

## Film music in advertising: An intertextual approach

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# Film music in advertising: An intertextual approach

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## ABSTRACT

What can commercial advertisements gain from creative ‘borrowing’ of film music? One probable answer is that it vests the product advertised with a more powerful emotional impact. But what are the limitations of effective intertextuality between film and advertising established through the use of a film soundtrack? The present study of 100 television ads (1960–2016) offers 4 models of intertextuality through the analysis of musical patterns, opening up a hitherto unexplored line of research.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Film music; advertising music; intertextuality; borrowed interest; TV ads

## 1. Introduction

The use of preexisting music in ad soundtracks is a widespread practice in advertising today. Long gone are the days when nearly all television ads had original music, created by a composer who sought to link the soundtrack directly to the images presented in the commercial. Nowadays, the preexisting music used in advertising comes from musical artists, groups, and bands currently in vogue, although sometimes classic hits may also be used. The formats of these soundtracks vary, from original recordings, to covers, to ‘free covers’ (Palencia-Lefler 2009, 101–04). Taylor (2012) reveals how popular music and advertising became mutually dependent industries across a century of change, forcing to rethink what we know about the popular arts and consumer culture. In that sense, the history of popular music is replete with relationships to commercial enterprise, licensing music for TV ads (Klein 2008).

However, it is not common practice for advertising campaigns to feature film music in their ads. The few cases that exist are perhaps the product of the ‘spirit of originality’ that characterizes advertising professionals. This article explores why the practice of using film music in advertising is exceptional and, as a result, lacking in established rules. Indeed, there is no academic literature or research on this phenomenon published in any country in the world. Is an advertisement inspired by a film deemed less creative, particularly if it goes further than mere ‘inspiration’ and borrows its imagery or soundtrack?

Without giving away the results of the present study, it seems reasonable to suggest that the use of film music poses problems for advertising creators and audiences, particularly because of the prior existence of certain values associated with the film that need to be brought into sync with the persuasive intent of the advertising. Of course, the film and the ad have their own distinct storyboards. The film soundtrack may have been used for a different

purpose previously and the advertising needs music of its own, music that is not associated with any other image. The rights to Hollywood film music may also be expensive or unaffordable. Film directors and film score composers may withhold their permission or prefer not to be associated with advertising, a field considered to be beneath the cinematic art. The phenomenon explored here raises many unanswered questions, particularly since film music is only used in advertising in very exceptional cases, but in those cases the end result of the ad is often highly positive and achieves considerable audience acceptance – which, in turn, poses another unanswered question.

## 2. Theoretical background

The concept of 'intertextuality', a term coined by the philosopher and author Julia Kristeva in 1966, was originally posited in the context of literary criticism (Worton and Still 1990). Later, its use would expand into linguistics and semiotics, pushing the boundaries of the concept to encompass what some authors refer to as 'interdiscursivity' (López Mora 2007; Villalobos 2003). For Kristeva, intertextuality 'is a process, a fluid state of oscillating interpretations that seeks to expose the plurality of meaning, both in texts and, indeed, at the most basic level of the signifier' (Butler 2014, 129–130).

Intertextuality is in fact a feature of the 'dependence' of a discourse on other discourses, through the inference and deduction of content that can be added to the initial information. Intertextuality may take the form of a literal quotation, a veiled allusion, or a direct or indirect tribute to a film or a cinematic style, or to a musical genre; in short, when the message involves an intentional combination of discourses (López Mora 2007, 48). The concept should therefore not be restricted to discussions of literary works; it is also present in discussions of film, painting, music, architecture, photography, and virtually every other type of cultural and artistic production (Allen 2000, 174). All texts, both verbal and non-verbal (literary, historical, philosophical, music, films, or advertisements), interact with each other; no text is entirely autonomous, because nobody can create work independently of the cultural context in which that work exists, and this is the basis of the concept of intertextuality (Zengin 2016, 303). Some authors, like Miani (2016), have proposed analytical tools for studying intertextuality between music and language. To music is attributed a mode of normal, natural, or magic meaning, always linked to language, although for Barthes, music and language should be kept mutually autonomous (1977, 180).

In film studies, 'intertextuality' is described as the way in which a film (or text) 'refers' to other films (or texts). In film music studies, intertextuality refers to film music that references other music used previously in another audiovisual work (a film, short, or advertisement), or alternatively in a recording, score, or live performance (Harrison 2014, 214).

Intertextuality in advertising (in the case of the current study, it may be more appropriate to speak of intermediality or interdiscursivity, a semiological relationship between a literary or audiovisual work and a painting or music) has existed since the origins of the industry. Advertising professionals have always sought to go further than merely conveying the explicit message that the ad is required to transmit. Advertising thus often draws on films in a quest to find a shared universe between the spectator and the creator of the message (García and Jiménez 2011, 84). This is why many advertisers have turned to cinema as a source of inspiration to create little works of art (Jiménez and

Elías 2013, 157). In such cases, they would become films within advertising films that are marked by numerous cinematic references, whether through a specific theme, a character, or a director, in a genuine symbiosis (159). For others, intertextuality 'is a parasitical technique, which exploits the talent of others for its own benefit, reusing discoveries, sucking ideas dry' (Segarra 2001, 63). On this basis, the hypothesis proposed here is that in each advertisement there are direct or indirect reminiscences of other discursive genres. This cooperation of advertising with music, literature, or cinema is what allows an ad (graphic or audiovisual) to become an interdiscursive creation.

The current study examines the phenomenon of intertextuality between film and advertising exclusively through music, without analyzing complementary aspects related to the imagery, storyline, scenic design, or graphic design.

Film music has an identity of its own, separate from the image and the plot, and must meet both the requirements of the *audiovisual contract* and the demands of its creator (Mainer 2013, 265). The film music composers know that music could quickly and effectively communicate geography, history, class, and race. This means that for advertising, communicating an identity or place is easy to accomplish, and it can speak to an audience's actual location (Kassabian 2009). The film music creation process is generally complex, nearly always drawing from the script and from certain images, based on which the composer must create a suitable musical atmosphere. Film music composers may also receive instructions from the director, in addition to those in the script, but in any case, it is clear that they do not work on the basis of a brief with commercial objectives. Conversely, a composer of advertising music is subject to just such a brief.

Music facilitates the creation of meanings and images associated with the product. In this way, advertising draws on the associative function or 'atmosphere creation' when an ad presents a product targeting a specifically defined audience, adorning it with music that is more representative of that audience (Pérez and Hormigos 2012, 76). For their part, film composers also seek to associate their creative ideas with the atmosphere created by the images, but they do not consider inclusive or exclusive target audiences; they only consider generic audiences whom they must engage with an atmosphere fully integrated into the film and introduce into a world removed from reality.

Film and advertising composers face similar difficulties in relation to acceptance of their work. The fashions and tastes of their audiences completely circumscribe their freedom of action. In the case of advertising, it is important for composers to be fully familiar with consumer tastes, since most consumers already have a very clear idea of the ads they like and those they do not (Stone, Besser, and Lewis 2000; Zander 2006). Graakjaer and Jantzen (2009) make it clear how both advertising research and musicological research is necessary for the study of music in advertising.

Obviously, good music, whether original or preexisting, can contribute to the effectiveness of the ad because it enhances its appeal, finding a place in the consumer's memory that can outlast the campaign itself (Palencia-Lefler 2009, 93). Without music, advertising loses much of its persuasive force, and thus the evolution of advertising cannot be understood without considering the evolution of its music (90). The same is true of film. Films without music would not be films; we would return to the silent films of a century ago, because when we think of the persuasive force of cinema we think of music, the key element capable of transforming the cinematic image.

MacInnis and Park (1991) identify a peculiar characteristic of advertising music that they refer to as 'fit', which they define as 'consumers' subjective perceptions of the music's relevance or appropriateness to the central ad message' (162). In a sense, they suggest that the 'pertinence' of the music has a powerful effect on the viewer's 'attention' to the ad message (Olsen 2002; Palencia-Lefler 2010). In this respect, lyrics or words in the ad music – if any – are not essential, or are only essential when the subject has a prominent level of involvement with the brand (Park and Young 1986, 14). By the way, Klein (2009, 99) is interested in how the contextualization of songs in commercials impact on this process, 'how the use of music in advertising constrains, highlights, or suppresses meanings that audiences have the ability to create'.

Another key factor in the use of music in advertising is 'congruence', a quality that defines how appropriate a song is, and how well it fits the message and theme of the ad (Hung 2000; Vitouch 2001; Allan 2006; Oakes 2007; Lavack, Thakor, and Bottausci 2008). This quality will be essential when judging the effectiveness of 'borrowing' music from other images: the resulting ad must aim for maximum 'congruence' to achieve the desired effect. In addition to congruence, we also need to analyze what is referred to as 'ad context', a quality that defines whether the ad style fits the specific product (Janssens and Pelsmacker 2005; Lusensky 2010), which is essential for creating advertising with film music and images.

On the other hand, Huron (1989) suggests that there are six basic ways in which music can contribute to an effective advertisement: (1) entertainment; (2) structure continuity; (3) memorability; (4) lyrical language; (5) targeting; and (6) authority establishment (559). If we apply Huron's analysis to advertising with film music, we could conclude that it clearly supports and enhances 'entertainment', 'memorability', and 'authority establishment', while greatly complicating 'structure continuity' and 'lyrical language', and potentially undermining 'targeting' as it may limit the audience to fans of the film.

It is also interesting to reflect on the model posited by Hall (2002), founded on Perception, Experience, and Memory (P-E-M). The author of the current study concurs with Hall's argument that the critical function of advertising is to frame perception (24). Music is essential in this phase of creating expectation, and its memorability is important for guiding consumer choices. The more recognizable and memorable the melody, the rhythm, and the lyrics are, the more direct the inducement process will be. Dibb et al. (2006, 499) suggest that the use of music in advertising is the key to a persuasive sequence of events referred to as A.I.D.A. (Attraction, Interest, Desire, Action). In relation to the second factor in the sequence, some authors speak of 'borrowed interest'; in the case of this study, this refers to an interest borrowed from the music in the process of evoking emotions that contributes to making the ad more pleasant and positive in the eyes of consumer.

The Collins Dictionary (2017) defines the advertising and marketing concept of 'borrowed interest' as 'the intentional association of a consumer product or service with an unrelated theme or topic'. It thus represents an association intended to attract attention, with an unexpected result, whereby advertisers 'borrow' consumers' interest in something unrelated to the brand while promoting a product or service. Therefore, the fit of the 'borrowed interest' appeal is more likely to affect the consumer's perception of his or her personal benefits (Campbell 1995, 231). It is a marketing tactic that has been used extensively over the last thirty years, and suggests that the product or service

advertised has no actual value, or that in any case the advertising professionals have been unable to find a suitable alternative in the campaign or have taken an easy option lacking in creativity. The point is that they succeed in getting the advertiser to approve it. But in the advertising industry, this tactic has some detractors who argue that it is a mediocre creative solution, because the differentiation of the product should be found in the product itself and its context, and not outside that context (in our case, in an unrelated fiction film). Borrowed interest ads may represent a key boost to the campaign, but should not form the core element of an advertising strategy.

One plausible hypothesis for the current study is that film music offers the advertisement a 'borrowed interest', transferring to the product the emotional value associated with the music from the film. If the film music is chosen correctly and is successfully matched with the target market for the product, the advertising will aim for an intentional, unconscious association that triggers the consumer's memories associated with the film. The advantage of familiar music is that it does not need to be heard in its entirety to be remembered; a few simple notes, voices, rhythms, or beats can convey the essence of the emotions more quickly and effectively. And this is a basic quality of advertising.

But it is important to remember that if advertising borrows from the film an interest external to the product, this poses another obstacle to acceptance of the ad message if the film (or its music) does not have a sufficient guarantee of acceptance by the ad's target audience. Generally, a disliked song will have unpredictable consequences on consumers, and may even induce an unfavorable mood that could provoke a negative response to the brand (Craton and Lantos 2011, 402). Nor is a positive result assured even if the consumer likes the film, 'because the acquisition of attitudes was dramatically reduced in the good-mood condition, being happy may be a potent defense mechanism against unwelcome influences in advertising' (Walther and Grigoriadis 2004, 771). What does seem certain is that nostalgia, through the use of old songs, can play a highly positive persuasive role in advertising, as such songs have a nostalgia-inducing ability to mix emotions, time periods, and places (Baker and Kennedy 1994, 171). Thus, ads charged with nostalgia tend to evoke pleasant memories in viewers, as 'they automatically filter out thoughts that are unpleasant to maintain or enhance individual self-identity, generating a more positive valenced set of thoughts' (Muehling and Sprott 2004, 46). The use of non-contemporary music, especially if it contains relevant lyrics, generates a better attitude toward the ad and the brand (Chou and Lien 2010, 317). Roehm (2001) draws the conclusion that ads that use an 'instrumental version' of a popular song are more likely to engage the consumer with the brand than ads that use a 'vocal version' of the song. The current study will show that Roehm's conclusion is fully supported by the case of ads that use film music, where it is also more common to use instrumental versions than versions with lyrics.

By this point, it would have become clear that there are difficulties associated with the use of film music in advertising. The most notable of these is the complexity involved in the different storylines and the multiplicity of variables entailed in 'borrowing' from a film for an ad. Both in cases where consumers like the music of the film and its values and in cases where consumers dislike the music, the results for the new ad are uncertain, potentially ranging from excessive evocation or uncontrolled nostalgia to compulsive rejection. Other difficulties affecting all preexisting music relate to the fact that the use of 'customized' song compositions enhances the

communicative force of brand personalities (Saulpaugh, Huffman, and Ahmadi 2012, 160) and therefore, borrowing film music that has previously served a different cause is not very appealing, unless there are very good arguments for the new customization.

Based on the considerations outlined above, the current study posits the following research questions:

RQ1. In what cases may advertising seek to borrow an interest from a film's music soundtrack?

RQ2. Can a pattern be identified in ads that use film music?

RQ3. On what level does 'advertising-film' intertextuality through the music operate?

### **3. Method**

The specific research approach used for the current study is content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick (2014, 159), citing Kerlinger (2000), define this approach as 'a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables'. This set of methods and techniques facilitates the description and systematic interpretation of all kinds of messages and the development of valid inferences about the data collected (Krippendorf 1990, 11). This methodology does, of course, have limitations, particularly because the results focus exclusively on the framework of categories and definitions used in the analysis, and also due to the uncertainty of knowing whether the sample size is sufficient for effective study.

In the case of the current study, the author will analyze a large sample of commercials whose music soundtrack comes from films. This analysis will be conducted systematically, objectively, and quantitatively, within a universe of ads with the aforementioned characteristic.

#### **3.1. Universe and sample**

There are no surveys of television ads that use film music (or of ads in general), either public or private, published anywhere in the world. In view of this difficulty, the audiovisual repository consulted for the current study is YouTube, because it is used worldwide, contains a voluminous collection of ads, and is constantly being updated. As highlighted by Snelson (2011), there is a long tradition in research using samples taken from YouTube; Snelson analyzes 188 peer-reviewed journal articles with 'YouTube' in the title published between 2006 and 2009. The empirical studies group was the largest, with 62 articles and papers containing reports on research studies with methods, data, and results presented. Other interesting examples include the study by Abolhasani, Oakes, and Oakes (2017) involving 472 YouTube postings categorized to identify themes regarding consumers' experience of music in advertisements, and the content analysis by Duman and Locher (2008) of the influence of YouTube on the linguistic presentation of Barack Obama's and Hillary Clinton's 'conversation' metaphor in their campaign videos.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that YouTube is neither exhaustive nor subject to the strict standards of library science, particularly because it is the website's users who are responsible for content, uploading audiovisual material without classifying it systematically. To locate a sample of advertisements containing film music, the YouTube site lacks specific descriptors in video titles, tags, labels, or comments. Dozens of search combinations have therefore been used, and more than 6000 ads have been viewed over the course of 3 months to develop a reliable, sufficient sample. The search criteria contained expressions like 'film music in ads'; 'film -X- in ads in commercials'; 'composer -X- in ads in commercials'; 'soundtrack film/movie -X- in ads in commercials in advertising'; 'advertising in/about/on/concerning movie music'; among many others.

The sample contains 100 television advertisements that were found to be the most representative and diverse, and that fit the parameters established for the study, with no limitations on countries or advertisers, within the period 1960–2016 (Table 1).

Based on the type of research proposed here, its objectives and its complexity, the potential margin for error, time and funding constraints, and the absence of prior research on the topic (Wimmer and Dominick 2014, 104), the sample is considered to be of a sufficient size. For review and analysis, readers can find the 100 ads contained in the sample at: <http://bit.ly/2oUKXJP>

### **3.2. Unit of analysis**

The Unit of Analysis is a television commercial advertising a product or service, of a specific duration (ranging from 15" to 2'), with a soundtrack taken from a commercial film with no advertising interest in the product in question. There are various categories of units of analysis:

- ads with music and images from a preexisting film;
- ads with film music in different formats (original recordings and covers) and with recreated or figurative images of the film;
- ads with film music in different formats (original recordings and covers) and with images unrelated to the film.

Rather than using fixed categories, the analysis operates on a continuum, comparing the variables presented in different proportions:

- higher/lower presence of images from the film in the ad;
- higher/lower presence of music from the film in the ad;
- literal/figurative representation of images from the film in the ad;
- literal/figurative representation of music from the film in the ad.

This research does not include the analysis of commercials advertising a film or musical comedy in which the music from the film advertised is used, or commercials advertising film merchandise that use the music of the film associated with the products advertised. In both these cases, the storytelling has an advertising function based on a brief related to the film in question. Also excluded from the current study are television ads that



**Table 1.** Analysis sample: 100 selected ads (commercial brand\_film theme song).

01_NIKE Live Nothing_TheLastMohican	34_CHICK FIL_SaturdayNightFever	67_SEAT Alhambra_PiratesOfTheCaribbean
02_EL CORTE INGLES_2007_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	35_KIA_Flashdance	68_AIRVOICE Wireless_TheGodfather
03_DURACELL_ChariotsOffFire	36_VICTORIA SECRET_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	69_VOLKSWAGEN_KingKong
04_DOVE Shampoo_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	37_GAP 2000_WestSideStory_America	70_HEINEKEN_JamesBond
05_VODAFONE family and friends_TheGodfather	38_GAP 2000_WestSideStory_Jets	71_OTC Australia 1977_TheWayWeWere
06_VISA 1997_JamesBond	39_M&Ms_IndianaJones	72_HP_StarWars
07_NAB_TheSoundOfMusic_ClimbEvryMountain	40_LINCOLN Finacial_LoveMeTender	73_AQUARIUS_Hair
08_UNION FENOSA_ForrestGump	41_CILLIT BANG_FlashDance	74_Kpyжka Beжero Bear_Troya
09_FIAT 2005_Rocky	42_NHS Quit smoking 2008_JungleBook	75_CRUZCAMPO 1995_LifeOfBrian
10_GILLETTE_SaturdayNightFever_StayingAlive	43_ONE DIRECTION_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	76_CARLSBERG_DirtyDancing
11_VOLKSWAGEN_SinginInTheRain	44_UNITED HEALTHCARE_DirtyDancing_TimeOfMyLife	77_COCA COLA_HomeAlone
12_MAZDA_TheGoodTheBadAndTheUgly	45_PAPA JOHNS Pizza_Ghostbusters	78_WARBURTON_Rocky
13_FREIXENET 1981_SingingInTheRain	46_ELECTRIC HOSPITAL_SingingInTheRain	79_PALMOLIVE_ChariotsOffFire
14_FREIXENET 1977_Cabaret	47_MERCEDES_Big	80_DICKS Sporting good_Rudy_Tryouts
15_SKODA FABIA_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	48_VOLKSWAGEN Passat 2012_StarWars	81_CARLSBERG_TheCrateEscape
16_JBL WirelessHeadphones_Rocky	49_HALIFAX 1993_MoonRiver	82_WHEELER DEALERS_Grease
17_BT 2000_ET	50_USDA Food Pyramid_Pinocchio	83_MILLER High Life Bear_TrueRomance
18_HUGGIES 1998_SingingInTheRain	51_LOTERIA NACIONAL 2003_DoctorZhivago	84_NIKE Leave Nothing_TheGoodTheBadAndTheUgly
19_COCACOLA 2002_HarryPotterChamberSecrets	52_DODDS_StarTrek	85_MASTERCARD_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings
20_PEPSI Max_JamesBond	53_HEINEKEN_JamesBond	86_FORD Taunus 1974 Argentina_7Magnificent
21_ZOO Buenos Aires_FIEVEL_SomewhereOutThere	54_COCACOLA Diet Coke_Indiana Jones	87_BUDWEISER The human bridge carries a truck_Stripes
22_FORUM BCN2004_Dragonheart_ToTheStars	55_DAIRY QUEEN 2001SpaceOdyssey	88_RANGE ROVER 2016_Hatari
23_MARLBORO_7Magnificent	56_PRINGLES_LordOfTheRings	89_BREYERS SMOOTH DREAMY_GoneWithTheWind
24_BEATS_Pinocchio	57_PRINGLES_StarWars	90_GALAXY CHOCOLATE_BreakfastAtTiffanys MoonRiver
25_RENAULT distracciones_TheNeverEndingStory	58_NUTELLA_IndianaJones	91_TOM TOM Runner Cardio 2014_ChariotsOffFire
26_RENAULT Alonso_CheekToCheek_FredAstaire	59_SKYBANC_TheLionKing_HakunaMatata	92_CITROEN XANTIA 1993_ChariotsOffFire
27_VOLKSWAGENGolf_LoveThemeRomeoJuliet	60_WCFF_LesMiserables_IdreamedAdream	93_HYUNDAI 2010_TheSoundOfMusic_YouAre16GoingOn17
28_VOLKSWAGENGolf VersionBrasil_ForrestGump	61_MUTUA MADRILEÑA_Rocky	94_INTEL Pentium III_WestSideStory_IFeelPretty
29_VODAFONE_LetItGo_FrozenDisney	62_BRITISH GAS_MissionImpossible	95_KIA_TheSoundOfMusic_SoLongFarewell
30_COCACOLA 1989_Ghostbusters	63_APPLE Mac_MissionImpossible	96_NIKE Sharapova_WestSideStory_IFeelPretty
31_BANCO GALICIA_Titanic	64_BURGUER KING_TheLionKing	97_CARLTON DRAUGHT_FlashDance
32_ALDI 2015_TheSoundOfMusic_MyFThings	65_BARBASOL COLLECTOR_JurassicWorld	98_RICE KRISPIES_TheWizardOfOz_OverTheRainbow
33_MIKADO_Shark	66_FORD EXPLORER_JurassicWorld	99_PAMPERS_WestSideStory_IFeelPretty
		100_LYNKS24_TheWizardOfOz_OverTheRainbow

parody a film but do not use music (or that use music not taken from the film), as such products do not fall within the scope of this research.

### 3.3. *Categories of analysis*

For the development of the categories of analysis on the relevant coding sheet, the parameters of temporal classification and nomenclature have been taken into account for both for the film and the advertisement.

- Film: name of film/song
- Genre: fiction; musical; musical drama
- Year of Release: 1930–2016
- Time difference between film and ad: n. years
- Ad with Film Soundtrack Year of Release: 1960–2016
- Ad No.: 1 ... 100
- Advertising Brand: name of brand
- Brand Sector: Automobiles; Beverages; Food; Telephone/Electronics/Computers; Banks/Insurance; Perfume/Drug Stores; Clothing/Footwear; Department Stores/Supermarkets; Energy Services; Public Institutions; Tobacco; Miscellaneous
- Duration of Ad: 15"; 20"; 30"; 45"; 60"; 80"; 90"; 100"; 120"; 180"

For the analysis of audiovisual content, the sample is classified according to the diegetic or extradiegetic use of the film music in the ad. Diegetic music (also known as source music or screen music) refers to music that is supposedly objective and realistic and that belongs to the fictional narrative, i.e., it occurs in the time and place of the action, and the source from which this music emanates is present within the narrative itself. Conversely, non-diegetic music (also called unreal, subjective, suggestive, or featured music) has no justified source within the story. Non-diegetic music predominates in all audiovisual products, including advertising. The compilation of the results is also supported by a typological classification of preexisting advertising music (Palencia-Lefler 2009) distinguishing between the classical 'cover' (a new version of a familiar song or instrumental piece, normally changing the musical arrangement and performer but without changing the lyrics), the 'free cover' (a free adaptation of a familiar or existing song, changing the lyrics, in addition to possible changes of arrangement, performer, or both), and the original recording by the artist who performed the song in its day.

The elements of analysis are melody, rhythm, and lyrics; harmony and features intrinsic to the sound are excluded. The resulting classification should allow comparison of data to obtain interesting information, especially related to the use of imagery from the film in the ad (literal, similar, different) in an effort to characterize film-advertising intertextuality.

On the film music used in the ad, the coding sheet contains the following:

- Primary Classification: Diegetic/Non-diegetic
- Film Music Melody: Not used/Used (0–10)
- Film Music Rhythm: Not used/Used (0–10)
- Film Music Lyrics: Not used/Used (0–10)

- Degree of similarity to film music: 0 – Cover/10 – Original
- Intention to make film music recognizable: 0 (–) recognizable 10 (+) recognizable

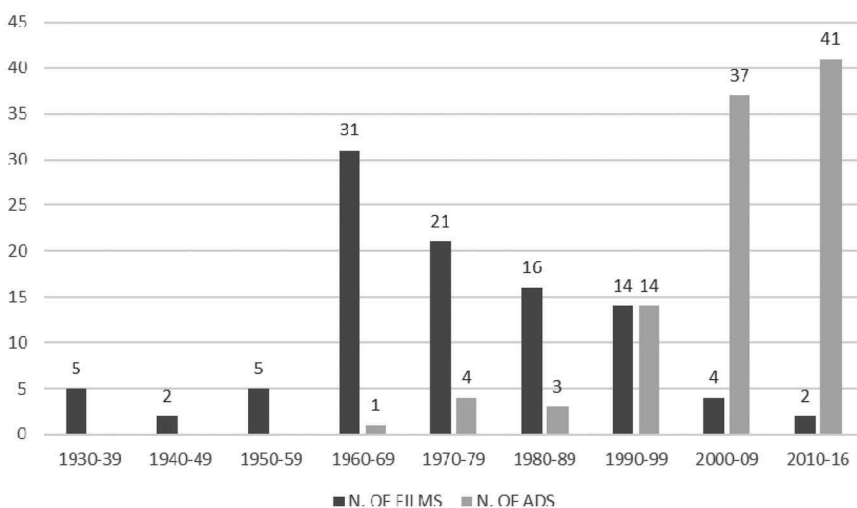
On the imagery from the film used in the ad, the coding sheet contains the following:

- Ad imagery same as film imagery
- Recreating film imagery (+) intertextuality (–) intertextuality
- Different from film image (+) intertextuality (–) intertextuality

#### 4. Results

Of the 100 analyzed ads produced between 1960 and 2016 containing film music, 78% were produced in the period 2000–2016, suggesting that the phenomenon analyzed is relatively recent, which may also explain why there is no existing research on the phenomenon. It was also found that the films that are the object of the ‘borrowed interest’ are much older: 68% of them were released between 1960 and 1990. The difference in eras is significant, as the average time gap between the film release and the ad release is 31.18 years. It is likely that advertising creators seek out established, older films with certain special rhythmic/melodic features in their soundtracks that can be incorporated into their advertising campaign with guaranteed effectiveness (see [Figure 1](#)).

The most widely used film soundtracks belong to the genres of fiction (54%), musicals (40%), and musical drama (7%), and are notable for a spectacular and memorable soundtrack, or specifically for a song or musical theme (*Mission: Impossible*; *Rocky*; *Star Wars*, etc.). The most prominent of all is Robert Wise’s classic score to *The Sound of Music* (1965), whose soundtrack is used in 10 ads, 6 of which use ‘My Favorite Things’, probably more for the meaning of the lyrics than the song itself (in advertising the idea of ‘my favorite things’ works particularly well). Also prominent are *West Side Story* (5 different



**Figure 1.** Year of release of films whose music is borrowed compared to year of release of ads that borrow film soundtracks.

brands), *Singing in the Rain* (4), *Chariots of Fire* (4), the ‘James Bond’ theme (4), and the theme from *Rocky* (4). Notably absent from the list are many excellent soundtracks to films whose story lines could not be classified as positive, touching, or majestic, and which explore contemporary issues of social injustice, cruelty, or political struggle (e.g., *Schindler’s List* or *Lawrence of Arabia*).

Of the advertising brands that borrow interest from different film soundtracks, the following sectors predominate: automobiles (20), beverages (17), food (13), and tele-phones/electronics/computers (12). The brands that have the most ads with film music are Coca-Cola, Renault, Volkswagen, Carlsberg, Vodafone, and Nike.

One of the established patterns identified in the sample is that product/service brands that use film music invariably choose films that originally promoted values that can be associated with the brand’s own values. An illustrative example is that of children’s food brands, which are often associated with adventure films. An opposite case is that of the minority of institutional brands that tread very cautiously in associating commercial values with public/collective values.

Of the types of ads that use film music, a majority (52%) have formats of 60 seconds or longer (80–90–120–180 seconds), suggesting that the decision to include a major film soundtrack is worthy of a bigger advertising budget. These ads are also characterized by their use of non-diegetic music (73%, compared to 27% of cases where the film music is present within the narration of the ad).

The data obtained make it possible to analyze the degree to which the melody, rhythm, and lyrics (in the case of songs) of the film music are used in each of the 100 ads (see Table 2). A majority of the ads use the melody ( $\bar{X} = 0.903$ ) and rhythm ( $\bar{X} = 0.894$ ) expressly with the objective of making the film music recognizable. The use of the lyrics is also prevalent, although the global calculation ( $\bar{X} = 0.397$ ) does not reflect this because half of the units of analysis use instrumental music. On the other hand, there is no evident pattern that might clarify why some ads use the original recording while others make use of a cover. Finally, the data reflects a prevailing intention to make the film music recognizable in the ad ( $\bar{X} = 0.697$ ).

Subsequently, comparing the data obtained made it possible to identify ‘pattern matches’ in the different series of constant variables identifiable within a larger data set. The highest repetition pattern ( $n = 28$ ) is that of ads that use the same melody and the same rhythm as the film music with the original recording from the film, in an

**Table 2.** Patterns of film music use in advertising.

Uses film music melody	Uses film music rhythm	Uses film music lyrics	Uses original recording	Intention to make film music recognizable
0 – NOT USED	0 – NOT USED	0 – NOT USED	0 – COVER	0 – LESS RECOGNIZABLE
1 – USED	1 – USED	1 – USED	1 – ORIGINAL	1 – MORE RECOGNIZABLE
$\bar{X} = 100$ ads	$\bar{X} = 100$ ads	$\bar{X} = 100$ ads	$\bar{X} = 100$ ads	$\bar{X} = 100$ ads
0.903	0.894	0.397	0.594	0.697
1	1	0	1	Repetition pattern $n = 28$
1	1	1	1	Repetition pattern $n = 13$
0.7~1	0.7~1	0~1	0.5~1	Repetition pattern $n = 72$
0.2	0.5	0	0	Lowest repetition pattern

instrumental version with no lyrics. The series of variables with the highest score (literal use of image and music) is a pattern that uses an original recording (in this case in a version with lyrics) that makes it extremely literal and close to the original version ( $n = 13$ ). In short, there is a pattern ( $n = 72$ ) of seeking to make the film music recognizable in the ad through an almost literal use of the rhythm and melody, either with the original or a cover version. In a minority of cases ( $n = 6$ ), the use of film music is so subtle (free covers, without lyrics, with simple melodic and rhythmic allusions) that they would only be recognizable by viewers who are intimately familiar with the film soundtrack.

The analysis also makes it possible to put imagery from the film used in the ad in relation to the type of music in the advertising. The various resulting categories range from ads with literal music and imagery from the film, to ads with music from the film (original recordings/covers) and recreated or figurative imagery from the film, as well as ads with music from the film (original recordings/covers) and different images from the film's imagery (see [Table 3](#)).

The results of the study reveal that in 33% of the total number of samples, the predominant intertextual format uses an original recording which, while not based on specific imagery from the film, figuratively recreates the characters, costumes, set design, setting, or gestures, with a clear intention to approximate the film's narrative and make it recognizable. Notable for their visual recreation through the use of the original soundtrack are the ads for KIA (*Flashdance*), VW Passat (*Star Wars*), Duracell (*Chariots of Fire*), Visa (the James Bond theme), GAP 2000 (*West Side Story*), Pringles (*Lord of the Rings*), and Apple Mac (*Mission: Impossible*), whose objective is to exploit the memorability of the product through a dual intertextual message. On the opposite end of the spectrum, brands like Renault (*The Neverending Story*), Lincoln Financial (*Love Me Tender*), and Rice Krispies (*The Wizard of Oz*) propose an intertextuality with a free cover that seeks only an abstract relationship between the film and the advertisement; subtler, less direct, relying in most cases on humor.

This analysis operates on a continuum, comparing the variables 'higher/lower presence of images from the film in the ad', 'higher/lower presence of music from the film in the ad'; 'literal-figurative representation of images from the film in the ad', and 'literal-figurative representation of music from the film in the ad'. This resulted in the identification of four different models of Advertising-Film intertextuality through the music:

Model 1. Absolute Intertextuality: the ad uses imagery/sound from the film to create a visual and sonic replica;

Model 2. Figurative Intertextuality: the ad figuratively recreates imagery/sound from the film in an imitative manner;

Model 3. Associative Intertextuality: the ad uses music from the film in a different visual context, with the aim to make the spectator associate the ad with the film;

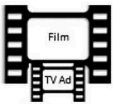
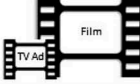
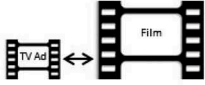
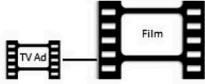
Model 4. Minimal Intertextuality: the ad uses music from the film in a different visual context, without aiming to make the spectator associate the ad with the film.

For the purposes of clarification, [Table 4](#) presents the maximum number of advertisements categorized according to the four models of intertextuality described above.

**Table 3.** Ads 1–100 in relation to imagery from film used and resulting type of music.

Ad imagery Ad music	Same as film 7%	Recreating film 50%	Different from film (+) intertextuality 18%	Different from film (–) intertextuality 25%
ORIGINAL REC. 58%	11, 24, 50, 58, 64, 65, 89 <b>(7)</b>	3, 6, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 30, 35, 37, 41, 45, 48, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 74, 77, 80, 82, 87, 91, 97 <b>(33)</b>	1, 34, 49, 71, 79, 86, 93 <b>(7)</b>	8, 15, 22, 26, 27, 33, 42, 51, 76, 84, 92 <b>(11)</b>
COVER 19%	<b>(0)</b>	5, 13, 14, 31, 44, 70, 81, 88, 90, 95 <b>(10)</b>	12, 21, 32, 59, 73, 85 <b>(6)</b>	2, 72, 83 <b>(3)</b>
FREE COVER 23%	<b>(0)</b>	7, 18, 28, 38, 39, 46, 78 <b>(7)</b>	4, 29, 47, 96, 99 <b>(5)</b>	25, 36, 40, 43, 55, 60, 61, 75, 94, 98, 100 <b>(11)</b>

**Table 4.** Models of advertising-film intertextuality through the music.

MODELS FOR ADVERTISING-FILM INTERTEXTUALITY THROUGH THE MUSIC		
<p><b>MODEL 1 ABSOLUTE INTERTEXTUALITY</b></p> 	<p>AD USES IMAGERY/SOUND FROM FILM</p> <p>AD REPLICATES VISUALS/SOUND FROM FILM</p>	<p>6, 11, 13, 14, 19, 24, 28, 30, 37, 38, 39, 41, 46, 50, 54, 58, 64, 65, 67, 82, 89, 90, 95, 97</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[24]</p>
<p><b>MODEL 2 FIGURATIVE INTERTEXTUALITY</b></p> 	<p>AD FIGURATIVELY RECREATES IMAGERY/SOUND FROM FILM</p>	<p>3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 17, 18, 20, 23, 31, 34, 35, 45, 48, 52, 53, 56, 57, 62, 63, 66, 68, 69, 70, 74, 77, 80, 87, 91, 99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[30]</p>
<p><b>MODEL 3 ASSOCIATIVE INTERTEXTUALITY</b></p> 	<p>AD USES MUSIC FROM FILM IN A DIFFERENT VISUAL CONTEXT FROM FILM SEEKING A DIRECT ASSOCIATION WITH FILM NARRATIVE</p>	<p>1, 12, 16, 21, 25, 32, 40, 44, 47, 49, 78, 79, 81, 85, 88, 92, 93</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[17]</p>
<p><b>MODEL 4 MINIMAL INTERTEXTUALITY</b></p> 	<p>AD USES MUSIC FROM FILM IN A DIFFERENT VISUAL CONTEXT FROM FILM WITH NO RELATION TO FILM NARRATIVE</p>	<p>2, 4, 8, 15, 22, 26, 27, 33, 36, 42, 43, 51, 55, 59, 60, 61, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 83, 84, 86, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[29]</p>

The four resulting models (Absolute Intertextuality:  $n = 24$ ; Figurative Intertextuality:  $n = 30$ ; Associative Intertextuality:  $n = 17$ ; and Minimal Intertextuality:  $n = 29$ ) are representative of the whole data set and the final result is proportional (without this having been the intention) to that of the whole sample. On the other hand, the ‘complicity effect’ or ‘recognition effect’ of the film music on the target audience occurs unevenly across the four models: while in the first two the intertextuality is made clear and explicit to the viewer, in the other two it runs the risk of not being interpreted, or even identified or recognized, since it depends on the cinematic/musical knowledge of the spectator (the age and the level of cultural awareness of the audience, among other factors, represent a clear potential barrier to the effectiveness of the intertextuality).

Examples of absolute intertextuality include Freixenet’s 1981 Christmas ad featuring Gene Kelly lip-synching to his own 1952 recording of ‘Singin’ in the Rain’, or the ad for Beats wireless headphones using the allegory of *Pinocchio* (Disney, 1940) as a puppet with no strings. On the other end of the spectrum, various brands opt for minimal intertextuality, as we find in the ads for Dove Shampoo, Skoda Fabia, Victoria’s Secret, or One Direction, all of which feature a cover of ‘My Favorite Things’ from *The Sound of Music* in a context far removed from the original film, but exploiting the power of the lyrics of the song to transfer them to the qualities of the product advertised.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

Films and memories of films can be potent signifiers apart from how the soundtracks actually sound, complicating how intertextuality operates in such examples: meaning extends beyond 'the notes' and rhythms – beyond even the musical text itself. Obviously, as audiovisual media, Film and Advertising benefit from multiple levels or modes of analysis, especially with methodologies that focus on texts.

What can be learned from these advertising examples and forms of intertextuality? The results of this research show that the absence of academic literature and research on the use of film music in advertising may be due to the fact that the phenomenon itself is quite recent.

Why might this practice have expanded so dramatically between 2000 and 2016 (an interesting and fundamental finding yielded by this study)? – The study reviews more than 50 years of television advertising. Is this development connected to the popularization of the internet and digital technologies, growing intertextuality in popular culture more broadly, and/or changes in consumer culture that promote certain media-savvy consumer sensibilities?

The results also demonstrate that advertising campaigns are likely to seek to borrow an interest from a film soundtrack (RQ1) only when that soundtrack is spectacular, memorable, and recognizable, and when it upholds values that are positive, moving, or epic; in short, when the film music tells a story that is majestic and that invites imitation ('Sound of Music'; 'Chariots of Fire'; 'Rocky'; 'Flashdance'; etc.).

The study has also identified a pattern of ads with film music (RQ2) that is notable for its use of the melody and rhythm (and occasionally the lyrics) to make the film music recognizable. The most common pattern is that of ads that use the same melody and the same rhythm as the film music with the original recording from the film, in an instrumental version with no lyrics. This is no doubt due to the fact that the words to the song from the film can sometimes be an obstacle to the correct understanding of the textual message of the product advertised.

It has also been found that the level on which advertising-film intertextuality operates (RQ3) depends on multiple factors external to the music (imagery, plot, set design), but it is precisely the music that has made it possible to classify intertextuality in four overlapping models that characterize the phenomenon, which could very probably be used to support the establishment of a more effective advertising brief. Nevertheless, the data obtained in this study do not reveal the existence of a single intertextual model appropriate for every creative situation presented by commercial advertising; instead, they have demonstrated that the 'borrowed interest' of the film music for the advertisement promotes originality and innovation in the four intertextual models presented in this research. And originality and innovation are the very essence of good marketing.

There is also no evidence that absolute intertextuality will necessarily produce a better 'fit' (MacInnis and Park 1991) than a model in which the audiovisual product makes use of minimum intertextuality, because the subjective perception of the consumer is affected by various factors, such as the age of the film and of the audience, the affinity that the film has with a particular type of audience (children, teenagers, women,



etc.), or a particular genre (musicals, comedies, epic adventures, etc.) that should fit in with the tastes and affinities of the consumer of the product being advertised.

Last of all, it also might provide scope to reflect on how the growing use of film music in advertising may be linked to broader social, cultural, industrial, and/or technological factors. Definitely, this study raises new questions that will need to be answered in further research using diverse methodologies, especially qualitative methods, mostly related to the semiotic paradigm created through intertextuality in all its forms.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Manuel Palencia-Lefler*, PhD in Advertising and PR, musician and composer, researcher at UNICA Research Group. The latest works are focused in a technological research line, in which you can observe the phenomenon of music as a vehicle of persuasive communication.

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