

(Shared) meaning in the strategy of audiomarketing — theory and practice

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Background in musicology. The concept that music's meanings are inseparable from the cultural and social contexts and circumstances in which they arise has become widely accepted on the ground of musicological studies. Music tends to be treated as a social phenomenon and therefore its meanings can only be explained by analysis of the processes and conditions that pertain to the contexts within which music is produced and received.

Background in consumer behaviour and communication studies. This approach seems to be especially significant in analysing the strategies, characteristic for contemporary culture dominated by media, in which the sender uses (imposed) background music to elicit predictable recipients' responses and behaviour. One of the most interesting examples is the presence of programmed music in commercial environments in which music becomes a modern marketing tool within activities determined as audiomarketing.

Aims. The main aim of the paper is to answer the questions how and why programmed music intentionally treated by the sender as an "acoustic wallpaper" (understood as an acoustic background, not engaging the focal attention of the listener) can become a shared meaning transmitter within the strategy of audiomarketing.

Main contribution. The paper is based on the assumption that music can be an effective implicit communicator, transmitting specific meanings on a group level to achieve the goals intended by the sender. The comparison of theoretical and practical aspects of audiomarketing reveals the varied functions of the linkages between musical structure (on macro and micro levels) and possible meanings. The theoretical marketing model of "servicescape" and the model of communication proposed by Lasswell are the starting points for the analysis of audiomarketing practice. General assumptions of music programming (presented on the example of the key Polish audiomarketing service provider) are discussed in the context of a hierarchical model of musical semantics. The overall analysis reveals the multilevel structure of music programming in the strategy of audiomarketing. In terms of shared meanings transmission it highlights the significant role of knowledge activation effects of in-store music and its possibility to activate superordinate knowledge structure which can mediate customers' behaviour. This process concerns the ability of music to prime certain thoughts and a network of associations which individual listeners have built up over their listening experience and which can be shared by large groups of people.

Implications. The proposed interdisciplinary approach gives a chance to analyse the phenomenon of audiomarketing from the sender's perspective in a possibly multidimensional way. The presented research shows, however, that it is necessary to expand the perspective with the reception models, because they take into account the problem of differences in the interpretation of the same phenomena by individual recipients.

Keywords: shared meaning, audiomarketing, acoustic engineering, programmed music, knowledge-activation effects, consumer behaviour

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Introduction

For anyone living in the contemporary culture dominated by the media, music is virtually unavoidable. It appears in a range of different situations and places as an immensely important part of everyday life. On the one hand, music constitutes a vital element of the human, individually-shaped acoustic environment being chosen by the listener for a range of different purposes, and on the other hand it appears in the public space, often as an imposed acoustic background (e.g., DeNora, 2000; Juslin, Liljeström, Västfjäll, Barradas, & Silva, 2008; North & Hargreaves, 2008; North, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2004; Sloboda, O'Neill, & Ivaldi, 2001). In the second case, music tends to accompany other non-musical activities, so it usually functions somehow beyond the focal listener's attention and because of a peripheral way of perception it can become a very effective tool of hidden persuasion and even manipulation within the strategy that can be termed "acoustic engineering". This strategy involves designing, construction and modification of the acoustic space of a given place by means of programmed music, with the use of scientific and technical knowledge. Its purpose is to modify or change the recipients' responses and behaviour in a way consistent with the values and interests of the sender. In such an approach, music is embedded in the framework of the social communication model which assumes that the final result of the communication process is to control the recipients' responses and behaviour, usually without their knowledge (Makomaska, 2017a).

One of the most common examples of "acoustic engineering" in the contemporary culture is the presence of music in commercial environment in which imposed music becomes one of the elements of a modern place of sale designed in accordance with the rules of the experiential and sensory marketing strategy (Krishna, 2010). This concept derives from the assumption that shops are not only places of sale, but they play a role of intermediary between the customers and the sellers/ producers; an intermediary which takes part in creating of the so-called "brand experience" (Fulberg, 2003). Already in the 1970s one of the most eminent theoreticians of marketing, Philip Kotler, stressed the fact that consumers in their purchase decision-making respond to the "total product", and in some cases the place of sale and particularly its atmosphere can have a bigger impact on the consumers' decisions than the product itself. Kotler introduces the term "atmospherics" to describe "the conscious designing of space to create certain effects in buyers" (Kotler, 1973-74, p. 50). He claims that the atmosphere of a commercial place may serve in three possible ways: as an attention-creating medium, as a message creating-medium and as an affect-creating medium "helping to convert behavioural intentions into actual buying behaviour" (p. 54).

More and more efforts were made either on the ground of theory of marketing or within consumer behaviour research to explore and develop the concept of "atmospherics" and

to implement it in practice (e.g., Kotler, 1994; Krishna, 2010). Growing importance has been attached to building up an “aura” around a given product or service so as to create conditions which will persuade the purchaser that the product is meant specifically for him or her. As a result, in the process of communication with customers, the atmosphere in the shop has become a sort of “unspoken language”. In searching for new ways to influence the consumers, not only by means of the sense of sight (reserved by traditional advertising), the role of other senses such as smell, taste, touch and hearing began to be appreciated. With time, both the marketing practitioners and theoreticians started to introduce the terminology relating to this type of activities. As a result, visual merchandising, scent marketing or audiomarketing, where the appropriately selected music acts as one of the marketing tools (Makomaska, 2011) have become inseparable elements of modern marketing strategies.

This specific context of the functioning of music in the commercial context puts the question of the relationship between music and meaning in a new light. Most theoretical and empirical approaches to meaning and music take as the object of their investigation the processes that are involved in an attentive way of music listening. For many years, especially within musicology, the problem of background music has been neglected and even treated as a symptom of incorrect attitude towards music (e.g., Adorno, 1976; Fabbri, 2013). At the same time, however, this topic was of interest to researchers representing various scientific disciplines such as psychology, marketing and social psychology of music (e.g., Bruner, 1990; North & Hargreaves, 2008, 2009; Turley & Milliman, 2000) and practitioners interested in introducing music to various types of commercial environments (e.g., Lanza, 2004, Makomaska, 2017a). This paper focuses on the phenomenon of audiomarketing in which programmed music is used intentionally by the sender to transmit meanings in various retail settings. I place in the centre of interest the issue of an “acoustic wallpaper”, understood as a musical stimulus that crosses the threshold of conscious perception, but because it is usually located on the periphery of auditory attention, it becomes an acoustic background, not engaging the focal attention of the listener.

The starting point for the presented study is the assumption that music is a social phenomenon, so musical meanings are inseparable from the cultural and social contexts and circumstances in which they arise. This concept, widely accepted on the ground of musicological, sociological and ethnomusicological studies, stresses the fact that music’s meanings can only be explained by analysis of the processes and conditions that pertain to the contexts within which music is produced and received (e.g., Cross, 2018). Therefore, music is understood as “a culturally defined perceptual artefact, existing in the mind of enculturated listeners (Hood, 1982; Lomax, 1962; Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1983)”, so “successful communication must involve shared implicit and explicit knowledge structures” (Lipscomb & Tolchinsky, 2005, p. 384). The above characteristics lead to another feature: the ambiguity of music. As Ian Cross claimed, music “has a sort of <<floating intentionality>>... it can be thought of as gathering meaning from the context within which it happens and in turn contributing meaning to those contexts” (Cross, 2005, p. 30).

The main aim of this paper is to answer the questions how and why programmed music intentionally treated by the sender as an “acoustic wallpaper” can become a transmitter of meaning within the strategy of audiomarketing. The theoretical perspective including marketing model of “servicescape” (Bitner, 1992) and the model of communication (Lasswell, 1948) is confronted with audiomarketing practice. The reconstruction of the audiomarketing strategy from the sender’s perspective is based on the case of the most significant and the biggest audiomarketing service provider on the Polish market – the company IMS S.A.

Audiomarketing in the theoretical perspective

In 1992 the American marketing researcher Mary Jo Bitner outlined the theoretical framework for the discussion initiated by Kotler (1973-4) on the importance of particular elements forming the commercial place. She claimed that the so-called “servicescape” should be treated as a mixture of properties (defined as “environmental dimensions”) which can influence both internal consumers’ reactions (on a cognitive, emotional and physiological level) and their behaviour. Although the consumers react to the environment as a whole, there is no doubt that an individual can perceive discreet stimuli, so the whole configuration of stimuli determines the responses to the environment. As a result, all elements constitute an integral part of the holistic service experience and have an impact on the consumer’s decisions. The presented framework is anchored in the research tradition of environmental psychology. It suggests that individuals react to places with two general, and opposite, forms of behaviour: approach and avoidance. Approach behaviour include all positive behaviours that might be directed at a particular place, such as a desire to stay, explore and affiliate, joy of shopping, returning, spending money, time spent browsing, loyalty etc. Avoidance behaviour reflects the opposite, in other words, a desire not to stay, explore and affiliate etc. (Mehrabian & Russel, 1974).

In Bitner’s model, music appears in the group of the “environmental dimensions” as one of the ambient conditions, together with such elements as temperature, air quality or scent. The next group within the environmental factors called “space and its functionality” includes, inter alia, equipment arrangement, furnishings, shape and size of these elements and spatial relations between them. “Signs and symbols” which, according to Bitner, communicate about a particular place are divided into two categories: the explicit communicators, like signs placed at entrances and indoors (e.g., the name of the company or department), and implicit/symbolic communicators like the quality of the materials used, floor coverings, certificates and photographs placed on the walls. It is assumed that the perceived “servicescape” may have an impact on different aspects of customers’ responses and behaviour, also on a cognitive level. Bitner claims that it can elicit responses influencing people’s beliefs about a given place and their beliefs about the people and products found in that place. In that sense, the commercial environment can be viewed as a form of nonverbal communication, imparting meanings through particular environmental elements.

What role does music play in this process? Is background music only one of the ambient conditions (playing a similar role to temperature), or is it a more advanced and more influential marketing tool used to transmit meanings, thus being a kind of implicit communicator (using Bitner's terminology)? Because audiomarketing is an activity usually targeted at mass recipients, the above question refers to the problem of meaning transmission on the group level. That is why the term "shared meaning" should be used and understood as meanings transmitted by music and being shared by members of a particular group.

To understand the level of complexity of the audiomarketing strategy, it is worth locating this problem in the context of traditional analytical framework of linear transmission models in communication, wherein "senders" (and their intentions) are essential components of the communication process. One of the best known and the most influential communication models mainly used to analyse the mechanisms of propaganda was developed by the American political scientist and communication theorist Harold Dwight Lasswell (1948). It focuses on five main questions, which boil down to the well-known formula: "Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect". "Who" refers to the sender who formulates the message, "what" indicates the content of message and "channel" describes the medium of transmission. "Whom" indicates either an individual recipient or the audience of mass communication and "effect" can be understood as the outcome of the message (see more in e.g., Steinberg, 2007).

Communication theorists point out that this model is the most useful for studying the overtly instrumental forms of communication, when the senders set a clear goal: to change the positions or behaviours of the recipients (e.g., McQuail & Windahl, 2013). The Polish researcher Tomasz Goban-Klas (1999) compares the process of communication in Lasswell's meaning to the game of bowling, where the sender is akin to the player, the ball is the message (content), the lane is the channel, the pins are the recipients, and the number of pins knocked down refers to the effect of communication. In the communication process, like in the bowling game, the goal is of course to achieve as effectively as possible the goal planned by the sender, therefore Lasswell's model seems to be a very good tool for research directed at the studying of effects of communication. Although this model originally concerns verbal communication and is not free from many simplifications (especially in terms of one-way approach to influence), it can be an interesting and useful reference point in analysing the strategy of audiomarketing in terms of the process of meaning transmission viewed from the sender's perspective. This approach allows for a more in-depth analysis of audiomarketing strategy which is an example of pragmatic forms of communication wherein, as defined by Steven Brown, "musical messages are tailored to their intended purposes" (2006, p. xiii). Lasswell's concept still provides a very good point of view to study different types of communication (including musical communication) in which the five mentioned elements (namely communicator, information, media, audience and effect) are developing, each with its own characteristics (e.g., Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2005; Sapienza, Iyer, & Veenstra, 2015; Wenxiu, 2015; Yakupov, 2016).

Audiomarketing in practice – the case of IMS S. A.

To understand the role of the sender, it is necessary to “look behind the scenes” of the process of music programming by professional audiomarketing service providers. Because audiomarketing companies are not willing to reveal their “know-how”, through various channels (including materials gained from the company and the data obtained from private informers) I managed to gradually gather information that allowed me to reconstruct the audiomarketing strategy from the perspective of the company IMS S. A. (until 2015 functioning under the name Internet Media Services) which nowadays is the biggest audiomarketing service provider in Poland.

Internet Media Services was set up in the year 2000, over a decade after the historical breakthrough of 1989, which initiated the process of political, economic and social transformation. With the democratisation of political life and the emergence of civil society, a market based on private property has emerged. The system of goods rationing, known from the communist People's Republic of Poland, and empty shop shelves (with only vinegar available) became a thing of the past. They were replaced by a free-market struggle for customers, which over time took the form of marketing activities. Undoubtedly, at the end of the 20th century the very idea of managing commercial space through the sound sphere was known only in the Western countries, especially thanks to the American company Muzak. From its establishment in 1936 until its bankruptcy in 2009, the brand dominated the global market in provision of programmed music, while the musical genre – *muzak* not without reason became a synonym of any background music which the listener only notices when it stops playing (Lanza, 2004; Makomaska, 2017a).

Internet Media Services was the first company offering audiomarketing services on the Polish market. When it started its activities back in 2000, it had only one client. Since its establishment IMS has grown rapidly. Currently the company provides audiomarketing services to 300 shopping malls and about 12,000 trade-and-service points. It reaches about 30 million Poles every week with its message (IMS Sensory Media, n.d.), which is a huge result, taking into account that the number of Polish citizens is currently over 38 million. It is active also in 15 other European countries. Currently IMS S.A. belongs to the IMS Capital Group which provides specialized sensory marketing services. Apart from audiomarketing, IMS also offers the so-called scent marketing, Digital Signage and event marketing. Activities in the field of scent marketing include “creation of individual scents and fragrances with focus on the brand image and the place of sale” (IMS Sensory Media, n. d.). Digital Signage is an innovative technology which makes use of moving pictures and sound to convey information and advertising contents. In this field, IMS deals with the production and broadcasting of clips and image profiles presented on plasma display panels in shops and shopping centres. Event marketing activities include organization of events, trainings, incentive trips and special actions such as Pop Up Store, You Tubers on GH, Spirits Marketing, Digital Signage Entertainment etc. (promotional materials of IMS).

In case of audiomarketing, which is still one of key elements of the company’s activity, IMS plays a role of a professional intermediary between the brand owner and the

customer. It provides services to many well-known brands which usually belong to big corporations. IMS's clients are, among others, the great shopping networks (e.g., Tesco, Makro Cash & Carry, Polomarket, Leroy Merlin, Billa, Carrefour, Selgros), the largest shopping centres (e.g., The Golden Terraces, Arkadia, Galeria Mokotów, Galeria Centrum, Blue City, Manufaktura Shopping Centre, Plaza Kraków Shopping Centre, Arkady Wrocławskie, Forum Gliwice), brand stores (e.g., Troll, Top Secret, Vistula, Go Sport, Olsen, Marks & Spencer), restaurants (e.g., Sphinx, Bierhalle, Sushi 77, Costa Coffee), and the petrol station network Jet Conoco Phillips (promotional materials of IMS), and many others.

Music programs, suited to meet the demands of a given place, are created by experienced music consultants who, in the process of programming, take into account two main sources of information: the data provided by the clients of the audiomarketing company and the results of scientific and marketing research. In relation to the first source of information, the company undertakes actions similar to those used for creating advertising campaigns. To facilitate the flow of information, IMS has prepared a special brief containing questions referring to the brand's target group, and to the customers' expectations. The aims of the audiomarketing activity defined by the client usually include such effects as image creation, increasing customer activity at the point of sale, as well as reducing background noise or fostering a relaxing and energizing impact. Afterwards, on the basis of the consumers' demographic data and information concerning the brand image, music consultants create an appropriate music program. In the process of selecting pieces for the playlist, music consultants rely mostly on research commissioned by IMS from Polish research company – Maison Research Consulting and on scientific research on the effect of music on consumer behaviour.

At the stage of music programming one of the most important aspects is the musical preference of a target group. At trade-and-service points offering a single brand, the music must be suited as much as possible to the preferences of the target group. If the company's aim is to build or alter the brand's image, the customers' musical preferences are of equal importance. In the latter case, the aim of audiomarketing is to attract potential customers to a given shop, while music becomes an element of the brand's image context. Completely different aspects dominate in programming music to network shops, such as supermarkets and megastores, where fast moving consumer goods are sold. The main aim is to increase sales, therefore the music programs for such venues usually consist of popular music in fast tempos. The control of customer flow is also very important in fast food restaurants.

The main tool for the playlist generation is RCS Selector, which catalogues compositions, allows to create music programs, analyses them and controls the database, as well as eases efficient preparation of playlists for a large number of clients. Currently IMS uses a music library that consists of over 1,000,000 commercial tracks. After the preparation of a playlist the company sends it to the points of sale via the Internet and monitors the day-to-day operation of the programs at the clients' venues. The music is forwarded from the IMS server to the music servers in each individual venue. The company has also created its own system of volume control – the program GoldenEar 24, which constantly monitors the sound volume at each point of sale. This

is important, as both too low and too high volume may have a negative influence on the customers. Furthermore, the volume should change in time: e.g., on specific days of the week and times of day the shops are busier and the noise level grows, which means that also the music must be louder.

Meaning transmission in audiomarketing – theoretical and practical aspects

The overall analysis of the process of music programming indirectly reveals the answers to all questions included in Lasswell’s model (1948). Because this paper focuses on the problem of meaning transmitted by (background) music, Lasswell’s model can be adopted in the following exemplary way presented in Figure 1. The starting point is the sender (usually the company representing the brand in this role), who, together with the audiomarketing company, actively participates in the message planning process. Programmed music is the channel through which the message is to be transmitted to the target group in order to trigger the reaction intended by the sender. An example of intentional actions may be the effect of shared meaning which mediates in the process of “solidifying”/building/or altering brand image.

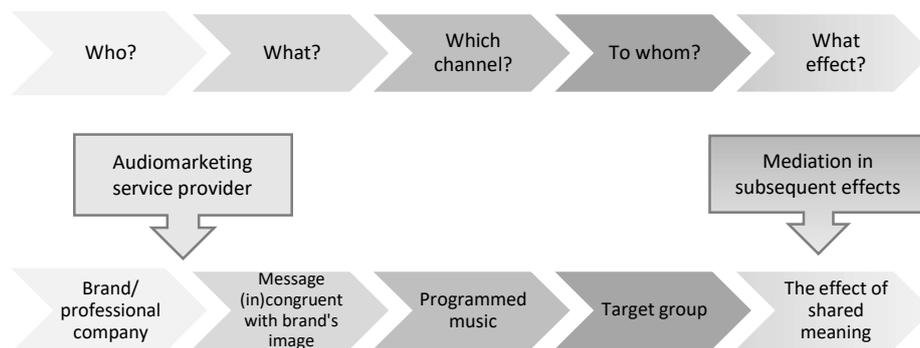


Figure 1. Strategy of audiomarketing in the perspective of Lasswell’s model of communication.

It seems that the problem of the transmission of shared meaning starts already on a macro level, at the stage when the audiomarketing company (usually acting on behalf of a given brand) makes the general decision concerning which musical genre should represent a brand, taking into account the musical preference of a target group or intended brand/ product/place image. This strategy is based on the assumption that different musical genres can evoke different “images” for the brand, product or place, which is confirmed by the results of scientific research primarily carried out in the field of marketing, psychology and social psychology of music (e.g., North & Hargreaves, 2008; North & Hargreaves, 2009; North, Hargreaves, & Krause, 2018). One of the most interesting conclusions drawn from experimental research is the fact that, for example,

classical music may evoke a sophisticated and up-market image, pop music – a fun and lively image, whereas “easy listening” music – a rather down-market and “tacky” (poor taste and quality) image. What is more, on a cognitive and behavioural level classical background music can lead to higher price estimates and can also influence customer spending, because they decide to buy more expensive products as it was confirmed by the experiments carried out in British student cafeteria by North and Hargreaves (1998) and the experiments carried out in a wine shop by Areni and Kim (1993). On the other hand, classical music can also work as a “repellent” for less affluent customers (e.g., Sterne, 2013), and also in the last years, e.g., McDonald’s restaurants used it as a “weapon” against aggressive clients. Its goal is “to create a calming atmosphere in order to counteract any rowdy shenanigans from customers” (Richardson, 2017).

The effect of the upmarket stereotype of classical music is one of the examples of a psychological process which in the psychological literature is known as knowledge activation effect. It is based on the fact that in-store music (although it is heard in a passive way) can activate superordinate knowledge structures which can mediate customers’ purchase behaviour (e.g., Martindale & Moore, 1988; North & Hargreaves, 2008; North & Hargreaves, 2009; North et al, 2018). This process is based on the ability of music to prime certain thoughts and networks of associations which individuals have built up over their experience and which can be shared by large groups of people. It is especially effective in the cultures dominated by the media. As North and Hargreaves claimed (2006) the notion that “music should activate related knowledge structures has a good pedigree in mainstream research on cognitive psychology. The latter indicates that if information is consistent with someone’s existing schema, it elicits faster reaction times and better recall from experimental subjects, and these are both indicative of knowledge activations” (p. 106). What is interesting especially in case of background music, this mechanism has direct parallels with the aesthetic response. As the research shows, the resources of human attention are not a constant and depend i.a. on the activity of the so-called activation system, responsible for maintaining the appropriate level of stimulation (Allen, Reber, & Reber, 2009). Moreover, a significant role is played by the listener’s approach to the music. If the listener is interested and favorably disposed towards the listened music, the subjective cost of attention span will be considerably lower than in the case of a lack of interest or considerable unwillingness. Additionally, attention involvement while listening to music depends on i.a. two perspectives subjectively defined by the listener: familiarity and complexity of music material, which also translates into experiencing pleasure-unpleasantness and simultaneously constitutes the measure of listener’s preferences (Berlyne, 1971). More recent research in the area of neuroaesthetics and neuropsychology (e.g., Hodges, 2018; Reybrouck, Eerola, & Podlipniak, 2018) confirm that there is a link between attention, arousal, emotion and decision-making processes, which is an interesting reference point for further exploration.

In marketing practice there are many cases of audiomarketing campaigns based on the knowledge activation effect, also in the Polish market. One of the examples is the usage of Fryderyk Chopin’s music as a background in many surprising places such as the Polish High Speed Train (Pendolino). Undoubtedly, in this context the meaning of

Chopin's Nocturne in E-Flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2 becomes a social construction, and Chopin's music is used to create up-market image of the Polish company.

The analysis of audiomarketing strategy reveals that the general decision of audiomarketing company concerning musical genre refers to the highest level of the hierarchical model of musical semantics (Fig. 2.) proposed by Brown (2006). The choice is based on the assumption that "a musical genre can signify whole cultures, subcultures, geographical regions, social identities, and other similar things" (Brown, 2006, p. 16). However, the decision made at the first stage of music programming shows the top of a complex network, relating features of the musical hierarchy to those of the semantic hierarchy. Because the model is hierarchical, anything at a higher level necessarily incorporates elements of all lower levels, so the structural features of music such as tempos, volumes, rhythms, timbres, melodic contours etc. also play a role in the formation of meanings.

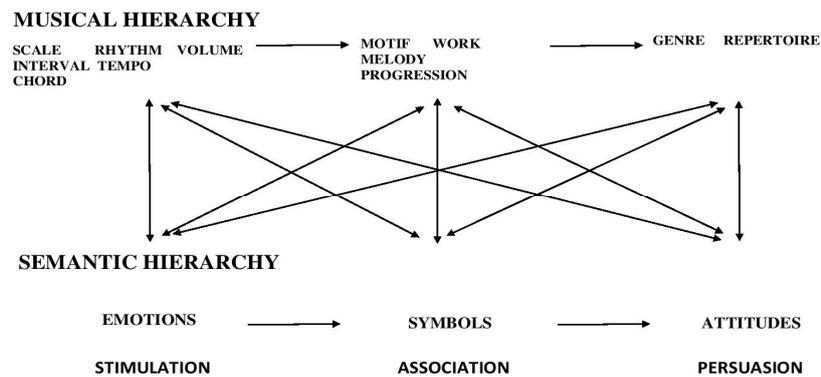


Figure 2. A hierarchical view of musical semantics (Adapted from Brown, 2006, p. 15).

Brown (2006) claims that "music is, in its most basic sense, an associative enhancer of communication at the group level" and that "music's principal mode of operation at the cultural level is associative, and this often manifests itself in specific linkages between musical structure and social meaning" (p. 1). It seems that audiomarketing strategy analysed through the prism of sender's intentions and the results of empirical research confirm the above assumptions. However, a look at the process of transmission of meanings from the recipient's perspective can lead to slightly different conclusions. It can be assumed that the recipient's reactions are not always congruent with the responses intended by the sender. So far the issue of discrepancy between the intended outcomes and the actual effects has been theoretically and empirically discussed in the context of broadcast commercials (e.g., Craton & Lantos, 2011; Craton, Lantos, & Leventhal, 2017; Lantos & Craton, 2012) what gives an interesting perspective in search for mechanisms that might underlie listeners' musical responses in various commercial environments. Indirectly this problem refers to the issue of the

effectiveness of audiomarketing strategy in terms of cultural versus individual connotations, what requires further research.

Epilogue

As it is confirmed by many empirical research, in-store music may serve as an effective “message-creating medium” (Kotler, 1973-74) playing a strategic role in triggering appropriate reactions in the target group, also on a cognitive level (e.g., North & Hargreaves, 2008; North et al., 2018). Undoubtedly, initially the theoretician of marketing underestimated the role of music seeing it only as one of the ambient conditions, not included in the group of implicit communicators (Bitner, 1992). The results of the present analysis shows that the modification of theoretical models is absolutely justified. There is no doubt, that through the mechanisms of meanings anchored in the area of cultural connotations, music can transmit messages even on a mass level shaping people’s beliefs about a commercial place and their beliefs about the people and products found in that place. Customers are usually not aware of the manipulation they are subject to so it is not surprising that this hidden function of music strikes up controversy. In the discussion led by the representatives of various scientific disciplines such as acoustics, acoustic ecology, architecture and sound studies background music is also treated in the categories of contemporary acoustic pollution and a tool of manipulation (e.g., Bradshaw & Holbrook, 2008; Schafer, 1977, 1993). It directly leads to the problem of privacy of sound and the right to an individual selection of music, especially in public space (see e.g., Makomaska, 2015, 2017a, 2017b).

However, it seems unlikely that in-store music could entirely determine shoppers’ purchase decisions. The research on judgmental biases suggests that heuristic influence of music would mediate behaviour in the situation when an element of uncertainty in product choice appears or a consumer is in a state of low involvement with the decision process. At the same time music will probably have less impact on the consumers decision when the customers have a clear preference for one particular product, or when product selection requires a considerable amount of deliberation. As pointed out by North and Hargreaves: “a shopper is unlikely to buy a Ferrari rather than Porsche simply because he/she hears Vivaldi” (2006, p. 119).

There is no doubt that a more detailed analysis of audiomarketing strategy requires the extension of the research perspective and the inclusion of reception models, because they take into account the problem of differences in interpretation of the same phenomena by individual recipients. Polish sociologist and communication theorist Goban-Klas (1999) proposed an interesting model called “model of blocks”. It shows that recipients in the process of reception usually create their own constructions (interpretations) sometimes contrary to the sender’s intention. In the context of audiomarketing it would be interesting to see what factors determine the process of “building blocks” and how the recipients interpret meanings transmitted by background music that is located on the periphery of listeners’ attention.

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Biography

Sylwia Makomaska, assistant professor at the Institute of Musicology (University of Warsaw). She graduated in musicology and political science (specialty: journalism). In 2008 she received her PhD from the University of Warsaw for the dissertation on Absolute Pitch (tutor: prof. Andrzej Rakowski). In 2010 she was an academic visitor at Roehampton University in London. Among her scholarly interests are the phenomenon of AP and the role of music in social communication. Since 2017 she has been involved in the research project entitled “‘Acoustic wallpaper’ in the public space – from *musique d’ameublement* to audiomarketing”, supported by the National Science Centre (Poland).