

NEVER Alone ON HOLD



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◆ Music does matter ◆

Boomer Callers Take Note of Hold-Music



CINCINNATI, Ohio -- Nearly all of us know what it's like to be put on "musical hold." Call almost any customer service number, and you can expect to hear at least a few bars of insipid elevator music before an operator picks up. The question is: Do you hang up or do you keep holding? That may depend on your gender and what type of music is playing, according to University of Cincinnati professor of marketing James Kellaris.

Kellaris, who has studied the effects of music on consumers for more than 12 years, teamed with Sigma Research Management Group of Cincinnati to evaluate the effects of "hold music" for a company that operates a customer service line. The UC researcher and his colleagues tested four types of on-hold music: light jazz, classical, rock and adult alternative.

Study participants were asked to imagine calling a

customer assistance line and being placed on hold. They were then exposed to "on hold" music via headsets and asked to estimate how long it played.

A summary of what the study discovered about callers on-hold:

- **Hold time seems longer than it is.**
No matter what music was played, the time spent "on hold" was generally overestimated. The actual wait in the study was 6 minutes, but the average estimate was 7 minutes and 6 seconds.
- **Light jazz makes the hold-time seem shorter.**
Time spent on hold seemed slightly shorter when light jazz was played, but the effect of music format differed for men and women. Women reacted more positively to the music than did men. Women also felt the hold-time was shorter during light-jazz hold-music.
- **Classical music produced gender differences.**
Among the males, the wait seemed shortest when classical music was played. Among the females, the wait seemed longest when classical music was played.
- **Rock hit rock-bottom.**
Rock music was the least preferred across both gender groups and produced the longest waiting time estimates. "The rock music's driving beat kind of aggravates people calling a customer assistance line with a problem," said Kellaris. "The more positive the reaction to the music, the shorter the waiting time seemed to be."

Unfortunately for companies operating on-hold lines, men and women have different ideas about what music is

"fun." "The possible solution, Kellaris jokes: "If you're a male, please press one. If you're a female, please press two. If you are in a bad mood, please hang up and try later."

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