

**BRAND PLACEMENT IN MUSIC VIDEOS.
THE EFFECT OF BRAND PROMINENCE AND ARTIST CONNECTEDNESS ON
BRAND RECALL AND BRAND ATTITUDE.**

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a 2 by 2 between subjects factorial design to investigate the impact of brand prominence and artist connectedness on brand placement effectiveness in music videos. The results show that brand prominence has a positive effect on brand recall, regardless of the respondents' connectedness to the artist. Furthermore, when respondents do not identify themselves with the artist, brand prominence does not influence brand attitude, but when respondents identify themselves with the artist in the music video, the attitude toward the music video is higher for prominent than for subtle brands.

INTRODUCTION

Today, consumers are overwhelmed by an increasing amount of commercial messages. To break through this advertising clutter, advertisers are forced to search for alternative ways of advertising in order to capture consumers' attention. One of these alternative advertising forms is brand placement. Brand placement, also called product placement, can be defined as "*the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers through audio and/or visual means within mass media programs*" (Balasubramanian, Karrh & Patwardhan, 2006, p.115). In the last few years, brand placement has become increasingly popular (Lowrey, Shrum & McCarty, 2005). Although it was originally used in films and television programs to lower the production costs, brand placements now frequently appear in novels (Brennan, 2008), videogames (Nelson, 2002), newspapers and magazines (La Ferle & Edwards, 2006), and music videos (Plambeck, 2010) as well. Also, academic interest in the effectiveness of brand placement has increased remarkably (e.g., Cowley & Barron, 2008; Russell & Stern, 2006; Balasubramanian et al., 2006; Russell, 2002). Numerous researchers have studied the impact of brand integration in various media, but a medium that has been largely neglected in brand placement studies is the music video (for an exception, see Schemer, Matthes, Wirth & Textor, 2008).

The music industry has become huge and music videos are an important aspect of this industry. As a large (and young) audience can be reached through these videos (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Newell, Salmon & Chang 2006), it is no wonder brand placement has become a common and popular practice in music videos. Moreover, the paid inclusion of brands in music videos can reduce the production costs of a video by 25 to 50% (Chang, 2003). However, as most studies focus on the impact of brand placement in movies and television shows (Bressoud, Lehu & Russell, 2010; van Reijmersdal, 2009; van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2007), research on the effectiveness of brand placement in music videos is limited. This study, therefore, investigates the impact of brand placements in music videos on brand recall and attitude.

The effectiveness of brand placements depend on how brands are integrated within media content. Previous brand placement research, for instance, shows that the prominence of the integrated brand influences both brand recall and brand attitudes (Gupta & Lord, 1998; Lee & Faber, 2007; Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Prominent brand placements are more likely to be recognized, but also lead to more negative attitudes than subtle placements (Brennan & Babin, 2004). Since these effects have not yet been investigated in a music video context before, the present study investigates the effect of brand prominence on both brand recall and brand attitude.

In addition, based on the Balance Model of Russell and Stern (2006), the effectiveness of placing brands in media content can be influenced by the degree to which consumers align their brand attitude with those of the characters in a movie or show. This process is driven by consumers' emotional involvement or identification with the main characters, or in music videos, the artist. Previous research examined the impact of brand placement and brand-character associations on brand attitudes in television comedies (Russell & Stern, 2006). However, these authors indicated the need to extend the influence of brand-character associations to other media vehicles. Since in music videos, the artist plays a crucial role, the impact of artist connectedness on brand recall and brand attitude will be investigated.

The combined examination of both variables, brand prominence and artist connectedness, allows us to investigate the potential moderating impact of artist connectedness on the persuasive effects of brand prominence in the context of music videos. A 2 by 2 between subjects experimental design in which brand prominence (prominent versus subtle) was manipulated and artist connectedness was measured, was used to examine the proposed research questions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Brand prominence and artist connectedness

This study examines an important dimension of brand placement, namely brand prominence. Brand prominence is the way in which the brand placement is integrated in the media content, in terms of drawing the viewers' attention (Gupta & Lord, 1998). Imbedding brand placements in media content can be done in two different ways, namely subtly or prominently. Subtle placements draw less attention because they are less integrated in the storyline and mostly appear in the background. Prominent placements, on the other hand, are very visible due to the size of the brand, its central position on the screen and the active role it plays in the storyline (Morrison et al., 2002). As previous studies on brand placement in a movie or serial context show that brand prominence affect both brand recall and brand attitude, we assume similar effects of brand prominence on recall and attitude in the context of music videos. Furthermore, we expect the impact of brand prominence on the effectiveness of brand placement to be moderated by the viewers' connectedness to the artist in the music video. Personal connectedness appears when the viewer feels strongly associated with the main character/artist (Russell & Puto, 1999). In music videos, the artist is the central character with whom viewers may be strongly or weakly connected on a parasocial level (Karr, 1998). Based on the Balance Model of brand placement (Russell & Stern, 2006), we expect the level of artist connectedness to influence the effectiveness of brand placements within the context of a music video.

Brand recall

Previous studies showed that prominent placements indeed draw more attention to the placed brand and therefore lead to higher recall and recognition than subtle placements. These results have been found for brand placements in movies (Babin & Carder, 1996; Gupta & Lord, 1998), tv programs (Law & Braun, 2000) and even in computer games and advergames (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Chaney, Lin & Chaney, 2004; Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Hence, we expect that this positive effect of brand prominence on brand recall will also occur for brands placed in music videos. However, when an individual feels strongly connected to the artist in the video clip, he/she may be mainly focused on the artist and not notice the placed brand. In other words, the attention devoted to the music video might be divided between the artist and the brand, leading to the following hypothesis:

H1: For individuals with a low artist connection in a music video, prominent brand placements lead to higher brand recall than subtle brand placements. For individuals with a high artist connection in a music video, this effect of prominence is apparent, but less strong.

Brand attitude

Brand prominence can affect viewers' attitude towards the placed brand. Traditional brand placement research assumes that, since consumers are strongly involved with media content and have a positive attitude towards this content, the effect of brand placements on brand attitude will pass through by an unconscious transfer mechanism where the attitude towards the media content is transferred to the integrated brand (Baker, 1999). Assimilation effects (Balasubramanian et al., 2006; McCarthy, 2004), biased processing (Forgas, 1995) and the lack of persuasion knowledge (i.e., the personal knowledge that consumers develop about marketers' motives and tactics and which helps them to identify how, when and why marketers are trying to influence them, Friestad & Wright, 1994, 1995; McCarthy, 2004) can explain these carry-over effects of context on brand attitude. In movies, Russell (1998) suggests that these carry-over effects between context and brand have more chance to occur when a brand is placed subtly than when it is placed prominently, since the persuasion knowledge mechanism is expected to be higher for prominent than for subtle brands (e.g., Campbell & Kirmani, 2000; Ye & Raaij, 1997).

In music videos, we expect persuasion knowledge to be less activated than in movies and tv programs, because viewers do not expect brand placements to occur (Panic & Cauberghe, 2010). According to Wright (1974), persuasion knowledge has to be learned and the defense mechanism it evokes is mainly activated when the consumer expects certain persuasive messages, which is not the case when watching music videos. Related to the transfer of media content attitude to brand attitude, Russel and Stern (2006) found that the artist's attitude towards the brand in the movie or show can be transferred to the consumer and consequently, influence his/her attitude towards the brand. In particular, the more the viewer feels connected to the character/artist, the more the character/artist associations will be transferred to the related brand. Davis and Rusbult (2001) tested the Balance Model for artists and concluded that artists with whom viewers have a strong parasocial relationship can support the adjustment of consumers' attitudes towards brands. So, because viewers look up to the artist, they tend to identify with the artist and approve them as models of accurate product decisions (Russell & Puto, 1999). For these individuals, prominently placed brands will activate the brand associations, that subsequently will be positively influenced by the artist connectedness. For individuals who are not connected to the artist, the positive transfer mechanism from the artist to the brand will be less apparent, regardless of level of brand prominence. Hence, we expect that:

H2: For individuals with a high artist connection, prominent brand placements lead to a higher brand attitude than subtle brand placements. For individuals with a low artist connection, brand prominence has no influence on brand attitude.

METHOD

Design and Procedure

To test the impact of brand prominence and artist connectedness on brand recall and attitude, we conducted a 2 (prominence: prominent vs. subtle) x 2 (artist connectedness: low vs. high) between subjects experimental design. Each respondent first looked at one music video in which a brand was placed either prominent or subtle and then indicated to what extent he/she recalled the placed brand, the attitude towards that brand and completed some other measures.

Stimuli

Existing music videos were used. The selection of these videos was based on the appearance of the brand within the music video, either prominently (in the foreground, big in size,...) or subtly (in the background, small in size,...). To increase external validity, we included eight music videos in the study; four in which the brand is placed prominently (Black Eyed Peas-My humps (Louis Vuitton); Taio Cruz-Dynamite (BMW); Mike Poser-Cooler than me (Nokia); and Jennifer Lopez-Jenny from the block (Evian)) and four in which the brand is placed subtly (Lady Gaga-Poker Face (Bwin.com); Ashanti-baby (Mercedes); Pussy Cat Dolls-When I grow up (Mercedes), Usherfeat. Pitbull DJ-Got UsFallin' In Love (Nike)).

Measures

Artist connectedness is measured with five items ($\alpha = .867$) based on the identification scale of Van Looy, Courtois, De Vocht and De Marez (2012) (e.g., “*I would like to be more like the artist in the music video clip*”). After measuring artist connectedness and averaging the items, a median split divided the respondents to be either part of the low artist connectedness condition versus the high artist connectedness condition. Perceived prominence is measured with a self-constructed five-item scale ($\alpha = .900$, e.g., “*the brand was prominently placed*”). Brand recall is measured with one item: “*Which brand appeared in the music video clip*”? The answers of the respondents were recoded into either correct or incorrect. Brand knowledge is measured by a five-item scale ($\alpha = .899$, Roehm & Sternthal, 2001). Finally, music liking is measured with a self-constructed three-item scale ($\alpha = .952$, e.g., “*I liked the music in this music video*”).

Participants

A non-random sample of 143 Flemish participants (70% women, 30% men, proportionally spread over conditions) participated in this study. Ages ranged from 19 years to 28 years ($M_{age} = 23.47$, $SD = 1.59$). This sample is suitable since music video clips are mostly developed to target youngsters. An online questionnaire was used to gather the data.

RESULTS

Manipulation check

Brands that are placed prominently ($M = 3.85$) score higher on perceived prominence than brands that are placed subtly ($M = 1.97$) ($F(1,130) = 214.98$, $p < .001$). There is no main effect of artist connectedness ($F(1, 130) = .031$, $p = .861$) nor is there an interaction effect between artist connectedness and prominence ($F(1,130) = 2.75$, $p = .099$) on perceived prominence.

Brand recall

While prominently placed brands (63.4%) are better recalled than subtly placed brands (36.6%, $Chi^2(1) = 19.78$, $p < .001$), artist connectedness does not significantly influence brand recall ($Chi^2(1) = .26$, $p = .367$). Moreover, there is no significant interaction effect between prominence and artist connectedness on brand recall. In this respect, the results show that brand prominence has a positive effect on brand recall for both respondents who are highly ($Chi^2(1) = 10.15$, $p < .001$) and lowly ($Chi^2(1) = 11.13$, $p < .001$) connected to the artist in the music video. In particular, in both conditions the brand is better recalled when it is placed prominently (low connection: 66.7%, high connection: 61.8%) than when it is placed subtly (low connection: 33.3%, high connection: 38.2%). However, the positive effect of prominently placed brands on brand recall is less strong for highly than for lowly connected respondents, supporting H1.

Brand Attitude

A two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), with prominence and artist connectedness as between subjects variables, music liking and brand knowledge as covariates and brand attitude as dependent variable, reveals that there is a main effect of prominence ($F(1,104) = 7.85, p = .006$). Brand attitude is higher when a brand is placed prominently ($M = 3.15$) than when a brand is placed subtly ($M = 2.82$). Furthermore, there is no main effect of connectedness ($F(1,104) = 2.76, p = .100$). Brand attitude is similar for individuals who connect ($M = 2.87$) and individuals who do not connect ($M = 3.10$) themselves to the artist in the music video. Furthermore, there are positive main effects of the covariates, music liking ($F(1,104) = 23.15, p < .001$) and brand knowledge ($F(1,104) = 61.16, p < .001$), on brand attitude. Finally, results reveal that there is a significant interaction effect between prominence and artist connectedness ($F(1,104) = 4.21, p = .043$, see Figure 1). In a situation of high artist connectedness, brand attitude is higher when the brand is placed prominently ($M = 3.16$) than when it is placed subtly ($M = 2.58, F(1,46) = 9.67, p = .003$). In a situation of low artist connectedness, brand attitude does not vary according to the prominence level ($F(1,56) = .35, p = .556$; $M_{\text{subtle}} = 3.05$ vs. $M_{\text{prominent}} = 3.14$). These results support H2.

Insert Figure 1 Here.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, FURTHER RESEARCH

In recent years, brands are increasingly being placed in all kinds of different media content. Past academic research about brand placement in music videos is however scarce. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to fill this void. First, the results of this study reveal that brand placements benefit most if they are prominently placed in the music video as this results in a higher level of brand recall. This is in line with previous studies investigating brand prominence in movies, tv programs and games (e.g., Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2010; Gupta & Lord, 1998; Law & Braun, 2000; Schneider & Cornwell, 2005). Brand prominence also has a positive effect on brand attitude. Although this result is in contradiction to the findings of Russell (1998), it is in line with past findings of prominent brand placements in advergames (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2010) and comic books (Panic & Cauberghe, 2010). In addition, the current study shows that artist connectedness moderates these findings, both in brand recall and brand attitude. The results are in line with the Balance Model of brand placement (Russell & Stern, 2006), as for respondents who are highly connected to the artist, the effect of brand prominence on brand recall is less positive than for those respondents who are less connected to the artist. A possible explanation might be that highly connected individuals focus their attention more on the artist and thus paying less attention to the placed brands.

Finally, the limitations of the present study suggest directions for further research. First, other – more subtle – measures than brand recall should be used to measure the effectiveness of brand placements (e.g., recognition). Next, we did not investigate the underlying mechanism to explain the results profoundly. Further research should incorporate variables such as persuasion knowledge and devoted attention to the brand placement and the music video. In addition, the current study only investigated positive brand-artist integrations. Future studies could add negative associations to investigate the impact of artist-brand relation in music videos more in depth. Further, artist-brand congruency (e.g., Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Misra & Beatty, 1990) and perceived level of expertise of the artist for the brand are interesting variables to examine within this context of brand placement in music video clips.

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Figure 1: Interaction effect of brand prominence and artist connectedness on brand attitude

