

# Music and Advertising: The Effect of Music in Television Commercials on Consumer Attitudes.

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# **1. Introduction**

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*"[...] When [background music is] used appropriately, [it] is the catalyst of advertising. It augments pictures and colors words, and often adds a form of energy available through no other source." (Hecker 1984)*

There is no doubt that music can elicit many different responses out of people. Music can calm us, excite us, emotionally move us, sadden us, soothe us and can even coordinate us at work. There is also no doubt that we are quite the musical species (Sacks, 2007). Humans are able to remember music they have heard for a lifetime, as well as the emotions it triggered. We are fully capable of memorizing thousands, if not more, musical pieces in our life, including song elements such as lyrics, melody, tempo, rhythm and even pitch. Over the centuries, humans have made music everywhere and the music we play spans from the easiest simple melody on a piano to a complex orchestra symphony with dozens of musical instruments.

Music is a part of our lifestyle, of our culture and of our society.

So, we can without question state that music is quite an important aspect in how we perceive things in our daily lives.

Various researches have been done to examine how music influences our consumption behavior.

Areni (1993) found that classical music in a wine store prompted customers to buy more expensive products but did not influence the quantity purchased. This was not the case when top-forty music rather than classical was played in the wine store. The influence of different music on how long customers spend their time on shopping, was studied by Yalch and Spangenberg (2000). They found that customers' shopping time was shorter when they heard familiar background music than when they heard unfamiliar music. However, when they asked subjects previously if they would shop longer with unfamiliar music or familiar music, responders stated the latter, which contradicts the research outcomes.

These and more are excellent examples of how music influences us subconsciously.

While the previous part mentioned interesting examples of music influencing consumption behavior, this paper will focus on another related topic.

Television commercials have a long reputation of being the main advertisement channel to the masses. Therefore, it is no wonder that companies are willing to spend a lot of money to create a high-quality television commercial. Apart from the visual and verbal content of a commercial, the third important feature is the music accompanying the visual and verbal parts. A number of researches have found that the musical ingredient in the television commercial plays an important part in the creation of consumer attitudes towards the advertised product and brand.

However, the effect of music in television commercials on consumer attitudes towards the advertised products and brands is not an easy one to understand. Many other factors also play a role in the creation of attitudes - cognitive as well as affective elements.

Yet, there is sufficient evidence supporting the claim that music plays a significant role in the formation of attitudes towards the brand and endorsers' products. For example, a luxurious car commercial is often accompanied by a musical piece that we usually associate with the terms 'cool', 'mysterious', 'sophisticated' and even 'sexy' (Imagine a James Bond kind of music). Hence, we are more likely to judge the advertised car to have these attributes, given that we do not have any other background information on the car, which might have already influenced our judgment about the car.

Music playing in a TV commercial usually affects us subconsciously, but it has a great impact on how we perceive the product that is advertised and the commercial in general. There are different kinds of background music in advertisements, such as jingles, original music pieces that are written especially for the commercial and even popular hit songs. Whereas famous jingles can induce brand repetition because the viewer has most likely heard the jingle

before and associates it directly with the brand, instrumental music generally affects the viewer more indirectly, influencing the viewers' mood and emotions towards the advertisement.

Various papers have been published on this subject.

A study by Alpert and Alpert (1989) found that music had a significant influence on the consumer's emotional state and mood, which is an important concept in the establishment of attitudes, since mood states seem to bias judgments and opinions in the same direction as the mood state. They discovered that happy music produced a higher average mood than sad music. Sad music, on the other hand, was more effective in influencing purchase intent than was happy music or silence.

In a more recent study, Oakes (2007) found that when the musical background in an advertisement fits the message and imagery of the commercial ("congruity"), consumers responded more affective towards it. Additionally, people were observed to remember the content of the commercial more clearly when the background music was congruent with the advertisement. Oakes also mentioned several other types of congruity that are vital in the creation of consumer attitudes. These included repetition congruity, association congruity, mood congruity, genre congruity and musical score congruity.

The concept of musical congruity will be discussed in more detail in this thesis.

Research on this topic has revealed that the effect of music on the formation of attitudes is determined by various factors, such as musical congruity (including timbre congruity, genre congruity etc.), type of commercial music (e.g. jingles, instrumental, pop songs), musical mode (minor or major), tempo of the song (e.g. fast or slow) and the general mood the music conveys to the audience, among others. Several of these musical factors that are brought forth in various research papers will be analyzed and discussed.

This paper will attempt to analyze the effects of music in television commercials on consumer attitudes towards brands and products. Why does music influence

consumer attitude? What effect does music have on mood and emotional states? Are we subconsciously influenced by commercial music or also consciously? What are consumer attitudes towards commercials in the first place? These and other questions will be addressed in this paper.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

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## 2.1 Television Commercials

A commercial television advertisement is a short television program generally produced and paid for by an organization. It typically communicates a message to the public to market and promote their product(s) and service(s). A commercials' main objective is to show and state what the product is, what its main features are and what advantages it has. For this purpose, they can use several different forms of visual, verbal and aural impressions to creatively convince the audience of the products' competitive advantages. The run-time of a television commercial lies typically between a couple of seconds to a few minutes, depending on the content and purpose of the ad. The purpose of a television advertisement can range from raising awareness of the existence of a (new) product or a service to political advertising.

Schellenberg (2011) notes the existence of five different types of television commercials: political advertising, promotional advertising, infomercials, television commercial donut as well as sponsorship advertising. The aim of political advertising is to reach a regions audience to obtain their vote. The more money raised at the political party campaign, the bigger the national coverage of the political television commercial. In some countries, this type of advertising is prohibited, for example in France.

Promotional television commercials represent the largest amount of commercials shown on television broadcast media. These commercials market and promote products and services from different companies.

Infomercials, also called teleshopping ads or paid programming, are somewhat different than other types of commercials. They are about 30 to 60 minutes long and are generally shown at unusual times of the day such as very early in the morning or late at night. The infomercial provides complete and lengthy information and explanation about a particular product in a talk show fashion, also regularly showing experts or celebrities using the product. Typically, viewers can order the advertised product by calling the telephone number shown on the screen during the infomercial.



A television commercial donut is a kind of commercial template, which has all the required components of a normal commercial but is missing the actual product to be advertised. Companies that do not have the resources, skills or the necessity for a fully produced commercial use these kinds of commercial donuts. Last but not least, sponsorship advertising aims at linking a brand or a company to an upcoming event, such as McDonalds for the Olympic games.

Humor, animated characters and surprise effects are often used in a television commercial to gain the attention and interest of the viewer. Animated characters in commercials may often be more useful than real actors, because they can illustrate different and sometimes more engaging depictions, especially for children. For example the Kellogg's cereal commercials show the characters of the different types of cereals to appeal to the children who often recognize the characters on the cereal boxes. Emotional displays such as humor and surprising effects can be valuable, since they attract the viewers' attention, by making them laugh or surprising them.

Predictably, the cost of airtime for commercials on television networks increases with the popularity of the program shown at that time and is considerably higher at peak times, when many people are watching television.

It is thus essential for organizations to have knowledge of the type of programs their target consumers tend to watch, since prices for television airtime are extremely high. Expertise in broadcast television production and broadcast standards is also essential for a company's commercial to be accepted by the television networks.

Television commercials have become a key form of mass-market advertisement for companies. In order for the television ad to become successful, companies must make a commercial that will gain the attention and interest of the audience, meets broadcasting standards and place it in targeted television networks that will reach the targeted consumer segment.

## **2.2 Attitude**

According to Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2006, p. 392-393), attitudes are defined as being “global or overall evaluative judgments”. Since attitudes influence purchase intent and purchase behavior, it is of great interest to companies what consumers think about their products; whether they are favorable towards it or not or whether they think it is of the best quality or not. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) define attitudes as being “General evaluations people hold in regard to themselves, other people, objects and issues.” According to the authors, these evaluations can be based on an array of emotional, behavioral and cognitive experiences with the product, service or brand. In addition, they can affect or steer emotional, behavior and mental activities.

### *Attitude Properties*

There are five attitude properties that are worth noting for the purpose of this study (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel, 2006 p. 396-399). The first one is *attitude valence* and refers to whether the attitude towards something is positive, neutral or negative. As an example, a person may like McDonalds and Taco Bell but may dislike Burger King, while being indifferent about Kentucky Fried Chicken. The second one is *attitude extremity* and refers to the strength of the liking or the disliking. The person in the previous example may like both McDonalds and Taco Bell, but he might prefer one to the other if he or she had to choose. *Attitude resistance* reflects the extent to which an attitude is resistant to change. Some attitudes towards products or brands are very immune to change, while others are more easily modified.

The fourth property is called *attitude confidence*, which is a person’s conviction that her or his attitude is correct. Attitudes that were formed because of direct experience with the product are usually high in attitude confidence. Indirect experiences with a product or a service, such as a radio commercial, usually do not affect attitude confidence very strongly. Attitude confidence is important, due to the fact that it can reinforce the relationship between attitude and behavior. When confidence in a brand is high, people will be more comfortable buying a product or a service, because people know they can rely on their experiences and knowledge about the product.

*Attitude accessibility* is the last property. It refers to how easily the attitude can be recovered from memory. An attitude will only influence people if it can be retrieved from memory. Therefore, attitudes that are easily recovered from memory affect consumer behavior more strongly than those that are not easily recovered.

### **2.3 Different Types of Commercial Background Music**

There are several different types of background music that can be used in television commercials.

This paper will focus on three different types of commercial background music:

1. Instrumental background music without vocals – Any musical compositions, whether existing or especially written for the commercial, without voice or lyrics. The compositions can range from a whole symphony orchestra to melodies with just a simple synthesizer. This type of background music is most commonly used when the verbal (or even visual) content of the advertisement is very important, for example in commercials for medication such as aspirin, where it is required by law that information such as benefits and side-effects of the medicine is stated. Additionally, when advertisers want the attention of the viewers focused on something particular in the commercial, such as the appearance a celebrity, this type of music is also used.
2. Popular hit songs – Any popular and well-known songs, recorded by (famous) singers or bands, which is generally well liked by the average person. Sometimes music from somewhat unknown artists is also used. The songs can be from any musical genre, depending of course on if the genre fits the content and purpose of the television commercial. This type of music is employed when the advertiser wants to “ [...] create an association between the song and the [advertised] product or service” (Allan, 2006).
3. Jingles – Short musical compositions that are normally written especially for the brand and/or the product that is advertised. Generally, they have a catchy tune and lyrics and are used repeatedly in different commercials and promotions of the company, so as to encourage

consumer recognition and retention. Well known jingles include 'I'm lovin' it' from McDonalds and 'Intel Inside' by Intel.

## **2.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model and Theory of Musical Fit**

### *The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of Persuasion*

The Elaboration Likelihood Model was developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and essentially summarizes the different cognitive processes that were found by earlier studies and researches. The ELM, according to the authors, is “ [...] a general framework for organizing, categorizing, and understanding the basic processes underlying the effectiveness of persuasive communications”. In the context of this paper, 'persuasive communications' will be defined as being advertisements, such as television commercials.

The model proposes that there are two routes in which attitudes can be shaped or changed. The first route is called the *central route*. When a person has the opportunity, capability and incentive to carefully process the information of a certain product or brand, attitudes are typically influenced through the central route. This involves situations where a consumer exhibits high involvement with a product, such as cars, where one has to assess and consider many aspects of the product before one buys it. The second route is called the *peripheral route*. Via this route, attitudes are less affected by active thinking, but more by indirect, subliminal factors. This is more likely with low involvement products, where one does not need much product information, such as bottled water.

Petty and Cacioppo also referred to the high involvement situation as one with high elaboration likelihood and the low involvement situation as one with low elaboration likelihood.

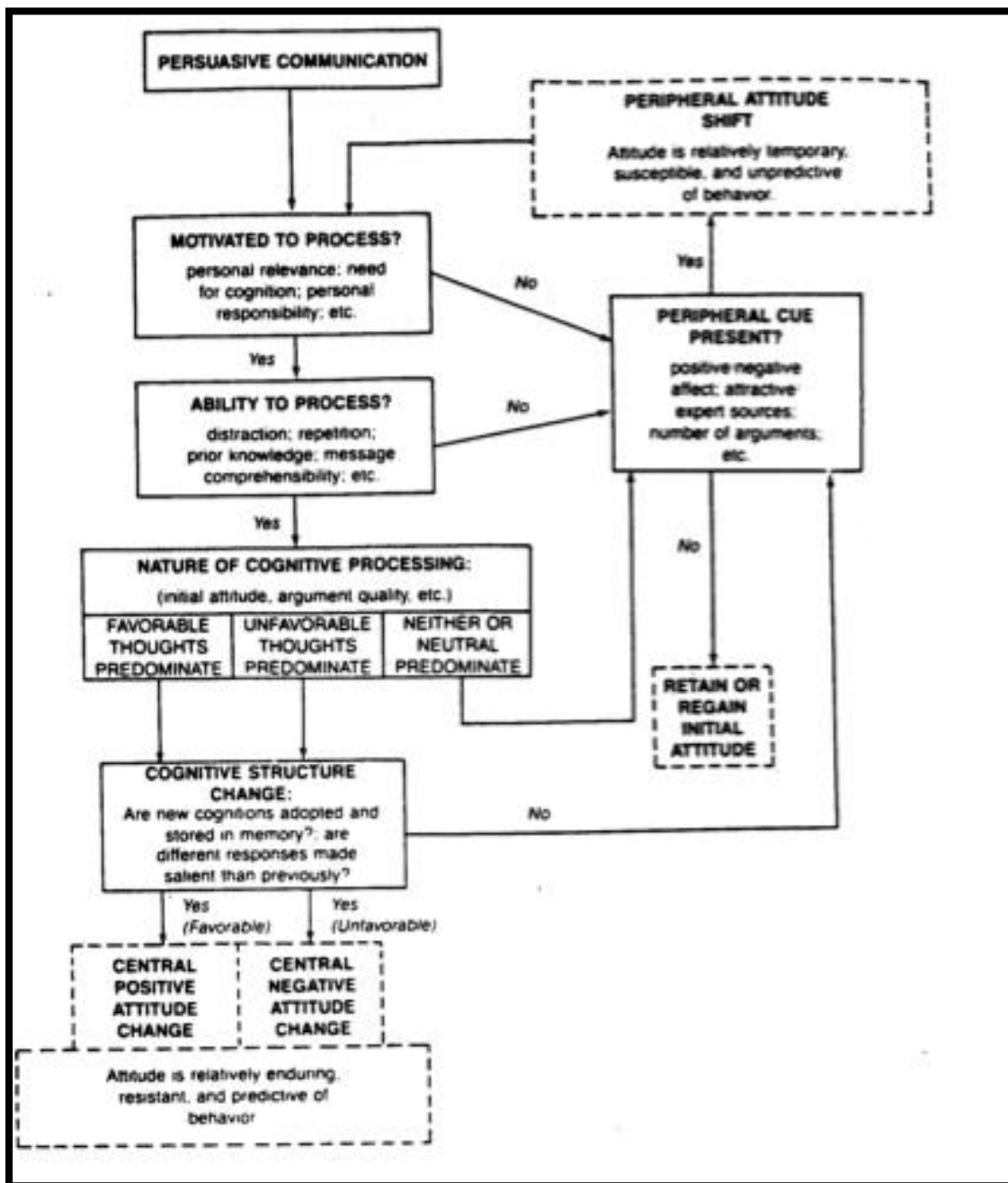


Fig. 1. The processes of the central and the peripheral route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model and their effect on attitude. (adapted from Petty, 1977; Petty and Cacioppo 1978, 1981a)

A graphical representation of the ELM is depicted in the figure above. First, some kind of persuasive communication takes place, for instance, when a person watches a television commercial. If this person is motivated and has the right ability to process the information, then this can induce an attitude change either

in a positive or negative direction. If 'favorable thoughts predominate' when he or she watches the commercial, a positive attitude change can occur, and when 'unfavorable thoughts predominate', a negative attitude change can occur. If the person has no or only neutral thoughts when watching the commercial, it all depends on the peripheral cues present in the ad. Peripheral cues may be unnoticeable things such as background music, number of arguments stated or just general likability of the commercial. A peripheral cue can induce a peripheral attitude shift, which is generally temporary and unstable. But the peripheral attitude shift may lead to more motivation to become more involved and process the information stated in the commercial more consciously, and this brings us back to the beginning of the cycle.

Petty and Cacioppo also put forth a number of claims about the ELM. Five will be explained:

1. People are motivated to have correct attitudes (Festinger, 1950). This is the case because, as an illustration, if a person thinks something is 'right' when it is actually 'wrong', then this person's opinion will only lead him to make bad behavioral choices and sooner or later his opinion will be confronted and questioned by other people, which will lead to disappointment and a consequent attitude and opinion shift.
2. Even though people want to have correct attitudes and opinions, this all depends on individual and situational characteristics. Moreover, people do not always have the ability, the capacity or the motivation to have high involvement in every informational process. When motivation and ability to thoroughly think about the arguments presented in an advertisement is low, then attitude is more likely to be influenced by peripheral and affective signs.
3. Several variables can influence the direction of the attitude change by A. serving as credible and convincing arguments, B. serving as peripheral or affective cues or C. influencing the amount or direction of involvement in the issue. Attitudes can be manipulated by the strength or weakness of an argument in cases of high elaboration likelihood. If the argument is strong, then the attitude will be

- positively influenced and vice versa. In cases of low elaboration likelihood, attitudes are influenced more by peripheral cues.
4. Variables that influence motivation and/or ability to process information in a fairly objective way can do so by either boosting or lowering argument analysis. Five different variables have been identified which serve this purpose. The first one is *distraction*. It influences a persons' capacity to process information in a comparatively objective manner. If involvement is low, then distraction should have no significant effect. *Repetition* of an advertisement tends to initially increase and then decrease agreement. Thus, excessive repetition may decrease involvement and interest, but in some cases may also boost an individual's skill to process the message arguments. The third variable is *personal relevance*. When people think that a message is personally relevant and affects their lives in some way, they become more motivated to evaluate the message and its arguments. When *personal responsibility* is high, people are more willing to exert the mental effort to process the arguments stated, because they feel a certain responsibility to do so. Last but not least, a *need for cognition* means that people actually enjoy assessing and thinking about the arguments presented. Therefore a high need for cognition means that people show a higher involvement.
  5. When motivation and/or ability to evaluate a message are low, peripheral cues become more significant as determinants of persuasion and attitude. When motivation and/or ability to evaluate a message are high, peripheral cues become less significant. Also, the quality of appropriate arguments has a bigger effect on opinions and attitudes when personal relevance is high.

#### *The Idea of Musical Fit*

This theory was proposed by MacInnis and Park (1991). It further develops the Elaboration Likelihood Model by stating that music may also have a positive influence on consumer attitudes in a state of high involvement if the music fits

the advertisement. The notion of 'Musical Fit' is similar to the concept of musical congruity (Oakes, 2007), which argues that music congruent (i.e. matching) to the content of the advertisement is imperative for the success of the advertisement.

MacInnis and Park introduced two concepts in their model; namely 'indexicality' and 'musical fit'. The indexicality of music is the amount of emotional memories it brings back. Music that has a high indexicality stimulates strong emotions that are associated with past events. These powerful emotions might boost low-involvement consumers' interest in an ad and influence their feelings and attitudes towards the advertisement.

Musical fit is the consumers' subjective view on if the music in the advertisement is relevant and fitting to the content of the ad. When the music fits the commercials' message, low-involvement consumers may process more of the message and experience more positive emotions than if the music would not fit.

In the table below, the different effects of indexicality and musical fit on low- and high-involved consumers found by MacInnis and Park is summarized.

The term 'Message-based processing' indicates the extent to which the informational content of the commercial is consciously evaluated and processed. 'Non-message-based processing' describes the processing of affective cues such as music.

	High Indexicality	High Musical Fit
Low Involvement	<u>Message-based processing</u> - Attention to the message is enhanced	<u>Message-based processing</u> - Positive effects on attention to the message
	<u>Non-Message-based processing</u> - Positive effects on emotions	<u>Non-Message-based processing</u> - effects on emotions and attitude towards the ad
		<u>Lack of Fit</u> - More negative emotions than in the case of high involvement



High Involvement	<u>Message-based processing</u> - Distraction effect, although very weak	<u>Message-based processing</u> - Positive effects on attention to the message and consumer beliefs
	<u>Non-message-based processing</u> - Effects on positive emotions	<u>Non-message-based processing</u> - Positive effects on emotions
		<u>Lack of Fit</u> - Less negative emotions than in the case of low involvement

Fig.2 Summary of the effects of indexicality and musical fit on situation with low- and high-involvement as found by MacInnis and Park (MacInnis and Park, 1991)

# 3. Problem Statement

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## 3.1. Research Question and Sub-Questions

As previously mentioned, this paper will analyze the influence of music in television advertisements on consumer attitudes.

Thus, the research question is:

*“What are the main effects of background music in television commercials on consumer attitudes towards the commercial and the brand?”*

The following sub questions will be addressed and studied in order to define the effects of music in television advertisements:

- *What are general consumer attitudes towards commercials?*
  - There is evidence suggesting that because of the abundance of television advertising, people are constantly bombarded with mass advertisements and cognitive stimuli. This has caused the emergence of some sort of stigma tied to television commercials, leading people to believe that commercials are a way to make companies' products and services look more alluring than they actually are and that advertisers are trying to persuade and deceive them to buy it by any means possible. Therefore, it is important to first look at the general attitude people hold towards commercials in the first place.
- *How does commercial background music influence consumers' mood?*
  - One's mood and emotional state are one of the most important determinants in the formation of attitudes. This is why it is important to consider the effects of background music on mood states.
- *What is musical congruity and how does it affect consumer attitude?*
  - The notions of musical congruity and fit have been explained in chapter one and chapter two, but will be analyzed in more depth in chapter five.

- *What are the effects of music in commercials on attention and memory?*
  - The degree of attention to the television commercial is important to consider when studying attitudes, as well as the effect of music on memory. Memory significantly influences attitude accessibility, which is imperative for brand recognition and retention.
- *What are the influences of musical modes (i.e. major and minor), song pitch, song tempo and rhythm on attitudes?*
  - Different song elements might have individual effects on consumer moods and attitudes. If so, what are these effects and why do they occur?
- *What are the potential pitfalls of using music in advertising?*
  - Even though using music in commercials can be beneficial and could positively enhance consumer attitudes towards the ad and the brand, advertisers should be aware of some potential downsides when using background music.

### **3.2. Purpose and Relevance of the Research**

Consumer attitude is a useful predictor of future consumption behavior. Indeed, attitude might have the greatest impact on future purchase intentions immediately following exposure to the advertisement. Various researchers state that attitude towards a commercial mediates attitude towards the brand and this is also supported by empirical evidence.

Therefore, examining the effects of music in commercials on consumer attitude can be of great value to advertising agencies and companies in general. If music plays a large role in how consumers evaluate the advertised products and may even affect their purchase behavior, advertising agencies and companies could benefit greatly from these effects if applied properly. If, for example, the specific effects of different musical elements such as rhythm, tempo and genre on consumer attitude would be researched more exclusively and would be categorized, then commercials' background music could be created more specifically for the purpose of the commercial. For instance, if a company wants to produce a commercial that aims to raise brand awareness, then music that

satisfies this particular purpose can be used. Likewise, if a company wants to influence purchasing behavior through the commercial, then different music would be used that satisfies that purpose.

Past research has shown that background music in TV commercials has a considerable influence on consumer attitudes and emotions towards the advertised products and services, thus the evidence and incentive exists.

This paper will attempt to categorize and summarize the differential effects of various musical features in television commercials on consumer attitudes, found in past studies. A summary on this topic might be helpful for future researches.

## 4. Methodology

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To examine the various effects of music in television commercials on consumer attitude, current literature on the subject will be reviewed and analyzed. Thus, a range of journals, paper, articles, online publications and books on this subject will be consulted and evaluated.

This qualitative study will aim to distinguish the different effects of commercial television music found in research papers and make a summary of these effects. Based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the theory of musical fit, the various effects will be reviewed and studied and the most recent effects of the relevant literature will be examined. In addition, the literature review study will investigate the different views and perspectives of the different authors.

To analyze the concept of musical congruity, Oakes' 2007 study "Evaluating Empirical Research into Music in Advertising: A Congruity Perspective" will be examined and reviewed. Indeed, MacInnis and Parks' concept of musical fit corresponds to this.

To examine the relationship between music and mood, the research paper of Judy Alpert and Mark Alpert will be studied. To determine the connection between music and memory and attention, Allans paper "Effects of Popular Music in Advertising on Attention and Memory" (2006) will be scrutinized.

Finally, a number of actual television commercials will be analyzed in order to get a clear view of the structure of the commercial and how the background music is incorporated into the commercial. The type of television advertisements, the type of background music and the general emotions and moods it conveys will also be explored.

## 5. Literature Review and Analysis

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### 5.1 General Consumer Attitudes Towards Television Commercials

Mass media advertisements, such as TV commercials, tend to be largely ignored due to the overload of such advertising in recent times. People also seem to view mass media advertisements to have not much intrinsic value. Since there are so many advertisements these days and people have limited time and cognitive resources, the ability of a consumer to thoroughly process each one of them is significantly diminished (Bogart, 1985). Past studies have shown that there is a general negative attitude towards advertising (Alwitt and Prabhaker, 1994).

It has been observed that advertisements put in media that are perceived as more credible and reliable, such as newspapers, are seen as more informative, convincing and valid as opposed to advertisements in less credible media, like TV commercials (Becker, Martino and Towners, 1976; Larkin 1979). Credible media such as newspaper are seen as more serious and sophisticated by the consumers, therefore the advertisements in it are also perceived as more sophisticated.

Media advertisements, such as television commercials, are usually associated with entertainment, which is perceived as being less serious and sophisticated. Evidently, the consumers' attitude towards a commercial also depends on his or her interests, current preferences and what he or she is looking for at the moment. A consumer will have a more positive attitude towards a commercial that provides accurate and relevant information about a product or a service the consumer is currently looking for.

Wang et al. (2002) found in their research that five emotional factors and one demographic variable play a role in the formation of attitudes towards advertisements. The five emotional factors are entertainment, informativeness, irritation, credibility and interactivity. For example, a commercial high in entertainment, informativeness, credibility and interactivity and low in irritation, is most likely a memorable commercial that creates a positive consumer attitude towards the brand and advertised product.

The demographic variable that was found to significantly influence attitude was age (Mai and Schoeller, 2009). Age also significantly influences a persons' interpretation and affective response towards a TV commercial. This outcome is not surprising since, for example, a teenager will look differently at a commercial than an elderly person because of differences in experiences, maturity and knowledge.

Advertisers should aim at eliciting a positive emotional state from the consumer, such as happiness or passion, when creating a commercial. Emotional advertising is a way to convey certain incentives to the viewers to evoke some kind of feeling and emotional response from them. An emotional cue in an advertisement can increase attention, memorability and the attractiveness of the brand and product or service. It is distinct from informational advertising, which aims at communicating relevant information about the product or service to the consumer (Puto and Hoyer, 1990), who in turn processes the newly obtained knowledge which can lead to a change in attitudes. Emotions that are frequently used in commercials include humor, eroticism, passion, shock, warmth, trust, credibility and hope.

In their research, Mai and Schoeller found that positive attitudes were positively correlated with understanding of the commercial. Television commercials that were perceived as being more pleasant, more appealing and more entertaining seemed to be better understood.

The general attitude towards television commercials thus logically seems to be related to how original and engaging it is, which advertisers can influence.

However the common tendency seems to be that people have a fairly negative attitude towards advertisements and commercials in general, because of mass advertising overload in modern society. Due to this, people are also getting used to ignoring advertisements and similar commercial attention seeking stimuli, which are abundant nowadays.

## **5.2 Influence of Background Music in TV Commercial on Consumers' Mood**

As mentioned in the introduction, Alpert and Alpert have studied the effects of background music on consumer moods in their paper "Background Music as an Influence in Consumer Mood and Advertising Responses" (1989).

In their paper, they define mood as being "[...] a fleeting, temporary feeling state, usually not intense and not tied to a specific behavior". Mood is not the same as an emotion, but it does have an impact on consumer attitude and behavior, according to the authors.

Mood states seem to bias attitudes in the same direction to the mood state. For instance, if a person is in a happy mood and watches a TV commercial, then it is more likely that he or she will have a more positive attitude towards it than if he or she were in a bad mood. Moreover, mood states also affects how the commercial is remembered and the attitude accessibility of an individual. If a person was feeling happy while watching a commercial, he or she is more likely to have a positive memory about it. A negative mood also seems to have a more complex effect on behavior and attitude than positive moods (Isen 1984; Donnerstein, Donnerstein and Munger 1975). The influence of mood takes a peripheral route, because a mood state is not controllable or conscious.

Allen and Madden (1985) found that the background stimuli in an advertisement, such as music, affect mood and consumers' reflection of the ad. Gorn (1982) found that music that was enjoyed by the viewer had a more positive affect on his or her attitude than disliked music. However, Kellaris and Cox (1989) replicated this study but failed to come to the same conclusions after controlling for musical structure factors and demand effects. So it appears that

the distinction between liked and disliked music does not have a significant effect on mood and attitude.

In their study, Alpert and Alpert presented products to their subjects with accompanying music that had different musical structure elements and tested for the effect on mood and product assessments. The products that they gave to the participants were various greeting cards, which portrayed either happy events, such as birthdays and anniversaries, or for more unfortunate events, such as 'get well soon' cards. Subjects were shown these cards with accompanying background music, that was either predetermined as having a 'happy' or 'sad' musical structure.

The research results showed that both the accompanying background music and the greeting card profiles had a significant influence on participants' mood states. Music that was predetermined as having a happy musical structure made subjects' moods more positive than sad music. Accordingly, happy music produced the highest average good mood. However, they also found that background music did not necessarily affect how subjects perceived the greeting cards. Thus, joyful cards such as birthday cards were still overall perceived as happy, even with music that had a sad musical profile.

Surprisingly, music with a sad profile was more successful in influencing purchase intent than happy music or just silence. Since there was no verbal content in the experiment, incentives to process information via the central route was diminished, while peripheral cues, such as the background music and the depictions on the greeting cards were magnified.

Wintle (1978) found that music can considerably enhance the emotional response towards television advertising. She stated that commercials and background music shared three subjective aspects: "[...] an activity factor, a pleasantness factor, and a potency/personal relevance factor". Wintle too argued that when the congruity of the background music and the content of the commercial were high, viewers would evaluate the commercial more positively.



In his paper, Bruner (1990) discovered that different musical structure elements, such as music mode, tempo and pitch, triggered different moods and feelings in people. For example, a musical piece in a major mode evokes happier moods and feelings than songs in minor modes, which evoke sad moods. This will be analyzed in more detail in chapter 5.6.

There is thus considerable evidence that music influences the mood of people, even music that is played in the background of commercial and is therefore not processed via the central route.

### **5.3 The Effects of Musical Congruity on Brand Attitude**

In his paper “Evaluating Empirical Research into Music in Advertising: A Congruity Perspective” (2007), Oakes examines the topic of musical congruity, which is almost identical to the theory of musical fit by MacInnis and Park. He stated that music that fits the commercials’ content and purpose will create a more positive attitude towards the commercial, the brand and the product or service advertised, than when it is incongruent. Additionally, a better fit could also lead to greater purchase intention by consumers, greater emotional responses, as well as better visual and verbal recall of the content in the TV commercial.

Oakes conducted a literature review and made a list of all types of music and advertising congruities that he found in his literature search.

While spoken words in television commercials can become annoying and boring after seeing it a couple of times, music can make repetition enjoyable, because it uses rhythms and a variety of sounds that accompany the verbal content of the commercial. This can lead to *repetition congruity*. Viewers may recognize the music and might pay more attention to the ad when they see it again, thus improving brand attitude.

Indeed, the concept of congruity can also have the opposite effect. When consumers hear a song or a musical piece, which they associate with a negative and unpleasant memory, there is so-called *association incongruity*. Similarly, when they associate the music with a pleasant past experience there is

*association congruity*. Of course, this is a very subjective factor that is very difficult to control by advertisers. However, advertisers can use information such as the fact that songs, which are often played at funerals, have more chance to evoke a negative memory in people than songs that are played at parties, for example. Even though this is a minor detail, advertisers should be aware of the concept of association incongruity.

*Valence congruity*, which comes very close to attitude valence, is the finding that the likeability of a song enhances brand attitude. Conversely, disliking of music in a commercial reduces brand attitude. This is again a rather subjective aspect that is difficult to control. Nevertheless, advertisers can for instance take a look at the target segment and find out what their favorite music is in general or use recent chart hits, which are currently popular among many. In addition, cultural characteristics influence whether a musical piece is liked or disliked. So, while North Americans might favor country music, South Americans may favor latin music more.

Bozman et al (2011) argued that musical liking only improved brand attitude when the consumer exhibited low product involvement, thus when music is processed via the peripheral route. This is not the case with high product involvement; this might be because high-involved consumer's process almost all information provided in the commercial via the central route, and they are cautious of anything that might bias or persuade them.

The next type of congruity that should be taken into account by advertisers is *semantic congruity*, which was proposed by MacInnis and Park (1991). They argued that a higher congruity between the commercials' song lyrics and the message content will lead to improved attitude towards the brand, both in high and low involvement conditions. It is also the case in high involvement situations, because consumers that have high participation do not need to exert extra cognitive effort to suppress the background music in the advertisement because in this case it enhances and supports the verbal content.

*Genre congruity* is when the musical genre fits the content and type of the commercial, enhancing brand attitude. A good example is when a commercial for

Brazilian coffee is accompanied by Brazilian music, emphasizing the local authenticity of the coffee. Another example is when certain brands or stores want to create a more sophisticated, upper-class image; they often use classical music in their advertisements or play it in-store.

Genre congruity also seems to improve the visual recall of the commercial, however this finding is somewhat disputable, because commercials with high genre congruity often put a large emphasis on the music and hence use simpler verbal messages than other commercials, to compensate the distracting effect of the music.

Two other types of congruity that influence the affective response of a consumer, which is also an integral factor in the formation of attitudes, are *timbre congruity* and *score congruity*. *Timbre congruity* is the finding that tonal congruity with other sounds of the commercial (e.g. spoken word) improved affective response towards the commercial. *Score congruity* is the finding that musical scores that were composed especially to fit the advertisement also improved affective responses towards it.

There is no doubt that the accompanying music in a TV commercial should fit its content and verbal and visual messages in as many dimensions as possible to enhance consumer attitude towards the brand and the product. The concept of musical congruity is one of the most essential notions in determining attitude, and advertisers should be aware of it when producing a commercial.

#### **5.4 Effects of Background Music on Attention and Memory**

To understand the influence of background music in TV commercials on consumer attitude, it may be suitable to interpret the effect of music in commercials on the attention and memory of consumers. Both the attention to and the memory of the advertisement can significantly influence attitude, more specifically attitude confidence and attitude accessibility. Attitude confidence is influenced by attention to the commercial, because the more a person pays attention to it, the more information he or she absorbs and thus the more confidence he or she has in his or her knowledge about the brand and the advertisement. Attitude accessibility is affected by a consumers' memory of the

advertisement, since the better the consumer remembers the commercial and its content, the higher a consumers' attitude accessibility.

In his paper, Allan (2006) examines the influence of popular music in TV commercials on consumer attention and memory. He researched what kind of popular music in a commercial would enable the maximum level of attention to the brand and the strongest memory for the brand: popular music with the original vocals, popular music with altered vocals, popular music without vocals (instrumental) or no music at all.

He stated that attention comes before memory, because if the advertisement does not receive any attention in the first hand, then the probability that any of its content will be remembered is extremely small.

For a commercial to gain sufficient attention, the popular song should not just be relevant, but also needs to hold some kind of significant meaning to the viewer. For example a club hit that is fun to listen to but has no meaningful content may not generate as much attention as a powerful ballad hit song, which holds more emotional value. Of course, the song genre and its lyrics should fit the content of the advertisement.

It has been found that the recollection of information is enhanced when cued with a well-known musical piece (Rubin, 1977). Apparently, the melody of the song provides a certain framework for memorizing and encoding the messages in the advertisement.

The results of Allan's study showed that popular songs with original and modified vocals produced significantly greater attention towards the commercial than no music or and instrumental song. Songs with original and songs with modified vocals also produced greater memory of the advertised brand. Commercials with popular music were shown to be more effective in stimulating attention and memory than commercials without popular music, mainly because they capture the attention of viewers, but also because they seem to encourage memory.

One major factor that is important in determining the level of attention and memory is personal significance. Personal significance influences the impact of popular music in advertising as a stimulant. This seems quite obvious, since one would pay more attention to a commercial if it played ones' favorite song than if not. Moreover, the vocals in a song are an integral aspect. Participants in Allan's study were more attentive towards a commercial if there were vocals in the song than when there were no vocals.

Clearly, popular music has a huge influence on consumer attention to the ad and memory of the ad. However, since there are huge costs involved for receiving the right to use a hit song by a popular band or artist, many advertisers and companies cannot afford to use such type of music. Advertisers should also be careful when choosing a popular song, because a song that is too well known might be too familiar and repetitive for viewers. In addition, artists have increasingly become more reluctant to allow advertisers to play their music in commercials, because of their believe that it degrades their music. Even so, if they do have the funds to obtain the right to use a popular song, advertisers should avoid using instrumental versions of popular songs, since they have the least preferred effect on consumer attention and memory, as found in research.

### **5.5 Influence of Song Tempo, Rhythm, Pitch and Musical Mode on Consumer Mood and Attitude<sup>1</sup>**

Various musical elements such as song tempo, rhythm and pitch seem to be closely associated with different emotional states and sometimes even trigger them. Even though most cultures of our world would have similar perception about the different impressions of musical elements, I focus on western society and culture when evaluating the effects of various musical aspects, because it might be different for other cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, a few common musical terms are used (denoted with \*). An overview of definitions of these terms is provided in the appendix.

### *Tempo*

Fast music is regarded as conveying a happy and exciting feeling state, more so than sad music, all other things being equal. Fast music also seems to be more pleasant to hear for the audience. Holbrook and Arnand (1988) found that the general preferences for the tempo of music exhibited an inverted U-shaped preference function, “with 70 to 110 BPM (beats per minute) being the range of favored tempo”. They also found that quicker tempo in commercials was associated with generally more positive evaluations than commercials with moderate or slower tempi.

### *Rhythm*

Hevner (1936) learned that strong and stable rhythms were evaluated as representing serious and tough impressions. On the other hand, smoother rhythms were judged to represent more happy, humorous and dreamy feelings. Musical pieces in a staccato\* rhythm were perceived as being dynamic, lively or even agitating, particularly when it was performed with a lot of intensity and volume (Wedin, 1972). Music in legato\* was regarded as giving a more serene, tender and dreamy impression, especially if performed softly.

### *Pitch\**

Musical compositions with a high pitch seemed to be evaluated as more exciting or joyous than music that has a low pitch, which is often judged as sad.

The two musical modes also seem to trigger diverse effects on the moods of listeners. The major\* mode is associated with joyful, vivid and playful feelings, whereas the minor\* mode is associated with melancholic, mysterious and even angry characteristics (Scherer and Oshinsky, 1977). In an experiment involving minor and major mode, it was found that subjects seemed to learn more and make more personal associations with a commercial that was accompanied by music in major or mixed mode (Stout and Leckenby, 1988). Commercials with music in a minor mode appeared to be more annoying and less favorable to subjects.

Similar to the major mode, consonant\* musical harmonies were perceived as jolly, happy or peaceful. Analogous to the minor mode, dissonant\* harmonies

were seen as more agitating, worrying or gloomy. A good example of how consonant and dissonant harmonies are used in a commercial is the commercial for Bayer Aspirin. In the ad, you first see a person who is in pain, accompanied with dissonant music, which reflects the pain and the disturbance. Then he takes an aspirin and the dissonant music transforms into a consonant harmony, which reflects his pain subsiding, giving the impression of calmness and normalcy.

There is also a difference of effects between ascending and descending melodic lines on mood states. Ascending melody lines are associated with dignified or majestic impressions, whereas descending melody lines gave the impression of excitement or peacefulness (Hevner, 1936). Musical compositions with a large range of notes, comprising of more than an octave\*, were seen as being more glorious and impressive than compositions with a range of less than an octave, which were seen as being more somber (Gundlach, 1935). However, these findings are questionable, because even songs with a small range of notes can be perceived as being happy and entertaining.

Gundlach also found that the use different instruments had diverse effects on the perception of the song. Songs, in which brass instruments played the main melody, were described as triumphant or even bizarre. Woodwind instruments (e.g. flutes) on the other hand, conveyed uncomfortable or irritating emotions, and songs, in which a piano played the melody, were seen as brilliant or calm. String instruments were associated with feelings of delight and pleasure.

**Musical Characteristics for Producing Various Emotional Expressions\***

Musical Element	Emotional Expression								
	Serious	Sad	Sentimental	Serene	Humorous	Happy	Exciting	Majestic	Frightening
Mode	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major	Major	Minor
Tempo	Slow	Slow	Slow	Slow	Fast	Fast	Fast	Medium	Slow
Pitch	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Rhythm	Firm	Firm	Flowing	Flowing	Flowing	Flowing	Uneven	Firm	Uneven
Harmony	Consonant	Dissonant	Consonant	Consonant	Consonant	Consonant	Dissonant	Dissonant	Dissonant
Volume	Medium	Soft	Soft	Soft	Medium	Medium	Loud	Loud	Varied

\*Developed primarily from Hevner (1937), Kinnear (1958), and Vinovich (1975) with additional information from Gundlach (1935), Scherer and Ostinsky (1977), Watson (1942), and Widin (1972).

Table 1: Different musical elements are associated with various moods and emotional expressions (adapted from Bruner II, 1990)

In the table above a summary of the associations between various musical elements and mood is depicted. Since there is little debate that music can be associated with emotion-like features, an overview like this can be very useful for advertisers seeking the right music for an advertisement.

### **5.6 Potential Pitfalls of using Music in Advertising**

Although there is sufficient evidence and research supporting the fact that music in commercials enhances consumer brand attitude, there are also some possible dangers when choosing and using particular musical compositions in an advertisement on television. Craton and Lantos (2011) have analyzed some drawbacks in the use of background music in commercials.

There is always some probability that a portion of the target population will dislike the music played in a particular commercial. However, a person disliking the background music in a commercial will judge the brands' credibility lower than if he or she would see the commercial without any music (Simpkins and Smith, 1974). Target consumers may respond negatively because they might find it inappropriate and disturbing for the situation they are in (e.g. they have to concentrate on something important), they think the music does not fit the advertisement or they find it irritating, boring, repetitious or they dislike the artist performing the song. The fact is that people seldom like listening to music involuntarily, which is unfortunately the case with most music in commercials (North et al, 2004).

Another problem is that the background music in a TV advertisement can hinder consumers' concentration and processing of the verbal and visual messages in the ad, because the music distracts them. Brand information recall and attitude towards the commercial can also be damaged when the background music captures too much attention and cognitive effort of the consumer. Therefore, music should not draw the attention to itself, but instead should function as a supporting role to the brand and ad message. One problem with music that is especially composed for the commercial and that people have not heard before may be that consumers use all their cognitive attention to process the music,



rather than understanding the message of the commercial. The complexity of the background music also plays a role in this. Background music that is seen as complex by consumers is at first disliked but with repetition it becomes liked. Background music with medium subjective complexity on the other hand, will be liked at first but with repetition it becomes too familiar and people will start disliking it. Simple background music tends to be disliked from the start and will remain that way. Thus, advertisers have to face the challenge of choosing background music that is distinctive and has optimal complexity.

A further difficulty is repetitiveness. A consumers' attitude towards a commercial will deteriorate with repetition, and it seems likely that the role of music is also to blame. Repetition, on the other hand, can also have a positive effect. Creating new associations between the music and the brand take time, therefore repetition is significant.

Evidently, it is probably impossible to get everyone from the target audience to like the commercial and achieve 'universal appeal'. There will always be a portion of the target public that dislikes some features of the music accompanying the ad. Musical genre preferences differ a lot among people and circumstances. Not surprisingly, attitudes towards musical genres are strongly connected to personality and lifestyle (North and Hargreaves, 2007).

So, for advertisers it is important to understand the potential dangers associated with background music. The best way for them to find out possible pitfalls is to have a trial experiment of the commercial and the music. As Ogilvy (1963) said: "The most important word in the vocabulary of advertising is test".

### **5.7 Analysis of Background Music in Television Commercials**

In this section, four relatively diverse television commercials will be analyzed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> YouTube video links for the relevant commercials can be found in the appendix

### 5.7.1 Nespresso – What else? – The Swap (2011)

Nespresso has made a whole range of commercials featuring the well-known actor George Clooney, in which he famously says: “Nespresso. What else?” at the end of the commercial. The Nespresso commercials have become a hit over the whole world, making their espresso pads look like a sophisticated and cool coffee product.

In this section I will focus on one Nespresso commercial, with the title ‘The Swap’, released in 2011. The ad starts with George and another woman retrieving their luggage at an airport. Once at the hotel, the woman opens the suitcase and realizes that it is not hers. You see a snapshot of the opened suitcase; in it you see a bunch of Nespresso pad boxes (Decaffeinato Intenso) and a men’s shirt. The woman calls George and says: “I think I have something that belongs to you” and George replies: “Me too”.

You then see a snapshot of George’s suitcase, which contains womens’ lingerie and boxes of Nespresso pads (Volluto). They then meet at a Nespresso bar and George says: “Miss Volluto”. The woman replies: “That’s incredible. I’ve always imagined you much more...” (George:) “Taller?” “No, no. Much more... Ristretto!”, after which George looks a bit confused and slightly amused and the woman leaves saying: “Goodnight Mister Decaffeinato.”

The function of the background music in this commercial is to accentuate and emphasize the different scenes and moments. The visual and verbal content of the ad are much more important than the music in this case, however the music in the Nespresso commercial perfectly supports the visual and verbal elements. The music is relaxing lounge music, using few instruments, namely hammond, drums, synthesizer strings, guitar and bass.

Nespresso television ads always have the same characteristic main melody played on the hammond, which enhances repetition congruity.

The moods that Nespresso tries to communicate to the viewer are coolness, playfulness, humor, relaxation, a sense of uplifting and a bit of suspense and romance. The jazzy lounge genre of the background music perfectly maintains

this sense of 'coolness' and slight humorousness Nespresso is trying to convey to the viewers, which fits the image of Nespresso products well.

### **5.7.2 Dior – Miss Dior Cherie (2008)**

In 2008, cosmetics and fashion company Dior launched a new fragrance targeted towards the younger generation called "Miss Dior Cherie". They also released a commercial for it, which was directed by the popular female director Sofia Coppola and starring Belarusian fashion model Maryna Linchuk.

The commercial shows Maryna as a young girl having fun in Paris in the summer. You see various scenes showing Maryna in Paris, like running with a dog next to a big fountain, strolling along a Parisian bridge, fitting a beautiful long dress in a boutique, cycling in the streets of Paris, looking at delicious pastry in a French bakery, walking in a luxurious apartment room and wandering through a Park. You then see her with an oversized bottle of the Miss Dior perfume and her kissing a mysterious young man. Finally, Maryna is lifted in the air with a bunch of colorful balloons in her hand and you hear a seductive female voice saying "Miss Dior Cherie, the new fragrance of Dior", along with the on-screen title 'Miss Dior Cherie'.

In the commercial there is no verbal content, except at the end. There is only music accompanying the visual scenes. The French song played is called 'Moi Je Joue' (which means 'Me, I play') and was recorded by famous French actress, model and sex symbol Brigitte Bardot. It is a fun up-tempo pop song with acoustic guitars, handclaps and some percussion.

The moods the commercial is trying to convey to the audience are romance, youthfulness, happiness, luxury, innocence and a bit of fresh naivety. The advertisement is meant to be flirty, light, young and fun, targeting a younger audience between the ages of 15 and 30. The accompanying song complements this with its upbeat tempo, rhythmic acoustic guitars and of course the French vocals that are sung which are very original and cheery.

### **5.7.3 Kit Kat - “Gimme a Break” (1994)**

Although this commercial for a Kit Kat chocolate bar is relatively old, the jingle that was featured in it was very popular in the early nineties.

The short lyrics of the jingle (“Gimme a break, gimme a break, break me off a piece of that Kit Kat bar”) along with the catchy and simple melody captured the attention of many viewers. It was very successful, even making it to some top ten best jingles lists.

There are many versions of commercials featuring the Kit Kat jingle, but I will analyze a short one from 1994.

The commercial starts with a male voice shouting: “One, two. One, two, three, four!” simultaneously showing one, two, three and four Kit Kat chocolate bar pieces (i.e. there are four ‘pieces’ of chocolate attached in one Kit Kat chocolate bar, which can be broken off). Then the jingle starts, showing a band, consisting of five men with country music instruments (guitar, upright bass, ukelele etc.), playing and singing the jingle. Shortly after you see various other bands performing the jingle, including a pop band, three men singing the jingle in harmony and a salsa band. At the end you see a woman eating a Kit Kat piece and finally, the Kit Kat candy bar wrapping on a sheet of music notes.

The jingle is an upbeat, simple and happy short song, featuring guitars, drums, trumpets, an upright bass and percussion. There is no other verbal content in the commercial except the jingle, which means that the music is most likely consciously processed via the central route of the elaboration likelihood model.

The moods the commercial and the jingle are trying to convey are happiness, togetherness, activeness and jubilancy. Together with the lyrics, the advertisers wanted to create an association with eating a Kit Kat during a break (“Gimme a break”) and the moods they want to communicate towards the consumer.

The danger with this commercial was that the jingle might have been perceived as being too simple, increasing the risk of repetitiveness. However, given its success, I speculate that viewers liked that it was very quick but fun and after a while, when they learned the jingle, there was enhanced repetition congruity.

#### **5.7.4 Volkswagen – The Force (2011)**

This funny commercial by Volkswagen for their 2012 Passat family sedan was featured in the Super Bowl of 2011. It became hugely popular afterwards, getting more than 50 million views on YouTube. AdWeek named it the best commercial of 2011, because it is exceptionally charming, witty and endearing for a present day commercial.

The commercial shows a kid all dressed up as Darth Vader, a character of the popular Star Wars movies. In the commercial, tiny Darth Vader tries to use ‘the Force’ to bend certain objects in the house to his will. At first he tries it on a fitness machine, then the dog, then the washing machine, then a baby doll and finally a sandwich plate (Which is mother slides to him) all without success. When his dad comes home in the Volkswagen sedan, he goes outside to the driveway, steps past his dad and tries to command the car with outstretched arms. After a dramatic pause, the car miraculously responds as the engine turns on and the kid looks flabbergasted. The next scene shows his dad looking knowingly at the mom, holding the car’s key fob – he had pressed the remote start function on the car key.

The background music that is used in this advertisement is the famous Star Wars theme ‘The Imperial March’ by John Williams. It is an orchestral song including string instruments and brass instruments; the latter are playing the melody of the song, giving it a majestic feel. The theme is slightly altered for the purpose of the commercial, so that certain important cues are emphasized, for example the dramatic pause when the kid tries to command the car.

Even though the Star Wars theme song is actually quite a serious and dramatic song, it has a very humorous effect because it is matched with this particular

visual content. The commercial shows the world in the perception of the kid on a certain level, and the background song reflects the determination and fantasy of the kid to bend objects to his will, which is of course a ridiculous, but also very adorable, endeavor. Because the commercial has a Star Wars theme it can enhance association congruity, since most people are familiar with the Star Wars franchise.

The moods this commercial is trying to transmit are humor, family closeness and comfort, warmth, stability and cuteness. Since the car advertised is a family sedan, it is logical that a tight-knotted family is depicted in the commercial, with a traditional starting family; a wife, a husband, a child and a dog.

## 6. Conclusion

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### 6.1 Summary of Literature Findings

There seems to be a general negative attitude towards television commercials, partly also because of the overload of such advertising. Logically, commercials these days have to stand out of the crowd in order to overcome the general negative attitude in the first place.

An individual's mood is a key determinant of his or her attitude towards a commercial. Mood states seem to bias consumer attitudes in the same direction as the mood state. The influence of music on mood seems to be mainly peripheral and subconscious. However, music only appears to have a partial effect on mood, since other factors (visual and verbal) also play a major role.

One of the most essential factors in the effect of music on consumer attitude is the concept of musical congruity. Music that is congruent to the commercials' content and intention will create a more positive attitude towards the commercial and the brand. Higher congruity also leads to greater purchase intention, greater emotional response and better memory of the commercial.

Different kinds of musical congruity exist: Repetition congruity, association congruity, valence congruity, semantic congruity, genre congruity, timbre congruity and score congruity. Congruence in many of the different kinds will most likely improve consumer attitude.

Furthermore, the attention to and the memory of the commercial can also significantly influence attitude. It was found that the recall of information of an ad is improved when paired with a well-known musical composition. Commercials with popular music also appeared to be more effective in stimulating attention and memory than commercial without popular music. Other important factors were personal significance of the music and the presence of vocals.

Different musical structural elements, such as tempo, rhythm and pitch also appeared to have an effect on mood and attitude. For example, music with quicker tempo was evaluated as more favorable. Music with a strong and stable rhythm was perceived as being serious, while music with a smooth rhythm was perceived as happy. Musical pieces with a high pitch and/or a major mode were perceived as being joyful, whereas music pieces in a low pitch and/or minor mode was seen as being sad, which was less favorable to consumers. The type of instruments in a song, the note range and the melody lines (Ascending or descending melody) also had a significant effect.

Although music in commercials can have a very positive effect on consumer attitudes towards the commercial and the brand, there are some potential pitfalls when using music. There is always some portion of the population who will dislike the music that is played in a commercial, whether it is because they do not like the artist, the genre or the style. This cannot be controlled because it is a subjective factor, depending on personality and individual characteristics. Additionally, music can also act as a distraction and limitation for consumers who are trying to process the information presented in the advertisement.

A musical composition in an advertisement should also not be too complex and not too simple. Advertisers therefore face the challenge of using music that has a 'optimal complexity', which is obviously difficult to define and to find.

Last but not least, advertisers should be aware of repetitiveness. A song that is too simple or too popular might ultimately become too familiar and repetitive.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The main effects of music in television commercials on consumer attitudes towards the commercial and the brand that have been found in this literature review have been summarized in the previous chapter 6.1. We can state that the influence of background music is greatest when there is low cognitive involvement and high affective involvement. Products such as jewelry, cosmetics, sportswear and beer fit this description.

Music in commercials for high cognitive involvement products, such as cars, appliances and insurances will tend to have less effect on consumer attitudes.

However, in some cases music can enhance cognitive processing of the commercial (Craton and Lantos, 2011):

- Enhancing the informative content of the commercial through congruence with music, brand image, verbal and visual content.
- Gaining attention with music in commercials that is appealing
- Use music to improve memory of visual and verbal messages of the advertisement
- Forming new connections between music and the brand
- Recollection of previous (positive) associations with the music
- Aid the development of the brand image, for example by using a certain musical style

Music can also elicit various affective responses from consumers:

- Trigger positive or negative emotional memories
- Elicit feelings or emotions that might induce consumers to have a positive affective response towards the ad and influence consumer attitude and purchase intent
- Affecting the strength of emotional response which are induced



- Produce a mood state in the commercial that becomes linked to the brand
- Offer an emotional experience

Most of the effects summarized above are processed via the peripheral route, since music in commercials usually plays in the background. However, with jingles and other few exceptions, the probability that the music is processed via the central route is considerably higher, because then the music is the main attribute of the commercial (for example the Kit Kat jingle).

Some recommendations for advertisers and marketers with regard to the usage of music in TV commercial:

- Be aware of musical congruity with other elements of the advertisement. This is essential, since attention, memory and attitude will be enhanced when there is high musical congruity.
- Be aware of the differences in consumer responses towards background music in cases of low involvement and high involvement. In cases of high involvement, advertisers should pay attention to choosing music that supports the main message of the ad and is not distracting.
- Be aware that some target consumers may have negative associations with the music.
- Choose music that has 'optimal' complexity and repetitiveness. Music that is too complex or too simple will have a negative effect on consumer attitude. Music that becomes too repetitive has the same effect. Be aware, however, that repetition can also improve memory of the ad message.
- Be aware that when using unsuitable music, it can harm the brand's image.
- Be aware that differences in musical structural elements, such as tempo, rhythm, pitch, melody, type of instruments and harmony can all influence consumers' perception of the music and possibly also influence their mood and attitudes.
- Be aware that familiar music, such as popular hit songs, might be associated with negative memories for some individuals, even if it is a happy song. This means that using original musical compositions that are

composed especially for the commercial may be preferable, because such music cannot evoke any previous negative associations.

### **6.3 Limitations**

There were some limitations concerning this literature review study.

One main limitation is that because the effect of music on consumer attitude is largely cognitive and subconscious in the human brain, it is difficult to comprehend and analyze these effects from a marketing perspective.

Additionally, the influence of background music in commercial on the mental processes is still not understood well enough.

These effects should be researched more psychologically and neurologically before marketers can fully implement the knowledge in their studies.

Moreover, how consumers perceive and evaluate background music, either via the peripheral route or the central route, is very subjective and differs with every individual. This makes it hard to propose a clear overview of effects of background music on consumer attitude, moods and behavior. Even so, it is probable that generalizations can be made, even if there are some exceptions.

In this literature review, some papers were studied that were more than twenty years old, for example Alpert and Alpert (1989) and Petty and Cacioppo (1986). This can have the risk that some of it is outdated and not compliant with newer research. For example, the elaboration likelihood model by Petty and Cacioppo has been criticized for being too simplistic by various sources.

Finally, another limitation is the subjectivity in the analysis of television commercials. Since I personally evaluated the features of the commercials I saw, it is highly likely that my observations are biased. I may have perceived different moods and aspects in a commercial and its accompanying music that others might not have perceived. On the other hand, different people might have seen or discern other moods or features that I did not find. Furthermore, I paid very close attention to the commercials I analyzed and I watched them a couple of

times. I also listened to the background music very attentively. In reality, people only partially pay attention to a TV advertisement, and the accompanying music is almost never listened to with full attention. However, the general impression should largely be the same, since intentions of commercials are usually quite clear when analyzed with the purpose of detecting the purpose of them.

#### **6.4 Further Research Recommendations**

Although the subject of music and advertising has been explored for some time now, there are still some areas in the topic that require further or new research. In this section I will suggest some further research topics.

Research has indicated that males and females perceive music different, as well as certain elements of a TV commercial (Zander, 2006). For example, women appeared to respond more favorable and more openly to commercials, especially if the person in the commercial was a man. Music too seems to have a different effect on men and women. Even so, more research is needed on this difference, which can be quite useful for advertisers targeting a certain gender.

A further research topic that might be interesting to study is the effect of music on memory. It has been claimed that music enhances memory of the ad, but research results to date are mixed (Kellaris et al, 1993; Allan, 2006). Further research should be done on the extent of the processing constituent of consumers' attitude towards advertising music. It may be that the attitude towards the commercials' music improves or diminishes memory of the advertisement.

Another subject interesting to pursue is the effect of background music on brand image linkages. Research on this topic is very limited (Allan, 2006), because the influence of music on brand image creation is very complicated and difficult, since music consists of many different variables, including music genre, artists, lyrics and musical structural characteristics. However, if this could be researched in the future, it will be of great value for companies and advertisers.

An interesting research topic about musical genres is what musical styles do consumers assign to what product groups. Maybe there are certain music genres that fit very well with a particular product group, for example club music with alcoholic beverages, such as vodka. It might be helpful to examine this in more detail, so that advertisers have an overview of different music genres that fit to certain product or service categories.

An additional topic worth looking into is cultural differences in the perception of music and music in advertising. This paper has focused on western cultural notions and perceptions about music, but other cultures, such as Asian and Middle-Eastern cultures, may favor different music and perceive various musical structural elements in a different way. More research on this disparity may be beneficial for companies and advertisers seeking to introduce their products or services in other countries.

Finally, there should be more research about music that is in the foreground of a commercial. Literature on the subject has mostly examined the effects of background music in commercials, but less so about music that is central in the advertisement, for example jingles. Understanding the influence of 'foreground music' on consumer attitude might be the next step in research on music and advertising effects.

# 7. References

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## 7.1 Appendix

### Chapter 5.5: Musical terms

In chapter 5.5 some common musical terms are used. Here are some definitions of the terms I used:

*Pitch* – The perceived pitch of a musical piece is the frequency on which it lies. A high pitch might be perceived as high tones and a low pitch might be associated with low tones.

*Major mode* – A major scale follows this sequence of steps: “Whole-Whole-Half-Whole-Whole-Whole-Half”. Major mode chords are usually used in cheerful and happy songs.

*Minor mode* – A minor scale follows this sequence of steps: “Whole-Half-Whole-Whole-Half-Whole-Whole”. A minor chords’ third note is a half down the scale. It is characterized as having a sad undertone, and this is why minor chords are often used in melancholic and sad musical compositions.

*Staccato* – Staccato is a form of musical rhythm, where notes are played sharply and quickly after another (resembles a clock that is ticking).

*Legato* – A form of musical rhythm, where the notes that are played ring a bit over each other to produce a smooth sound.

*Consonant* - Sounds that are pleasant to hear when played together, so in the right musical key (In western culture at least).

*Dissonant* – Sounds that are unpleasant to hear when played together, and are usually off-key (In western culture).

*Octave* – An octave is a doubling of a particular frequency. When a note is played ‘an octave higher’ one essentially hears the same note, but on a higher frequency level.

### Chapter 5.7: YouTube links to the analyzed commercials

1. [Nespresso – The Swap \(2011\)](#)

([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiNpDesMzyc&list=PLB79AF8EF1BA925FE&index=1&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiNpDesMzyc&list=PLB79AF8EF1BA925FE&index=1&feature=plpp_video))

2. [Dior – Miss Dior Cherie \(2008\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgNoD1Lemyw)  
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgNoD1Lemyw>)
3. [Kit Kat – Gimme a break \(1994\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V7c-jZ4wbg)  
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V7c-jZ4wbg>)
4. [Volkswagen – The Force \(2011\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0)  
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0>)

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