

Debbie Harry on aisle three

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By Julian Lee Marketing Reporter
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Debbie Harry, lead singer for the band Blondie.
Photo: AP

They may be soft rock but Blondie, Eurythmics and Natalie Imbruglia could soon be employed in the business of hard sell after researchers found that playing their hits in stores increased customer satisfaction.

Customers thought queues were shorter, customer service better and the store environment better in shops that played music, despite the fact that nothing had changed bar the introduction of music, a study has found.

But the most "outstanding" finding for Graham Chant, who studied the effect music had on sales, was that customers were none the wiser that they were shopping to, among others, Abba's *Dancing Queen*.

"There was no difference [in] the results for people who claimed that they'd heard the music and the people who claimed they had not heard the music," Mr Chant told the Australian Market and Social Research conference in Sydney yesterday.

Researchers interviewed a total of 1700 shoppers over a nine-week period in three stores. Music was subsequently introduced into two and the changes monitored.

Shoppers were asked twice if they had noticed anything different before the researchers told them about the music.

"Yet these people who had said no to all these questions still showed a difference in their behaviour and emotional state, as compared to people who were in stores that

did not have music ... Customers did not have to be consciously aware in order for it to have an effect," he said.

The study also found the desire to hurry out of the store with the minimum of fuss was much higher in stores with music, though this was not necessarily bad, as most people aimed to limit the length of their shopping trips, Mr Chant said. "It was as if the music being there made them want to get on with their business; do the deal and leave."

Mr Chant said his research challenged claims by one seller of in-store music, that shoppers spent more and stayed longer when music played. However, he said it could be argued that customers who left satisfied would return for longer visits.

Retailers have long believed that music affects store ambience but most tend to play bland genres such as easy listening. Mr Chant acknowledged that had heavy metal been tested the outcome might have been different. "There is strong evidence ... to support the view that different genres or tempos have different effects on people. I am not too sure what heavy metal might have done."