

Music in social marketing: Consumer response to background music in advertising green products

Supervisors: [Dr Morteza Abolhasani](#) and [Professor Gordon Liu](#), Department for Strategy and Marketing, The Open University Business School

Project description:

The 'Net zero' target for carbon emissions of 2050 is now generally seen as too late as there is now a profound agreement that major carbon reduction is required in a very short timeframe, as well as other radical changes to reduce biodiversity loss and other harms. Advertising plays an important role in enhancing public awareness about the environmental concerns, positively affecting the images of socially responsible brands, and ultimately affecting consumers' choices of green products. There will be consistent growth in environmental advertising following the rise of consumer interest in the environment, since a growing number of consumers are becoming concerned about environmental degradation, diminishing natural resources, or threats linked with global warming and climate change over the last few decades (Dunlap and Scarce, 1991). Recent advertising research particularly stressed on the importance of developing the appropriate blend of communication and messaging techniques in instigating positive evaluations of green products and brands by consumers (Sheehan 2013; Bailey et al. 2014). The increase in consumers' concerns about environment has led to marketers acknowledging the need for green marketing as a key component of their strategy (Davis, 1993; Banerjee et al., 1995; Manrai et al., 1997; Chen, 2010). This is evident in the research carried out by Environmental Leader and Media Buyer Planner (2009) demonstrating that 80% of marketers prepare for increasing the expenditure on green marketing and advertising activities in the future to be able to target more environmentally conscious consumers.

Zinkhan and Carlson (1995, p. 1) defined green advertising as 'the promotional messages that may appeal to the needs and desires of environmentally-concerned consumers. Banerjee et al. (1995, p. 22) further defined green advertising as any advertising that 'explicitly or implicitly addresses the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment; promotes a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service; and/or presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility'. The association of a green brand with pleasant images through using powerful elements in advertisements may lead to more positive brand attitude, as compared to merely presenting informational claims.

As one of the most important creative elements, music is incorporated in more than 94% of advertisements (Allan, 2008). Music accounts for a significant commercial advantage in the context of advertising by producing favorable associations with the product/brand (Gorn, 1982), contributing to the message (Hung, 2000), and by attracting consumers' attention and enhancing message recall (Yalch, 1991). Countless billions of dollars are spent annually on music by advertising agencies and client companies (Oakes, 2007). Music is ubiquitous in television, radio and cinema advertising, as well as in many service and retail contexts, thus underlining the need for increased academic research.

Although the use of green claims in advertising represents billions of dollars a year in spending, the efficacy of green appeals and the effectiveness of music in reinforcing these appeals as a communication strategy remains uncertain. The different meanings that can be associated to various types of music can reinforce varied advertising appeals used in green marketing such as fear appeal, sad appeal, guilt appeal, humour appeal, among others. Music is capable of producing feelings that can be associated to these appeals through manipulating different structural characteristics of music such as genre, tempo, and mode. Analysing the existing research indicates an important gap: Although the extant literature suggest that various advertising appeals exert significant impacts on brand and advertising evaluations (Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2009; Hartmann et al., 2005), no previous study examines the effects of background music used in green advertisements upon reinforcing the intended message appeal. In other words, no previous study has investigated the effects of background music in advertisements promoting green products. A potentially fruitful route for research in the area of music and advertising is to explore the effects of background music in the domain of social marketing.

Therefore, we welcome applications for PhD research in the area of music and advertising. We are interested in hearing from potential PhD students who have an interest in consumer behavior, consumer psychology and sensory marketing. The research may follow a mixed methods approach, involving the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. This will address the methodological gap, i.e. the almost exclusively positivist approach adopted by the existing research.

About the supervisors:

This PhD research would build on the current relevant study being carried out at the Open University by Morteza Abolhasani and Gordon Liu. [Morteza](#) is a Lecturer in Marketing at the Open University Business School. His main research interests focus on exploring consumer responses to background music in advertising as well as service environments. [Gordon](#) is a Professor of Marketing Strategy at the Open University Business School. Gordon's research focuses on the intersection of marketing, strategy and entrepreneurship with particular interest in topics surrounding innovation/new product development, strategic orientation/capabilities, and network/strategic alliance.

References:

- Allan, D. (2008). A content analysis of music placement in prime-time television advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 48(3), 404-417.
- Bailey, A. A., Mishra, A., & Tiarniyu, M. F. (2016). Green advertising receptivity: An initial scale development process. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(3), 327-345.
- Banerjee, S., Gulas, C. S., & Iyer, E. (1995). Shades of green: A multidimensional analysis of environmental advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 24(2), 21-31.
- Chen, Y. S. (2010). The drivers of green brand equity: Green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust. *Journal of Business ethics*, 93(2), 307-319.
- Davis, J. J. (1993). Strategies for environmental advertising. *Journal of Consumer marketing*, 10(2), 19-36.
- Dunlap, R. E., & Scarce, R. (1991). Poll Trends: Environmental problems and protection. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 55(4), 651-672.
- Environmental Leader and Media Buyer Planner. 2009. Green marketing: What works; what doesn't – a marketing study of practitioners. http://www.aimme.es/archivosbd/observatorio_opportunidades/GreenMarketingReport_ExecutiveSummaryEL.pdf
- Gorn, G. J. (1982). The effects of music in advertising on choice behavior: A classical conditioning approach. *The Journal of Marketing*, 46(1), 94-101.

- Hartmann, P., Apaolaza Ibáñez, V., & Forcada Sainz, F. J. (2005). Green branding effects on attitude: functional versus emotional positioning strategies. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 23(1), 9-29.
- Hartmann, P., & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, V. (2009). Green advertising revisited: Conditioning virtual nature experiences. *International Journal of Advertising*, 28(4), 715-739.
- Hung, K. (2000). Narrative Music in Congruent and Incongruent TV Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(1), 25-34.
- Manrai, L. A., Manrai, A. K., Lascu, D. N., & Ryans Jr, J. K. (1997). How green-claim strength and country disposition affect product evaluation and company image. *Psychology & Marketing*, 14(5), 511-537.
- Oakes, S. (2007). Evaluating Empirical Research into Music in Advertising: A Congruity Perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(1), 38-50.
- Sheehan, K.B. *Socially responsible advertising: Does a brand have a conscience. In Controversies in Contemporary Advertising*; Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2013; pp. 235–255.
- Yalch, R. F. (1991). Memory in Jingle Jungle: Music as a Mnemonic Device in Communicating Advertising Slogans. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76(2), 268-275.
- Zinkhan, G. M., & Carlson, L. (1995). Green advertising and the reluctant consumer. *Journal of Advertising*, 24(2), 1-6.