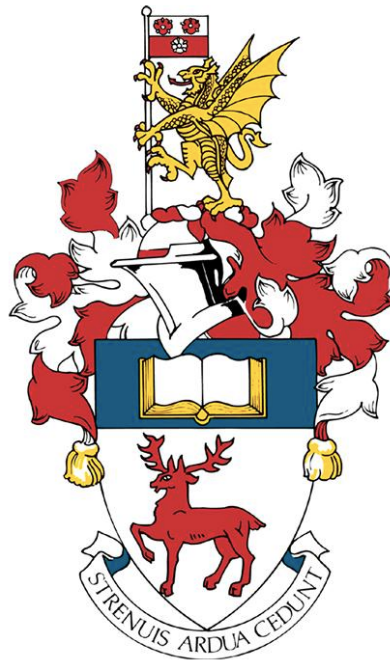


University of Southampton Music Department

Academic Year 2020-21

MUSI3021 Research Project



Dissertation:

# Hitting the right note? The ethical dilemmas of music in marketing

Student ID: 29952166

ERGO number: 61702

Word Count: 9,586

## Abstract

This research considers the ethical implications of using music in advertising. It first establishes ethical determinants and discusses them in relation to ethical motivation. The pre-existing ethical dilemmas in relation to music are then discussed with the research gap relating to music in advertising being highlighted.

Following this, this research then considers music's relationship with human neurology and considers both the environmental and biological factors which contribute to our perception, understanding and interpretation of music; the implications of this providing basis for some of the ethical dilemmas present in the use of music in advertising.

Music, marketing and ethics are then discussed. Firstly, the implications of creating music associations are highlighted, with key areas such as the transformational power of music, sonic branding and auditory associations providing the weight of the argument. Then, it looks at music in relation to manipulation, with psychological studies such as the elaboration model and classical conditioning taking precedence. Musical mishearing and musical interpretation and perception are then discussed with topics around synesthetic perception being mentioned. Finally, there are discussions around music's ability to encourage social division and reinforce stereotyping.

This research concludes that corporations should include discussions around music use in advertising and marketing with regards to ethics and suggests that it is necessary for them to consider the implications of music's use.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the time, support and advice given to me by my supervisor Professor Jeanice Brooks. I would also like to acknowledge my parents, Adrian and Sonia, who have supported me throughout my life in all that I do and without whom I would not have been able to achieve what I have. I would like to acknowledge the love and encouragement I have received from my sister, Victoria. I would also like to recognise my friend Ferne who makes me smile every day and is always there for me. I would finally like to recognise all other friends and family members who have supported my efforts over the last three years.

## Table of Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS/MUSICAL EXAMPLES	5
INTRODUCTION	6
ETHICS	8
Ethical Motivation	8
Determining What is Ethical	11
Considerations Relating to Music and Ethics	13
Research Gap	18
THE BIOLOGY BEHIND MUSIC	19
MUSIC, MARKETING AND ETHICS	25
Music and Associations	25
Music, Advertising and Manipulation	30
Music, Perception and Interpretation	34
Music, Social Division and Inclusivity	37
CONCLUSION	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44
APPENDICES	49

## List of Illustrations/Musical Examples

Figure 1: Carroll's CSR Pyramid suggesting the order that organisations should prioritise differing responsibilities	10
Figure 2: Types of Ethical Problems. The relationship between motivation and moral judgement when determining the extent to which something is an ethical problem	12
Figure 3: Demonstrates the movement of sound through the ear	20
Figure 4: A Musical illusion. The sound pattern in comparison to its common perception through headphones	22
Figure 5: The 5 note McDonalds jingle	29

## Introduction

Music plays a significant part in day-to-day society, with culture and politics being shaped by music's influencing power. This is heavily evidenced through prominent examples all throughout history. Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poem No. 3 "Les Préludes", was composed to represent that life on Earth was a prelude to glory in heaven. Yet in World War 2, it was chosen, by Hitler himself, to be broadcast on the German radio every time there was a Nazi victory, suggesting that the horrors of war were a step toward a glorious new world; this manipulation of purpose demonstrating the way in which music's power can be bent towards different immoral or distasteful purposes, even in the most extreme of circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Another example is with El Sistema in Venezuela which some critics have claimed to be governmental propaganda. In this case music acts as a distraction, with the government encouraging their country to see young musicians rather than focusing on the national problems that exist.<sup>2</sup> In both these examples, it is clear that music can be successfully used in ways many would deem wrong or immoral. Alternatively, music has also long been used to improve morale and in therapeutic settings. Some of the earliest examples of its use are in sea shanties, where sailors would sing together to provide a narrative of hope when in highly stressful and life-threatening situations.<sup>3</sup>

If we acknowledge that music is more than simply entertainment, and can have moral or therapeutic dimensions, the relationship between marketing and music appears more significant; Firstly, with music being marketed as a product and secondly, music being used as a tool in marketing strategies. Marketing involves the persuasive promotion of goods or

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<sup>1</sup>Music, War and Revolution: Volume III, "Music and Power: The Power of Music," directed by Maria Stodtmeier and Isa Willinger, Medici.TV.

<sup>2</sup>Music, War and Revolution, "Music and Power," Maria Stodtmeier.

<sup>3</sup>Murray and Lamont "Community Music and Social/Health Psychology: Linking Theoretical and Practical Concerns," 83.

services in an effort to encourage their exchange, usually with money.<sup>4</sup> Given the assumed power music has, it becomes necessary to attempt to ascertain the role music has in influencing thought and behaviour and the ethical implications of using music in a way that can encourage or manipulate such an exchange. This research aims to uncover whether music can be used in marketing ethically or whether it is inherently unethical to use it in this way. This study will explore the present use of music, in relation to marketing, and discuss the ethical dilemmas surrounding it. Considering ethical issues regarding the use of music in marketing is of great importance as currently there is little discussion of its use in larger discussions of corporate ethics. Music can be used for both good and bad with ethical discussions helping to distinguish where that boundary lies. Corporations should be considering their use of music in creating a bias, in relation to ethics.

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<sup>4</sup>*Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Marketing” by Kent A. Grayson, and Jonathan D. Hibbard, accessed January 21, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/marketing>.

## Ethics

Ethics are considered the social system to study the moral domain, with morality consisting of the values and beliefs which are accepted as right.<sup>5</sup> Ethical behaviour is hoped for in functioning society. Some ethical practises, such as respecting an individual's life, are enforceable by law; others are considered soft law whereby a person is a respecter of a code of conduct or moral principle. In any case, ethical practise is necessary to prevent the deterioration of society. The topic of ethics, especially in a business setting, is complex. Ethical practises in marketing can only be questioned once the factors which influence decision-making are better understood and hence some exploration is needed.

## Ethical Motivation

There are many arguments as to why an individual might buy into behaving ethically. Whilst we might hope that altruism is the leading motivator, often the actions of individuals are influenced by an enlightened self-interest. By acting morally, an individual can avoid penalties and improve their reputability. This is particularly noticeable within major corporations which seek to improve their moral capital by appearing to follow regulation and appealing to the moral compass of consumers.<sup>6</sup>

There are two fundamental conceptions of managerial responsibility which are important to understand. Friedman suggested the shareholder view which is to maximise profits and their shareholder value whilst obeying society's laws and ethical norms.<sup>7</sup> In this view, it is in the managers best interest to act to preserve the interest of the shareholders, to whom they

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<sup>5</sup>*Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Ethics," by Peter Singer, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy>.

<sup>6</sup>Suri Ratnapala, "Moral Capital and Commercial Society," *The Independent Review* 8, No.2 (2003): 215.

<sup>7</sup>"Friedman Doctrine," Corporate Finance Institute, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/finance/friedman-doctrine/>.



are responsible; a shareholder is someone who “holds stock(s) in a given company”.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, the stakeholder view, formulated by Freeman, suggests that profit is secondary to an organisation’s stakeholders; stakeholders being anyone who will either directly or indirectly be affected by the organisation.<sup>9</sup> Managers should act to protect anyone who could be affected by the actions of the organisation. Campbell highly criticises the stakeholder theory, arguing instead that motivations to act ethically and engage with corporate social responsibility (CSR) are as a result of a corporation’s relationship with economic factors.<sup>10</sup> He argues that it is institutional forces that determine this relationship.<sup>11</sup> These contrary views highlight an organisations willingness to consider externalities, as well as to act in their own interest or in society’s interest.

Managing ethical behaviour is challenging as the implications of ethical behaviour can sometimes fail to be beneficial. This is particularly challenging in business organisations, as their priority is with creating profitable return. Many managers do consider the triple bottom line, that is environmental, social and economic factors, when making decisions.<sup>12</sup> However, many managers consider it a necessity to prioritise economic growth over other factors to stay financially competitive. This was demonstrated by Carroll’s model of CSR, which suggests that economic responsibilities should be prioritised above legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>“Shareholder,” Corporate Finance Institute, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/finance/shareholder/>.

<sup>9</sup>R. Edward Freeman, “Managing for Stakeholders,” in *Ethical Theory and Business 8th Edition*, ed. by Tom L. Beauchamp, Norman E. Bowie and Denis G. Arnold (New Jersey: Pearson, 2009), 56.

<sup>10</sup>John L. Campbell, “Why would corporations behave in socially responsible ways? An institutional theory of corporate social responsibility,” *Academy of Management Review* 32, No. 3 (2007), 952.

<sup>11</sup>Campbell, “Why would corporations,” 954.

<sup>12</sup>Will Kenton, “Triple Bottom Line (TBL),” *Investopedia*, October 10, 2020, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/triple-bottom-line.asp>.

<sup>13</sup>Archie B. Carroll, “The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders,” *Business Horizons* 34, No.4 (1991): 40-43.

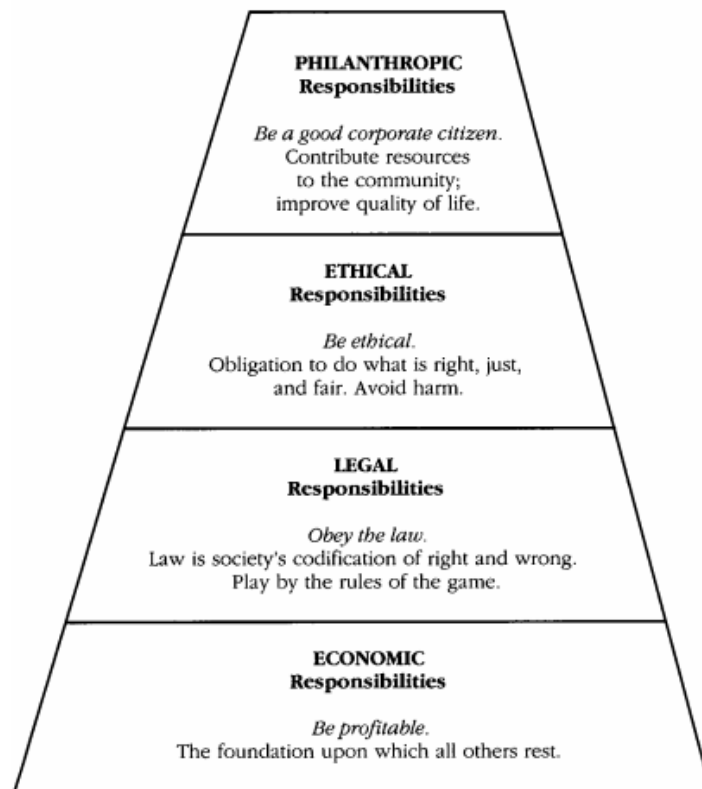


Figure 1: Carroll's CSR Pyramid suggesting the order that organisations should prioritise differing responsibilities<sup>14</sup>

Since this publication, many have argued that the suggestion that a corporation should prioritise economic responsibilities over other responsibilities is fundamentally immoral.<sup>15</sup> Alternative models suggest that ethical practises have to be embedded within an organisation through ethical leadership and careful HR management to allow for ethical behaviour to be inherent in decision making and avoid its subordination to profit.<sup>16</sup> Whilst some corporations, such as TOMS<sup>17</sup>, can create corporate success based on CSR principles, a greater majority don't. This is primarily due to the complexities of managing ethical responsibilities whilst staying competitive.

<sup>14</sup>Carroll, "The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility," 42.

<sup>15</sup>Denise Baden, "A reconstruction of Carroll's pyramid of corporate social responsibility for the 21<sup>st</sup> century," *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility* 1, No.8 (2016): 12, doi: 10.1186/s40991-016-0008-2.

<sup>16</sup>Tamar A. Kreps and Benoît Monin, "'Doing well by doing good'? Ambivalent moral framing in organizations," *Research in Organisational Behaviour* 31, (2011): 101.

<sup>17</sup>"Responsibility," TOMS Group, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://tomsgroup.com/en/sustainability/>.

## Determining What is Ethical

Ethical absolutism would suggest that there are universal moral laws that can be applied to rationally determine objective right and wrongs<sup>18</sup>. However, in many cases, behaving ethically is not as easy as simply determining right from wrong. Externalities can implicate unethical behaviour into seemingly ethical actions. For example, an individual may buy a car with their hard-earned money. Whilst this transaction may cause the individual no moral qualms, externalities such as the cars contribution to global warming and pollution, may make this action somewhat unethical. The subjectivity of moral boundaries makes determining ethical behaviour challenging. Ethical relativism supports this and suggests that ethics are context dependent and subjective.<sup>19</sup> The challenge facing decision makers is whether something is ethically absolute or whether, given the context, an otherwise unethical decision is acceptable.

For thousands of years, moral philosophers have hypothesised perspectives by which mankind must abide to be ethical (See Appendix A). These perspectives demonstrate further the subjectivity of making ethical decisions and perhaps suggest that any action can be determined to be unethical. This is highly significant as it implies that when questioning morality, we are only ever really determining the extent to which something is immoral, rather than determining if it is. This means that when determining ethical behaviour, we should consider its moral intensity. Moral intensity can be measured by a multitude of factors: magnitude of consequences, concentration of effect, probability of effect, social consensus, proximity and temporal immediacy.<sup>20</sup> Each of these factors can help to identify the degree to

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<sup>18</sup>Gael McDonald, "Ethical relativism vs absolutism: research implications," *European Business Review* 22, No. 4 (2010): 454-456.

<sup>19</sup>McDonald, "Ethical relativism vs absolutism," 447-449.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas M. Jones, "Ethical Decision Making by Individuals in Organisations: An Issue-Contingent Model," *The Academy of Management Review* 16, No. 2 (1991): 374-378.

which something is ethical. This can demonstrate why certain moral judgements are made and the motivation behind their implementation.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, moral framing should be considered. Moral framing is the way in which an issue is presented and then perceived by those making decisions. Bias can change the degree of perceived relative importance of factors relating to moral intensity.<sup>22</sup> Where this is the case, immoral actions can be considered moral by a large proportion of society. For example, if something is continually presented in a way in which people begin to accept as normality, then its ethical implications may be dismissed, or worse, not even noticed. This can change the degree to which someone is motivated to act on their moral judgement.<sup>23</sup>

Moral Judgement			
Motivation		Indeterminate	Determinate
	High	Ethical Dilemma	No-Problem Problem
	Low	Moral Laxity	Compliance Problem

*Figure 2: Types of Ethical Problems. The relationship between motivation and moral judgement when determining the extent to which something is an ethical problem<sup>24</sup>*

Moral framing highlights that the determining of ethics can be manipulated. Hume suggested that mankind is free to choose good from bad with motivation to act being based on the experience of feelings of approval.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, Freud suggested that rather ethical

<sup>21</sup>Daniel M. Bartels et al, "Moral Judgement and Decision Making," in *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Judgement and Decision Making*, ed. Gideon Keren and George Wu (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 482-483.

<sup>22</sup>Jones, "Ethical Decision Making," 389-390.

<sup>23</sup>Geoffrey Russel Grice, *The Grounds of Moral Judgement* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 13.

<sup>24</sup>Aviva Geva, "A typology of Moral Problems in Business: A Framework for Ethical Management," *Journal of Business Ethics* 69, No. 2 (2006): 135 Table 1.

<sup>25</sup>Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, "Hume's Moral Philosophy," accessed April 12, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/>.

behaviour is influenced by two opposing forces: the censoring and controlling forces of civilisation and the instinctual and unconscious desires of the individual.<sup>26</sup> Freud's proposition is particularly interesting as it presents external forces as having an influence on ethical behaviour. This means that it is necessary to consider who is controlling the framing of events as any bias will change the extent to which something is an ethical problem. Those in society who benefit from framing something so that it appears not to be an ethical dilemma, create an ethical paradox whereby their unethical behaviour creates a false ethical reality for others.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, everyone differs in the extent to which they believe something to be morally right or wrong. If, as Freud suggests, ethical behaviour is influenced by forces of civilisation, it is important to objectively evaluate morality regularly, for if we don't, the boundaries as to what is ethically acceptable can be continually changed in favour of those with power. By making such evaluations, it can encourage the sustainable development, growth and globalisation of society, limit vulnerability and increase trust.<sup>28</sup>

## Considerations Relating to Music and Ethics

Based on our understanding on what determines ethics, there are many ethical dilemmas that currently exist with the use of music. As an industry, music was worth over \$20.2 billion in 2019.<sup>29</sup> It has seen a growth of 24.1% in streaming revenues which has meant that of the global recorded music revenues, 56.1% is dominated by streaming services (See Appendix B).<sup>30</sup> Like any growing commercial giant, the music industry continues to develop

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<sup>26</sup>Edwin R Wallace IV, "Freud as Ethicist," in *Freud V.I: Appraisals and reappraisals*, ed. Paul E. Stepansky (New York: Routledge, 2014), 87.

<sup>27</sup> Brenda Cohen, "An Ethical Paradox," *Mind* 76, No. 302 (1967): 250.

<sup>28</sup> Muel Kaptein, "Ethics Management," in *Ethics Management: Issues in Business Ethic*, vol 10, (Dordrecht: Springer, 1998), 32.

<sup>29</sup>"Industry Data," IFPI, accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.ifpi.org/our-industry/industry-data/#>.

<sup>30</sup>IFPI, "Industry Data."

its sales strategy through marketing with focus on product, place, price and promotion.<sup>31</sup> The worth of the industry has meant that ethical misconduct is not uncommon.

One of the most noticeable issues associated with the industry is piracy. Despite the mass marketing efforts in the early 2000s, such as the “You wouldn’t steal a car” ad, to raise awareness among consumers, piracy is still considered a major problem.<sup>32</sup> In a study carried out by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), 27% of all music respondents admitted to using unlicensed methods to listen to or obtain music.<sup>33</sup> This has ramifications for the growth in the electronic distribution of music as it drives down the economic value of recorded music due to economies of scale.<sup>34</sup> There are many contrasting opinions as to whether piracy itself is unethical. Whilst it’s an act of civil disobedience, many argue that it is more unethical that copyright holders sue in “an attempt to slow or stop an innovation that is likely to bring about a social good”.<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, there are many ethical dilemmas which exist with regards to intellectual property. The purpose of copyright is to “protect sounds and written work of the creative” with the intention of protecting against infringement and as proof of ownership.<sup>36</sup> There are different licenses, for example, mechanical and performance, that give artists different rights.<sup>37</sup> A need for such rights has developed due to drivers such as technology, consumer demand and law.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> E. Constantinides, “The Marketing Mix Revisited: Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marketing,” *Journal of Marketing Management* 22, No 3-4 (2006): 408.

<sup>32</sup> Gustaf Nelhans et al., “Spontaneous reactions to an anti-piracy initiative: A YouTube clip micro analysis,” in *iConference 2013: Proceedings*, (Fort Worth: Texas, 2013), 985-989, accessed February 18, 2021, <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/41278>.

<sup>33</sup> IFPI, “Industry Data.”

<sup>34</sup> Robert F. Easley, “Ethical Issues in the Music Industry Response to Innovation and Piracy,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 62, (2005): 165.

<sup>35</sup> Easley, “Ethical Issues,” 166.

<sup>36</sup> “A Brief Discussion on Intellectual Property for Musical Creatives,” Transcending Sound, accessed November 7, 2020, <https://www.transcendingsound.com/blog/2017/01/30/ipformusiccreatives>.

<sup>37</sup> A. G. Ciccattelli, “How New Musicians Can Protect Their Music’s Intellectual Property,” *IPWatchdog*, 2017, accessed November 7, 2020, <https://www.ipwatchdog.com/2017/05/29/musicians-protect-music-intellectual-property/id=83619/>.

<sup>38</sup> D. Herlihy and Y. Zhang, “Music industry and copyright protection in the United States and China,” *Global Media and China* 1, No.4 (2016):393.

Copyright law is extensive and has limited the environments in which music can be performed. The recording industry can control and limit access to music by threatening litigation to those who seek to circumvent the law. Rosemary Coombe said, “This legal situation leaves us with a musical culture structured primarily in favour of the financial interest of corporate intellectual property holders and shaped by the contractual conditions they establish”.<sup>39</sup> She further explains “any notion that the state should act to protect interest and to secure access to a range of public goods has become illegitimate”.<sup>40</sup>

There are differing perspectives as to how the ethical dilemma created by intellectual property could be resolved. Some support the moral rights perspective suggesting that copyright should be extended to protect royalties, whilst others suggest that such an expansion would inhibit the development of creative works inspired by pre-existing music.<sup>41</sup> Transformative appropriation has informed most musical traditions, so as to imply an idea is ‘new’ is contradictory.<sup>42</sup>

The law often doesn’t protect artists. Instead, it allows major corporations to take control, prohibit creativity of new artists and limit the income of the creative through streaming services. To distribute their work, musicians often have to partially sell their rights to major corporations. With corporations taking a big cut in royalties, in particular when constructing streaming services, it suggests that corporate motives are purely financial. This means that some consumers are misled when supporting artists, as they believe that by abiding by IP law, rather than pirating, they are supporting the artistic creator. It should also be considered that because musical culture is structured and shaped by the contractual conditions that corporations

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<sup>39</sup> Rosemary Coombe, “Making Music in the Soundscapes of the Law” in *Steal This Music: How Intellectual Property Law Affects Musical Creativity*, Joanna Demers (Athens: University of Georgia press, 2006), viii.

<sup>40</sup> Coombe, “Making Music,” viii-ix.

<sup>41</sup> Joanna Demers, *Steal This Music: How Intellectual Property Affects Musical Creativity* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>42</sup> Demers, *Steal This Music*, 29.

create, it controls what is distributed. The power that these organisations have, can prevent and limit access to music by them threatening litigation to those seeking to circumvent the law.

This highlights two significant ethical dilemmas. Firstly, major corporations can control what music people are exposed to by threatening access to music. Secondly, IP law is presented as a tool to protect artist creativity and the moral right of the author. This is misleading to musical consumers as it encourages them to abide by laws instigated by major record companies, whilst they pay royalties to those same record companies. The consumer believes that their money is going to support the moral rights of the artist whereas the reality is that the majority doesn't.

Another major issue is the way that the industry is shaped. The music industry treats music as a commodity. The notion that the industry operates to the benefit of musicians and their audience is inaccurate.<sup>43</sup> The industry, like most businesses, prioritises profit. Many corporations in the industry have long standing collaborations, which allow the respective resources and capabilities to be exchanged, creating very high market entry barriers.<sup>44</sup> This has created an “oligopoly of very large multinational companies” which dominate the industry.<sup>45</sup> North and Hargreaves said “put simply, the more that a small number of companies control the charts (i.e. greater concentration) the *slower the turnover* of songs on the charts (i.e. lack of diversity) and the *smaller number of new artists* there are that reach the charts (i.e. lack of innovation).”<sup>46</sup>

North and Hargreaves highlight a number of ethical issues regarding equal opportunities to musicians. One example involves companies' music buying behaviour being

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<sup>43</sup>Adrian C. North and David J. Hargreaves, *The Social and Applied Psychology of Music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chap.5 Music, Business and health, 3, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198567424.003.0005.

<sup>44</sup>Jonathan Gander and Alison Rieple, “Inter-organisational Relationships in the Worldwide Popular Recorded Music Industry,” *Creativity and Innovation Management* 11, No. 4 (2002): 250.

<sup>45</sup>North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 4.

<sup>46</sup>North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 5.



focused on minimising financial risk. They do this by investing time and money in a small number of artists through the superstardom strategy which places a few musicians above the rest, guaranteeing their success.<sup>47</sup> Consumers, especially non-musicians, tend to engage with reputable or well-known artists to avoid the investment of time and money in music which may not result in greater enjoyment.<sup>48</sup> This strategy sees a few musicians receiving a disproportionate amount of success relative to talent.

This has left artists feeling pressure to change to fit the commercial market. According to Howard Becket, “the commercial musician chooses to sacrifice self-respect and the respect of other musicians (the rewards of artistic behaviour) for the more substantial rewards of steady work, higher income, and the prestige enjoyed by the man who goes commercial.”<sup>49</sup> This article is interesting in indicating that musicians have a desire to be their own creative artist but often feel that to achieve success in larger society, they must sacrifice personal preference and self-respect to appeal to non-musicians.<sup>50</sup> As well as musicians feeling forced to decide between success and creativity, there is also a direct conflict regarding musical accessibility, with musical events and products often being costly or exclusive. The concept of “selling out” is often perceived as a moral dilemma by artists and audiences. Commercial musicians who claim to be creating music for their audiences are then restricting access to the very people with whom it was created for. This indicates further that musicians are often forced to focus more on profitability than their art.

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<sup>47</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 6.

<sup>48</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Howard Becker, “The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience,” *American Journal of Sociology* 57, No. 2 (1951): 140.

<sup>50</sup> Becker, “The Professional Dance Musician,” 136.

## Research Gap

Whilst the ethical dilemmas resulting from music's treatment as a product have been explored in significant depth, there is an area that has been vastly overlooked: the ethical dilemmas that come as a result of using music as a tool. Music is present in a variety of marketing strategies but the ethical implications of its use in these situations has not been carefully monitored. There is a distinct lack of awareness among the public, who are exposed and affected by music in advertising, as to music's effect both physiologically and culturally. Therefore, this research aims to expose the ethical dilemmas present in music's use within marketing. In doing this, moral framing, moral intensity and ethical motivation will be instrumental in identifying ethical dilemmas.

## The Biology Behind Music

The way in which humans respond to and are influenced by music is as a result of two primary factors: that is either environmental or biological. The associative use of music in society means that exposure to different cultural factors makes us respond differently to different music. This means that our environment can and does change the way in which we respond physiologically. It is important to note that whilst our environments are a great influencing power, the effectiveness is due to our biological and neurological makeup. The way in which the human brain functions means that the effectiveness of culture factors becomes more evident. As such it is necessary to explore the neurological and physiological effects of music.

Before we can begin to evaluate the ethical use of music, specifically in marketing, it is first necessary to consider the relationship between music and neurological function. Without this understanding, it is challenging to evaluate ethical factors, such as the magnitude of consequences, probability of effect, or social consensus, when using music.

In the involuntary physiological process of hearing, a stimulus creates sound waves, vibrations through a medium, which move through the ear canal. Those sound waves cause the tympanic membrane to vibrate which in turn causes a chain of vibrations which ultimately creates waves in the fluids of the cochlea.<sup>51</sup> This causes the basilar membrane to vibrate and stimulates sensory cells which send nerve impulses to the brain.<sup>52</sup> What is particularly interesting is the apparent neural plasticity of music.

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<sup>51</sup>*Encyclopædia Britannica*, “The Physiology of Hearing” by Joseph E. Hawkins, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/science/ear/The-physiology-of-balance-vestibular-function>.

<sup>52</sup>*Encyclopædia Britannica*, “The Physiology of Hearing”.

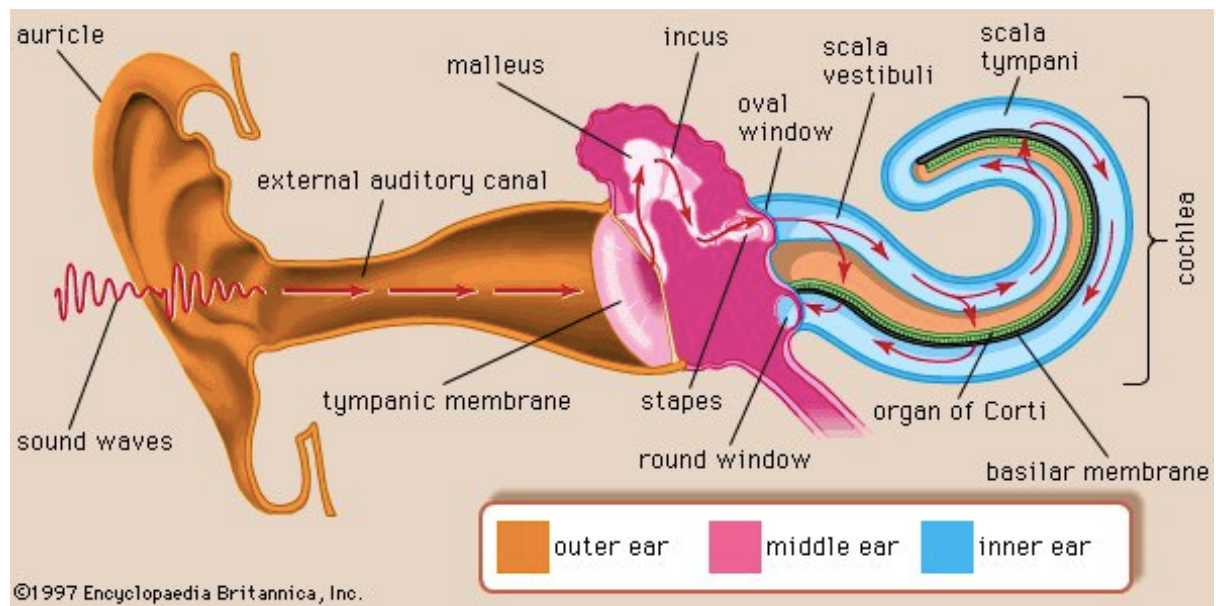


Figure 3: Demonstrates the movement of sound through the ear<sup>53</sup>

Whilst the interaction of a single sound wave can produce auditory acoustic properties, it is the additive nature of multiple sound waves which creates emergent timbres and thus creating music.<sup>54</sup> In order to interpret this, neural imaging has shown that the human brain maps the different acoustical frequencies recognised by the cochlea, via electrical impulses onto differing neural tissue.<sup>55</sup> Music has been shown to activate “multiple cortices (auditory, visual, motor), the cerebellum, emotional, memory and mesolimbic structures.”<sup>56</sup> These activations vary depending on type of music and our interaction with them (eg. performing or listening). This in itself is an interesting finding as it suggests that unlike other stimuli, music can be more effective at provoking a response.

<sup>53</sup>Encyclopædia Britannica, *mechanism of hearing; human ear*, 1997, image, Encyclopædia Britannica, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/science/ear/The-physiology-of-hearing#/media/1/175622/536>.

<sup>54</sup>Stephen Handel, “Timbre Perception and Auditory Object Identification,” in *Hearing*, ed. Brian C.J. Moore (Cambridge: Academic Press, 1995), 425-426.

<sup>55</sup>Samata R. Sharma and David Sibersweig, “Setting the Stage: Neurobiological Effects of Music on the Brain,” *Research Media and Information Exchange: Crossroads of Music and Medicine* 6, (2018):4.

<sup>56</sup>Sharma and Sibersweig, “Setting the Stage,” 4.

Recent studies emphasise the response of the right-hemisphere of the brain to music and that even imagining music can activate areas on this side of the brain.<sup>57</sup> Another significant finding is that high proportions of the brain stimulated by music are located closely to memory or emotional parts of the brain. As such, music can become embedded within memory and evoke emotional response with greater immediacy and effectiveness than almost any other stimulus.<sup>58</sup> In extreme cases, the extent to which music can be ingrained within memory can result in an earworm, “the mental replaying of songs or tunes.”<sup>59</sup>

An individual’s responses to music have been shown to be biologically relevant in relation to feelings of pleasure and reward (see appendix C).<sup>60</sup> These responses are noticeable in all stages of human development and prove that music creates measurable physiological experiences.<sup>61</sup> The relationship between music and brain functionalities highlights that the emotional response of a listener can’t be predicted and thus it is not possible to predict if it will cause the listener harm. This itself is not a highly new phenomenon, with censorship and political manipulation, such as the restrictions placed on Shostakovich by Stalin in soviet Russia, being a prime example of music being recognised as something which can stir emotion and undermine self-control.<sup>62</sup> What is a relatively new concept, is that music doesn’t just change the way someone feels but rather the way in which they think.

Studies have also highlighted discrepancies regarding hearing or rather mishearing. One of the most famous examples of an auditory perception is with that of Laurel and Yanny,

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<sup>57</sup>Michael Trimble and Dale Hesdorffer, “Music and the Brain: The Neuroscience of Music and Musical Appreciation,” *BJPsych. International* 14, No. 2 (2017): 29, doi:10.1192/S2056474000001720.

<sup>58</sup>“Music and the Brain: Scientist Oliver Sacks on Musical Cognition,” filmed May 2009, *The Music Instinct: Science and Song*, 01:14, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/musicinstinct/video/music-and-the-brain/scientist-oliver-sacks-on-musical-cognition/45/>.

<sup>59</sup>Sacks, “The Power of Music,” 2530.

<sup>60</sup>Anne J. Blood and Robert J. Zatorre, “Intensely pleasurable responses to music correlate with activity in brain regions implicated in reward and emotion,” *PNAS* 98, No. 20 (2001): 11818.

<sup>61</sup>Trimble and Hesdorffer, “Music and the Brain,” 29.

<sup>62</sup>Marcel Cobussen and Nanette Nielsen, *Music and Ethics*, (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 14.

Vladimir Ashkenazy, “Music; Making Music in the Shadow of Stalin,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 2003, Accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/arts/music-making-music-in-the-shadow-of-stalin.html>.

with individuals being divided over what they heard. In a study conducted by Pressnitzer et al., they demonstrated that the reasoning for both words being heard was due to a similarity in frequencies of the two words, with high or low pass filters changing the likelihood of the individual hearing one or the other.<sup>63</sup> However, what is of particular interest to this study is not the cause of the ‘Yanny/Laurel’ effect, but rather why certain individuals were affected differently. The study highlighted that perception is not passive but rather relies on unconscious inferences based on past experience.<sup>64</sup> Whilst age was thought to be a factor, others included gender, musicianship, linguistic skills and preceding context.<sup>65</sup> This is a prime example of how cultural factors can have an influence on musical interpretation and hearing and can influence human physiology.



Figure 4: A Musical illusion. The sound pattern in comparison to its common perception through headphones<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> D. Pressnitzer et al., “Auditory Perception: Laurel and Yanny Together at Last,” *Current Biology* 28, (2018): R739.

<sup>64</sup> Pressnitzer et al., “Auditory Perception,” R741.

<sup>65</sup> Pressnitzer et al., “Auditory Perception,” R740.

<sup>66</sup> Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words*, 34.

The effect of environmental factors was also found evident in the tritone paradox, which suggested that an individual's dialect influenced what they heard.<sup>67</sup> In relation to this paradox, Deutsch suggested that “we do not passively analyse incoming sound patterns but rather, we interpret the ambiguous tritones in terms of acquired pitch class template, and our interpretation strongly influences what we perceive.”<sup>68</sup> Such discrepancies in brain organisation are comparable to preferences in the use of the left or right hand.<sup>69</sup> This finding suggests that a person's ability to interpret what they hear can be inhibited biologically as a result of long term exposure to environmental factors and can also help to explain musical listening; the way in which music is interpreted.<sup>70</sup>

These findings make the way in which music is used highly relevant with regards to ethics. According to Cobussen and Neilson, “More than any other art form, music has the potential to invade personal spaces and can be employed in behaviour that could qualify as unethical, torture being the most extreme example.”<sup>71</sup> Suzanne Cusick emphasised this when discussing ideas surrounding “no-touch torture”, stating that “sound can damage human beings, usually without killing us, in a wide variety of ways.”<sup>72</sup> People often refer to the power of music, power being the “strength or the ability to control people and events.”<sup>73</sup> Music certainly has a recognisable coercive power, especially with dynamic rhythms which encourage impulsive responses on large scales.<sup>74</sup> Involuntary foot tapping or crowds clapping together to the beat are some such examples. The profound motor power found within rhythmical patterns in music can have incredible therapeutic prowess and has been shown to stir motor arousal in

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<sup>67</sup> Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words*, 187.

<sup>68</sup> Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words*, 80.

<sup>69</sup> Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words*, 187.

<sup>70</sup> Cobussen and Nielsen, *Music and Ethics*, 11.

<sup>71</sup> Cobussen and Nielsen, *Music and Ethics*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Suzanne Cusick, “Music as Torture/Music as Weapon,” in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, ed. Michael Bull and Les Black (New York: Routledge, 2016), 383.

<sup>73</sup> Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “Power,” accessed February 09, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/power>.

<sup>74</sup> Oliver Sacks, “The Power of Music,” *Brain* 129, No. 10 (2006):2528, <https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awl234>.

a way that more formal medical treatments can't.<sup>75</sup> Alternatively, music can contribute to the development and stimulation of brain activity and therefore its repression or restriction in certain settings could also be deemed as morally questionable.<sup>76</sup> As an inherent part of society, allowing anyone, except the listener, to decide what music they should or shouldn't be exposed to, could be considered unethical as it suggests that the advocate of such behaviour feels the need to alter or restrict the listener's thoughts, behaviours and perceptions.

The nature by which music affects the brain is highly significant from an ethical stance. As individuals, we have little control over music and sound exposure in certain settings. This means that the transformative effects of music occur freely, with little or no consent or control from the listener. It is clear that cultural factors have a significant effect in musical perception due to the way that music interacts with the brain. This has major ethical ramifications given what is known about music's interaction with the brain.

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<sup>75</sup>Sacks, "The Power of Music," 2529.

<sup>76</sup>Cobussen and Nielsen, *Music and Ethics*, 9.



## Music, Marketing and Ethics

Whether we enter a shop, or turn on the television, music is likely to be present. This is because music is recognised by corporations as an incredibly effective marketing tool. The reality of music's prominence in marketing is primarily not related to it as entertainment. Fundamentally, music is used to manipulate purchasing patterns so that consumers develop a relationship with products.<sup>77</sup> This in essence is the purpose of marketing; to advertise something in a way that makes it appear more appealing to the consumer.<sup>78</sup> Marketing itself is not particularly unethical, and it would be wrong to criticise the field. Usually, a consumer is aware of their interaction with the visual presentation of sales techniques. Consumers may choose to ignore or evade such techniques but in doing so, some recognition, however slight, will have been made in order to make such a choice. Unlike marketing aimed at the visual senses, auditory marketing tends to be more subtle and yet is often further reaching. Music has a tendency to function in an ambient way, where conscious engagement is less frequent. Furthermore, its ability to envelop a space means that involuntary and subconscious musical processing can occur so that the intentions of musical marketing reach consumers without them even being aware of it. Given what is understood about the neurological function of music on the brain, it is necessary to explore the various ethical dilemmas which accompany the use of music as a marketing tool.

## Music and Associations

Forming associations and relationships is a healthy part of human development.<sup>79</sup> Our brain processes information in a way which joins facts together to create neurological

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<sup>77</sup> Robert E. Milliman, "Using Background music to Affect the Behaviour of Supermarket Shoppers," *Journal of Marketing* 46, no. 3 (1982):86.

<sup>78</sup> Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong, *Principles of Marketing* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2010) 26.

<sup>79</sup> H. Rudolf Schaffer and Peggy E. Emerson, "The Developments of Social Attachments in Infancy," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 29, no. 3 (1964): 6.

connections.<sup>80</sup> This itself is completely normal and healthy and is effectively how we are able to learn. However, what we connect together and the resultant associations, comes as a result of cultural exposure. As such, two different people can make associations around an object but the association that each of those individuals make could be different. Unlike most other stimuli, associations formed through music can alter thought processing due to the neurological responses caused in multiple cortices. In this way, culture and physiology work together to form lasting associations. It is this understanding that highlights issues surrounding ethics and morality, as a change in the way music is used in cultural settings could alter the neurological connections and associations that are subconsciously formed.

Auditory marketing and associations relate to the ability to recall the relationship between sounds with something else, such as a product, logo or scenario.<sup>81</sup> When these associations are formed, melodic or rhythmic elements of the music, or the thing itself, can become present in our mind at any time when we interact with either part. In this way, adding music to something which a company wishes for you to remember, becomes incredibly effective. Arguably, companies can not forcibly ingrain music or the associate part in your mind, and therefore may suggest that the use of music within a marketing setting is perfectly moral. Acknowledgments such as these could be considered highly irresponsible. They suggest that probability of consequence and social consensus are irrelevant, meaning that corporations have the right to the possibility of changing the way an individual thinks without their opinion. That is not to say that corporations can't use music in a profitable way, but rather that they should not do this at the expense of the consumer. Corporations have a social responsibility to act in the interest of all who could be affected by their actions even if they deem the likelihood of fruition to be slim.

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<sup>80</sup> Rana Ismail, "How Does the Brain learn?" *Qatr an-Nada*, no. 11 (2007): 8.

<sup>81</sup> Aradhna Krishna, Luca Cian and Tatianna Sokolova "The power of sensory marketing in advertising," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 10 (2016): 145.

In instances such as these, it suggests that the transformational power of music is being overlooked. When a particular tune or piece of music and its association become symbiotic, it may be challenging to change one or the other. For example, many people would now associate Phil Collins 'In the Air Tonight' with a drumming gorilla, thanks to highly successful advert campaign by Cadbury.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, you may never have heard of a song called "Young Folks" by Peter Bjorn and John, however you may well recognise it as the Homebase ad music.

These relatively simple examples demonstrate just how interconnected music and memory are, but also highlight that musical intent can be overwritten or undermined when placed in association with something else, as was seen with the use of music in Nazi Germany. Additionally, it suggests that when music becomes symbolic, it is "difficult to change any of the constituent parts without a consequent on its meaning."<sup>83</sup> This means that when an established neurological connection has been made between music and a product, it is incredibly hard to disassociate them.

Music may influence not only an individual's memory but also their actions or physical behaviour. This transformational effect has been measured experimentally, in what is called The Mozart Effect<sup>®</sup>. The experiment exposed different groups of rats to white noise, silence, music by Philip Glass and Mozart's K448 for an extended period of time.<sup>84</sup> The rats were put in a maze and monitored to see how well they navigated it.<sup>85</sup> Rats exposed to Mozart were shown to have improved spatial reasoning and could navigate the maze more effectively, with greater speed and precision than any of the other groups.<sup>86</sup> Whilst the extrapolation of the findings of this test can be debated, and flaws were found with this testing, what is significant

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<sup>82</sup> Jo Caird, "'I was basically told: you are never showing this' – how we made Cadbury's Gorilla ad," *The Guardian*, January 7, 2016, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/2016/jan/07/how-we-made-cadburys-gorilla-ad>.

<sup>83</sup>Derek B. Scott, "The power of Music," in *Power*, ed. by Alan Blackwell and David McKay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 99.

<sup>84</sup>Scott, "The Power of Music," 112.

<sup>85</sup>Scott, "The Power of Music," 112.

<sup>86</sup>Scott, "The Power of Music," 112.

is that a change was observed. In this way, we see that music may have the power to transform both the thoughts and actions of an individual. In relation to marketing, this highlights that music may not only encourage people to create a positive (or negative association) with products but also suggests that music may encourage people to physically behave in a different way.

Such implications could extend into purchase patterns including frequency and time spent in stores. Unlike commercial displays, the auditory associations formed neurologically from instore music are likely to be longer lasting. Additionally, consumers tend to be more aware of visual senses and make more conscious decisions in this regard.<sup>87</sup> This highlights issues regarding ethical responsibility and whether or not corporations that use music in marketing are knowingly using music to encourage these changes. If corporations are aware of these effects, then it suggests some degree of corporate immorality as the corporation is affecting the consumer's unconscious purchasing patterns. If, however, they are acting obliviously, it suggests that corporations should be doing more to understand the effects their marketing strategies may be having on society.

One example of auditory associations which many corporations are aware of is sonic branding. Sonic branding is the sound that is associated with a brand creating a "relationship between the product and its target market in a similar way that a national anthem plays to a country".<sup>88</sup> Over the last 30 years, many significant brand sounds have emerged. Microsoft, Apple, Netflix and even messaging networks have all got their own unique sound which instantly draws your memory to their brand. The simple 5 note whistle produced as the sonic brand for McDonalds is practically unmistakable worldwide.

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<sup>87</sup> Robert Gifford and Cheuk Fan Ng, "The relative contribution of visual and auditory cues to environmental perception," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 2, No. 4 (1982): 275.

<sup>88</sup> Aashish Pahwa, "What Is Sonic Branding? The Psychology Of Sonic Branding," *Feedough The entrepreneurs' guide*, December 6, 2017, accessed March 3, 2021, <https://www.feedough.com/sonic-branding/>.



Figure 5: The 5 note McDonalds jingle

Branding is understood to be “beliefs that form the basis for ideas, [with] those who seek to turn these ideas into tangible brands generating that same belief in others”.<sup>89</sup> To do this, corporations “must at some point offer, either functional or emotional, benefits to stakeholders” to build trust in a consistent deliverable.<sup>90</sup> In this way, adding a short but recognisable sound to a brand makes it unmistakeable to consumers. Once more, the desired corporate values become ingrained in that sound or jingle, meaning that instead of having to re-watch or reinvest time into a marketing advertisement, all that is required is for the consumer to hear the sound to get the same initial reaction. This makes the power contained within music far more effective than visual forms of marketing and emphasises issues regarding moral intensity in relation to concentration of effect, social consensus and temporal immediacy.

There is limited research on the extent to which different sonic brands may have differing effects on individuals. That is because up until recently, the understanding behind why sonic branding was so effective had not been explored. However, a study conducted in 2012 indicated that the number of tones in a sonic brand had a correlation between the value consumers place on products, with very few (three) or numerous (nine) tones being perceived

<sup>89</sup> Daniel Jackson, *Sonic Branding: An Introduction*, ed. Paul Fulberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 96.

<sup>90</sup> Jackson, *Sonic Branding: An Introduction*, 96.

as less valuable.<sup>91</sup> As music itself is complex, future research may be necessary to explore the influence of other properties. However, given what this study highlights and the vast lack of research on the topic, it emphasises a need to consider further the ethical implications of using music in a marketing setting. If the consumer was more conscious of their decision regarding sonic branding, the ethical dilemma would not be present. However, the findings of this research indicate that the identity of the sound can be formulated and manipulated so that stakeholders formulate positive unconscious attachments with brands.

## Music, Advertising and Manipulation

Music can be used ethically in marketing settings, if we consider the model of music's use in community music. In this scenario, the intention and purpose of music is to benefit society. To do this the music used is diverse.<sup>92</sup> It encourages a wide range of people to engage with self-expression or learning.<sup>93</sup> If we assume that a corporation wishing to act ethically would have similar intentions, that is to benefit stakeholders (society), then similar musical goals should be apply. However, if we consider the way in which music is used in a commercial setting, it is clear that a lot of these points are not considered. In fact, the opposite is often done with the intention of corporations being focused on manipulation in order to achieve profitability, rather than allowing the consumer to make an informed decision. One such example is with the elaboration likelihood model (ELM).

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<sup>91</sup> Vijaykumar Krishnan, James Kellaris and Timothy Aurand, "Sonic logos: can sound influence willingness to pay?", *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 21, No. 4 (2012): 279.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Murray and Alexandra Lamont "Community Music and Social/Health Psychology: Linking Theoretical and Practical Concerns," in *Music, Health and Wellbeing*, ed. Raymond MacDonald, Laura Mitchell, and Gunter Kreutz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 78-79.

<sup>93</sup> Murray and Lamont "Community Music and Social/Health Psychology: Linking Theoretical and Practical Concerns," 78-79.

The ELM considers the way in which we process stimuli and the resultant outcomes of that processing.<sup>94</sup> It has indicated that “variations in the nature of persuasion are a function of the likelihood that receivers will engage in elaboration of information relevant to the persuasive issue.”<sup>95</sup> This means that the differing persuasive techniques, in relation to factors such as motivation, ability and opportunity will either lead to high or low involvement processing. The ELM indicates two ways of thinking; central process operating as a result of high involvement or peripheral process operating as a result of low involvement.<sup>96</sup> When an individual uses central processing, the consumer considers carefully and is invested in weighing up their decision. This comes as a result of a strong argument that the consumer feels the need to investigate. The peripheral route, however, is a way for corporations to encourage consumer action based on a direct relationship they have with the message. This could be a familiarity or positive relationship with something. This way of thinking encourages impulsivity in consumers, as instead of considering the positives and negatives, they act first.

Music contributes to a peripheral path of thinking when used in marketing. It is not there to add strength to the product but rather to elicit a behaviour or action change based on a preference to the music. In this way, “music [has] a positive effect for low involvement participants, leading to better brand attitudes than for those participants in a no music condition.”<sup>97</sup> An additional, but just as significant, finding regarding the ELM, is that music hinders central path thinking as data suggests that when “the available cognitive resources for processing an advert are insufficient, the processing will be incomplete and so retention will be hindered.”<sup>98</sup> This is relevant as it suggests that those who weigh up decisions regarding

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<sup>94</sup> Richard E. Petty and Pablo Briñol, “The Elaboration Likelihood Model,” in *The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, ed. Paul A M Van Lange, Arie W Kruglanski and E Tory Higgins, (London: Sage, 2012), 224.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel J. O’Keefe, “Elaboration Likelihood Model,” in *The International Encyclopaedia of Communication*, ed. W. Donsbach (2008), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiece011>.

<sup>96</sup> Petty and Briñol, “The Elaboration Likelihood Model,” 225.

<sup>97</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 22.

<sup>98</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 22.

products in advertisement, don't benefit from music in advertisement, thus meaning that music's primary purpose is to develop feelings of familiarity to persuade those who would otherwise not consider purchasing the product. This is significant as other forms of marketing tend to contribute to both central and peripheral pathway appeal. This demonstrates an unconscious persuasive power with music suggesting that "background music may facilitate retention by maintaining attention and decreasing the number of thoughts that consumers have concerning topics other than the advert and product."<sup>99</sup>

Over extended periods of time, the ELM can contribute to the effect of classical conditioning. Classical conditioning is the development of a response as a result of two linked stimuli.<sup>100</sup> There is limited research relating to classical conditioning in advertising. Whilst some studies challenge the reproducibility of experimental evidence found to support the existence of classical conditioning in advertising, most suggest that through the classical conditioning approach, product preferences can be affected based on our preference to the music we hear.<sup>101</sup> Since the 1980s, corporations have moved away from purely persuading consumers of the benefits of products and instead have focused on consumers' like for the advert itself.<sup>102</sup> This is because by "employing a conditioning-based approach, [...] a product (conditioned stimulus) [could be paired] with a liked piece of music (unconditioned stimulus) [to] produce an association between the two, and therefore a liking for the product (a conditioned response)."<sup>103</sup>

From an ethical perspective, it is important to consider that music is effectively captivating an audience who would otherwise not engage. Whilst this could be considered a

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<sup>99</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 23.

<sup>100</sup> Saul McLeod, "Classical Conditioning," *SimplyPsychology*, 2018, accessed March 6, 2021, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/classical-conditioning.html>.

<sup>101</sup> Elnora W. Stuart, Terence A. Shimp and Randall W. Engle, "Classical Conditioning of Consumer Attitudes: Four Experiments in an Advertising Context," *Journal of Consumer Research* 14, No. 3 (1987):334.

Gerald J. Gorn, "The Effects of Music in Advertising on Choice Behaviour: A Classical Conditioning Approach," *Journal of Marketing* 46, No 1 (1982): 95.

<sup>102</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 20.

<sup>103</sup> North and Hargreaves, *The social and applied Psychology of Music*, 20.



good marketing campaign in a capitalist world, there are several issues with this. As discussed, musical associations become ingrained biologically due to neurological activations that occur closely to memory and emotion structures in the brain. This means that by companies using music to form cultural attachments, the associations formed are stronger than other forms of marketing and thus limit the self-control of consumers to a greater degree. Corporations which recognise the neurological reality that music works with memory can use it culturally to create associations, not just in marketing, but in any social context. This has worrying implications as to individual self-control and wider manipulation and implies that those in power have a right to undermine freedom.

Additionally, consumers are unaware of these subconscious changes which has several ethical ramifications. Firstly, marketing campaigns such as these encourage consumer overspending which may place some consumers in financial hardship. Similarly, music's use in marketing encourages unsustainable societal growth, setting in motion ideas of want over need. This in itself has long term negative social and environmental consequences. Whilst all marketing campaigns do this to some extent, music activates areas of the brain associated with pleasure and reward. This means that when used culturally, in association with something that is being presented as a 'need', music can create overwhelming feelings and may trigger dopamine to be released in the brain.<sup>104</sup> This same chemical can contribute to feelings related to addiction.<sup>105</sup> Studies have not yet shown whether music, dopamine release and addiction are linked. However, given the elicited response of music in relation to dopamine release, it could be considered irresponsible of companies to not consider the implications of its use. Consumers may have more will power regarding spending, if marketing campaigns were more responsibly created.

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<sup>104</sup> Valorie N. Salimpoor et al., "Anatomically distinct dopamine release during anticipation and experience of peak emotion to music," *Nature Neuroscience* 14, no.2 (2011): 260.

<sup>105</sup> Gaetano Di Chiara and Valentina Bassareo, "Reward system and addiction: what dopamine does and doesn't do," *Current Opinion in Pharmacology* 7, no.1 (2007):73.

Finally, there is the issue that consumers are less able to make informed decisions, with their own personal choice being manipulated in favour of corporate profitability. Instead of solely presenting persuasive arguments, marketers are having to use psychological tactics to improve their sales. Thus, suggesting that profitability can be made at the expense of the consumer.

## Music, Perception and Interpretation

Music can be manipulated so that individuals develop certain emotional responses and product associations. However, it is not just resultant thoughts and associations that should be questioned. What is heard can be just as untrustworthy. The human brain is limited in the way in which it can interpret sound, meaning that perceived sound can be different to the actual sound.

Many people are familiar with optical illusions, which is when the visual senses are tricked into seeing something that is different from reality. Similar to optical illusions, musical (or auditory) illusions also exist, as seen with the example of Yanny and Laurel.<sup>106</sup> These illusions can vary from spatial anomalies, such as mislocating sound, pitch, such as continual pitch ascension or descension, or even phantom words, the complete mishearing of words.<sup>107</sup> In 2008, outrage was sparked at Mattel's Cuddle 'n Coos doll which was heard by consumers to say, "Islam is the light."<sup>108</sup> This was not the case but highlights that when listening we are "strongly influenced not only by the sounds that reach us, but also by our knowledge, beliefs, and expectations."<sup>109</sup> Other forms of marketing, such as visual, tend to be far more explicit

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<sup>106</sup> Pressnitzer et al., "Auditory Perception," R741

<sup>107</sup> Dianna Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words: How Music and Speech Unlock Mysteries of the Brain*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2019) 104.

<sup>108</sup> CBC News, "'Islam is the light?' Cuddle 'n Coos dolls spur debate among parents," *CBC*, December 09, 2008, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/islam-is-the-light-cuddle-n-coos-dolls-spur-debate-among-parents-1.762982>.

<sup>109</sup> Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words*, 104.

meaning that it is less open to interpretation. However, auditory illusions and mishearing are far harder to predict due to cultural factors such as knowledge and expectations changing the way that sound and music are neurologically interpreted. Whilst hard to predict, corporations who give no thought to mishearing risk causing unwarranted offence.

Additionally, music often carries extrinsic meanings which can be in the form of lyrics, programme notes, or visual aids. However, given the relationship between music and brain functionalities, such as memory and emotion, it also has intrinsic meanings which are unique to the individual listener. Music can't then be viewed as abstractive as it is tied with inherent and involuntary biological responses. Rimsky-Korsakov and Scriabin, both Russian composers, can be used as examples of people who found dominant intrinsic meaning within music. They claimed that certain musical keys and colours were connected in what was coined synesthetic perception, or 'colour hearing'.<sup>110</sup>

Synaesthesia perception, the variation in consumer auditory perception, means that the use of music in marketing can have both intended and unintended consequences.<sup>111</sup> This means that whilst using music in some marketing settings may appear harmless, it may cause some consumers distress based on their understanding or interpretation of what they are hearing based on a memory invoked biological response. For example, individuals struggling with loss may find certain songs emotionally triggering. Whilst challenging for corporations to predict, it does pose an ethical dilemma to marketers. In this way, marketing teams need to consider and consult a wider range of preferences and target groups in an attempt to avoid such issues. When marketing products, corporations should also be careful to not use music which could be considered inappropriate or harmful. An example of the intentional inappropriate use of music in advertising could include Johnny Cash's "Ring of fire" for Preparation H's

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<sup>110</sup>Kenneth Peacock, "Synesthetic Perception: Alexander Scriabin's Color Hearing," *Music Perception* 2, No. 4 (1985): 483-484.

<sup>111</sup> Julia Simner, "Beyond perception: synaesthesia as a psycholinguistic phenomenon," *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* 11, no.1 (2006): 23.

haemorrhoid ad.<sup>112</sup> Alternatively, the alcohol company Jack Daniels unknowingly used the song “Jane says”, a song based about addiction, in their advert.<sup>113</sup> In both these examples, potential harm can be caused to consumers in relation to age-appropriate content and sensitivity.

These different variations in musical perceptions and interpretations are often as a result of environmental factors, which is incredibly significant in relation to ethics. Unlike associations, which are created through the development of some sort of relationship between a minimum of two things, perceptions are formed based on presented or available information.<sup>114</sup> Corporations who are aware that creating a certain environment can alter consumer perception could use this knowledge to ensure that a consumer’s perception is such that it benefits them. For example, if a company actively supports or even creates fads, they can choose to use music in advertising in a way which creates a positive response to the long-term environmental factors that the company have been contributing to. John Lewis has been able to do this in its Christmas advertising campaigns and has even paved the way for competition in this area.<sup>115</sup> John Lewis, like most retailers, emphasised Christmas through marketing. However, since 2007, the release of their music video style Christmas adverts has given them a reputation which has attracted increased profits and widespread media attention, based on the environment that they have created.<sup>116</sup> As a result, much of the music used in the adverts is now perceived as Christmas music, whilst in reality the music used is not related to the holiday. When used alongside product associations, corporations, such as John Lewis, are

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<sup>112</sup> Alyssa Mertes, “Music in TV Advertisements: 10 Examples of the Best and Worst,” *Quality Logo Products Blog*, January 7, 2021, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.qualitylogoproducts.com/blog/music-tv-advertisements-10-examples-best-worst/>.

<sup>113</sup> Mertes, “Music in TV Advertisements.”

<sup>114</sup> Robert Efron, “What is Perception?” in *Proceedings of the Boston Colloquium for the Philosophy of Science*, ed. R.S. Cohen, M.W. Wartofsky (Dordrecht, Springer, 1969), 137.

<sup>115</sup> Alex Finnis, “John Lewis Christmas advert songs list: Who sang in each of the past years, from Lily Allen to Elton John,” *inews*, November 12, 2020, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://inews.co.uk/culture/television/john-lewis-christmas-advert-songs-list-2020-who-sang-song-lily-allen-elton-john-757654>.

<sup>116</sup> “The secrets of John Lewis’s Christmas success,” *The Chartered Institute of Marketing*, November 30, 2019, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://cim.co.uk/exchange/editorial/the-secrets-of-john-lewiss-christmas-success/>.

able to change the consumer perception of the song (ie. From pop music to Christmas music) which then in turn triggers associations that make it analogous with John Lewis. In other words, the neurological organisation of the consumer is such that their perception preferences the corporation based on the tradition and anticipation the company have created. It is important to note that, in this situation, music is not the cause of the perception change. Rather the consumers perception of the music is being changed to act as a trigger for an associative response. In this way, it could be argued that preference to the music is not based on the music but rather societies influence on what music is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ based on how music is presented. Corporations may be changing our preference to music, for their benefit, simply by presenting it in different ways, so as to alter our perception. It is essential that corporations carefully consider the implications that perception manipulation can have on their consumers when using music in marketing. Lack of consideration could be considered negligent.

## Music, Social Division and Inclusivity

A final consideration for music, ethics and marketing, is that of music in relation to social division and inclusivity. As discussed, music has a considerable amount of power and when used in marketing can manipulate consumers thoughts and ideas. This power, if not carefully managed, can result in the reinforcement of stereotypes and social division.

When designing a marketing campaign, corporations usually focus their efforts on a select target audience. The target audience is a demographic of people to whom the product or service will appear most appealing.<sup>117</sup> Creating a targeted advertising campaign is crucial in ensuring market success. The issue with this is that by focusing on a specific consumer group, corporations are creating implicit societal barriers. A store, such as Superdry or Hollister, may

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<sup>117</sup> Laura Lake, “What Is a Target Audience?” *the balance small business*, November 30, 2019, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/what-is-a-target-audience-2295567>.

emphasise their youthful demographic by playing loud indie music. They create an atmosphere which not only encourages their target group, but actually dissuades all other consumers and this is where ethical issues arise.<sup>118</sup> Instead of encouraging society to mix, this type of marketing emphasises differences. Music is incredibly effective at creating a mood or atmosphere due to its ability to conjure emotion and thus feelings relating to stereotypes tend to be amplified. Acknowledging societal differences and celebrating cultures can be very positive. However, the use of music in continual reinforcement of subconscious segregation can create unhealthy societal divisions. Individuals should never feel like they can't enter a store because it is not "designed" for them. Despite this, cultural hegemony, the institutional framing of social structures achieved through the influencing of values and norms, often means that different areas of society can feel uncomfortable in certain musical environments.<sup>119</sup> By using music instore, corporations are typifying their products to a certain group of consumers. This can encourage hostility between those who feel that the store environment is for them and between those who "shouldn't" be there.

Another issue with this is regarding peer pressure in these environments. It may be that by playing music of a certain style in association with a brand places pressure on consumers to "fit in". For example, if rock music is played in a clothing store, a consumer may feel a subconscious pressure that they should like the music before they buy the clothes because the clothes are designed for those with a certain style which is perceived in relation to the music. Whether or not this is intentional by the corporations, this type of pressure can encourage fad behaviour, or influence impulsivity.<sup>120</sup> Consumers are then more likely to conform to the ideas presented by retailers, out of fear that by not conforming they could become a social outcast.

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<sup>118</sup> Richard Yalch and Eric Spangenberg, "Effects of Store Music on Shopping Behaviour," *The Journal of Consumer Marketing* 7, no.2 (1990): 61.

<sup>119</sup> Nicki Lisa Cole, "What is Cultural Hegemony?" *ThoughtCo*, January 06, 2020, accessed April 02, 2021, <https://www.thoughtco.com/cultural-hegemony-3026121>.

<sup>120</sup> Ludmila Bandeira Lima Barros et al., "Store atmosphere and impulse: a cross-cultural study," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 47, No.8 (2019): 818.

Whilst music is not the only contributor to fad developments, it can be a serious factor which should be considered.

Likewise, music can, and often is, used to reemphasise stereotypes. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that “people choose their music not only for its message sound and/or danceability but also for the ways in which it can bolster their self-image.”<sup>121</sup> In a similar way, corporations can create an image based on their choice of music in advertising. When a corporation chooses music to create an image, they often choose music that reinforces a stereotype. This stereotype can be culture, gender, race or age based. This can be seen in adverts by Dolmio, a pasta sauce company. Whilst not produced in Italy, adverts show an Italian family gathering to eat lasagne. This stereotype is further reinforced by their choice of music. Similar to Dean Martin’s “That’s Amore”, this ad is dominated by accordions, harps and mandolins which create a stereotypically Italian “feel” for audiences. Arguably, reinforcing a stereotype which is seemingly trivial isn’t an issue. However, it demonstrates the extent to which ads can strengthen stereotypes through music. By painting an over exaggerated idea around a group of people, there is a risk of creating an extreme. Furthermore, there is a risk that those who reinforce stereotypes, do it in a way which creates prejudice, encouraging segregation and prejudicial behaviours among consumers.

Elizabeth Blair suggested that “one way music acquires meaning is through its association with and use by culture, meaning that when adopted by marketers and advertisers, the subcultural meanings attached to the music are transformed, preserving its inherent power structure.”<sup>122</sup> This means that cultural understandings of music genres, as well as their intrinsic and extrinsic meanings, stay inherent within whatever setting they end up getting used in. In

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<sup>121</sup> George H. Lewis, “Taste Cultures and Musical Stereotypes: Mirrors of Identity?” *Popular Music and Society* 19, no. 1 (1995): 37.

<sup>122</sup> Basil G. Englis and Greta E. Pennell, ““This Note’s For you\*...:” Negative Effects of the Commercial use of Popular Music,” in *NA – Advances in Consumer Research* 21, eds. Chris T. Allen and Deborah Roedder John (Provo: Association for Consumer Research, 1994), 97.

this way, music has the potential to reinforce negative perceptions. Context should always be considered before using music in adverts. Geico's motorbike insurance ad chose to use music by The Allman Brothers. However, what the company did not know, was that The Allman Brothers both died tragically in a motorbike accident.<sup>123</sup> This demonstrates how actions and events can stay associated with music and how their misuse can be considered insensitive.

This idea expands further to major historical and cultural periods. Music such as opera has a long history of being perceived as for the white aristocracy or the upper classes of society.<sup>124</sup> In contrary, blues and soul have come out of the hardship faced by impoverished black Americans.<sup>125</sup> Whilst such cultural extremes are somewhat less, with opera being publicly funded to encourage inclusivity, and blues and soul reaching all audiences, it is important to consider their cultural history as significant.<sup>126</sup> Unlike other forms of marketing, music often has long and historic cultural routes which often typify key historic moments. As Blair suggested, the cultural associations of the music are still likely to be present, even if it is to a lesser or more subconscious degree. In this way, using music in adverts can create an image around a product based on its cultural heritage. If not carefully done, corporations risk allowing issues regarding race, gender and class to continue, by using music that is influenced by subcultural meanings.

These ideas become even more dangerous when we consider consumer sovereignty, that is "the level of knowledge and sophistication of the target audience of an advertisement."<sup>127</sup> When presenting a mix of both facts and polished advertising, organisations

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<sup>123</sup> Mertes, "Music in TV Advertisements."

<sup>124</sup> Kristen Turner, "Opera In English: Class and Culture in America, 1878-1910," (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Graduate School, 2015), iii.

<sup>125</sup> Stuart L. Goosman, *Group Harmony: The Black Urban Roots of Rhythm & Blues*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 24.

<sup>126</sup> "English National Opera announces strategy for nurturing BAME talent and encouraging a more inclusive opera industry," English National Opera, January 28, 2019, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://eno.org/news/english-national-opera-announces-strategy-for-nurturing-bame-talent-and-encouraging-a-more-inclusive-opera-industry/>.

<sup>127</sup> Saviour L.S. Nwachukwu et al., "Ethics and Social Responsibility in Marketing: An Examination of the Ethical Evaluation of Advertising Strategies," *Journal of Business Research* 39, No.2 (1997): 108.



have to be aware in differences in consumer discernment. Knowledge and sophistication are likely to differ significantly between individuals. This means that ideas that may be presented in jest, may be taken more seriously by some consumers. If this is with regards to issues surrounding stereotyping, there is a serious risk that feelings of segregation will never extinguish and may even grow. In this way corporations have a responsibility to consider the implications of music they use.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the use of music within advertising does raise many ethical issues. Whilst the relationship between music and ethics has been widely considered in relation to the selling of music, very little consideration has been given to its use in advertising, which is of real concern. The use of music in advertising has huge ethical ramifications. Music has an ability to influence human behaviour and thought with little or no consent given by consumers as to how it does this.

Music's ability to create long lasting associations without consumer consent is one of the greatest ethical dilemmas found in this research and has worrying implications for wider society. Firstly, the use of music to ingrain an idea into consumers implies a lack of concern regarding agency and free will. Whether done intentionally, this lack of concern suggests that corporate needs and profitability can be prioritised over individual needs. In other aspects of society, consent of will is considered important and so the suggestion that because it is on a subconscious neurological level, consent is no longer important, seems wrong.

Furthermore, this research highlights that currently the use of music to change the way consumers think, is also deemed acceptable by corporations. Currently, through processes such as classical conditioning and ELM, changing consumer desires and purchase patterns in favour of products is commonplace. Similarly, changing their perception is also deemed acceptable. Not only do corporations in this instance fail to gain consent but they are also inevitably changing the way people act. This has wider implications on societal issues. Firstly, with regards to control, suggesting that it is fine for an individual or organisation with more money or power to control or influence others without their knowledge or permission. This itself is morally wrong. Secondly, with regards to sustainability. Through the influencing power of music, corporations can create a less informed consumer agglomerate, which are led by desires of want over need, thus increasing issues such as debt and resources diminution. The

recognition of emotional response caused by music in association to brands and products means that once such patterns are created within a consumer group, those established feelings are almost impossible to change, meaning that the harm caused by music use in a given scenario can be long lasting.

Music also has a certain ambiguity that corporations can struggle to predict due to consumer perception. Differences in consumer perception mean that harm can be done to consumers who may have negative emotional associations with music. Similarly, musical mishearing can mean that offence can be caused unintentionally. Whilst corporations can do less to address these issues due to the uniqueness and sporadic nature of harm caused, corporations should consider its potential.

Finally, the animosity that can be created due to instore music marketing and advertising is also of concern. The ethical implications of using music in a way which reinforces stereotypes and social division is of great significance. If society hopes for equality, then the allowing of even subtle or unconscious stereotypes to underpin marketing campaigns through music use must stop. Whilst subtle, the potential messages that music has the power to reinforce, could be devastating to progress made thus far regarding equality. Corporations have a responsibility to consider the social division that they could inadvertently be causing.

Given the findings of this research, corporations have a responsibility to consider their use of music and include it in discussions of larger corporate ethics. The ethical implications of using music in advertising shouldn't be considered an afterthought, but instead should be at the forefront of discussions. It is not suggested that corporations avoid using music to increase profitability, but rather that they use music in a transparent and non-manipulative way. By ensuring discussions around music use are had, corporations can decrease the extent to which harm is caused by music misuse and encourage positive change.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Ethical Theories and their flaws

Adapted from theory found in *Ethical Theory and Business*.

Tom L. Beauchamp, Norman E. Bowie and Denis G. Arnold, *Ethical Theory and Business* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2019).

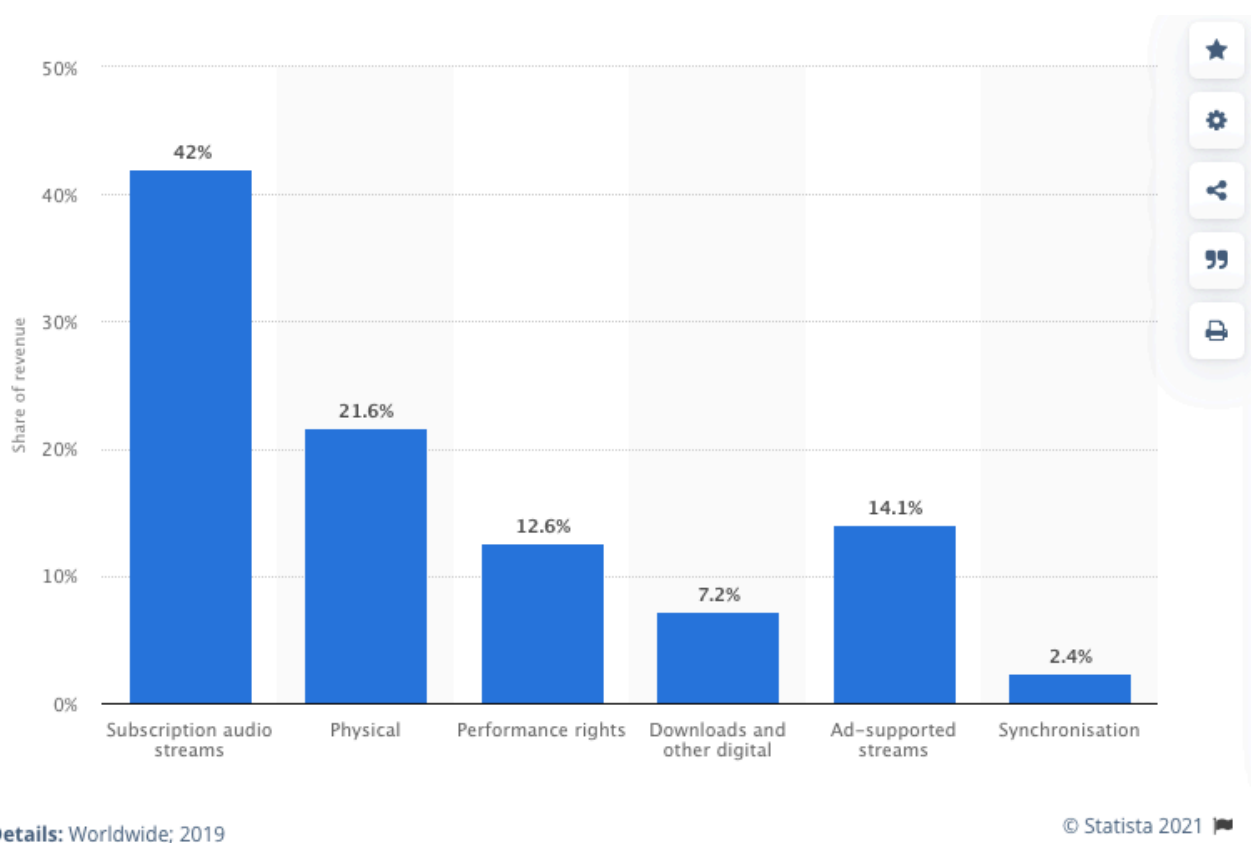
Perspective	Philosopher	theory	flaws
Utilitarian	Jeremy Bentham	Actions should result in benefits for the majority	Suggests the minority are less important
Religious	Multiple authors	Love your neighbour as your self	Suggests that you act in your own best interest. Arguably addicts don't.
Rights theory	John Locke, Alan Gewirth	Natural rights are basic entitlements and should be protected. Level 1 – right to life, body and mental integrity Level 2 – right to avoid deception, freedom of speech Level 3 – right to acquire property	Some individuals have their rights restricted when they break the law. Arguably this isn't morally wrong. Similarly, those who go to war are killing for the greater good.
Justice theory	John Rawls	Never take action that will harm the minority. "veil of ignorance"- what decision would you make if you didn't know your own interest	Does that mean you then sacrifice the majority?
Conservation of resources	Stevan E. Hobfoll	Strive to protect things which are centrally valued	Suggest that it's okay to not value things which are of little value in society
Aristotle	Aristotle – Greek Philosopher	We should be proud of actions. Acquire traits of virtue	Sometimes people are proud of immoral actions eg. Trophy hunters. Alternatively, someone might do the right thing, but not be proud of it eg. Self-defence
Kant	Immanuel Kant	Universal duties to behave ethically. If everyone behaved as you do, would you be happy?	Sometimes it is necessary to do something wrong for the greater good.

## Appendix B

### Share of recorded music industry revenues worldwide in 2019, by segment

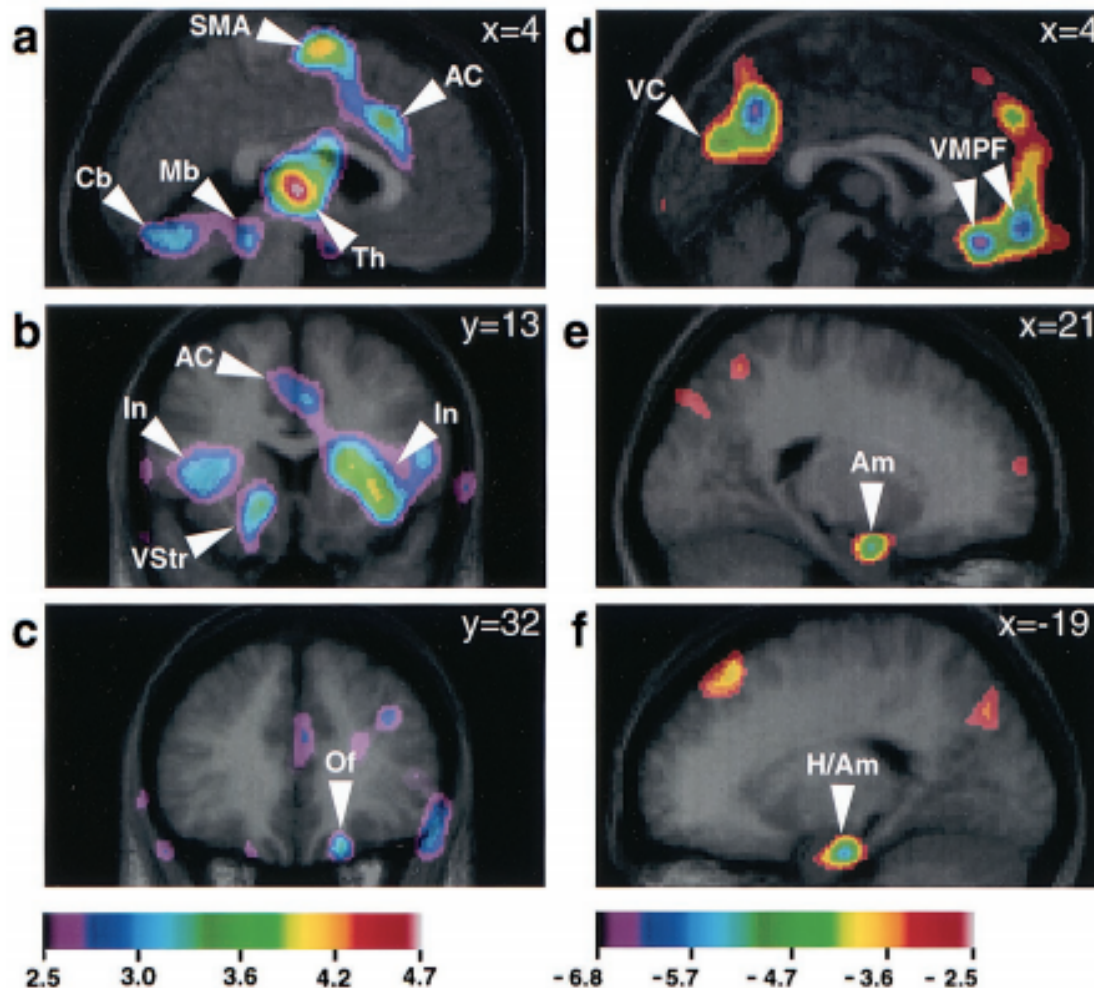
IFPI, “Share of recorded music industry revenues worldwide in 2019 by segment,” chart, May 4, 2020, Statista, Accessed February 08, 2021.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/421012/global-music-industry-revenues-source-share/>.



## Appendix C

Anne J. Blood and Robert J. Zatorre, “Intensely pleasurable responses to music correlate with activity in brain regions implicated in reward and emotion,” *PNAS* 98, No. 20 (2001): 11818 - 11821



A study into the neural mechanisms underlying emotional responses to music. Subjects selected music and any regional cerebral blood flow (rCBF) changes, which caused “chills”, were measured. Increases and decreases in rCBF were noted in areas of the brain relating to reward, motivation, emotion, and arousal, when the intensity of the chills increased. “This finding links music with biologically relevant, survival-related stimuli via their common recruitment of brain circuitry involved in pleasure and reward.” “The t-statistic ranges for each set of images are indicated by colour scales below each column, corresponding to a–c (positive correlations with increasing chills intensity), and d–f (negative correlations). Positive t values denote correlation with increasing ratings of chills intensity; negative t values denote correlation with decreasing ratings of chills intensity.”

Abbreviations: SMA (supplementary motor area), AC (anterior cingulate cortex), Mb (left dorsomedial midbrain), Th (Right thalamus), Cb (bilateral cerebellum), In (bilateral insula), VStr (left ventral striatum), Of (right orbitofrontal cortex), VC (visual cortex), VMPF (ventral medial prefrontal cortex), Am (right amygdala), H/Am (left hippocampus/amygdala).