

# Loud music can make you drink more, in less time, in a bar

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Commercial venues are very aware of the effects that the environment – in this case, music – can have on in-store traffic flow, sales volumes, product choices, and consumer time spent in the immediate vicinity. A study of the effects of music levels on drinking in a bar setting has found that loud music leads to more drinking in less time.

Results will be published in the October issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* and are currently available at Early View.

"Previous research had shown that fast music can cause fast drinking, and that music versus no music can cause a person to spend more time in a bar," said Nicolas Guéguen, a professor of behavioral sciences at the Université de Bretagne-Sud in France, and corresponding author for the study. "This is the first time that an experimental approach in a real context found the effects of loud music on alcohol consumption."

Researchers discretely visited two bars for three Saturday evenings in a medium-size city located in the west of France. The study subjects, 40 males 18 to 25 years of age, were unaware that they were being observed; only those who ordered a glass of draft beer (25 cl. or 8 oz.) were included. With permission from the bar owners, observers would randomly manipulate the sound levels (either 72 dB, considered normal, or 88 dB, considered high) of the music in the bar (Top 40 songs) before choosing a participant. After the observed participant left the bar, sound levels were again randomly selected and a new participant was chosen.

Results showed that high sound levels led to increased drinking, within a decreased amount of time.

Guéguen and his colleagues offered two hypotheses for why this may have occurred. "One, in agreement with previous research on music, food and drink, high sound levels may have caused higher arousal, which led the subjects to drink faster and to order more drinks," said Guéguen. "Two, loud music may have had a negative effect on social interaction in the bar, so that patrons drank more because they talked less."

In France, observed Guéguen, more than 70,000 persons per year die because of chronic alcohol consumption, and alcohol is associated with the majority of fatal car accidents. "We have shown that environmental music played in a bar is associated with an increase in drinking," he said. "We need to encourage bar owners to play music at more of a moderate level ... and make consumers aware that loud music can influence their alcohol consumption."

Source: Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research

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