

# **Typology of Music in Advertising**

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*Music in advertisement is influential and can be emotionally appealing, and it has become a common element and a crucial feature. The choice of which type of music used is a conscious and creative decision that needs to be strategic. While previous studies on music in advertisements have focused on popular songs, this study attempts to extend this research with a focus on the originality of the music and the level of interaction. A content analysis of UK Christmas advertisement and US Super Bowl advertisements was carried. The study introduced a new typology of music in advertisements, making a theoretical contribution by extending previous works on music in advertising. It further offers insight for current practices of the use of music, creative strategies with regards to the selection and integration of music.*

## **Introduction**

Music in advertising is influential and can be emotionally appealing (Mogaji, 2018). It has become a common element and a crucial feature in advertisements (Alpert, et al., 2005), whether as foreground or background music. Advertisers use it in various ways to appeal to consumer emotions: making consumers smile, laugh, cry and feel nostalgic (Allan, 2006). The choice of which type of music used is a conscious and creative decision that needs to be strategic. Music for advertisements could be popular songs (including original version), stock songs that are pre-recorded (like with stock images) or customised jingles (specifically written and produced for a specific advertisement) (Taylor, 2015). Popular songs can be expensive to use, but consumers can associate with it. Conversely, stock songs may not be easily adapted and customised — the use can be limited even though quite affordable. Additionally, while customised music provides freedom and creates an association with the brand, it may not prove to be very popular with consumers. However, it is authentic, unique and can be more affordable, depending on the producer or the singer.

While acknowledging that music in advertising is a narrow topic of research (Taylor, 2015), this study attempts to extend the research on the use of music in advertisements that not just limited to popular music but a holistic overview of music in advertising and considering the characters' involvement in the music. As seen with the iconic Michael Jackson, Pepsi advert where he was involved in the advert, his music was not just used but also his personality. Likewise, Cadbury's commercial featured a gorilla playing the famous drum sequence from

Phil Collins' hit "I Can Feel It". The involvement of the characters offers a different level of endearment which has not been previously considered. This aligns with previous ideas that suggest that music can be engaging (Huron, 1989), maybe not just for the audience watching it and singing along but also for the characters in the advertisement as this encourages viewers to watch and listen to the advertisement in a different way (Dunbar, 1990). It was found that the music was not just used as a background feature but became part of the advertisements — evoking emotions and a sense of excitement. Based on the conceptual arguments advanced in this article, we used a qualitative classification strategy and content analysis involving the identification of cases (Bailey, 1994) to appropriately place music in advertising into quadrants of the typology advanced in this article. This study offers insight for current practises of the use of music, creative strategies with regards to the selection and integration of music and the effectiveness of these executional cues to engage with the audience, appeal to their emotion and lead to a positive attitude.

## **Literature Review**

Music is one of the most highly utilised executional cues in advertising (Yalch, 1991). Selecting appropriate music can contribute to the effectiveness of an advertisement merely by making it more attractive and entertaining (Huron, 1989). Consumers are known to favour products that elicit some degree of recognition or familiarity, and music can be used to reinforce this memorability. Craton and Lantos (2011) introduced the attitude to advertisement music — the Aam construct which describes how consumers respond to advertisement music. This is a predisposition that can be considered favourable or unfavourable when consumers are exposed to music in advertisements. This is what the consumer perceives, thinks and feels when they listen to music in an advertisement — that is, how the consumer consciously experiences the music (Craton, et al., 2017). Using popular song has often been used to enhance the Aam; it increases the memorability of a product or the product's name (Huron, 1989; Alpert, et al.,

2005) as the effects of such popular songs linger on in the consumers' minds. Popular music is considered the most used. This is "well-liked and well-favoured" music (Middleton, 1990), listened to by "ordinary people" (Shuker, 1994) and has broad exposure and appeal, but usually only for a fixed period (Allan, 2006). It has been used extensively to get the attention of the young demography (Shea, 2004) as it is involving, engaging and can persuade the potential consumer to purchase the advertised product or service (Allan, 2006). Chou & Lien (2014) noted that it could be used to evoke consumer nostalgia in response to TV commercials. Content analysis of music in Super Bowl commercials revealed that popular music was used in more than a quarter of the commercials analysed (Allan & Tryce, 2016).

Most research on music in advertising shows that popular music is most often considered. Allan (2006) highlighted three typologies based on popular music: advertising using original popular music vocals; altered popular music vocals; and original popular music instrumentals. However, it is important to note that there are many other forms of music relevant to advertisements, which highlights further gaps in knowledge that need to be explored. Roehm (2001) identified the prospects of using unfamiliar song and instrumentals, suggesting that vocal versions of a different song can be very useful. Furthermore, instrumentals can be more effective in evoking the advertising message recall if the song is already familiar. Likewise, there are also jingles that are "catchy songs about a product or service that usually carry the advertising theme and a simple message" (Belch & Belch, 2015, p. 325). These are not popular songs but customised songs specifically for the advertisement. Though its use has declined over the last few decades, some advertisers still consider the relevant for their campaign (Taylor, 2015).

The full scope of music in advertisements has not been explored outside the genre of popular music, though its value and importance are recognised and acknowledged. It is essential to consider other forms of music as overcoming the media clusters is of utmost importance to

marketers. Perhaps different types of music are being used beyond popular music. Based on the preceding literature review, we advance a model of music in advertising that combines the features of popular music with original music and the characters' level of involvement. Literature reviews indicate that popular songs have been used predominantly as the only sources of music for advertisements. In another dimension, the involvement of actors in advertisements has not been fully explored. This present study aims to provide an answer to questions around the types of music being used in advertisements with the anticipation of identifying other types outside the popular music genre.

## **Methodology**

The research methodology used for this study is content analysis. This was the same method adopted by Allan & Tryce (2016) for analysing popular music used in Super Bowl commercials. Christmas advertisements in the UK for 2017 were selected while Super Bowl advertisements in the USA for 2018 were selected. Advertisements within these periods are considered as the most prestige as brands owners want to use such occasions to showcase their offering to a broader audience. Christmas advertising is ingrained in UK culture as brands owners launch their official adverts in early November to appeal to their customers during that festive period (Mogaji, 2018) while the Super Bowl is the most watched TV show in America (Bond, 2015). It is considered one of the biggest holidays for football fans and some treat it like Christmas (Rosenberg, 2018). Commercials during the game have gained in popularity, and advertisers use it to introduce new products or campaigns (Allan & Tryce, 2016). 14 Christmas advertisements in the UK and 54 advertisements shown during Super Bowl 2018 (available at [https://www.adsoftheworld.com/collection/2018\\_super\\_bowl\\_commercials](https://www.adsoftheworld.com/collection/2018_super_bowl_commercials)) were selected for analysis. To guarantee the objectivity and reliability of the results, two individuals, independent of each other, served as the coders. They were not involved in the research and were not familiar with the design of the study or its purposes. The researcher was

not involved in the content analyses. The coders were trained for 8 hours and used the ten 2016 UK Christmas advertisements and fifteen 2017 Super Bowl advert to test the coefficient of reliability. After the initial coding, the intercoder's reliability was between 0.50 and 0.95, which indicates that there was no agreement between both coders. Subsequently, the author was involved in resolving any issues. It was discovered that the version leads to high disagreement. Individual knowledge about music was considered a cause of this low coefficient. Some songs that were deemed to be original by a coder were found to be cover vocals. The disagreement was solved by researching more about the songs to know the original artist.

In some cases, there were doubts about the music information, so secondary research on websites such as <https://www.adsoftheworld.com>, <https://www.tvadsongs.uk/>, <https://www.tvadmusic.co.uk/> and <http://www.sounds-familiar.info> was carried out to verify some of the data, especially with a number of the Super Bowl adverts. There was further discussion among the team, with any differences discussed and collectively resolved by the author. The intercoder's reliability was rechecked and was between 0.94 and 0.98, and the adjusted scores were analysed. Four typologies of music were discovered as presented in the results section. Coders were able to review the advertisements and classified their music into one of the four quadrants of the typology. The variables developed by Allan & Tryce (2016) for their content analysis of Super Bowl advertisements were adopted for this study. Each advert was coded based on: The country (US or UK), presence of music (yes or no), prominence (background or foreground) version (original vocal, original instrumental, cover vocal or altered vocal), characters shown performing, product relevance (song lyrics relevant to the product) and narrative relevance (song lyrics pertinent to the narrative in the ad).

## Results

With the introduction of involvement in advertisement music and the popularity of popular songs in advertisements, a typology of music in advertisements is presented. The typology recognises the importance of popular songs but also highlights the emerging trends of original and customised songs (Taylor, 2015). The typology, presented in Table 1 and the subsequent section was based on the precise composition of the music. In other words, it has been explicitly composed for an advertisement. Often, in the credit list of the advertisements, this information is presented.

## Typology

### *High Involving Popular Music.*

The audience knows these songs already as it has received huge airplay. This could also be a remixed version sang by another musician or one which Allan (2006) described as “original popular music instrumentals”. These are all still derivatives of popular music. Also, characters sing, dance or engage in activities that align with the song being played. An example from the Super Bowl is the NFL advertisement where players (Manning and Beckham Jr.) were practising passing routes and recreated the iconic dance scene from the 1987 hit movie Dirty Dancing to the theme song (I've Had) the Time of My Life sung by Bill Medley and Jennifer Warnes. This is an incredibly popular song but was not just used as a background song as the main characters were involved in the advertisement.

### *Low Involving Popular Music*

These are popular songs — people know the tune and are familiar with the lyrics. However, the difference is that there is less engagement with the song. There is no much congruency and infusion between the songs as well as the character in the advert. Often, this can be background music. As it is popular, to begin with, it can arouse a positive emotion towards the advert, but because it is less involving, it can also discourage the audience. However, this

can also be seen as suitable for some types of products whereby the message of the advertisements needs to be more emphatic, and the background music can complement the message. Brands were using popular songs but not in congruency with the character's involvement. Often, this type of music is used without a voiceover.

#### *High Involving Customised Music*

These are customised songs, specifically created for the advertisements. The lyrics are used to communicate messages which offer advertisers the opportunity for both logical, factual and emotionally appealing advertisements (Huron, 1989). Even though they are customised, they are still engaging. Characters in the advertisements engage with the song, as they dance and sing along. Sainsbury's 2017 Christmas advert in the UK was centred around an upbeat, festive song written by lyricist Ben "Doc Brown" Smith and was composed by Mikis Michaelides (Sainsbury's, 2018). The song was specifically commissioned for the campaign which features members of the public and Sainsbury's colleagues singing about the things that help them to live well at Christmas time. This type of music for advertisements can be expensive as the songs are customised, especially if it involves professional songwriters, producers or artists.

#### *Low Involving Customised Music*

These appear to be the most common and easy option for using music in advertisements. They are customised songs, but may not be as engaging or involving as others. This is because they are often used background music. This can often be from two sources. Firstly, music is commissioned for the advertisement. Secondly, the music could also be a form of stock music. This is "pre-recorded music that can be rented or bought" (Russell & Lane, 1999, p. 549). The Jeep Jurassic advertisement used the theme song from Jurassic Park composed by John Williams. Bud Light's Bud Knight ad used a commercial song from the



Sound Lounge. This song was produced specifically for the commercial, and it has not been made available to purchase or download.

**Table 1 about here**

## **Discussion**

This study has attempted to explore music in advertisements qualitatively and highlighted the level of involvement of the characters in advertisement music — the way characters are dance, sing and engage in various activities in congruency with the music. This level of engagement has not been previously explored, and this study is making a contributing to a better understanding of music in advertisements. The study makes a theoretical contribution by extending previous works on music in advertising, in particular, the typologies of Allan (2006), and incorporate the characters involvement dimension to create typology. The typologies of Allan (2006) and Allan & Tryce (2016) did not recognise the relative nature of describing popular music and the possibilities of customised music for advertisements. This study argues that there is more to music in advertisements than just popular songs whether as original, cover vocal or instrumental. This study has used existing advertisements from television and seasonal scheduling to provide a qualitative description and analysis of music in advertisements, moving beyond popular music and further exploring customised songs for advertisements and the characters' level of involvement with the music.

The implication of these studies is relevant for advertising practitioners with regards to the choice of music for their advertisements. Firstly, choosing a popular song and getting the artist involved in the advert could be very good as seen with Tom Jones' *Things go better with Coca-Cola*, Michael Jackson's *New Generation*, and David Bowie & Tina Turner's *Creation* for Pepsi highlight the possibilities of involving characters in the advertisement. Also, familiarity is considered an essential element in advertising (Krishna, et al., 2016), justifying the use of

popular music or possible commission of a famous artist to sing about the product. However, the cost implication of using a popular song should be acknowledged, suggesting why customised or stock music may be advisable. However, a better option could be using the music from an upcoming artist. Secondly, there are considerable benefits to using music from an upcoming artist. 1) It can be seen as customised and unique because it has not received much publicity or airplay. 2) This lack of awareness gives the advertisements an opportunity to break through the media clusters as this is something that was not previously very popular and not everyone has heard it before. 3) It can be considerably more affordable than using a more popular song from an established artist or customising a song. Also, the upcoming artist feels appreciated and supported in their career. 4) This could lead to a co-creation and increase the equity of the brand as the artist will be willing to be associated with the advert and share among their contacts. With customised music, there is a sense of uniqueness to the advertisements and with the possibilities of breaking through media clusters. Copies of the song can also be sold or given away as a download, leading to more engagement and co-creation of values. It can be considered worthwhile because it is unique and can be specifically customised to meet the style of the advertisements the art director has the liberty to direct the song as seen fit. Likewise, this type of music can be used to break clusters in a global market. Global brand owners can commission local artists to develop songs they can use in their advertisement, and local audiences can perform different dance steps to the music.

Customised music can be a worthwhile investment in production. With the right music producer and art director, they can work together to ensure that the music aligns with the main idea of the advertisement. Often the brand owner will have full rights to the music and can control how it is shared. It can become the brand's identity and for sensory marketing (Craton, et al., 2017). However, the cost implications of this arrangement should not be ignored as it may be seen as more expensive. Stock music, on the other hand, is considered a cheaper

alternative when in need of customised music for an advertisement. It is, however, relatively less involving but it may not offer the creative liberty to align with the message of the advertisement. It could also be bought by many other people who may be interested in using it for their advertisements; thereby, the music may no longer be unique for a particular advert. Legal issues with royalties and rights may also be an issue to consider when using stock music.

## **Conclusion**

This typology is intended as an organising framework to help marketers understand and decide on music type to adapt. It extends knowledge around the structural elements of music in the surrounding context of an advertisement and its interaction with the consumer. As Taylor (2015) suggested that more research on customised music in forms of jingles would be a welcome as this type of music is poised to stage a comeback, this study further makes theoretical contrition with the aim of filling this gap in knowledge and helping other researchers develop hypotheses for future research. It is also important to highlight the idea that perhaps some songs may be deemed too solemn to warrant engagement by the characters. A limited number of advertisements have been used to present these typologies. However, as Vega & Kidwell, (2007) suggested, such preliminary data needs to be substantiated with a larger sample and the use of quantitative techniques such as cluster analysis. The fact that the limited advertisements were from the UK and the US can also be considered a limitation to better integration of this typology as advertisements from other regions may have inherent structural meaning and strategy which is not captured in this typology. It also highlights implications for global brands as they may be challenged in selecting a suitable song for their advertising campaign as popular music might not be able to convey the intended message and the location of the audience is taken into context. Ultimately, not in all cases will a popular song be relevant and corresponding to the brand and marketing message.

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		Involvement	
		High	Low
Composition	Popular	<p>High Involving Popular Music</p> <p>Popular music, being recorded by an artist and in the public domain. This could also include remixed versions.</p> <p>Characters in advertisements are involved — dancing, singing along.</p> <p>Examples: Celebrations to Come (NFL), This is Getting Old (E-Trade), Doritos Blaze vs. Mtn Dew Ice (Mountain Dew)</p>	<p>Low Involving Popular Music</p> <p>Popular music but with little or no engagement from the characters.</p> <p>The characters often have their narratives and the music offers a passive background effect.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Long Live the King</i> (Lexus), <i>Good Odds</i> (Toyota), <i>Moz The Monster</i> (John Lewis)</p>
	Customised	<p>High Involving Customised Music</p> <p>Music is specifically produced for the advertisement. Often may not be available for general sales or download. Unique for the advertisement.</p> <p>Characters in the advertisements also engage by singing and dancing along. The name of the brand could be included in the lyrics.</p> <p>Examples: <i>Every Bit of Christmas</i> (Sainsbury's), <i>Geoffrey The Part-Time Reindeer</i> (Toys 'R' Us)</p>	<p>Low Involving Customised Music</p> <p>Music is specifically produced for the advertisement. This can also include Stock/pre-recorded music.</p> <p>There is little or no engagement. Often used as a background effect with voiceover and characters in different scenes.</p> <p>Examples: The Wonder of Us (Coca-Cola) Bud Knight (Bud Light), Paddington &amp; The Christmas Visitor (M&amp;S)</p>

Table 1: Typology of Music in Advertising