Popular music in Super Bowl commercials 2005-2014

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to quantify and qualify the commercials in the Super Bowl.
Design/methodology/approach – This study is a content analysis of the placement of popular music in Super Bowl advertisements over a ten-year period (2005-2014).
Findings – More than a quarter of the commercials analyzed contained popular music. Although the use of popular music in commercials vacillated from year to year, popular music was most often observed in the product category of beverages; the music treatment most often used was original vocals; and song lyrics were most often relevant to the narrative of the commercial, rather than the brand.
Originality/value – This study extends the growing body of Super Bowl advertising research to popular music in commercials and provides a benchmark for all future research in this area.

Keywords Marketing, Advertising, Marketing campaigns, Popular music, Super Bowl commercials
Paper type Research paper

Executive summary

The popularity of the Super Bowl has grown tremendously since the first game in 1967. As a result, the $40,000 fee for a 30-second advertisement during that first Super Bowl has grown exponentially to over $4 million in 2014. Advertisers recognize that watching Super Bowl commercials has also gained in popularity, and is now as important and engaging as watching the game itself. Consequently, advertisers use Super Bowl ads to introduce new products or campaigns.

This research begins with a discussion of the relationship between sports and music. It follows with a content analysis of ten years of in-game Super Bowl commercials airing from 2005 to 2014. The result is a description and analysis of the placement of popular music in Super Bowl advertising.

The data analysis reveals that of the 599 total commercials viewed (excluding network and NFL promotional ads), 157 contained popular music. The percentage of commercials with popular music ranged from a low of 18.5 percent in 2011, to a high of 41.1 percent in 2014. The genre of popular music most utilized was rock (28 percent), followed by pop (25.5 percent). Popular music was most often observed in the product category of beverages (27.7 percent) followed by motor vehicles (25.1 percent). Popular music treatment was most often original vocals (65 percent), and more likely to be relevant to the narrative of the commercial (54.1 percent), rather than the brand advertised (13.4 percent).

This study was designed to expand the growing body of Super Bowl advertising research by extending it to an analysis of popular music. Based on the results, it appears that this executional cue has varied considerably in Super Bowl ads from 2005 to 2014, but risen consistently in the last three years. This is in line with the growth of

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music in advertising outside of the Super Bowl. Additionally, this study was designed to provide a more robust qualitative description and analysis of popular music placement in Super Bowl advertising from which inferences can be drawn about current practices, creative strategies, and its effectiveness as an executional cue. The results provide a glimpse into how advertisers are currently using popular music in Super Bowl commercials.

Introduction

Are you ready for some football … ads? If it is the Super Bowl then the answer is probably yes! "Within just a few years after the first Super Bowl in 1967, the televised game became a national ritual [where] today, one viewer in ten tunes in just for the ads" (Kanner, 2004, p. 1). And they are not just tuning in for the advertisements (ads) they are watching them (Bickle, 2012; McMains, 2013). Not surprisingly, the cost of ads has grown with their popularity (Table I). In 1967, a 30-second ad cost only $40,000. By 2002, the cost had grown to $2.3 million and, by 2012, the price had risen to $3.5 million (Edwards and Terbush, 2012). In 2013, the cost of a Super Bowl ad was $3.8 million (Horovitz, 2013), and had climbed to $4.0 million in 2014, (Horovitz, 2014). Why are advertisers lining up to pay these exorbitant fees? "Adding to the game's appeal as ad revenue is the fact that, for many viewers, watching the ads is as important as the game, a bright spot in today's media environment, where almost 50 percent of US homes now have a digital recorder" (Vranica, 2014, p. 1). Sporting events generally, and the Super Bowl in particular, represent programming, which is watched live rather than from a DVR. The Super Bowl has "become so ingrained in US culture that, with rare exception, it is the most watched US television event each year" (Tomkovick *et al.*, 2001, p. 90). Furthermore, the Super Bowl reaches a wide range of demographics, making it more appealing to advertisers (McAllister, 1999).

The Super Bowl is "the place for advertisers to be seen and to showcase their best [work]" (Kanner, 2004, p. 1). For this reason, it is also a very appropriate place to investigate trends in advertising because "marketers have seized this venue to introduce new campaigns or products or to take on new names or purposes, and the commercials have acquired lives of their own" (Kanner, 2004, p. 5). It has become the "prime time to kick off ads" (McCarthy, 2001). It has "helped companies launch new products" (Tomkovick *et al.*, 2001, p. 92). The best example of all is Apple's "1984" television commercial, which launched its Macintosh personal computer.

Table I.
Super Bowl ad rates and spending

Year	Average cost: 30,000	Total ad spend (million)
2005	$2,400	$158.4
2006	$2,500	$162.5
2007	$2,385	$151.5
2008	$2,700	$186.3
2009	$3,000	$213.0
2010	$2,974	$205.2
2011	$3,100	$227.9
2012	$3,500	$262.5
2013	$4,000	$292.0
2014	$4,200	$331.8

Source: Kantar Media

The commercial aired during the third quarter of Super Bowl XVIII (Gunst, 2014). Music labels have also used the Super Bowl to release new music and kick off concert tours. For example, Bud Light debuted a song by DJ and Producer Afrojack titled, "Ten Feet Tall" in one ad (Anderson, 2014). Katy Perry began her concert tour with a halftime performance during the Super Bowl in 2015.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, "corporate strategists" successfully leveraged the parallels between music and sports, but 1960s-1980s was a time-period of greater partnership between music and sport as each benefited the other commercially. The cross-marketing continues (McLeod, 2006). Josh Rabinowitz, Director of Music at the Grey Group advertising agency, believes that "[t]he idea of a musician selling out by working with a brand has 'virtually dissipated'" (Petrecca, 2014). It should be noted; however, that the cries of artist "sellout," while diminished with the growth of popular music in advertising, have not been completely silenced. CNN reported that one tweet they received said that the Bob Dylan, Chrysler commercial was "disappointing and sad on so many levels, proof that there are very few not willing to sell out" (France, 2014).

Neil Young would certainly agree (see song "This Note's For You"). Nevertheless, in Bob Dylan's defense, if he is a "sellout," at least he has been consistent. In 1965, when asked which "commercial interest" he would sellout to Dylan replied, "Ladies' garments" (Thompson, 2014). Of course, he did eventually team up with Victoria's Secret. So, having a song in a Chobani Yogurt commercial (I Want You), and appearing in another with his song "Things Have Changed" (Chrysler) both in the Super Bowl is not so surprising. What is surprising is that this is still considered "selling out" and thus, something to be considered by advertisers when looking at a potential risk of consumer backlash when using popular music in advertising.

Why are advertisers using popular music? Specifically, why do advertisers run ads with music during the Super Bowl? It may simply be that the use of recognizable and appealing "popular" music is directly related to the necessity for the brand to stand out from the clutter and be engaged. "The focus on music comes as many advertisers look for ways to engage 108 million viewers" (Anderson, 2014). Music "engages the attention" (Huron, 1989). It "makes you watch or listen [to advertising] in a different way" (Dunbar, 1990). If advertisers are successful with using music to align their brand image with the self-concept of a highly identified sports fan or Super Bowl television viewer, they may reap the benefits in the marketplace. According to Bateman (2013), brands are using popular music in their Super Bowl ads because they have a "stronger relationship with sport" than any other genre of music. Also, popular music helps to construct a collective identity (Holyfield *et al.*, 2013). The hope is that this "interaction of various marketing and communication activities come together to impact and influence consumers" (Schultz, 2005, p. 6). What better place to begin to examine this interaction than with popular music in Super Bowl advertisements?

Sport and music

Sport and music have always enjoyed a paralleled existence. "Music and sport are two of the most popular and culturally pervasive activities through which individual and collective identities are produced, reproduced, negotiated and contested" (Bateman, 2013, p. 301). According to Hans-Dieter Krebs (2001), the common characteristics between music and sport can be described in four aspects: "in play and movement," following established rules of play, to which there can also be improvisation, "in continuous mental and physical training" for achieving discipline and excellence,

"in the performance pyramid" made up of amateurs at the bottom and the elite at the top, and "in the virtually universal language" of these cultural forms. Sports and music also have similar fans. "The image of the frenzied fan dominates the discussion of music fans and sports fans" (Lewis, 2002, p. 12). Snyder (1993), a sport sociologist, reminds us that "[m]usic is a form of discourse – a way of conveying meanings, including emotions, within sport." Using an auditory elicitation approach, Snyder concludes "music is an additional means of producing and transmitting meanings" and a "source of consensus and social cohesion." Synder further concluded that "music in sport contexts might be considered a way of 'commodifying' both sport and music, with an exchange value, for the marketplace."

The relationship between sports and music continues to grow. "In the past 20 years popular music and sports have become noticeably more aligned and interconnected as cross-marketed, hypercommodified products of the leisure and entertainment industry" (McLeod, 2011, p. 78). Nowhere is this interconnectedness more apparent than in the Super Bowl. "The Super Bowl is inordinately connected to musical content. Over the course of an 8-hour television broadcast, including pre- and post-game shows and the like, music is heard for approximately one-third of the time including network themes, commercial themes, and dedicated musical production numbers" (McLeod, 2011, pp. 158-159).

Advertising and music

Music has been used in advertising since the early days of radio and television. For the purposes of this study, a general but exact definition of popular music would be helpful.

Unfortunately, popular music does seem to "defy a precise, straightforward definition" (Shuker, 1994, p. 5). Thus, a combination of some of the definitions will be used where popular music is "well-liked and well-favoured" (Middleton, 1990) music for "ordinary people" (Shuker, 1994) that has wide exposure and appeal, but usually only for a fixed period of time.

Music is one of the most highly utilized executional cues in advertising (Yalch, 1991). Past research (see Bruner, 1990) has observed a variety of music variables including music appeal (Kellaris and Cox, 1989), music mood (Alpert and Alpert, 1990), music fit (MacInnis and Park, 1991), and music tempo (Brooker and Wheatley, 1994).

The advertising effects of these music variables (see Allan, 2007) have been tested on everything from attitude toward the ad (North *et al.*, 2004), attitude toward the brand (Brooker and Wheatley, 1994), purchase intention (Alpert and Alpert, 1990), pleasure and arousal (Alpert and Alpert, 1990), personal significance (Allan, 2006), memories (Brown and Kulik, 1977; Tulving, 1972), to integration (Olsen, 1995).

Advertising and the Super Bowl

Super Bowl advertising research is starting to claim the spotlight as well, from many perspectives. Some researchers investigated creative strategies (Kim and Cheong, 2011), while others looked at ad likeability and short-term stock price enhancement (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Fehle and Zdorovtsov, 2005; Kim and Morris, 2003).

Furthermore, there exist research findings that Super Bowl promoted movies grossed nearly 40 percent more than non-Super Bowl promoted movies (Yelkur *et al.*, 2004). Yet another approach was to study Super Bowl advertising as "commercial celebration" (social attention and legitimacy), or the "celebration of advertising as a beloved form of mediated entertainment" (McAllister, 1999, p. 403). Researchers have shown that arousal

more than pleasure influenced ad recall in Super Bowl advertising (Pavelchak *et al.*, 1988). The practicality of Super Bowl advertising for new products and companies has been debated (Dotterweich and Collins, 2005), possibly due to low visual attention levels of viewers of the Super Bowl, especially in sports bars (Beasley *et al.*, 1998) or when "total message length and number of times a brand is advertised" (Newell and Henderson, 1998, p. 243). Brian Lambert, EVP/Head of Film & Television Music for Universal Music Publishing Group, has a different view. He believes "[t]he whole goal of the advertiser is to get the attention of people, whether their eyes are glued to the TV or their back is turned, and having a great song really helps with that" (Hampp, 2013).

As for Super Bowl advertising as it relates to cues, a content analysis of over 400 Super Bowl ads aired from 2001 to 2009 showed that each ad contained on average two informational cues (Kim *et al.*, 2012). The most compelling research for advertisers competing for the all-important *USA Today* Ad Meter involves the Super Bowl ad likeability model introduced in 2001 (Tomkovick *et al.*, 2001), and updated to recognize the increase in music in Super Bowl ads in 2011 (Yelkur *et al.*, 2011). Although no trending is available, over 77 percent of Super Bowl ads in the 2000s employed some type of music (Yelkur *et al.*, 2011). It is here that this research begins. A content analysis will be used for this study. This is consistent with other studies of Super Bowl ads (Kim *et al.*, 2012). Berelson (1952) described content analysis as a "research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). It will be used to analyze commercials with popular music in Super Bowl ads from 2005 to 2014 with the goal of "making inferences" (Weber, 1990, p. 9). Specifically, this study will observe and analyze the extent of the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials (2005-2014); the product (brand and category) and music (artist, genre, prominence, version, artist gender, artist age, artist number, artist shown performing, choreographed, music edited, product relevance, and narrative relevance) characteristics; and, based on these results, determine what can be inferred from current practices and creative strategies being used in regard to the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials.

Methodology

All in-game commercials aired during ten years of the Super Bowls from 2005 to 2014 were content analyzed for this study using a time-dated commercial log provided by Kantar Media with links to all commercials over the ten-year period. This sample consisted of 599 commercials not including network or NFL promotional announcements. Of these commercials, 157 utilized some type of popular music. A code sheet was adapted from an earlier study (Allan, 2008) to record specifically both quantitative and qualitative information on the placement of music in the commercials. The extensive code sheet included variables used in previous content analyses of television advertising (Alexander *et al.*, 1998; Avery and Ferraro, 2000; Callcott and Lee, 1994; Elliott, 1995; Roy and Harwood, 1997; Unger *et al.*, 1991; Wilkes and Valencia, 1989), as well as variables appropriate to the analysis of music (Allan, 2006, 2008; Alpert and Alpert, 1990; Brooker and Wheatley, 1994; Kellaris *et al.*, 1993; Kellaris and Kent, 1991; MacInnis and Park, 1991; Olsen, 1995; Roehm, 2001; Wallace, 1991).

A coding instrument consisting of product and music characteristic variables used in prior content analyses of popular music in television advertising research (Allan, 2008) was utilized. Product characteristics variables accounted for two standard variations: brands and category. These two product characteristics were chosen because it is useful for advertisers for competitive and parity reasons to know which

brands and product categories are using popular music most. Music characteristics variables consisted of 12 variations: artist, genre, prominence (partial or predominate), version (original vocal, original instrumental, cover vocal, altered vocal), artist gender, artist age, artist number, artist shown performing, choreographed, music edited, product relevance (song lyrics relevant to the product), and narrative relevance (song lyrics relevant to the narrative in ad). These 14 variables are a relevant and useful means of analyzing and categorizing the advertising and the music in an interesting and meaningful manner as a guide to advertisers of current practices related to the use of popular music in Super Bowl advertising.

One trained coder recorded these variables. Reliability was established using the coefficient of reliability (also known as Cohen's κ). To ascertain reliability, another trained coder resulting in an overall reliability coefficient of 94.3 percent reanalyzed 10 percent of the one coder's sample. [F]Coder agreement was greater than 80 percent for all variables above the minimal agreement level (Riffe *et al.*, 1998).

Results and discussion

Table II shows the number and percentage of ads with popular music from 2005 to 2014. Of the 599 total commercials viewed (excluding network and NFL promotional ads), 157 contained popular music. The percentage of commercials with popular music ranged from a low of 18.5 percent in 2011, to a high of 41.1 percent in 2014.

Product variables

Table III shows the unique ads with the presence of popular music (anywhere) in a commercial in terms of the product category variables: brands and product category. As can be seen, significant differences were observed in the use of music and product characteristics. Of the popular music ads, the most frequently observed product category involved "beverages" ($n = 43$). The next most observed ads for popular music were for "automobiles" which included cars, trucks, and SUVs ($n = 39$). It is not surprising that auto ads continue to use popular music. This product category has collectively fueled its advertising with popular music since at least 1970 when The Doors licensed "Light My Fire" to Buick (Patton, 2002).

Music variables

Table IV shows the unique ads with the presence of popular music (anywhere) in a commercial in terms of version and prominence. As can be seen, significant differences

Table II. Super Bowl ad with popular music

Year	Number of music ads	Percentage of music ads
2005	18/52	34.6
2006	14/67	20.8
2007	15/62	24.2
2008	13/58	22.4
2009	11/59	18.6
2010	13/68	19.1
2011	12/65	18.5
2012	18/59	30.5
2013	20/53	37.7
2014	23/56	41.1
Total	157/599	26.2

Product category	Popular music ads
Audio/video	5
Autos, trucks, SUVs, etc.	39
Bank/insurance/legal	5
Beverages (beer/soda/juice)	43
Cell phones	14
Clothes	4
Computers	3
Entertainment	10
Food	16
Health	8
Restaurants (fast food)	8
χ^2 – value	17.58*

Note: *Significant at the 0.01 level

Table III. Distribution of unique ads by product characteristics variable

	n
Music version	
Original vocal	102
Original instrumental	40
Cover vocal	13
Altered vocal	2
χ^2 – value	26.02*
Music prominence	
Background	31
Foreground-primary	77
Foreground-secondary	49
χ^2 – value	37.49*

Note: *Significant at the 0.01 level

Table IV. Distribution of unique ads by music characteristic variables

were obtained in the use of music and these music characteristics. Of the 157 total ads with popular music, 102 were original vocals, 40 were original instrumentals, 13 were cover vocals, and two were altered vocal. Prior research shows that the vocal version has been shown to be more effective when unfamiliar, while instrumentals can be more effective in evoking advertising message recall if the song is already familiar (Roehm, 2001). Still other research found that song vocals, either original or altered, are a more effective stimuli of advertising effects than instrumentals or no popular music especially when personally significant to the consumer (Allan, 2006). As for the prominence of the music itself in the ads with music, popular music was most often observed in the foreground and most likely the primary rather than secondary part of the ad. These results indicate that when advertisers use familiar music, it is usually original vocals in the foreground.

Table V shows the unique ads with the presence of popular music (anywhere) in a commercial in terms of ten of the music characteristic variables: genre, artist, artist gender, artist age, artist number, artist shown performing, music video, choreographed, edited, product relevance, and narrative relevance. As can be seen, significant

	n
Music genre	
Rock	44
Pop	40
R&B/hip hop	29
Classical	12
Country	9
Folk	8
Movie/broadway	5
Jazz/blues	4
Techno/dance	5
Latin	1
χ^2 – value	12.65*
Artist: gender	
Male	130
Female	16
Mixed	10
χ^2 – value	26.27*
Artist: age	
Adult	146
Young adult/teen	9
Children	2
χ^2 – value	42.49*
Artist: number	
Single	82
Duo	17
Group	54
χ^2 – value	24.76*
Artist: performing	15
Edited	134
Choreographed	
Entirely	26
Partially	73
Product relevance	
Direct	21
Indirect	30
None	106
χ^2 – value	36.73*
Narrative relevance	
Direct	85
Indirect	39
None	33
χ^2 – value	20.14*

Note: *Significant at the 0.01 level

Table V.
Distribution of unique ads by music characteristic variable

differences were obtained in the use of music and these commercial characteristics. For the ads with popular music, the most observed genre was rock ($n = 44$), followed by pop ($n = 40$). In both cases, the artist was most likely male ($n = 130$), adult ($n = 146$) and solo ($n = 82$). Very few of these artists in the ads performed live. As for the production

of these ads, most of the ads contained edited popular music that was at least partially choreographed. Concerning the relevance of the music to the product or service in the ad, about 13.4 percent had some type of relevance to the product while 54.1 percent had some type of relevance to the narrative in the ad.

Table VI shows the distribution of brands. The most observed brand was Budweiser.

Table VII shows the artists in the ads with popular music. The most observed band was Led Zeppelin.

Discussion

This study was designed to observe and analyze the extent of the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials (2005-2014), the product (brand and category) and music (artist, genre, prominence, version, artist gender, artist age, artist number, artist shown performing, choreographed, music edited, product relevance, and narrative relevance) characteristics; and, based on these results what can be inferred from current practices and creative strategies being used in regard to the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials.

Based on the results, the extent of the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials (2005-2014) has varied considerably in Super Bowl ads from 2005 to 2014, but risen consistently in the last three years. This is consistent with the growth of music in advertising outside of the Super Bowl, specifically 40 percent in 1986 (Stewart and Furse, 1986), 75 percent in 1989 (Huron, 1989), 89 percent in 1993 (Appelbaum, 1993), and 96 percent in 2008 (Allan, 2008). Additionally, this study was designed to provide a more robust analysis of popular music placement in Super Bowl advertising. The results provide a benchmark for future trending.

Brands	*n*
Budweiser	13
Coca Cola	8
Doritos	8
Bud Light	6
Pepsi	5
Volkswagen	5
Hyundai	5
Diet Pepsi	4
Honda	4
Denny's	3
Kia	3
Taco Bell	3
Toyota	3
Audi	2
ESPN	2
Fed Ex	2
GM	2
Go Daddy	2
Intuit	2
Mercedes Benz	2
Pepsi Max	2
Subway	2

Table VI. Distribution of unique ads by brands

Artist	*n*
Led Zeppelin	3
Beethoven	2
Bill Withers	2
Chad & Jeremy	2
Cult & Flo Rida	2
Elvis	2
Firehouse	2
Gwen Stefani	2
Lakeside	2
LMFAO	2
Michael Jackson	2
Nelly	2
Stevie Wonder	2
The Who	2
Bob Dylan	2
House of Pain	2
Quiet Riot	2

Table VII. Distribution of unique ads by artist

With regard to the product (brand and category) and music (artist, genre, prominence, version, artist gender, artist age, artist number, artist shown performing, choreographed, music edited, product relevance, and narrative relevance) characteristics, consistent with prior research (Kim and Cheong, 2011), beverages and motor vehicles were the two highest product categories in this study and all of them contained popular music. Popular music was most often observed in the product category of beverages (27.7 percent) followed by motor vehicles (25.1 percent). Budweiser and Coca-Cola were the most observed beverages with Hyundai and Volkswagen the most observed motor vehicles. With regard to the most interesting music characteristics, the genre of popular music most utilized was rock (28 percent), followed by pop (25.5 percent).

Popular music treatment was most often original vocals (65 percent), and more likely to be relevant to the narrative of the commercial (54.1 percent), rather than the brand advertised (13.4 percent). Another very important observation from this study was that popular music was more likely to be relevant to the ad narrative than the brand in Super Bowl commercials. This is important since some prior research suggests that music was most effective when it "fit" the "central ad message" (MacInnis and Park, 1991, p. 162), but other research suggests that music was more impactful when the music, in some way, pertains to the product (Alpert and Alpert, 1990; Brooker and Wheatley, 1994). It does, however, suggest that advertisers are possibly using popular music to stimulate some type of emotion or personal relevance from the narrative to the consumer, possibly triggering memories for significant life events or "episodic memories" (Tulving, 1972); "flashbulb memories" (Brown and Kulik, 1977); leading to greater involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1994); all potentially resulting in a more central route to persuasion (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

Based on these results, a number of things can be inferred from the increasing amounts and current practices related to the use of popular music in advertising in Super Bowl commercials. First, the fact that popular music was consistently observed in almost 20 percent of Super Bowl ads from 2005 to 2014 suggests that advertisers find it an effective executional cue. The significant increase in ads from 2011 to 2014

suggests that advertisers are finding it increasingly effective although, competitive parity among advertisers within a product category might also be a reason for the drastic increase. Second, advertisers are more likely to integrate popular music in the product categories of beverages and motor vehicles suggesting a potential popular culture correlation that is not age or gender based. Third, the genres of rock and pop were observed the most consistent with the nature of mass media advertising needing mass appeal music. Fourth, since the original vocal was most utilized this suggests advertisers are not only trying to capitalize on the songs appeal but the artist as well and consistent with past research from primetime television (Allan, 2008). Fifth, because the popular music used was more likely to be narrative focused rather than the brand focused, suggests that popular music is being used as a more effective way to involve the consumer in the storytelling. It also explains why there are not more jingles being used since they tend to be more brand-focused.

In any case, music is clearly "taking center stage at the Super Bowl – and not just during the halftime show" (Anderson, 2014) to the benefit of the brand and the band. In both 2013 and 2014, the most popular ad, according to the *USA Today* Ad Meter, was from Budweiser and it contained popular music. The song was "Landslide" and the artist was Fleetwood Mac, who benefited from the ad as well. In 2013, "Landslide" saw a 500 percent increase in download sales (Graney, 2013, p. 13). In 2014, Passenger's "Let Her Go" sales went up 51 percent (Williams, 2014) and the ad received 44 million YouTube views (Ugwu, 2014) the week following the Super Bowl (see Figure 1). It will be interesting to see if the use of popular music in Super Bowl ads continues to rise from the levels observed in this study.

Limitations and future research

While this content analysis provides a thorough and objective observation on how often and the manner in which popular music is present in Super Bowl advertising from 2005 to 2014, it is limited in its ability to provide a definite explanation for why it is used or an explicit recommendation to advertisers to use or not use popular music in advertising based on its effectiveness. Instead, the observation and inference of the context in which music is being utilized, and/or the confirmation of an increased or decreased use of music in commercials by advertisers, does suggest that popular music has been determined by advertisers to be more effective than other executional cues. But the fact that it was observed being used by such a large percentage of advertisers and growing suggests that it is certainly preferred by advertisers. Future research could use this content analysis for not only trending purposes, which is now possible, but also comparison of other executional tools like spokespeople or animals.

Another limitation of this study is the connection between music and sports. It can be inferred that fans of music and sports share common characteristics possibly engagement and involvement. This should be further investigated. Gwinner and Swanson's (2003) study "supports the premise that highly identified fans are more likely to exhibit several positive outcomes related to sponsorship" which includes sponsor patronage. Would these findings translate to brands that utilize popular music in their Super Bowel commercial advertisements? Future research could look at this possibility. Perhaps future research could also employ the psychological continuum model (PCM) to analyze the relationship between the use of popular music in Super Bowl commercials and the sport spectator's self-concept and its impact on their purchase intentions toward the sponsoring brand. Funk and James (2001) introduced

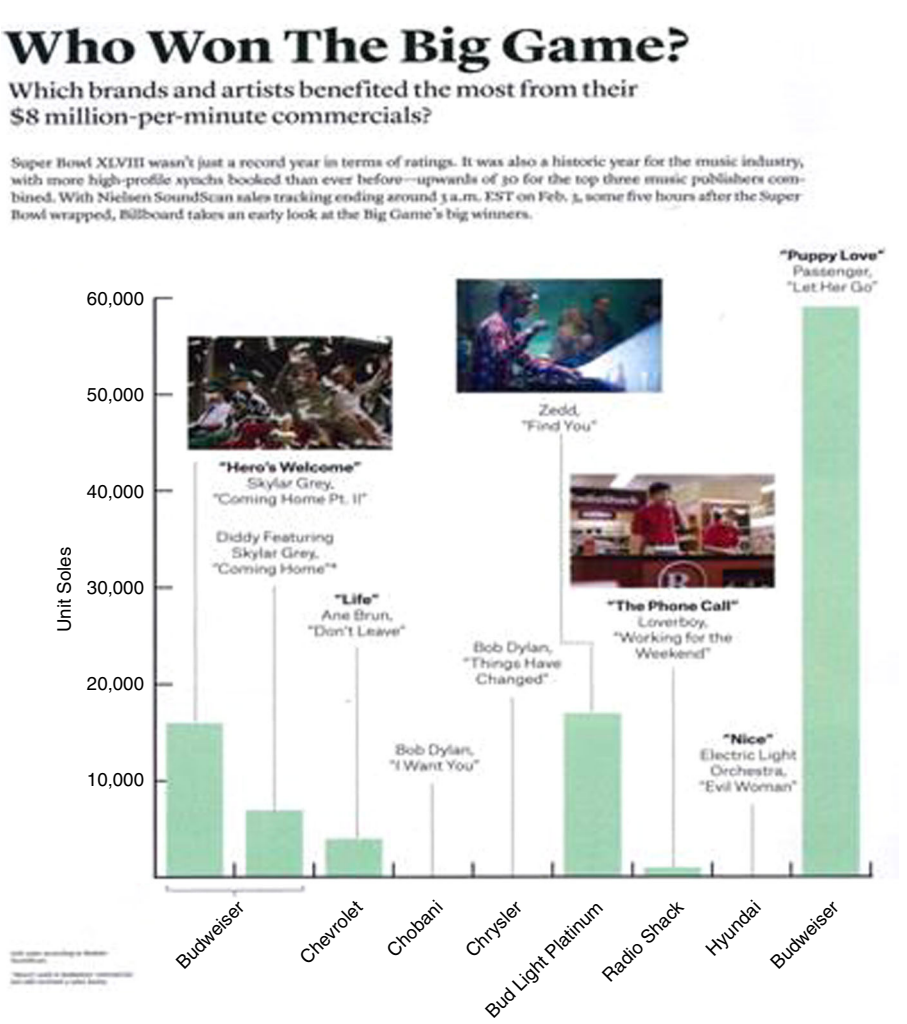

Figure 1.
Billboard

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PCM as a framework for the systematic examination of the psychological connections of sport spectators' involvement with sports or sport teams (Note: sport spectator is distinguished from sport fan.). Unlike awareness interest desire action, trans-theoretical model, or escalator model theories, which focus on outcomes of desired changes in behavior, PCM focuses on "the psychological relationship an individual may form with a sport object (e.g. a sport or team) and identifies the different factors thought to influence the formation of a strong connection relative to a sport object."

Finally, this study utilized a comparatively large sample of commercials, but it is still just a snapshot of ten years of Super Bowl commercials. Additional studies and samples could allow for more generalizations and inferences. Despite its limitations, this study provides a foundation for all future research of popular music in Super Bowl commercials.

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