

Den ofrivilliga lyssnaren

Möten med butiksmusik

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Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i etnologi, som med tillstånd av Humanistiska fakultetsnämnden kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 16 september kl. 13.30 i sal Vasa B, Vera Sandbergs Allé 8.

Opponent: Lars Kaijser, docent i etnologi, Stockholms universitet.



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The involuntary listener

Encounters with in-store music

Abstract

Title: The involuntary listener. Encounters with in-store music.

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Keywords: in-store music, ethnography, listening perspectives, consumer roles, urban soundscapes, affect, affective networks, store marketing, store atmospherics, marketing discourse, consumerism.

The aim of this dissertation is to explore potential customer's encounters with the phenomena of in-store music. The area chosen for the study is the core shopping district of Gothenburg, Sweden, known as Inom Vallgraven ("within the moat"). The material for the study consists of 12 in-depth interviews with persons in the ages 27 to 71, as well as a digital enquiry with approximately 120 replies.

Today, in-store music is a highly ranked aesthetical component for stores and shops worldwide. In-store music is often presented as a symbolic "umbrella", which allegedly heightens other aesthetical components within the stores. In-store music is not a new phenomenon per se, but during the last decade it has gone through what can be described as a spatial transformation; what once was often referred to as barely audible Muzak or background music is now, in general, in the absolute foreground.

The focal objective is to analyze how potential customers perceive and negotiate with the phenomena of in-store music. How do they direct themselves towards in-store music? How do they listen to it? What kind of listening experience is possible/impossible within different store atmospheres? What meaning is attributed to the phenomena of in-store music? And what do they do when bothered by it?

The study confirms that a lot of potential customers seek what could be called auditory asylums, where strategies such as actively ignoring (when possible) or fleeing to portable music players are common. In contrast, the study also confirms that – when in-store music is used 'right' and with tending surrounding components – it can generate a desirable nightclub-esque sensation. The study also confirms that potential customer's encounters with in-store music often are of an ambivalent and doubtful character. Not knowing how – or if – they are affected by the music, it tend to leave them in a state of resignation from their own knowledge and experience. The result is a battle between knowledge and ignorance. The origin of this state can be linked to a strong marketing discourse, where a broad and culturally relativistic perspective on musical influence is narrowed down and, in some cases, completely absent.