

# MUSICAL MESSAGING

## ONBRAND HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPACT THAT AUDIO MARKETING CAN HAVE ON RETAIL DESTINATION SHOPPERS

Audio as a medium of communication is a powerful way to reach customers. Whilst many marketing plans will focus on communicating with shoppers through visual mediums such as video and print advertising, many more overlook the influence sound can have on the perceptions and emotions of consumers – whether conscious or unconscious.

Most shoppers will be generally oblivious to the music and announcements that are broadcast throughout shopping centres, so much so that the work that goes into creating the right playlists and scripts for every occasion is often overlooked.

Daniel Graham, managing director of OnBrand Marketing, says that audio or radio marketing is an important tool and used extensively in retail, and that using a central messaging platform, it is possible to target specific shoppers on different days of the week which is critical to retail success and overall commercial property footfall.

“According to an Edison Media Research study done a few years ago, audio marketing has been recognised as a powerful but subtle marketing tool,” says Graham. “It is all encompassing, reaches everyone in the centre, but doesn’t stop people in their tracks.”



**AUDIO MARKETING HAS BEEN RECOGNISED AS A POWERFUL BUT SUBTLE MARKETING TOOL, WHICH IS ALL ENCOMPASSING**



The study found that retailers saw significant returns on using audio media to drive consumers into their stores, and that ‘butterfly shoppers’ who had not predetermined where they will visit proved influenced by this type of media in the moment whilst they were shopping. The ultimate goals of the research were to determine just what level of recognition, retention, and response the shoppers had to targeted advertising via radio



**ABOVE: KERI-ANN READ,  
AUDIO MARKETER  
AT ONBRAND**

marketing, and examine the impact digitally-enhanced, custom-programmed music had on the shoppers’ experience.

“The study results revealed that shoppers were not only aware of messages delivered via radio marketing but in fact demonstrated a high recall rate of those messages,” tells Graham, explaining that the results have been proven by work done during the pandemic.

OnBrand audio marketer Keri-Ann Reid creates bespoke audio scripts and crafted music playlists and audio announcements for the 220 shopping centres that OnBrand looks after across the UK. The work involves providing scripts, music playlists and creating pre-recorded voiceovers for retail outlets covering seasonal activities such as Christmas or Mother’s Day, or upcoming local charity events.

However, when the first Covid-19 lockdown arrived and the needs of the shopper evolved almost overnight, the type of content required changed dramatically. Graham says: “We had to quickly move from preparing for a range of easily predictable seasonal events to having to keep on top of the news agenda and responding almost day by day to the changing rules.”

Reid created over 50 different scripts covering mask wearing, handwashing, social distancing as a pre-recorded package. One challenge was in creating content where differing rules were in place across the UK, so bespoke audio was created for shopping centres in Northern Ireland and Scotland.



ABOVE: DANIEL GRAHAM FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF ONBRAND MARKETING

"Some clients wanted their own bespoke messaging, such as introducing one-way systems or special safety measures for delivery suppliers, so Keri-Ann and the team worked with voice artists to provide all kinds of solutions, as and when they were needed," says Graham, noting that they recorded all scripts in male and female voices and allowed the client to pick the one that they feel best suits their customers.

Graham says that it was more than just announcements that changed during the pandemic, as they recognised a need to make changes, ambient music playlists changed as well. "In general we create playlists for different moods," he explains. "For example we have feel good playlists, summer playlists, Christmas playlists, coffee break playlists – a whole range which are very popular depending on the time of year.

During the pandemic, OnBrand created a 'Covid playlist' using songs like *Don't Stand So Close to Me* and *Every Breath You Take* by The Police, which he says proved quite popular.

However, as destinations recognised that music is known to extend dwell time, many decided to speed up the essential shopping times and

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so stopped playing music altogether in order to encourage shoppers to shorten the time they spent in stores, pick up essentials only, and go home.

Today, life is finally gradually returning to normal and although there is still a need for some Covid-related material in areas like Scotland, for the most part preparations have been devoted to Mother's Day, Easter events and Summer holidays, as before.

Now, Keri-Ann predicts an increase in messages being used to promote seasonal events. "We already have scripts lined up for the Jubilee and a Royalty/Monarchy playlist ready to go and we're staying ahead of the game with newsletters promoting our generic messaging which we will have pre-written for our clients," she says. "There is now a definite increase in our clients using our service following the drop from Covid and we're interacting with them more and will be contacting all of them to see if they need a refresh in their messaging. We are also seeing an increase in the video side of the department. We already run audio to video for CIG Healthcare, and have done some work for LNER in this regard and we think this is a service that will grow."

This month, says Graham, music is being used to extend shopping dwell time again, encouraging the feel-good factor with upbeat playlists, and even creating relaxation zones or introducing unusual soundbites, such as morning birdsong for Kingfisher Shopping Centre in Redditch. OnBrand is also investigating the use of recognisable nature sounds to support The Brewery, Romford, with the destination's series of wild animal murals, Walk on the Wild Side.

"Keri and the audio marketing team played a key role in helping to keep customers and staff safe in shopping centres during a period of constantly changing rules," adds Graham.