Memory and perception of brand mentions and placement of brands in songs

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Although brand placement in movies and TV series has attracted significant interest from researchers and practitioners, little is known about the financed insertion of brands in songs. However, evidence is growing that this kind of placement could be of interest for addressing certain types of target audience. This article sheds light on this new form of communication, and highlights its interest for advertisers. It also studies its effectiveness. Based on a web survey, the paper analyses recall and recognition of 17 brands placed in two songs (‘Tes Parents’ (Your parents), a French chanson-style song by Vincent Delerm, and ‘Wonderbra’, a rap song by MC Solaar), and attitude towards the use of brands in songs.

Introduction

‘Now I got to give a shout-out to Seagram’s gin / Cause I drink it and they payin’ me for it’

‘Freek-a-Leek’, Petey Pablo 2004

The words of this song, which was ranked on the Billboard Top 20 Hot Rap Tracks for 36 consecutive weeks in 2004, provide clear evidence that the practice of brand placement in music exists. The insertion of brands in songs is one of the most ignored placement forms. Although brands have been used in folk songs for a long time, this practice did not become a means of communication that involved financial compensation until very recently, and even then only in a marginal manner. American rap and hip-hop have been the pioneers in the field. This new market has aroused the interest of some advertisers. In March 2005, McDonald’s called upon
the Maven Strategies agency to persuade hip-hop and rap singers to quote the Big Mac brand in their songs, in return for $1 to $5 per radio broadcast (Murphy 2005).

The objective of this article is to present this new form of communication, and to propose a first contribution to the research concerning its effectiveness. In this respect, we analyse the memorisation of 17 brands cited in two French songs. As we might intuitively suppose, the most memorised brands are those that are most mentioned, those placed in the refrain and stated slowly. Moreover, the number of memorised brands is higher when the auditor identifies the artists correctly, and when he/she appreciates both the artist and the song. Our study looks also at the perception of placement. Approving of the song and the artist tends to generate a favourable attitude towards the use of brands. The choice of the partner artist therefore appears to be the major element in placement, and it necessarily relies on a fine analysis of its musical universe and its audience. In general, the presence of brands in songs is relatively well accepted, insofar as it is supposed to stem from the creative freedom of the author, and it may even be judged successful due to its power of evocation.

The article is organised as follows. The first section presents the mentions and placements of brands in songs, and situates them among other kinds of placement. The three sections that follow it detail the different stages of our study: the theoretical framework, the research hypotheses and the method and results of the survey. The conclusion presents the main contributions and limitations, and suggests future research directions.

An original form of communication

Origin and quantification of placements in songs

Brand placement refers to a hybrid communication form that offers an often captive audience access to a brand that is presented in a discrete, non-argued and financed manner in a movie, a TV series, a video game, or a literary or musical work. It thus makes it possible to address a target that is not covered by the clearly identified forms of communication spaces (Fontaine 2006). Contrary to the simple mention of a brand, which stems entirely from the creative freedom of the author, and does not involve anything in return, placement involves both a financial reward and a con-
tract between an advertiser and an artist, in which the conditions of the use of the brand are defined. Since the famous example of Reese’s Pieces sweets in the film *E.T.*, in 1982, the placement of products, and more generally brands, in films, has become common practice. As Lehu (2005) noted, MGM and Warner Bros called for firms for their productions as early as the late 1920s. Beyond cinema and television, new fields of application are developing rapidly, among them video games, live performances, and literary and musical works (Brennan 2008; Delattre 2008).

Music is a particularly interesting sector for brands (Charpentier 2007). Indeed, brands have been present in songs for a very long time: the beer brand Budweiser was mentioned in an American folk song written in 1903. There are numerous examples in both anglophone (see Appendix 1) and francophone songs (see Appendix 2). Since the 1980s, some brand mentions have been paid for. The release of the song ‘My Adidas’ in 1985, by the hip-hop band Run-DMC, is often considered the starting point of brand placement in the music industry. The song was initially only a free and uninterested homage to their fetish brand, but it quickly led to the signing of a partnership contract of around $1.5 million with Adidas. From that date on, the number of brands in songs, in particular rap songs, has increased significantly.

Any quantification of the phenomenon is partly uncertain. Friedman (1986) counted the brands in 256 American folk songs between 1946 and 1980. The number of brands in songs increased significantly in the period 1970–1980 (the average frequency is greater than four brands per 10,000 words), in line with the increasing presence of brands in the media. Since 1993, the marketing agency Agenda Inc. has been counting the brands mentioned in the top 20 American songs – almost exclusively rap and hip-hop. In 2005, 35% of 106 ranked songs contained at least one brand, against 40% in 2004 and 39% in 2003. The automobile, alcohol, fashion, luxury and firearms brands are the most represented (see Table 1). It is difficult

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<tr>
<th>Table 1: The most mentioned brands in the Top 20 American songs</th>
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<td><strong>Brands</strong></td>
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<td>Mercedes-Benz</td>
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<td>Nike</td>
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<td>Cadillac</td>
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<td>Cristal</td>
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<td>Louis Vuitton</td>
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<td>AK-47</td>
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<td>Source: <a href="http://www.agendainc.com/brandstand05.pdf">http://www.agendainc.com/brandstand05.pdf</a></td>
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to estimate the proportion of mentions that can properly be considered placements, since most advertisers do not wish to give publicity to such arrangements. Tony Rome, manager and founder of the agency Maven Strategies, estimates that 10% of mentions correspond to real placements of brands with compensation (Williams 2005).

**Characterisation of placements in songs**

Brand mentions and placement are not a homogeneous communication form. The very definition of brand placement leads us to distinguish placements that involve payment from mentions that are a product of the ‘freedom of creation’. In this perspective, placements can be considered as the sponsoring of a song and of the artist by a brand. The distinction between placements and mentions is however not as clear as it might seem, insofar as some mentions, which are initially spontaneous, subsequently generate compensation. Moreover, some artists mention brands with the ulterior motive of obtaining financial compensation, or other kinds of return, such as an advertising contract, sponsorship of a tour, etc.

From the point of view of the advertiser, placement can be considered from two different angles. In traditional placement, the song is conceived as a simple medium, and can be distinguished from placements that involve a real partnership between the artist and the brand. In the first case, whether a deliberate communication or not, the song offers visibility to the brand outside the traditional advertising space. The exposure is one-off and non-exclusive, and it can lead to a real congestion of brands. For example, as many as 14 brands are quoted in ‘The Jump Off’, a song by Lil’Kim. In the second case, placement is part of a more general partnership between an advertiser and an artist. This is the case, for example, in the partnership between Jeep and the singer Missy Elliott, who mentions the brand in several songs, appears behind the wheel of a Jeep Commander in one of her videos, which won an award at the MTV Music Awards, and composed the music for the advertisement of the brand. The long-term tendency is towards the development of this type of partnership (Charpentier 2007), often with exclusivity clauses. Placement in songs is then used to complement other communication techniques in the music industry (see Figure 1).
Selective review of literature on the effectiveness of placement

Basing their work on models of advertising persuasion, numerous researchers have studied the cognitive, affective and behavioural attitudes of consumers towards brand placements. Table 2 presents a selection of the research that has examined the effectiveness of placements, mainly in films. The memorisation of brands, in terms of either recall (spontaneous memory) or recognition (assisted memory), appears to vary greatly, depending on the placement characteristics and the brands concerned. Among the criteria that favour memorisation are the prominence of placement (Law & Braun 2000; Lehu 2005), oral mention of the brand name (Law & Braun 2000; Russell 2002; Lehu 2005), location on the screen (Gupta & Lord 1998), and the contact with the main characters of the film (d’Astous & Chartier 2000). The influence of the other variables mentioned in the literature is more ambiguous. This is the case, for example, for the degree of integration of the brand in the scenario. On the one hand, it seems that a brand that is involved in the story can hope for greater memorisation. Nelson (2002) found superior recall of brands placed in
### Table 2: A selective literature review of the effectiveness of brand placements

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<th>Level of action</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Results</th>
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| Cognitive and behavioural | Ong & Meri (1994) | Recall and purchase intentions of brands placed in 2 movies (75 spectators) | • 78% recall rate of the brand with prominent placement (between 4 and 40% for the others)  
• Purchase intentions unchanged |
| Cognitive and affective | Karrh (1994) | Recall of 5 brands placed in a 33-minute clip taken from a movie (76 students) | • Higher recall of brands integrated in the story and in a category of less familiar products  
• Evaluation of brands unchanged |
| Cognitive and behavioural | Law & Braun (2000) | Recall, recognition and purchase intentions of brands placed in a TV programme (111 students) | • Stronger purchase intentions (even though the brands are not recognised)  
• Influence of prominence and audio/visual combination on recall and recognition |
| Cognitive and affective | d’Astous & Chartier (2000) | Recall, recognition and approval of brands placed in 11 movies (103 students) | • Placements that are well integrated with the main character are more appreciated  
• Higher recall of appreciated placements, less prominent, less well integrated and in presence of main character  
• Higher recognition of prominent placements, less well integrated and in presence of main character |
| Cognitive | Nelson (2002) | Recall of brands placed in a real game (20 students) and in a demo game (16 students) | • Higher short-term recall of brands integrated in the game  
• Higher short and long-term recall of new placements |
| Cognitive and affective | Russell (2002) | Recognition and attitude change towards brands placed in a short movie (107 students) | • Audio placement better memorised than visual placement  
• Stronger attitude improvement of a peripheral brand (versus a central one) in a visual placement |
| Cognitive | Lehu (2005) | Recall of brands placed in 1 movie (304 video fans) | • Recall rate between 0 and 25.7%  
• Influence of prominence of placement, clarity, localisation on the screen and oral mention of the brand name |
| Affective | Fontaine (2006) | Change of attitude towards 2 brands placed in 1 short movie (480 students) | • Attitude improvement of one of two placed brands  
• Influence of involvement in movies and familiarity with the brand |
| Cognitive and affective | Matthes et al. (2007) | Recognition and evaluation of one brand placed in a TV show (115 students) | • Positive impact of the frequency of placement on the evaluation of the brand in case of strong involvement and ‘low persuasion knowledge’ |
video games when they are an integral part of the game. On the other hand, the study conducted by d’Astous & Chartier (2000) shows superior spontaneous and assisted memorisation of brands that are less integrated in the scenario, because this type of placement, which appears less natural, attracts more attention.

Research on affective and behavioural responses to brand placements is less common. The first studies noted placement’s absence of impact on the attitude towards a brand (Karrh 1994) and on purchase intention (Ong & Meri 1994), whereas recent studies, based on the implicit memory theory, have shown that the placement of non-memorised brands may explicitly lead to an improvement of attitude (Fontaine 2006; Matthes et al. 2007) and of choice intentions (Law & Braun 2000).

**The effectiveness of placements in songs**

To our knowledge, no previous academic research has been conducted on the effectiveness of brand placement in songs. Nevertheless, several examples lead us to suppose that this form of placement is not without an effect on the public, and therefore on consumers. For example, the success of the Busta Rhymes track ‘Pass the Courvoisier’ in 2002 was accompanied by a 14% increase in the volume of sales of the cognac brand in the United States (Tomkins 2003).

The technique of brand placement in songs seems to offer several specific advantages. A brand that is endorsed by an artist benefits from the fact that singers have become undeniable leaders of opinion. According to a study of 450 American consumers conducted by New Media Strategies in 2003, 60% of those respondents who considered themselves hip-hop fans asserted that they were ready to watch films that featured their preferred artist, or buy products endorsed by that artist. Several studies have shown that the endorsement of a brand by a celebrity improves the memorisation of an advertisement (Atkin & Block 1983) and the probability of choosing that brand (Friedman & Friedman 1979). The announcement of a partnership between a firm and a celebrity leads to an increase in the firm’s stock price (Agrawal & Kamakura 1995), a sign that investors anticipate value creation. In general, music offers a strong experiential context. It stimulates the imagination through the emotional register, and enables the creation of a bond with a brand (Charpentier 2007). The influence of
music on the cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions of individuals has been confirmed by numerous academic studies (for a literature review, see Alpert & Alpert 1990; Bruner 1990; Rieunier 1998). Thus, music can impact the memorisation of advertisements (Tom 1990), consumer preferences (Gorn 1982) and time spent in the shop (Rieunier 2000). Bernard (1964) noted that, since the 1960s, popular music has become a much more everyday social phenomenon than movies or literature. It occupies an important place in the life of many people, especially the young. It can also offer more selectivity of the audience. Indeed, there are numerous musical genres that address different targets, from narrow to large. In this sense, placement in music may lie within the scope of tribal marketing, which focuses on communities or tribes of different brands. These communities bring together persons that share common values and a sense of belonging to a group, based on attachment to a brand. Cova and Pace (2005) underlined the fact that a firm can partly lose control of its brand, to the advantage of the ‘brand community’. This phenomenon has been formalised by Wipperfürth (2005) as brand hijack. He distinguishes between unforeseen hijacks and hijacks that are planned jointly by a firm and a community of consumers. Music appears to be one means of structuring communities around an artist, a group or a musical genre. The North American rap community has thus adopted several alcohol and luxury fashion brands. When mentions are spontaneous and part of an unforeseen hijack, most firms will try to accommodate the phenomenon. This is the case of several brands of cognac and American rappers. Other managers, such as those of Burberry, have reacted rather negatively to the spontaneous use of their brand by rappers, and have sought to dissociate themselves from the rap and hip-hop culture. The aim is to avoid losing control over the image and personality of the brand. The use of placements in songs can allow a firm to control brand hijacks, at least in part. The fact that the placement is not perceived as a communication instrument as such makes it possible to do ‘marketing without marketing’ (Wipperfürth 2005). These communities of consumers appear in fact to be more and more conscious and critical of marketing techniques and official communications.

In spite of the advantages of placements in songs, several elements potentially limit their effectiveness. Discretion in the use of these operations seems to be a condition of effectiveness. According to Balasubramanian (1994), placement is a hybrid communication form that
appears more credible than an advertising message, precisely because the advertiser is not perceived as the source of the message. On the one hand, this raises some ethical questions related to consumers’ right to information. On the other hand, when the placement is revealed, it creates a risk to the credibility of both the singer and the cited brand, especially if it appears purely opportunistic. This is the case, for example, when the artist tends to multiply the number of partnerships. Some studies (particularly Tripp et al. 1994) have shown that the endorsement of several products by the same celebrity reduces the effectiveness of the partnership, in terms of attitude towards both the advertisement and the brand, and also in terms of purchase intention. More generally, it is accepted that the risk of sponsoring is higher when it is associated with people rather than with events (Walliser 2003). This is particularly the case when a brand is associated with a music star. According to Louie et al. (2001), the involvement of a celebrity in a troublesome or undesirable event has an influence on the stock price of the partner firm.

**Framework and hypotheses**

**Theoretical framework for placements**

As Karrh (1998) and Fontaine (2006) have suggested, four main streams of research on placement can be distinguished. The first focuses on content analyses of the different brands or products placed. The second is interested in the practitioners’ and managers’ vision of placement. The third analyses the perception and acceptance of placement by the persons that are exposed to it. The fourth focuses on the effectiveness of placement, in terms of memorisation attitude or purchase intention towards the placed brands. Our research lies within the scope of the last two streams, in that it focuses on the managerial stakes of placement in songs. Indeed, several issues arise regarding the perception and the effectiveness of placement in songs. We chose to analyse in particular the criteria that favour the memorisation of mentioned brands. Awareness is an unavoidable goal for every advertiser (Lehu 2005), and it is therefore a logical criterion to include in this first study on the effectiveness of placements. In addition, we study people’s perception of brand placements in general, and of placement in certain specific songs in particular. On the other hand, the evolution of the
attitude towards the brands mentioned is not included in this study, due to the constraints related to survey design, and to the ‘artificial’ character of such a measure in the short term.

This exploratory study is based on several theoretical frameworks. Mentions and one-off placements can be analysed from the angle of classical persuasion theory. In this case, the brand is exposed to the target audience via the media. The brand alliance framework can be mobilised for placements that are linked to an overall, exclusive and long-term partnership. Brand alliances, whether they are shared development, co-branding or joint advertising, are based on shared value creation in terms of awareness and attitude (Simonin & Ruth 1998). Some forms of placement are a part of this framework: the artist is a brand that associates one of his/her products, in this case a song, with the brand of another firm so as to attract the attention of a particular target, or to benefit from some specific associations or image features. The evaluation of an alliance between two brands depends particularly on perceptual coherence: that is, on the ‘image congruence of the allied brands’ (Cegarra & Michel 2001). This notion of congruence, or fit, is also used in certain studies that deal with brand extension and sponsoring. Although sponsoring and brand placement are conceptually different forms of publicity, the border between the two is often blurred (Walliser 2003). In a certain way, mentions and placements can be considered a kind of sponsoring – that is, a publicity technique based on the association and exchange between one who sponsors and one who is sponsored. In addition, the issues of the credibility of the endorser and of the transfer of meaning from a celebrity to a brand (McCracken 1989) also arise in the case of placements.

Finally, works on relational networks and tribal marketing, and more particularly tribal branding (Cova & Pace 2005), can shed light on certain categories of placement. The objective is to attain a better understanding of the place of music in some brand communities, or of the way in which the placement is perceived by the members of the community. Several frameworks make it possible to grasp brand placement from a theoretical point of view. In order to offer a first empirical contribution on the effectiveness of mentions and placements in songs, we chose the more general models of advertising persuasion, and of brand endorsement by a celebrity, to set up the research hypotheses.
Research hypotheses

Our research hypotheses are founded on the literature that deals with brand placements and sponsoring, on the literature that associates music and marketing, and on five semi-structured interviews with consumers. Two categories of hypothesis emerged. The first concerns the different characteristics of placement that favour brand memorisation. The goal is to highlight the managerial elements that can foster the building of brand awareness. The second category concerns individual characteristics with regard to music, and their influence on both the number of brands memorised and attitude towards the placement of these brands. The objective is to identify those individuals that are most receptive to placement.

Three characteristics of placement are usually studied: prominence, clarity and the context of placement. Prominence refers to the capacity of a brand to attract attention thanks to a significant presence. For the placement of brands in movies, it is considered in spatial and temporal terms, and in terms of the number of occurrences (Lehu 2005). In general, research on information treatment shows that the attention that is paid to a stimulus favours its memorisation. Several studies have shown that strong prominence leads to better memorisation in the case of placement in movies (Gupta & Lord 1998; Lehu 2005) and on television (Law & Braun 2000). A review of the literature on sponsoring shows that sponsor memorisation increases with the duration of the exposure (Walliser 2003). A similar effect can be expected for placement in songs:

H1: The memorisation of brands mentioned in a song increases when their presence is prominent.

Clarity of placement refers to the clearness of the presentation of a brand: a complete or incomplete view or mention of a brand, a moving or still view, clear or unclear pronunciation, rapid or slow pronunciation, etc. Lehu (2005) observed that this criterion was underexploited in the research on placement, undoubtedly because of its subjective aspect. On the basis of a survey analysing placement in the movie Minority Report, Lehu examined the influence of clarity of placement, using the variables ‘total versus partial view’ and ‘moving versus still view’, and concluded that there was spontaneous memorisation of brands on the day after the
broadcast. Clarity seems to be an important variable in the case of audio placement, insofar as the oral quotation of the brand is not strengthened by a visual presence. Nickell and Pinto (1984) showed, for example, that the clarity and understanding of the message decreased with an increase in the speed of delivery. The following hypothesis can therefore be stated:

**H2:** The memorisation of brands mentioned in a song increases when their presence is clear.

The context of placement in movies concerns the integration of the brand in the scenario. The variables usually studied are contact with the main character of the movie, the central versus peripheral character of the placement, its congruence and its nature—visual, sound or combined. In songs, the context in which brands are used is highly variable. Certain brands are mentioned in a relatively neutral manner in order to strengthen the realism of a scene, or to designate an entire category of products, or to better define a character socially and culturally. Certain brands are used with very positive connotations, and are sometimes the subject of the song (‘Harley-Davidson’ by Serge Gainsbourg, ‘Jaguar and Thunderbird’ by Chuck Berry, ‘Little Red Corvette’ by Prince, ‘My Adidas’ by Run-DMC, etc.). Conversely, other brands are used in an ironic or negative manner. Thus, in the song ‘A l’envers à l’endroit’ (‘Wrongside/rightside’) by the French band Noir Désir, the multinational firm Vivendi symbolises the excess of capitalism. The hypothesis of a curvilinear effect (U-shaped curve) in the context in which the brand is used on its memorisation can be formulated, since there seems to be more attention in the case of either a positive or a negative stimulus. A neutral stimulus tends to be less perceived.

The combination of an audio and a visual placement has an impact on the memorisation of brands placed in movies (Lehu 2005) and on television (Law & Braun 2000). The placements analysed in this article are limited to verbal mentions of brands in songs, excluding placements in video clips. While the distinction between audio and visual placement cannot be used here, it is nevertheless possible to reinforce the impact of a placement by mentioning, in addition to the brand, an element that is characteristic of its universe: a flagship product, slogan or any other element of communication. According to the memory activation model (Anderson
1983), the name of the brand stored in the memory can be activated by a word-stimulus. Activation will tend to be easier as the proximity of the two concepts (or nodes) is stronger. The memorisation of a brand can therefore be facilitated by mentioning a complementary element that is particularly representative. This leads us to formulate the following two hypotheses:

**H3a:** Memorisation of brands mentioned in a song increases if the brands are used in a positive or negative (rather than neutral) context.

**H3b:** Memorisation of brands mentioned in a song increases if an additional element (slogan, product of the brand …) is mentioned.

In addition to the placement characteristics, the influence of a second category of variables should also be studied. This includes the experience of music, and the attitude of individuals towards music in general, and towards the songs selected for the study in particular. As early as 1973, Morgensztern showed that memorisation increases with the frequency of exposure. In his study, Lehu (2005) noted superior memorisation by those individuals that had seen the movie before borrowing the DVD: they correctly identified 3.19 brands (compared to 0.78 for the individuals that had seen the movie for the first time). According to the exposure effect (Zajonc 1980), repeated exposure to a stimulus improves the attitude towards it. Matthes et al. (2007) validated this effect for placement in a TV show. We may therefore suppose that the presence of a brand would be more accepted if the song and its interpreter were already familiar to the listener:

**H4:** Being familiar with the song increases:
   a) the number of brands memorised by the listeners of the song
   b) the attitude towards the use of brands in the song.

**H5:** Being familiar with the singer of a song increases:
   a) the number of brands memorised by the listeners of the song
   b) the attitude towards the use of brands in the song.
Since Zajonc’s (1980) work, it has not been possible to ignore the role of affective variables in the process of advertisement persuasion. The credibility associated with an advertising medium or a celebrity strengthens the effectiveness of the message (Ohanian 1991). Studies dealing with celebrities in advertisements and sponsoring have shown that associations can be transferred from a celebrity to a brand (McCracken 1989). This affective dimension seems particularly important in music. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are stated:

H6: Appreciating the song increases:
   a) the number of brands memorised by the listeners of the song
   b) the attitude towards the use of brands in the song.

H7: Appreciating the singer of the song increases:
   a) the number of brands memorised by the listeners of the song
   b) the attitude towards the use of brands in the song.

H8: Appreciating the musical genre increases:
   a) the number of brands memorised by the listeners of a song that belongs to that musical genre
   b) the attitude towards the use of brands in a song that belongs to that musical genre.

The last explanatory variable concerns interest in music. In the case of placement in movies, Fontaine (2006) observed that an individual’s attitude towards a placed brand depends on his/her involvement in cinema. In Lehu’s (2005) study, 93% of people that chose the film for its director remembered at least one placed brand (compared to an average of 42% for the entire sample). This may therefore suggest that people who are more interested in the direction of the movie devote more attention to the movie and memorise more brands. In the case of sponsoring, it seems that the interest of a person in an event generates favourable attitudes towards the sponsor (Levin et al. 2001). On the other hand, as Lehu (2007) showed in the case of placement in video games, involvement may result in a more critical opinion. The most interested people are more wary about the presence of commercial brands, particularly in cases in which the celebrity endorses several brands. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are stated:
H9: Strong interest in music:
   a) increases the number of brands memorised by the listeners of a song
   b) decreases the attitude towards the use of brands in the song.

Research methodology

Choice of songs

In order to test the hypotheses, a quantitative survey was undertaken. The general principle was to invite individuals to listen to two songs, then to inquire about the brands mentioned. The choice of songs, ‘Tes Parents’ by Vincent Delerm and ‘Wonderbra’ by MC Solaar, met several objectives. The idea was to choose songs in French that mention several brands and have comparable broadcast rates. Both songs were awarded a platinum disc (more than 300,000 units sold). A sufficient variety should also exist in terms of mention and placement of brands. Ten brands were counted in the song by Delerm and seven in the song by MC Solaar. It should be noted that, in the second song, there are two other brands that are inaudible at the normal playing speed. These two brands are not in the official text of the song. No individual in the sample explicitly memorised these brands. All the brands in the two songs are a priori spontaneous mentions, without compensation. The songs chosen are from different musical genres in order to improve the external validity of the study, and to highlight the differences according to musical preferences. The two musical genres chosen – French chanson and rap – are also those in which the use of brands is most frequent.

Operationalisation of variables

Table 3 shows the operationalisation of the variables in detail. The aim was to limit the length of the questionnaire without compromising the quality of the measurement of the variables. During the initial test of the questionnaire, it appeared that the length of time taken to administer it constituted a major constraint for respondents. The average time required to take the final questionnaire was around 15 minutes. In the case of movies, the prominence criteria adopted by Lehu (2005) are the duration of
placement, the surface of the screen occupied and the number of occurrences of the brand. The specificity of placement in songs requires the use of other criteria. Prominence is therefore measured by the number of brand mentions, their use in the refrain or in the verse, and possibly their use in a rhyme. The clarity and the context of the use of the brand involve some subjectivity, and they were measured on three-point scales by a brand specialist and a linguist. Familiarity with the song, approval or appreciation of the singer, of the song and of the music genre, are variables that the respondents have no difficulty in understanding, and were therefore measured in a direct way.

The interest-in-music scale is that used by Rieunier (2000). It is adapted from the RIA (Relevance Interest Attraction) scale of Strazziéri and Hajdukowicz-Brisson (1996). Following the approach of Rieunier (2000) and Fontaine (2006), the initial six-item scale was simplified to a three-item scale. In accordance with the results of Rieunier (2000), our study validates the uni-dimensionality and coherence of this simplified

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<th>Table 3: Operationalisation of variables</th>
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<td>Clarity of the presence of the brand</td>
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<td>Context of use of the brand</td>
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<td>Previous familiarity with the song</td>
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<td>Previous familiarity with the artist</td>
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<td>Appreciation of the song and of the interpreter</td>
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<td>Appreciation of musical genre</td>
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<td>Attitude towards the use of brands in songs</td>
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<td>Interest in music</td>
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scale (proper value = 2.26, explained variance = 75.37\% and Cronbach’s alpha = 0.82).

Administration of the questionnaire

For reasons of flexibility and cost, and to avoid delays, the questionnaire was administered via the internet. In spite of the difficulty of controlling the size and the representativeness of the sample, the effectiveness of online surveys had already been proven in several prior studies (Aragon et al. 2000; Ganassali & Moscarola 2004). The questionnaire, placed on a personal website, was designed in the form of three successive web pages. The first screen contained general questions and questions that referred to the respondent’s interest in music, and it allowed the respondent to listen to the songs. The second screen concerned the knowledge and appreciation of the songs and their singers, and the spontaneous memorisation of the brands mentioned. Finally, the last screen dealt with the assisted memorisation of brands, the internet users’ perception of brand placement and with spontaneous memorisation (with the indication of the title and extracts from the texts) of the brands in several other songs. Compared to a continuous form layout, this presentation on three screens had the advantage of not revealing immediately the length of the questionnaire. It also prevented the respondents modifying the responses they had already given, and made it possible to keep the object of the study secret until the respondents had listened to the two songs.

The administration of the questionnaire took place in June and July 2006. An electronic message was sent to two categories of persons: students (including former students) of a polytechnic institute, and individuals who had recently placed an advertisement on a music site. The goal was to study a sample of individuals who were relatively young and/or interested in music, since these categories of persons are the privileged targets of the music industry. The message invited the respondents to complete the questionnaire, via a hypertext link leading to the website that hosted the survey. The response rate of the usable questionnaires was 22.5\% (see Table 4). Of 144 questionnaires collected, only 119 were sufficiently complete to be usable. The incomplete questionnaires corresponded to individuals who had abandoned the questionnaire on the first or second web page. Excluding Lehu’s (2005) and Fontaine’s (2006) studies, the size
of the sample is in the upper tier of similar studies (see Table 2). Although it is not possible to estimate the precise response rate for each of the categories of respondents, given the anonymity of some responses, it appears that there were proportionately more answers from students. The difference between the response rates of the music site respondents (9.8%) and the polytechnic institute respondents (24.1%) appears very significant. This may be explained by the fact that the students knew the investigators personally. According to Ganassali and Moscarola (2004), internet surveys are particularly efficient when the targets are ‘linked contractually or intellectually with the promoter of the survey’.

## Research results

### Preliminary results

The final sample comprised 119 people, 42.9% of whom were women. The average age was 29.5, and 31.1% of respondents were students, 21% were executives and senior executives, and 19.3% were office or factory workers. Geographically, the respondents were mainly inhabitants of three French regions: Picardie (30.3%), Ile de France (27.7%) and Nord Pas de Calais (14.3%). Their preferred musical genres were pop-rock (67.2%), French chanson (46.2%), R&B and soul (29.4%), world music (20.2%), classical music (19.3%) and jazz (16%). Other musical genres were more marginally represented in the sample: rap (10.1%), techno (10.1%), heavy metal (9.3%), reggae (8.5%), country music (6.7%), gothic (5.9%), punk (3.4%) and rai (2.5%). A first analysis showed that the musical genre, age,
activity and region of the respondents had no influence on the memorisation of brands or on attitude towards placement.

The general questions on the perception of use of brands in songs showed that this practice is relatively well accepted. The opinion that placement does not pose any problem because it concerns the creative freedom of the author was one with which most respondents agreed ($m = 3.70$ for 5 points, $t = 6.96$, $p < 0.001$). There was no massive rejection of this practice. The respondents rejected the statement according to which the use of brands is unacceptable because it is a hidden advertisement ($m = 2.38$, $t = -5.72$, $p < 0.001$). Also, respondents tended to agree that the placement is often a success because of the power of brand evocation ($m = 3.43$, $t = 4.44$, $p < 0.001$). On the other hand, they did not have a clear opinion on the statement that the use of brands in songs is unavoidable ($m = 3.11$, $t = 0.96$), or about the fact that this raised the problem of not knowing whether the artist received compensation for mentioning the brand ($m = 3.03$, $t = 0.24$). The use of brands in songs would certainly have been less accepted if it had appeared to be clearly a communication operation with a compensation for the artist. It should be noted that the practice of the financed placement of brands in songs was relatively unknown to the French audience at the time when the questionnaire was administered. The discretion of placement operations seems therefore to be a condition of their effectiveness.

**Testing the hypotheses**

Given their nature, the different categories of hypothesis were tested separately. Hypotheses H1 to H3 aimed to determine the influence of the prominence, clarity and context of the brand placement on brand memorisation. On the basis of 119 observations, average recall and recognition rates were determined for each of the 17 brands present in the two songs. The average recall rate was 14.3% and the recognition rate was 33.5%. The comparison of means tests was used to compare the average memorisation rates according to the different modalities of prominence, clarity and context of placement (see Table 5). This type of test was chosen to

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1 The independence $\chi^2$ test shows that the number of people that memorised a brand is not equally distributed for the 17 brands. There is a significant link between the placed brands and, on the one hand, the average recall per brand ($\chi^2 = 233.5$, ddl = 16, $p < 0.0001$) and, on the other hand, the recognition rate per brand ($\chi^2 = 295.5$, ddl = 16, $p < 0.0001$).
Influence of prominence, clarity and context of placement on the mean memorisation rates per brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Tes Parents</th>
<th>Wonderbra</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recall rate</td>
<td>Recognition rate</td>
<td>Recall rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 occurrence</td>
<td>14.04%</td>
<td>32.17%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 occurrences</td>
<td>27.17%</td>
<td>54.07%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;2 occurrences</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 1.89*</td>
<td>t = 2.51**</td>
<td>t = 10.2***</td>
<td>t = 5.1***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 1.71*</td>
<td>z = 2.06**</td>
<td>z = 1.51</td>
<td>z = 1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a verse</td>
<td>14.04%</td>
<td>32.17%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a refrain</td>
<td>27.17%</td>
<td>54.07%</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 1.89*</td>
<td>t = 2.51**</td>
<td>t = 10.2***</td>
<td>t = 5.1***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 1.71*</td>
<td>z = 2.06**</td>
<td>z = 1.51</td>
<td>z = 1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention in a rhyme</td>
<td>16.52%</td>
<td>37.44%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without rhyme</td>
<td>31.10%</td>
<td>54.07%</td>
<td>36.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 1.25</td>
<td>t = 0.75</td>
<td>t = 0.46</td>
<td>t = 0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 1.22</td>
<td>z = 1.05</td>
<td>z = 0.25</td>
<td>z = 0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very clear enunciation</td>
<td>17.98%</td>
<td>38.74%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear enunciation</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>14.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediocre enunciation</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 0.47</td>
<td>F = 0.61</td>
<td>F = 1.54</td>
<td>F = 1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ² = 2.33</td>
<td>χ² = 2.33</td>
<td>χ² = 3.87</td>
<td>χ² = 4.89*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete mention</td>
<td>17.37%</td>
<td>38.28%</td>
<td>8.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviated mention</td>
<td>23.50%</td>
<td>42.90%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 0.49</td>
<td>t = 0.26</td>
<td>t = 0.02</td>
<td>t = 0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 0.52</td>
<td>z = 0.52</td>
<td>z = 1.01</td>
<td>z = 1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery slow</td>
<td>28.18%</td>
<td>51.25%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery normal</td>
<td>11.18%</td>
<td>30.40%</td>
<td>16.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery rapid</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 3.40***</td>
<td>t = 2.59**</td>
<td>t = 1.25</td>
<td>t = 1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 2.35**</td>
<td>z = 2.14**</td>
<td>z = 1.61</td>
<td>z = 1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive context</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative context</td>
<td>16.59%</td>
<td>37.93%</td>
<td>3.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral context</td>
<td>23.55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 0.75</td>
<td>t = 0.31</td>
<td>t = 0.94</td>
<td>t = 0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 0.78</td>
<td>z = 0.39</td>
<td>z = 0.89</td>
<td>z = 0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional features</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>23.50%</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No additional features</td>
<td>20.28%</td>
<td>42.55%</td>
<td>11.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t = 1.32</td>
<td>t = 1.65</td>
<td>t = 0.65</td>
<td>t = 0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>z = 1.31</td>
<td>z = 1.57</td>
<td>z = 0.36</td>
<td>z = 0.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Recall and recognition rates are based on 119 observations of 17 brands placed in 2 songs. The parametric test is the Student t test. The F test is used when there are two sub-samples. The non-parametric test is the Mann-Whitney U test. Kruskal Wallis χ² test is used when there are more than two sub-samples.

* Significant at 10%; ** Significant at 5%; *** Significant at 1%.
facilitate the comparison of the memorisation rate with those found in previous studies. The small number of brands indicates, however, that we should be cautious in the analysis of the results.

In accordance with hypothesis H1, prominence of brands seems to influence respondents’ memorisation even though this conclusion must be qualified, depending on the manner in which prominence was measured. Brands that are mentioned several times were memorised more, in both the spontaneous and the assisted manner. This was observed for each song individually, and at the aggregate level ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$ for the parametric and the non-parametric tests, respectively). In our sample, the correlation between the number of mentions and the presence of the brand in the refrain was very strong (since all the brands that are mentioned several times are present in the refrains). At the global level, the recall and recognition rates were 9.6% and 26%, respectively, for the brands in the verse, against 29.4% and 57.8%, respectively, for the brands placed in the refrains. These differences seem significant ($p < 0.01$), according to both parametric and non-parametric tests. According to the results, repeating leads to better memorisation. This however should be nuanced, because very few of the brands in the sample were used without rhyme. To sum up, it is possible to conclude that prominence of placement has an impact on the number of memorised brands, via the criteria of the number of mentions or presence in the refrain.

Among the different measures of the clarity of placement (H2), only the speed of the text seemed significant, except for the MC Solaar song, which has a significantly quicker delivery (no brand is mentioned slowly). In Delerm’s song, recall and recognition were superior for the brands that are pronounced slowly. The cognitive treatment of information should therefore be facilitated by slow pronunciation, even though we should remain cautious when interpreting this criterion, given its subjective nature. At the global level, we observed significant differences in memorisation (at the 5% level) between the three levels of speed in pronunciation. The results lead us to reject hypotheses H3a and H3b. More or less positive contexts of placement, and the quotation of a complementary characteristic, seemed to have no influence on the memorisation of brands.

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2 In addition, the number of mentions of a brand seems significantly correlated with its average recall rate ($r = 0.59, p < 0.05$) and recognition rate ($r = 0.63, p < 0.01$).

3 Only the non-parametric test in the MC Solaar song does not allow us to reject the null hypothesis at the 10% level. We should note however that, in this song, only one brand is mentioned several times.
Hypotheses H4 to H9 aimed to determine the influence of musical characteristics on the number of memorised brands, and on attitude towards the use of brands in songs. A significant difference was observed in the number of brands memorised for each of the songs: spontaneous recall of 1.81 brands for the song by Vincent Delerm, against 0.66 for the song by MC Solaar ($p < 0.0001$). The difference is as clear for assisted recall: 3.87 brands compared to 1.82 brands ($p < 0.0001$). Table 6 details the number of memorised brands difference tests with regard to familiarity with, and appreciation of, the song and its singer, preferred musical genre and involvement in music.

The hypotheses concerning the influence of the familiarity of the song and of the singer on the memorisation of brands seem corroborated.\(^4\) In the total sample, those who correctly identified the artists quoted significantly more brands, both spontaneously ($p < 0.001$) and in the assisted manner ($p < 0.005$). Being familiar with the artist undoubtedly leads people to pay more attention to his/her songs and lyrics. At the global level, familiarity with the song influences the memorisation of brands. Those persons that have heard a song often have already been exposed to the brands, and have certainly memorised some of them. On the other hand, the difference between persons that had never heard the song and those that had heard it rarely is not significant. We should note that familiarity with the song improves spontaneous memorisation in particular. The assisted memorisation of the individuals familiar with the song of MC Solaar was not greater. This can be explained by the fact that the brands memorised during the previous listening had already been quoted spontaneously.

The variables of approval of the song and approval of the artist had a strong influence on memorisation. Individuals who appreciated both the song and its singer spontaneously quoted more brands ($p < 0.01$) and also recognised more ($p < 0.01$). A positive attitude increases the interest in the singer and his/her environment, in the broad sense. Listening becomes more attentive, even though the exposure effect should not be excluded. The effects of song appreciation and artist appreciation were particularly observed in the song by Vincent Delerm, the approval scores for which showed a greater variance. Although appreciating the musical genre of

\(^4\) A correlation exists between familiarity with the song and familiarity with the interpreter. It should be noted that familiarity with the song is a simple declarative variable (without justification), while the ‘familiarity with the interpreter’ variable requires the respondent to name this artist without mistake.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Tes parents</th>
<th>Wonderbra</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number brands (recall)</td>
<td>Number brands (recognition)</td>
<td>Number brands (recall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with song</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( F = 9.8^{**} )</td>
<td>( \chi^2 = 12.9^{***} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with artist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( t = 3.8^{***} )</td>
<td>( t = 2.1^{**} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of song</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( F = 3.9^{**} )</td>
<td>( \chi^2 = 5.8^{*} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of interpreter</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( F = 4.7^{**} )</td>
<td>( \chi^2 = 7.6^{*} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred musical genre</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( t = 1.30 )</td>
<td>( t = 1.97^{*} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in music</td>
<td></td>
<td>( z = 1.67^{*} )</td>
<td>( z = 2.17^{**} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Mean number of memorised brands, based on 119 observations for each song. The mean for the two songs is based on 238 observations. The parametric test is the Student \( t \) test. The \( F \) test is used when there are two sub-samples. The non-parametric test is the Mann-Whitney \( U \) test. Kruskal Wallis \( \chi^2 \) test is used when there are more than two sub-samples.

Correlation coefficient used is the Pearson coefficient.

* Significant at 10%; ** Significant at 5%; *** Significant at 1%.
the songs improves brand memorisation in the total sample \((p < 0.01)\),
this influence is not significant for each song individually, particularly in
the case of those individuals who appreciated rap: when they listened
to MC Solaar’s song, they did not memorise more brands than the other
individuals.

To test the influence of interest in music, a mean involvement score was
determined on the basis of the three items in the scale. This involvement
score varies in the same direction as the number of brands memorised in
the assisted manner \((p < 0.01)\), but not in the spontaneous manner. This
may mean that more interested people have greater implicit memorisa-
tion, or pay more attention to the questionnaire (insofar as the recognition
is based on a relatively long list of brands). Correlation was clearly stronger
for the MC Solaar song. It is sometimes difficult for individuals that do not
appreciate rap to listen to a rap song attentively. The persons that are most
interested probably show more curiosity and more attention.

The hypotheses that refer to the attitude towards the use of brands in
songs were also tested with comparison of means tests (Table 7). Being
familiar with the artist or with the song did not have an influence on
attitude. For the total sample, a more positive attitude was observed only
in individuals who had rarely heard the songs (but this however was not
confirmed by the non-parametric test). Exposure to brands therefore does
not make it possible to improve the attitude towards their placement in
a song. On the other hand, the use of brands in the two songs was eval-
uated more positively by the individuals who appreciated, moderately or
strongly, the song and its singer. This is interesting because it tends to
show that the use of an appreciated celebrity might, under certain condi-
tions, generate favourable attitudes towards brand placement. Lastly, the
influence of musical genre observed for the total sample would be worth
analysing in more detail, since this influence was not found for each song
individually. Also, contrary to what we had supposed, strong interest in
music does not decrease the attitude concerning the use of brands. The
correlation between the two variables was indeed negative, but not signifi-
cant. The absence of a curvilinear relationship was also checked.
Typology and general perception of placements

The last stage of the research aims to establish a profile of those individuals that are the most receptive to brand placements and mentions – that is, those that memorised the largest number of brands, and those that judged positively the presence of brands in songs. The first typology is based on the total number of brands spontaneously quoted by each individual for
the two songs. A hierarchical ascendant classification (Ward’s algorithm) enabled us to distinguish between one and five classes. Based on the variation between the indices of fusion or level of aggregation (Donada & Mbengue 2001), two distinct classes were retained. Class 1 includes 69 individuals who spontaneously memorised fewer than three brands. Class 2 groups 50 individuals who memorised three or more brands. The profiles of these two classes were then compared. The individuals of class 2 are more familiar with the songs \((t = 1.73^*, p = 0.083)\) and their singer \((t = 3.48^{**}, p = 0.001)\). In addition, two opinions diverge significantly, depending on the categories. The individuals who memorised the largest number of brands refuted the statement that ‘nobody pays attention to brand placement’, and their response was significantly different from other individuals \((t = 3.15^{**}, p = 0.002)\). On the other hand, they considered that this practice did create a problem, ‘insofar as one does not know if the artist received compensation for mentioning the brand’ \((t = –2.39^{**}, p = 0.018)\). Memorisation of the brands does not automatically lead to the acceptance of placement.

The same procedure was replicated on the basis of the mean score of attitude towards the use of brands in the songs studied. Class 1 includes 40 individuals whose mean score is lower than 3, and class 2 includes 79 other individuals. The individuals in class 2 appreciated more both the songs \((t = 5.42^{**}, p < 0.001)\) and their singer \((t = 4.47^{**}, p < 0.001)\). Opinions differ greatly between the two classes. For the persons that judged positively the integration of brands in the two songs, brand quotations appeared less inevitable \((t = –3.6^{**}, p < 0.001)\), more acceptable \((t = –2.14^{**}, p = 0.035)\), more successful \((t = –2.27^{**}, p = 0.025)\) and manifested more creative freedom on the part of the author \((t = –1.84^{**}, p = 0.07)\). It therefore appears that a favourable attitude towards brand placement and brand mentions in general translates into a more positive judgement of the concrete use of a brand in a song. The same effect was observed by Andrews (1989) for advertisements, and by Gupta and Gould (1997) for brand placement in cinema.

**Discussion and conclusion**

This research sheds light on the effectiveness of brand mentions and placements in songs. Our study enabled us to evaluate the memorisation
of 17 brands present in two songs: ‘Les Parents’ by Vincent Delerm and ‘Wonderbra’ by MC Solaar. The recall rate of brands varied from 0 to 36.1%, while the recognition rate varied from 9.2% to 68.9%. These rates are significantly lower than those that Ong and Meri (1994), and d’Astous and Chartier (2000) observed in the case of placements in films, but close to those observed by Lehu (2005).

The influence of two large categories of variable was underlined: the characteristics of placement and the attitude of individuals towards music. The prominence of placement, as measured by the number of occurrences of the brand and its presence in the refrain, and the flow of the text – that is, the speed of delivery of the name of the brand – are the two placement characteristics that make it possible to improve the memorisation of the brands mentioned in the songs. The brands that listeners remembered most, in both the spontaneous and assisted manner, are those placed in the refrain (and therefore repeated several times), and those that are pronounced slowly. On the other hand, no significant impact of clarity or context of placement was observed. This result is interesting, since it seems to suggest that it is pointless for the announcer to control very precisely the conditions of use of the brand. Imposing strict conditions on the use of the brand in the placement contract (complete mention of the name of the brand in a positive context, mention of a particular feature of the brand, use in a rhyme, etc.) does not improve significantly the memorisation of a brand. Simply by making sure that the brand is mentioned at least twice, with a flow that is not too rapid, the announcer can ensure high memorisation, and leave the artist free with his text. Therefore, there is not necessarily any incompatibility between the freedom of the artist and the effectiveness of placement.

As for the music experience and the attitude of individuals towards music, several influence factors were noted. The number of memorised brands was higher if the individual was already familiar with the artist, and if he/she appreciated both the song and the artist. Some differences were observed for the two songs. The effect of approval on memorisation seemed weaker for the rap song. Liking rap or the song did not improve memorisation. Lastly, a positive correlation was observed between the

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5 The average recall and recognition rates are 21.3% and 75.6%, respectively. However, the study deals with placements presented out of their context, and was conducted on students familiar with the topic of the study.
number of recognised brands and the listeners’ interest in music. This leads to some managerial implications. Placement in songs appears above all to be a means of communication that addresses a target of people interested in music, and even passionate about it. Placement seems particularly effective when it targets the fans of an artist. Conversely, it is a communication method of little relevance for the wider audience, which is not very interested in a particular musical genre or in music more generally. Moreover, rap proves an interesting genre for placement insofar as, contrary to a certain general opinion, it has some effect beyond the rap community, as long as it addresses music fans who are familiar with the interpreter of the song.

This study also examined the perception of brand placement. A positive evaluation of a song is thus transmitted to the attitude towards the use of brands. To some extent this is coherent with the conclusions of Simpkins and Smith (1974), who noted that the diffusion of music that is congruent with the auditors’ preferences greatly influences the evaluation of the source of the message. Inclusion of brands is also judged more positively in a song that is interpreted by an artist whom we appreciate. This underlines the fact that the key stage in placement in music should be the selection of the partner artist or band. The effectiveness of placement, in terms of both memorisation of the brand and attitude towards placement, depends directly on the appreciation of the song and of its interpreter. Any placement contract should therefore be based on a precise study of the musical universe and the audience of the artist. In general, the presence of brands in songs is relatively well accepted, if it is supposed to result from the creative freedom of an artist. It appears also that the individuals who memorised the greatest number of brands were the least indifferent to placements. They were curious to know whether the artist received compensation from the firm that owned the brand. Beyond memorisation, it therefore seems necessary to integrate the measures of attitude to evaluate the effectiveness of any placement.

The originality of this study lies in its highlighting a new field that is potentially interesting for the advertisers. The results address partly the continuity of studies on the impact of sponsoring, and the effectiveness of placements, in the cinema, by confirming, for example, the influence of prominence of placement on the memorisation of brands. Given the specificity of the musical experience, the results also highlight the importance
of affective variables. Memorisation and acceptance of placement in a song are strongly linked to appreciation of the song and its interpreter. The choice of the artist therefore constitutes a major part of placement, and in this we concur to some extent with the issues addressed in studies on the effectiveness of a partnership between a brand and a celebrity (Atkin & Block 1983; McCracken 1989; Agrawal & Kamakura 1995). The results of our study also point to the difficulty of controlling all aspects of this new means of communication.

In spite of these contributions, this study has several limitations. Even though it focused on the mention of real brands in two existing songs, its internal validity could be improved. The operationalisation of some variables should be refined, particularly those subjective variables that refer to the clarity of the presence of brands. The influence of other variables on memorisation should also be identified and analysed. The integration of individual characteristics and, above all, brand characteristics (typicality, familiarity, awareness …) therefore represents a future research direction. The methodology we applied was intended to limit the biases inherent in a quantitative study. However, listening to two songs may have influenced positively the evaluation insofar as, according to the effect of simple exposure highlighted by Zajonc (1980), exposure to a stimulus renders the stimulus more familiar and leads to a more favourable judgement. This bias seems limited here, since the song by MC Solaar received a mean grade of 2.2 out of 5. As Ganassali and Moscarola (2005) underline, internet surveys can lead to problems of cover and representativeness. The administration of our questionnaire did not allow us to control completely the composition of the sample.

On the other hand, external validity is limited to memorisation in the very short term of brands placed in songs. Likewise, only two musical genres – French chanson and rap – were studied here. However, it seems that the lovers of other musical genres are less favourable to the presence of brands in songs. It is therefore necessary to remain cautious about generalising the results. Additional studies should be conducted. Measuring memorisation in both the medium term and in other musical genres should be undertaken. Memorisation in the case of exclusive placements should also be tested. The two songs used in this study contain several brands, and are thus not representative of all forms of mentions and placements. Lastly, beyond explicit memorisation, the impact of exposure on
attitude towards brands should be studied. Although our study has highlighted the link between an artist and the attitude towards the presence of brands in a song, it did not enable us to measure the evolution of the attitude towards each of the brands. The evolution of brand image, as well as the possible transfer of associations between an artist and a brand, remains to be studied. Works on the image, extension and alliances of brands would lead to a better understanding, not only of how placement can modify the associations with the brand, but also of how it could affect the image or the ‘perceived authenticity’ of the singer. More generally, it would be interesting to understand more the influence of the artists on the consumer behaviour of their admirers.

One of the main future research directions will be to analyse placement from the angle of experiential marketing, following the work of Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006) on entertainment marketing. The contact with a brand is made at the moment when the consumer lives an experience of divertissement in the broad sense. Musical experience often has a strong emotional content (Russo-Marie & Rossille 2001). Taking into account the context and the characteristics of this experience would enable us to understand how the placement is perceived, interpreted, memorised and integrated in the representation that individuals have of a brand.

In conclusion, brands are more and more present in songs. Whether they are used as an element of everyday life, as an emblem of a category of products, as a reference to a way of life, or as a sign of recognition between the initiated, they often have an evocative power. In a word, the brand conveys a set of positive and/or negative connotations. All this would be of no importance if the mention of a brand were the result of the creative freedom of the author alone. However, such mentions now receive financial or other kinds of compensation more and more often, or they are the subject of negotiated contracts that pre-date the writing of the song. If brand placements in songs continue to develop, the term ‘commercial music’ could really become relevant. This recalls the concept of listening merchandise developed by Theodor Adorno, the German philosopher and musicologist. The ethical issues raised by brand placement should not be ignored.
Appendix 1: Brand quotations and placements in anglophone songs

- ‘Tiffany’s! / Cartier! / Black Star! / Frost, Gorham! / Talk to me Harry Winston / Tell me all about it’, ‘Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend’, Marilyn Monroe, 1953
- ‘And my love is bigger than a Cadillac / I try to show it and you drive me back’, ‘Not Fade Away’, Buddy Holly, 1957
- ‘Fun fun now that daddy took the t-bird* away’, ‘Fun, Fun, Fun’, Beach Boys, 1960 (* Ford Thunderbird).
- ‘Cadillac, Cadillac / Long and dark shiny and black / Open up your engines let ’em roar / Tearing up the highway like a big old dinosaur’, ‘Cadillac Ranch’, Bruce Springsteen, 1980
- ‘I wear my Adidas when I rock the beat / On stage front page every show I go / It’s Adidas on my feet high top or low / My Adidas … My Adidas …’, ‘My Adidas’, Run-DMC, 1986
- ‘All we wanna do is party / And buy everyone at the bar Bacardi / Black Barbie dressed in Bulgari / I’m try’na leave in somebody’s Ferrari’, ‘The Jump Off’, Lil’Kim, 2003
- ‘You mix a little Coke with a little Dom Perignon / And a little Hennessy / You know we fine to carry on’, ‘Disco Inferno’, 50 Cent, 2004
- ‘I came to have a party / Open up the Bacardi / Feeling so hot tamale’, ‘It’s Like That’, Mariah Carey, 2005
- ‘And I’m ready to talk naughty in Veronica’s ear / She erotic and it’s hot, saw Heineken beer’, ‘Got Some Teeth’, Obie Trice, 2005
- ‘Nothin chillin at the Holidae In / Me and my peeps won’t you bring four of your friends / Feel on each other and sip on some Hen* / One thing leading to another let the party begin’, ‘Holidae In’, Chingy, 2005 (* Hennessy)
- ‘The real me is a southern girl / With her Levi’s on and an open heart / Wish I could save the world / Like I was supergirl’, ‘With You’, Jessica Simpson, 2005
Appendix 2: Brand quotations and placements in francophone songs

- « Salut à toi le people corse / Salut aux filles du Crazy Horse / Salut à toi la Vache Qui Rit / Salut à Laurel et Hardy », ‘Salut à toi’, Bérurier Noir, 1986
- « Et l’enfant est tombé / Et son Big Jim a roulé à ses pieds », ‘Attentat’, Jean-Louis Aubert, 1989
- « Stan Smith aux pieds le regard froid / Ils scrutaient la salle le trois-quart en cuir roulé autour du bras / Ray Ban sur la tête survêtement Tacchini / Pour les plus class les mocassins Nébuloni », ‘Je danse le mia’, IAM, 1993
- « Ma rue est bourrée de vices / A chacun ses délices, à chacun sa 8-6 », ‘Dans ma rue’, Doc Gyneco, 1996
- « Je me brise au whisky glace / Mais je courtise avec classe / Je m’allume au Malibu / Malade pas beau quand j’ai trop bu », ‘Machistador’, Mathieu Chédid, 1997
- « La mouise ça renforce les liens et quand la musique sonne / Partout les groupies font péter l’standard sur nos Ericsson », ‘Une affaire de famille’, Arsenik, 2000
- « D’abord on Playskool / Puis on Playmobil / Puis on Playstation / Et enfin on plait aux filles », ‘Et enfin on plait aux filles’*, Cédric Atlan, 2003 (* the promotional single distributed to the media was baptised ‘Playskool’)
• « [...] iPod dans l’intérieur poche / Du baladeur, fait passer le fil par la manche / Au bord de la Manche où tout les jours sont dimanche / Piétine les flaques d’eau comme pour prendre ma revanche / Ma revanche sur les trottoirs, trop tard / Petit Apple commence la lecture aléatoire », ‘Lecture aléatoire’, Médine, 2006

References


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