Stockholm School of Economics
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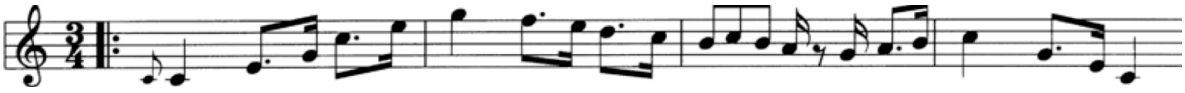
The Brands Are Alive With The Sound Of Music

A quantitative study of sound-a-likes and their effects on brand equity



Today, the presence of brands in media is greater than ever, making consumers consciously as well as unconsciously filter out the commercial white noise. The need for a stronger top of mind conditioning is increasing and being able to address consumers' emotions is a competitive advantage now needed in marketing. Music is a key marketing tool in doing so, but it comes at a high cost.

The concept of sound-a-likes is a relatively new, cost efficient way of using music, but the effects on a brand and its equity when used in marketing purposes is yet unknown. To make it an utilizable tool its implications need to be studied further.

The purpose of this thesis was to test if a sound-a-like could be equally efficient as the original song in affecting brand equity, in terms of brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth.

Hypotheses were tested through a quantitative method with an experiment where the respondents were randomly presented with two different versions of a commercial in a digital survey; one with the sound-a-like and one with the original song, holding all else equal.

The results clearly indicated that there was no significant difference in the effect on brand equity when using an original song compared to a sound-a-like.

The implications of the result is that the same effect on brand equity can be achieved with a sound-a-like at a much lower cost than an original song, which is associated with royalty fees. This result assures marketers that sound-a-likes can be a reliable, cost efficient tool for incorporating music in advertising.

Key words: Brand Equity, Sound Branding, Sound-a-like, Consumer Marketing, Music, Market Communication, Emotions, Effective advertising

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And to everyone who have inspired and motivated us along the way – You know who you are!

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1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In todays world where visual ads can be easily ignored by the consumer and simply labeled in their minds as “noise”, both consciously and unconsciously, sounds and music can give brands an opportunity to create recognition even though the consumer isn’t looking directly at brands advertisement (Lusensky, 2010). The importance for brands to create a strong position in the minds of the consumer is becoming greater. One way of achieving this is by establishing a music identity, which defines how the brand sounds.

Commercials today are becoming more inefficient in how they reach consumers and a large share of the Swedish population state that they are actively choosing to avoid TV-, radio- and internet commercials (Lusensky, 2010). This type of behavior is facilitated even further by new modern technology (e.g. TiVo, Netflix and other online streaming services) which allows consumers to watch television in an “on-demand”-way, skipping the ads and letting the viewers go straight to the shows and movies they want to see.

This has led to a shift in the way companies can reach their potential customers, where traditional marketing has to leave room for a much stronger emphasis on the actual brand and the equity it possesses in itself. What this calls for is a new perspective, which focuses on the more intangible factors that are associated with the human senses. Through the help of new key aspects such as emotions, experiences, engagement and exclusivity (“The Four E’s”) rather than the traditional marketing aspects which are the product, place, promotion and the price (“The Four P’s”), a brand can excel in the creation of an emotional bond with the customers and thus break through the “white noise” of today’s media and advertising. These new key aspects can be found in their purest form in music (Lusensky, 2010).

Music has been proven to affect customers’ preferences without the customer actually being able to point it out as a parameter. The good feeling the music produces has a spillover effect on the perception of the product (Gorn, 1982).

Music also plays a large part in most humans' everyday life because of its ways of putting us in a certain emotional state, its power to engage people while also creating a sense of own identity. (Lusensky, 2010). This is part of what makes music such a powerful tool in marketing and advertising when it comes to creating strong brand equity.

The climate of today's media world regarding advertising and commercials poses increasing difficulties for companies to reach potential customers through todays medial noise. More effort needs to be invested, in order to succeed in conveying your brand's identity to the audience, thus calling for larger marketing budgets in order to do so. The costs of using a well-known, famous song for a commercial is high due to the fact that it needs to cover expenditures for the writer, the artist, the record label as well as the publisher. These costs of licensed music can be replaced and thus lowered by instead choosing to use a sound-a-like.

A sound-a-like is a copy of an original song that differs so much that the makers are not required to pay any licensing or royalty fees, but it is still so similar to the original version that it could possibly evoke the same feelings as the original. When producing a cover of a song, the producer is still obligated to pay licensing fees. Therefore using sound-a-likes is the less costly option when deciding upon using music in advertising. Though the sound-a-like must differ somewhat from the original song, it does not vary to the extent that the listener would believe it to be two completely different songs. By using elements of a song that do not infringe on the original it could be possible to evoke the same connotations as the original in the consumers mindset. The purpose of the sound-alike is to convey the same feeling to the customer as the original song but at a fraction of the price as using the original.

If it is possible to create the same effect on brand equity as an original song, using sound-a-likes would make sound branding accessible to companies with smaller budgets. It would also help companies to take their branding to a new level.

1.2 Area of study

Music is very strongly connected to people's memories and the feelings associated with those memories. Being able to use music to enhance a brand is thus a powerful tool, which today is limited to larger corporations, due to their capabilities of investing larger amounts in marketing.

The concept of sound-a-likes is becoming more commonly used, but their actual implications on brands are yet unknown. If proven to be as efficient in affecting brand equity as an original song, it opens up for new marketing possibilities for companies, which previously faced budget constraints, limiting their choices of marketing tools. Based on this, this thesis aims to test if there are no differences in the effects on brand equity when using a sound-a-like in comparison to using an original song.

1.3 Purpose

The main purpose of the thesis is to examine if it is possible to achieve the same result with sound-a-likes as with original music. Comparison will be made between an original song and a sound-a-like to analyze if there are any differences in their effects on brand equity in terms of brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth.

1.4 Hypotheses

The hypotheses, which will be tested in order to find out if a sound-a-like could be considered to be an equally efficient tool in strengthening brand equity as an original song, are presented below:

- H_0: There is no difference in the effects on *Brand Equity* when using the original song or a sound-a-like
- H_{0A} There is no difference in the effects on *Brand Association* when using the original song or a sound-a-like
- H_{0B} There is no difference in the effects on *Perceived Quality* when using the original song or a sound-a-like
- H_{0C} There is no difference in the effects on *Purchase Intention* when using the original song or a sound-a-like
- H_{0D} There is no difference in the effects on *Word-of-Mouth* when using the original song or a sound-a-like

Each hypothesis will be further explained and motivated in the theory section.

1.5 Expected contribution of thesis

Previous studies have clearly shown the existing connection between music and how it affects the consumer. Although, no studies have been done concerning the more increasingly used sound-a-likes, which provide a cost efficient new way of using music in marketing purposes.

There are many studies done on the effects of the usage of music but none of the effects of using the original song versus a sound-a-like.

This thesis aims to cover the implications of the sound-a-like usage in comparison to original songs and examine if there is a possibility that its effect on the aspects brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth, are the same as those of the original music.

The purpose is to further explore the effect of music in advertising but from the perspective of how sensitive consumers are to small differentiation in the sound.

1.6 Limitations

This study will examine the effects of using a sound-a-like versus using the original song on brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth.

Studies have shown that music has a lower impact when deciding upon high involvement purchases compared to low-involvement products. Therefore the thesis and survey focuses on low involvement purchases where emotions have a larger impact on brand perception and purchase intention. More in particular, it focuses on low involvement and transformational products, which matches the nature of the product used in the experiment (Rossiter & Percy, 1991)

The respondents are intended to be homogenous enough to give the results accuracy high enough for possible conclusions and generalizations to be drawn upon. The age of the targeted group ranges from 20 to 30 years of age.

The original song chosen to base the sound-a-like on is digital and without vocals, since those are the characteristics which provide the best conditions for a successful replication. To match

the music category well, it was important that the customer base was considered to be a good fit with the music intended to use for the mock commercial shown in the survey. The product chosen as an example for this study was an energy drink, due to fact that it is believed to be a frequently consumed product among students and it also goes hand in hand with the typical upbeat digital music used for the experiment. More specifically the thesis will look into TV commercials and Internet advertising, which are the medias where music can be applicable in the marketing. The two channels are also some of the largest shares of the total marketing industry in Sweden in 2012, which confirms their relevance (Swedish Institute for Advertising and Media Statistics, 2014).

1.7 Disposition

This thesis consists of an introduction, theory, method, results and analysis, followed by a discussion. The introduction aims to provide the reader with the background information necessary to fully comprehend the subject and concepts of the thesis. The hypotheses examined in the study are presented and the purpose is stated. Finally, it describes the thesis' expected contribution to the subject music branding and finally clarifies the limitation of the thesis.

The theory section presents previous studies relevant to our study and make out the theoretical framework of the thesis. It aims to provide the knowledge necessary for an interpretation of the result and also an understanding of the analysis. The theory presented supports the possibility of the results to be generalized and applicable to other studies within the same area.

The method describes how the study was conducted and the tools used to collect and analyze data. Result presents the findings and an analysis of their implications. The final section, discussion, aims to show how the results fit into already existing theory while also viewing the analysis from the perspective of our hypotheses.

2. THEORY

2.1 The biological effect of music on humans

According to Daniel M. Jackson (2003), going back in time can give greater understanding to the relationship between music and human beings and how impact can be made through music. Archeological findings support that music and the making of music can be dated back thousands of years. Every single identified culture on earth has used music in one way or another. Today we can refresh our music memory by the push of one single button, but previous generations have only relied on carrying on and remembering music aurally.

Further, music does not just affect our memories but it also has a direct link to our emotions. Neurologically it can be explained by the fact that music affects the nervous system in our brains, which activates processes with corresponding emotional reactions.

Looking deeper into the basic biological reactions to sound it shows that even the smallest sound can set off tremendous reactions and charges of adrenaline. This is also known as the survival instinct “fight or flight” and can be triggered by minor sounds such as the sound of a rattlesnake or the snap of a twig. Therefore, sounds and music are calls to action for the brain at its most basic level.

For marketers, using sound is one of the most powerful tools to use since it calls to action and can easily access emotions, which are the two most important aspects of branding. Visual stimuli do not have the same great impact as audio stimuli but by combining the both, the image can communicate a message or information and the audio evoke emotions.

Söderlund (2003) states that it is evident that music evokes an emotional reaction among humans, which would lead to the presumption that it also would evoke an emotional reaction to advertising containing music. He argues that advertising which is emotionally charged often causes an emotional reaction in the mind of the customer. Classical conditioning, basic reflex or learnt behavior, explains the connection between the music and emotions and is believed to also arise in advertising.

Another explanation to why even the smallest stimuli can cause an emotional reaction is the relationship between emotions and memory. It is assumed that the type of emotion that a certain sound evokes in the present has a tendency to also evoke memories of the same sort from previous occasions. Further, the memories connected to the emotion have a tendency to intermix with the type of emotion that occurs in the present and enhance it. Therefore it is reasonable to state that emotion and memory appears to be intimately connected.

However, it is also raises questions concerning how emotionally charged marketing can evoke emotions. The good news for marketers is that our memory does not serve us perfectly right; the emotional memory is often imprecise in its association ability. Therefore, when we are exposed to a certain situation where we experience a certain emotion, it evokes emotions in the memory that have been stored from a previous occasion when we were in a similar situation. It is not certain that both situations are identical, but some form of experienced similarity still has the ability to evoke previously experienced emotions.

Söderlund argues that for a person to receive an emotional message, the message has to go through the process of perception undisturbed. Therefore, it is interesting to examine if a sound-a-like would not disturb the process of perceiving the message no more than an original would, and if they have the same weigh in on the process.

2.2 Music as a marketing tool

The media world today conveys an extensive amount of information to the consumers who, because of this, are developing a stronger ability to filter out and actively choose to ignore whatever information they wish. This calls for a shift in focus regarding the tools used for reaching out to them as a company in order to make your brand known and successful to consumers. Tangible factors as the Four P's are taking a step back for the Four E's which are more intangible (emotions, experiences, engagement and exclusivity) and all are factors, which can ultimately be found in music.

Apart from the shift in factors that speak to the human's feelings rather than to its rational side, there are five main trends that have lead to the music's increased relevance in today's marketing environment (Lusensky 2010).

Firstly, *music has become the soundtrack of our lives*. Due to the digitalization of music, it has become a bigger part of people's everyday life, and the challenge for companies lies in finding a way to exploit this channel to reach their target customers.

Secondly, *making yourself heard is becoming increasingly difficult.* To be successful in an evermore attention-seeking economical environment, more is expected from companies in terms of differentiation in order to reach out to the companies' targeted customers. Firms need to establish an exclusive position for themselves, both on the market but also in the minds of the consumers.

Thirdly, *emotions are becoming more important in marketing.* People are to a greater extent making their purchase decisions based on feelings and emotions, which makes it more important for companies to be aware of what emotional associations their brand evokes amongst the customers.

Fourthly*, brands are becoming experiences.* Due to the larger amount of products launched on the market with less noticeable differences in characteristics and function, the whole experience and of the brand becomes an important way to differentiate one's brand or product in order to justify charging a higher price. It is each brand's way of creating their own unique selling point.

Finally, *conversation is now a way to market yourself.* In an increasingly digitalized world, successful marketing is more dependent on the conversation it is able to initiate with its customers; how well the company can engage their customers and make them carry the conversation forward through word-of-mouth.

A study done by Millward Brown (2007) states that the main reason for people to listen to music is that we are trying to reach a certain state of emotion (75 percent of the respondents agreed to this). Combining this result with the marketing objectives of companies makes it clear that if a brand can find the optimal music which delivers the right emotions desired, customers could be targeted in a more efficient way.

2.3 How music affects brands

According to North & Hargreaves (1991) *"Brands with music that fit their brand identity are 96 percent more likely to be recalled than those with non-fit music or no music at all".* A music identity defines how the brand sounds by setting up rules for how the brand communicates through sound and music. It is then activated by strategic tools (sound logotypes and music programs) and used on the brand's different communication channels towards the customer.

The music identity creates brand recognition, without the customer actually having to look directly at the brand or commercial. The benefit of a music identity in comparison to a graphical identity is the fact that music is not nearly as static as graphics. Different music can be used for different customer contexts.

A music identity can provide the brand with differentiation, consequence and exclusivity. Its effects on the target segment are attention, recognition, emotion and positive associations. All of which are highly desirable by a company aiming to reach their potential customers.

A study done by Alpert & Alpert (1989) presented results, which suggests that audience moods and purchase intentions can be affected by background music, but that it doesn't necessarily affect intervening cognitions. It showed that background music played in commercials might have a significant influence over the audience's emotional reaction when variations in the structure of the music were tested. Even if the sound is not directly attentively listened to it can activate and stimulate peripheral processing.

2.4 Original songs and sound-a-likes

Music licensing and royalties are costly and can make out a large share of the marketing expenditure when producing a TV-commercial. This is due to the fact that when deciding to use an original song, there are actually four actors that are paid when using famous music in advertising: The songwriter, the artist, the record company and the music publishers (in Sweden, STIM). The more famous the song and the artist, the higher the cost of using it.

During the early 00s, companies and advertising agencies started questioning these high costs for using famous artists' music. Trends implied an increase in the use of more unknown music and

collaborating with new artists. More companies also chose to record their own versions of famous songs, so called “sound-a-likes”. The economic advantages are obvious, but there are some benefits of having a famous artist, which are difficult to overlook: Artists help to create attention and credibility with a certain target segment. The artists can also work as spokespersons for the brand to tell its story and values.

But there are some prerequisites that need to be fulfilled when using a famous artist to market yourself. The artist needs credibility and values that align with the company and its target market. The artist also needs to be positioned strongly within this selected group (Lusensky, 2010).

2.5 Brand equity factors which could be influenced by music

The aim of marketing is to strengthen the brand equity, which provides unique and strong associations to the brand in the mind of the consumer. Aaker (1996) divides brand equity into four areas; brand recognition, brand loyalty, brand association and perceived quality. To make it possible to see the effects of the different music played in a commercial it is necessary to remove the possible brand biases a respondent may have by using an anonymous brand. This implies that brand recognition and brand loyalty cannot be variables to examine, since they require some level of previous exposure to the brand. Thus, from Aaker’s four distinguished brand equity aspects, only brand association and perceived quality will be looked further into.

According to Jalilvand, Mahadavinia and Samiei (2011), there is a clear and direct causal relationship correlation between all of Aaker’s four aspects of brand equity on purchase intention, which makes purchase intention a relevant factor to examine in this study. Murtiasi, Sucherly and Siringoringo (2013) also look further into which factors influence brand equity, more specifically word-of-mouth. Results of the study shows that word-of-mouth has a positive influence on the brand equity aspects, which also makes this factor interesting to examine when comparing the effects of a sound-a-like versus the original track.

Therefore, the four brand equity-affecting variables that will be studied in how they vary, depending on the music, are brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth.

2.5.1 Brand Association

According to Gobé (2001) it has been shown in many studies that the triggering of endorphin release in the body, which strongly stimulates pleasure centers in the human brain, can be done by listening to music. The majority of the existing branding programs do not make use of sound to the fullest in their activities. Although, when adding some thought and effort to the music chosen, companies can engage the emotions of a consumer and establish themselves in their minds to create wanted associations.

Music, which stimulates affect and emotion within the consumer, creates a more efficient way of differentiating a product from the rest and evoke interest. This is mainly because such a large share of today's consumers is not actually actively looking for product information. Since music bypasses the rational parts of the human brain and instead targets the emotional parts, which trigger the purchases driven by impulse and desire, it is by far one of the most effective tools to use within advertising. Thus, music has the ability to overcome the fact that consumers often do not feel a personal need for the advertised product, nor the will to buy it.

A research done showed that 80 percent of those participating in a study where music was played while products was previewed chose the product which was accompanied by music they personally liked (Gorn, 1982*)*. The conclusion drawn from this study showed that music, as a way of reaching out to customers, could be the difference between purchasing a certain brand or not.

Regarding both Generation X (people born between 1966 and 1976) and Y (people born between 1977 and 1994) (The Social Librarian, 2014) music has come to make out a large part in the definition of the personal identity. This implicates that if a brand can create an association to a certain type of music that is favored by their target customers, the music can act as an important tool to distinguish themselves and their identity towards that targeted segment.

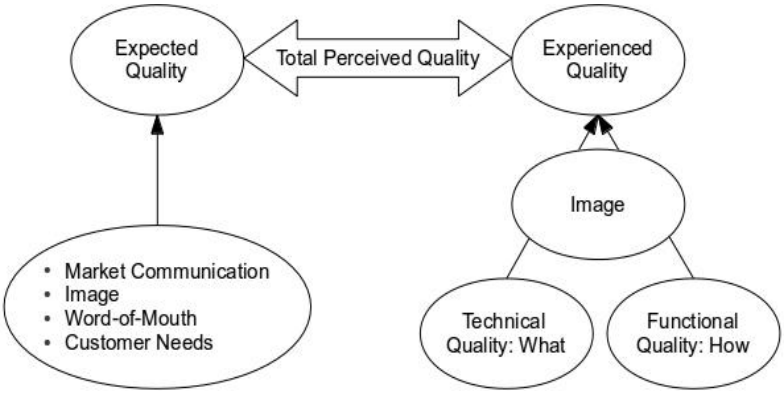
This is a strong competitive advantage if applied, and it is becoming increasingly occurring within retail among brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch and Gap, but also at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Investments are increasing within this area and the development of tailored music to each particular brand.

H_{0A}: There is no difference in the effects on brand association when using the original song or a sound-a-like

2.5.2 Perceived quality

Quality is known as a key driver regarding the satisfaction and value for customers, and the delivery of quality that can exceed competitors is essential in creating a sustainable, long-term competitive advantage as a company (Day, 1990; Porter, 1980) That being said, if one can control the quality perceived by consumers of a brand, the possibility of favorable market positioning can become a reality.

To look further into perceived quality, the Perceived Quality Model (Grönroos 1993) presented below, could be applicable also in this study. According to the model, the quality perceived can be divided into the *expectation* of the quality and the *experience* of the quality. *Experienced quality* consists of the image of the brand and its technical- and functional quality. Aspects that are relevant when managing *expected quality* can be both internal (controlled and provided by the organization itself) such as marketing communication, and external such as image, word-of-mouth and customer needs.



In the case of this thesis, what is of interest is the *expectation of quality*, since this is what marketing aims to manage to the fullest.

Since this study aims to examine what the organization itself can control, the internal aspects of market communication becomes of high relevance. These are the aspects that possibly could be affected by the presence of music in advertising.

The fact that the brand itself affects the expected quality is supported in the article Perceived Quality by Oude Ophuis & VanTrijp (1995). According to Steenkamp (1989) there are quality cues that can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic. The intrinsic cues are tangible aspects associated with the actual product (color, size, shape) while the extrinsic cues are related, but not actually a part of the product (brand name). Many labeling experiments show the importance in brand name *(*Allison & Uhl, 1964; Makens 1965; Rigaux-Bricmont 1982). Also in this case, it is possible that music has the possibility to affect the strength of the brand name and image.

H_{0B}: There is no difference in the effects on perceived quality when using the original song or a sound-a-like

2.5.3 Purchase intention

Marketing is a subject that can be examined and practiced in many different manners but in the end they all share the same main purpose - increasing sales. Purchase intention is the final step, and the aim of the marketing process. Although there are great difficulties in the accuracy of measuring correlations between marketing campaigns and sales increases over time. One way of measuring potential sales is to examine the consumers' intentions to purchase, as an indicator of possible future behavior.

The measurement of intention has derived from the mental dimensions of loyalty measurements. It is important to clarify that measuring intention is not a sure thing, it does not determine a person's actual behavior. It is purely a measurement of how a customer might perceive oneself to act in the future. It can also be viewed as the customers' *conscious* perception of behavior, while in the future the *subconsciousness* might decide the actual behavior (Söderlund, 2001).

The importance of the call to perform a purchase in commercials differs depending on what type

of product is being marketed. High-involvement purchases require stronger call for purchase since it often involves a higher risk for the customer in the form of a high price or a subscription over a longer period of time. The customer therefore puts more efforts into thinking over and rationalizing that type of purchases, requiring more persuasion. (Dahlén & Lange 2009). When it comes to low-involvement purchases the endeavor is smaller and intentions can be stored latently. When we buy our groceries we might not always plan our purchases ahead or what brand of a certain product we will buy. It is common to view a commercial and get the desire to buy a product without planning a purchase until faced with the product in the store and connect it to a latent intention (Dahlén & Lange 2009).

The most common way to examine intentions in surveys is to ask questions about repurchase, for example: "If possible, how likely is it that you would choose Red Bull the next time you want an energy drink?"

The Rossiter-Percy Grid (Figure 1, Appendix) would place an energy drink in the transformational and low-involvement category. Transformational motives include sensory gratification and stimulation, making an individual go from a relatively "okay" state of being to an even better state. These are the motives that trigger consumers' purchase intentions. The level of involvement is determined by the perceived risk of purchase; the lower the risk, the lower the involvement will be. A simple trial will let the consumer know if this is a product they like or not. Within this category, what is of high importance when addressing the potential customers is emotional authenticity, advertising likeability and the ability of the commercial to elicit correct emotional response and then link that response to the product.

In this thesis the respondents would not actually have consumed the product, therefore the intention to purchase will be strongly linked to the perceived image and brand attitude.

In marketing and market research it is widely accepted that if a customer has a good attitude towards the brand and product, the customer will posses some intention of purchasing the product. Therefore most surveys find a positive correlation between brand attitude and purchase intention. If there is no positive correlation it is likely that there is some error in the survey (Söderlund, 2003)

The positive correlation between brand attitude and purchase intention has become somewhat of a law of nature in marketing. It is therefore plausible to assume that if the survey shows a positive brand attitude towards both the original and the sound-a-like, the purchase intention will also be positive.

Taking the theory one step further is to assume that positive purchase intentions actually affect the customers purchase behavior. This is an easy way to rely on theory instead of empirically validate the correlation (Söderlund, 2003).

In the case of this thesis, increased purchases would increase sales and revenues if there was a positive brand attitude. By using a sound-a-like, costs can also be lowered and consequently increasing profits, while possibly provide the same effects on purchase intention.

H_{0C}: There is no difference in the effects on purchase intention when using the original song or a sound-a-like

2.5.4 Word-of-mouth

According to Söderlund (2001), many consumers find it important to hear the opinion of others while, or before, making purchase decisions. They talk and discuss their purchase intentions with family members, relatives, friends and on the Internet, and they might even ask for their final advice. As a result, the receivers of recommendations are most likely influenced in their decision-making because of their interaction and communication with others.

Word-of-mouth is defined in marketing as the process of communication between a non-commercial communicator and a receiver or purchaser of a product or service. In marketing this is considered to be one of the strongest marketing tools, but it is difficult to achieve since it involves transforming people into brand ambassadors. Although, the development of social medias has made it easier for both marketers and consumers to spread awareness.

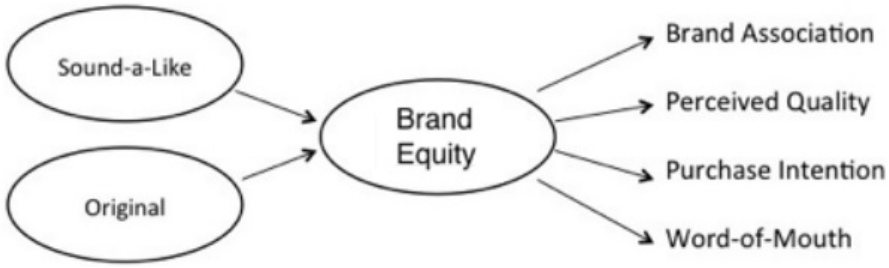
Further, Söderlund states that there is a strong connection between similarity and attraction, and also attraction and impact on purchase behavior, in the form of word-of-mouth. Studies have shown that other people in the surrounding of one single person, especially ones who previously

have purchased the product, can have great impact on others' purchasing decisions.

The ability to influence is based to a large extent on similarity between the customers and the recognition in the marketing. If the acquaintances are based on likeness is it plausible to assume that the people like each other, and if liked they also presumably find each other believable and trustworthy. An acquaintance bares stronger trust to consumers than the seller of a product, whose main interest is to generate revenue. If likeness and similarity are strongly linked in the making of word-of-mouth, it is granted to explore if the same applies to the process of the relationship marketing to customers. Meaning, if the marketing enhances the likeness between the brand and the customer, such as taste in fashion or music, it creates a greater bond to the customer and presumably also to its peers and the ones who would be receptive to word-of-mouth.

H_{0D}: There is no difference in the effects on word-of-mouth when using the original song or a sound-a-like

Summarized below is an overview of the independent and dependent variables:



3. METHOD

3.1 Problem definition

Since marketing today is showing a shift in the methods used to reach potential customers, towards appealing to the emotional side of people and music has become more relevant as a tool in doing so efficiently. Although, using famous tracks produced and performed by some of the largest artists can result in high marketing expenditures and sometimes hamper the potential spread of the advertisement due to its money exacting nature. Thereof the increasing demand for so called sound-a-likes. This study will examine the possibilities of sound-a-likes and their ability to provide equally same effects regarding brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth as the original famous track.

3.2 Approach

This thesis is based on a deductive approach, where hypotheses were generated after having taken part of existing theories within the field of music used for marketing purposes. The used method is quantitative and experimentally based, with dependent and independent variables, which is suitable when examining low involvement products. When the research is conducted, the hypotheses are either accepted or rejected according to theory, with the possibility to develop existing theories (Malhotra & Birks, 1999).

The research paradigm is positivistic, which aims to establish a causality in the examination through experiments in order to explain and provide clarity to the problem examined and perhaps even be able to generalize the result to make it applicable to further studies (Malhotra & Birks, 1999).

3.3 Experiment design

To examine the hypotheses, the decision was made to conduct a quantitative survey. For our hypotheses to be tested and to explore relationships, an experiment was used. In accordance with the definition of an experiment in market research purposes, one independent variable was manipulated to examine its effects on several dependent variables (Malhotra & Birks, 1999).

While conducting an experiment, precautions also have to be taken in order to control extraneous variables. Therefore the questionnaires for the both groups compared were identical and only the independent variable of version of the song was randomly assigned the respondents. Other extraneous variables may be age and geographical location (Malhotra & Birks, 1999). The survey focused on students who is considered to be in the same age group between twenty and thirty years old and the survey was directed towards students at Stockholm School of Economics (SSE) who is presumed to all reside in the area of Stockholm.

The product chosen was an energy drink, in the purpose of being a product which has a good fit with the music chosen to replicate, and the selection of SSE respondents. An existing commercial video for an energy drink was chosen, although the commercial has never been broadcasted in Sweden. The segments of the video where the brand of the energy drink was exposed were edited out of the video to be able to display a non-branded product in the survey. This would eliminate any prior perceptions of the brand that might affect the surveys results.

3.3.1 Manipulation of independent variable

Different versions of the video were produced, one with an original version of a song and another with a sound-a-like of the original song. Both commercials were identical with the only deviation being the different versions of the song.

The sound-a-like was produced with the help of music branding consultants that tailors music for events and brands, Music ID. The survey therefore got a sound-a-like as it would have been produced in a real life setting, by professionals that specialize in music branding. The best type of music to make a sound-a-like of is music that can be manipulated digitally with beats, such as house music. Preferably without vocals. The song chosen was Levels by Avicii. The survey was produced in two versions, one with the sound-a-like and one with the original song. All other aspects were kept the same in the surveys, the only difference was what version of the song in the video the respondent watched. What version the respondent was presented with was evenly randomized.

3.3.2 Survey design

Only questions that were perceived as necessary for the results were included in the survey. In most cases several questions were used on each topic, rather than just one in order to obtain the

full information needed.

To find out if the respondent was adequately informed about the product type previous to answering the survey, the questionnaire included filter questions to measure the familiarity and past experience of the respondent with the product. The questions' answering options were structured and divided into scale, multiple-choice and dichotomous.

The questions regarding information related directly to the research problem were placed at the beginning of the survey. It was followed by the classification information (socio-economic and demographic characteristics) and finally the survey also included demographic questions such as gender and age, as well as the option to provide an email address in the case the survey respondent wished to participate in the giveaway of two tickets to a museum. Since these last questions could be considered to be sensitive for some people, they were not placed at the beginning, in order to avoid suspicion of the surveys intention.

A semantic scale was used throughout the experiment to analyze similarities and differences between the two groups (Malhotra & Birks, 1999). Interval scales were used with a scale from one to seven. The use of interval scales is recommended when measuring customers' satisfaction, attitudes, preferences, emotions, perceptions and intentions. These types of attributes are considered to be fluctuating between negative and positive or high and low, and are therefore put on an interval scale (Söderlund, 2005).

The following dependent variables were covered and examined in the survey:

Brand association

To examine the dependent variable "brand association", several questions regarding the associations and feelings the commercial evoked were asked, with ten bipolar response alternatives (such as calmness versus energy, matureness versus youthfulness) on a scale from one to seven. Questions assessing brand likeability and trustworthiness were asked on the same type of scale as well. Also, recognition of the song played was tested, accompanied by a follow-up question asking if the respondent heard the original version of the song and the possibility to submit the name of the artist and the song if known. The purpose of this specific question of stating the artist and song was to increase the validity of the questions, rather than just asking

about the song recognition in general.

Perceived Quality

When assessing perceived quality, the questions asked addressed how important the respondent perceived the quality of the product showed in the commercial, how important they generally consider quality to be when purchasing the specific type of product and how believable they consider the commercial to be. All questions had response options on a scale ranging from one to seven.

Purchase intention

To measure the purchase intention questions recommended to use is the likelihood of the respondent to consider purchasing the product (Söderlund, 2005). In this survey the questions used to examine purchase intention were: "Have you purchased a product from this category, energy drinks, this year?", "How likely is it that you would buy this product to share with your friends when meeting them?" and "After viewing this ad, how likely is it that you would consider purchasing this product at least once?". As a follow-up question, the respondents were asked how much they were willing to pay for the product, where the response alternatives were multiple choice with different price intervals.

The main question is the likelihood of purchase consideration, although it is supplemented with further questions. These questions will highlight if the respondent is a consumer of the specific product category and if the consumer considers the product a low-involvement product.

Word-of-mouth

To measure the dependent variable word-of-mouth, questions regarding the respondents' willingness to spread information about the product were asked to examine the potential (Söderlund, 2005). More specifically, the question was phrased as: "How likely is it that you would recommend this product to others?" with response alternative on a scale from one to seven.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Sample

Collecting primary data became important in this study since there is a lack of secondary data available within this very specific area. To collect data the population of students at Stockholm School of Economics was chosen as a sample population. This is due to the fact that the students' age range matches well with the target age group of energy drinks, which is the chosen example product for the survey. The group also is homogenous enough to provide a good foundation for statistical results and is a representative population. By ensuring somewhat of homogeneity it mitigates for other deviations that are not significant to the experiment, which mainly concerns effects of music. The students of Stockholm School of Economics are considered to be representative, both in regards of the consumption of the product category energy drinks and the fact that they belong to the generation which music identification in advertising primarily applies to. To get a statistically representative and reliable result, the aim was to gather a sample with around one hundred respondents with an even gender distribution.

3.4.2 Experiment preparation

In order to be able to test the effects of a sound-a-like versus an original song on the respondents, a sound-a-like needed to be produced. This was done by Music ID, a company that works with music branding consultancy. They provide brands with commercials and tailored music that fit their specific image. The song chosen to make a sound-a-like of was Levels by Avicii, which was considered to be suitable for the targeted age group of the study and the product it would accompany in the survey. It is a song that is clearly recognized and popular, not only in Sweden but worldwide. The music video reached 46,8 million views during its first eight months on YouTube (YouTube, 2012). Today, it has reached 110,4 million views.

The two songs were accompanied by a commercial originally made for a brand that produces energy drinks. The logos were removed in effort to create an anonymous brand and eliminate possible brand biases that the respondents might have, both favorable and unfavorable. This was considered to be a more practically feasible alternative, rather than producing a completely new commercial.

3.4.3 Experiment execution

To collect survey responses, an email was sent out to about 800 students at Stockholm School of Economics, both Bachelor and Master students, provided with a link to the questionnaire. In order to create an incentive to answer, two museum tickets were offered as a prize for one random respondent. This approach did not yield many responses, and a new strategy with a somewhat more "instant gratification"-reward system was applied on location in the school. In return for taking the time to answer the questionnaire, the respondents received a baked good when submitting their email at the survey's final page. This was highly effective and all responses needed, about 120, were collected in just a few hours.

3.5 Analysis tools

Throughout the analysis, SPSS has been used to analyze the results and draw conclusions from the survey. In SPSS, the many variables regarding the four different hypotheses were merged, in the case that they were correlated with a Cronbach's Alpha above 0,75 (Söderlund, 2005; Peterson 1994). This was to get a more descriptive view over the result, rather than presenting all the variables separately.

3.6 Data quality

3.6.1 Validity

Previous knowledge about the topic of the thesis was low and the topic was chosen based on interest and eagerness to gain a deeper knowledge. During the process of the thesis, help was given by the music production company, Music ID. However, the main source of information concerning the topic was taken from literature to keep an unbiased relation to the thesis.

To ensure compliance between the theoretical areas and the questions asked in the survey, the tutor of the thesis, Sofie Sagfossen, along with Magnus Söderlund provided consultation in the development of the survey questions. Literature concerning how to frame survey questions was also used to find the questions and wording that target the aimed response.

The sample was restricted to students at Stockholm School of Economics to represent the population of students. The sample was therefore restricted to people within a certain age span and geographical area.

The product in the commercial and song was thereafter adapted to fit the sample of students. Energy drinks were thought to be a frequently purchased product among students and something that would feel relevant and engaging to the sample.

The song used, Levels by Avicii, has topped the song charts and therefore is considered to have a high recognition rate and evoke emotions and memories. Data shows that the original song was highly recognized and that a majority also thought the sound-a-like sounded familiar (Figure 2, Appendix).

In effort to avoid random sampling error (Malhotra & Birks, 1999), the survey focused on a homogenous group of students at SSE. The result of the experiment can be believed to be representative of the segment "students" and for its age group. Though it is not certain to be representative for the entire population in Sweden. Possibly if the experiment would be adjusted to fit different segments, regarding product type and music, it might be considered to yield the same result when applied to other targeted segments.

Since the customer segment, which is targeted by the companies producing the product selected as an example in the survey (energy drinks), is a match with the group that was examined it is likely that the results could be generalizable within this category of low-involvement and transformational products (Rossiter, Percy & Donovan, 1991). The possibility of the result being applicable to other product categories within the low-involvement section more generally, even those of a more informational nature, is not as realistic since it is a category tinged by problem solving and clearly stated, rational benefits rather than emotional aspects and likeability.

By using a brandless commercial, brand biases by the respondents were avoided, making the result more applicable to other scenarios other than this specific experiment.

It is common in surveys to have incomplete responses, although they can be eliminated in SPSS to avoid non-response error. Non-response error was avoided by clearing the sample from outliers. Responses which took too long to complete, completed at unusual times of the day, incomplete answers and those who had consistently same answers regardless of the question were removed from the data. By making the study quantitative, the risk of response error has also been lowered (Malhotra & Birks, 1999).

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability concerns the "repeatability" of the measures (Research Methods, 2006). Objectivity is highly important in achieving a reliable result and requires the writers to remain neutral to not let their own knowledge influence the data. To reduce the risk of this, people with further knowledge within the area of market research as well as music (Sofie Sagfossen, Magnus Söderlund, Magnus Rydén) has continuously been looking at drafts of the survey to ensure its quality. This has provided the study with a non-biased design. To ensure unbiased results from the survey and attempts to manipulate the outcome, Qualtrics was set to block multiple completed surveys from the same IP-address.

For each theoretical area more than one similar question was used to measure it in a valid way as recommended by literature. To further ensure reliability the questions were merged together to form the dependent variables and analyzed for correlation with a Cronbach's alpha test in SPSS. When analyzing the outcomes of the test, values above 0.75 were accepted (Söderlund, 2005) and considered to have reached a strong enough value to provide a proper validity for the analysis. The analysis showed values between 0.783 and 0.851 for all merged categories and therefore could be accepted to ensure that the factors captured similar aspects and were cohesive.

The questions asked aimed to avoid arbitrariness and no questions were open ended except for those where the respondent was asked to type the name of the artist and song. Also, terms that could be interpreted differently depending on the respondent (such as "often", "rarely" etc.) were accompanied with interval scales to achieve greater reliability since it otherwise can result in too much uncertainty regarding the answers true meaning (Söderlund, 2005).

4. RESULT & ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview

The four hypotheses aim to test if the use of sound-a-likes in commercials can be equally as effective in a brand equity perspective as the original music. By performing an experiment with a commercial where the music evenly and randomly varies between the original and the sound-a-like, all other aspects kept constant, the actual effects of the music itself could be isolated and presented more clearly.

Brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth are the four aspects affecting brand equity that are examined to see what role the music plays within these areas.

All hypotheses were tested through an independent t-test where a comparison of means was performed and the hypotheses with a significance level at five percent or above were accepted, since it indicates that there is no significant difference between the means of the two music samples, and thus the effect of them are the same. The significance levels ranged from 0.434 to 0.698.

4.1.1 Brand Association

As stated in the theory section, music and its ability to establish a personal need for a product can overcome the human mind's rationality and break through the noise in today's marketing environment. The ability to create a strong brand association becomes key in achieving this. The effect of the music used in a commercial should be the same regardless of if the original music or a sound-a-like is accompanying it, as long as they both evoke the same set of feelings within the customer (Söderlund, 2003), which is the purpose of a sound-a-like in a marketing context. This sense of brand association was tested, and the results are presented below:

	Original	Sound-a-like	Mean difference	T-value	Significance
Brand Association	4,55	4,41	0,14	0,79	0,434

n= A total of 114 respondants where 64 heard the SAL and 49 heard the original song.

The difference in brand association between the commercial showing the original and the sound-a-like are minor, and although the original song manages to achieve a somewhat stronger mean it

is far from significant. The equality in ability to affect brand association is confirmed by the high significance level at 0.434. The hypothesis is therefore correct and the two songs are equally effective in their influences on brand association.

H_{0A}: There is no difference in the effects on brand association when using the original song or a sound-a-like: Accepted

4.1.2 Perceived Quality

Since quality is known as a key driver in creating a sustainable competitive edge, it is a clear advantage to be able to manage expected quality, which is the one thing in perceived quality that actually can be controlled with marketing by the organization itself, rather than experienced quality. Factors which play a part in strengthening the marketed quality is image and brand name, both factors possible to affect with the help of music.

It would be intuitive to assume that an original version of a song would signal higher quality than a sound-a-like version of the same song. However, in this thesis the hypothesis is that an original and sound-a-like would signal the same quality since they are very much alike and that the memory often fails to remember the exact beat.

	Original	Sound-a-like	Mean difference	T-value	Significance
Perceived quality	3,62	3,71	0,09	0,39	0,698

n= A total of 114 respondants where 64 heard the SAL and 49 heard the original song.

The hypothesis was confirmed when the mean was tested. The high significance level of 0.698 confirms that there was no significant difference between the two, and thus the sound-a-like is equally efficient in affecting perceived quality as the original song. The means were roughly the same but, surprisingly, quality was perceived slightly higher among the respondents that viewed the video with the sound-a-like.

H_{0B}: There is no difference in the effects on perceived quality when using the original song or a sound-a-like: Accepted

4.1.3 Purchase Intention

Ultimately, the aim of marketing is to successfully be able to increase sales of a product or a service. Thus, by being able to increase purchase intention with the help of advertising and commercials, it is fair to draw the conclusion that it will also affect the actual purchase behavior of the consumer (Söderlund, 2003). For low-involvement transformational products emotions play a large part in triggering a purchase and music is a highly efficient tool to use in such cases, looking at the shift from tangible to intangible factors (Four E's) which all can be found in music.

If there is a way to be able to increase sales and simultaneously lower the costs of marketing (in this case by using sound-a-likes), an organization's profitability can be increased. This theory was tested through the hypothesis that a sound-a-like could create a purchase intention as efficiently as the original music.

	Original	Sound-a-like	Mean difference	T-value	Significance
Purchase intention	2,90	2,73	0,17	0,55	0,580

n= A total of 114 respondants where 64 heard the SAL and 49 heard the original song.

The original music does manage to create a slightly higher mean purchase intention in comparison to the sound-a-like, though it is far from significant. In this case, using a sound-a-like is equally favorable as using an original song regarding purchase intention.

H_{0C}: There is no difference in the effects on purchase intention when using the original song or a sound-a-like: Accepted

4.1.4 Word-of-mouth

The spreading of marketing messages through word-of-mouth is a highly sought after effect for marketers when launching campaigns, however it is difficult to achieve (Söderlund, 2001).

The hypothesis is that the original song and the sound-a-like would create the same effect on possible spreading of word-of-mouth.

	Original	Sound-a-like	Mean difference	T-value	Significance
Word of mouth	2,71	2,50	0,21	0,73	0,463

n= A total of 114 respondants where 64 heard the SAL and 49 heard the original song.

The data shows that there is no significant difference between the original and the sound-a-like when measuring the possible word-of-mouth. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted.

H_{0D}: There is no difference in the effects on word-of-mouth when using the original song or a sound-a-like: Accepted

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

Through the theory presented it is evident that the commercial environment today requires further effort from companies in order to reach the consumer through the noise. A highly effective way of doing so and reaching the consumers' emotions is through music. Music is a key tool in addressing peoples' less rational thoughts (Lusensky, 2010). Although, music can be an expensive way to market a brand and the alternative of sound-a-likes is becoming used more frequently.

The purpose of the thesis was to show if the effect of a sound-a-like, assuming that it evokes the same connotations as the original, could be equally strong as the original song in affecting brand equity and its contributing factors; brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth.

The study has shown that a sound-a-like actually can be an equally efficient way to affect brand equity as an original song. The results from the data clearly displayed an insignificant difference between the two songs accompanying the commercial, within all four dependent variables used to measure brand equity.

The data showed that the sample was very interested in music (Figure 3, Appendix). It is possible that the higher the musical interest is, the higher the sensitivity is to minor differences in the song, which would make a sound-a-like less efficient in such cases. But since the results proved it not to be the case, it is reasonable to assume that people who are less interested, and thus less sensitive to differences in music, would not be able feel any difference either.

This study provides a relevant addition to prevailing publications within the area of music in marketing, a relatively unexplored field of research in comparison to other marketing areas. Especially sound-a-likes are an unexploited subject due to its relative newness as a concept and marketing tool. The research done throughout this thesis, is contributing in laying down a foundation for further studies about this phenomenon and its implications on brand equity.

5.2 Discussing the results

5.2.1 Brand Association

Music has the ability to target the emotional parts of the human brain, which makes it possible to use it as a tool to trigger impulses and desires, which ultimately drives purchase decisions regarding low involvement products. Music can thus be considered as one of the more effective tools to use within advertising.

In this thesis the effects on brand association from the commercial was tested through several questions where the respondent rated the strength of different associations of the commercial on a scale from one to seven. The sample was divided into two groups where one heard the original song and the other heard the sound-a-like. To analyze if the associations differed between the two versions the mean of the rated associations was compared.

The results showed that the mean difference was minor and that there was no significant difference in the effects on brand associations between the two songs. It could therefore be concluded that the original song and the sound-a-like have equal effect on brand association For a company wishing to enhance brand association through the use of music in advertising it could be assumed that the same result will be achieved whether the song is an original or a sound-a-like. Prior to developing a sound-a-like, which aims to evoke the same sense of emotions as the original, it is of high importance that the specific brand associations wished to enhance, are specified and matched with the original song's type and sound. This ensures that the sound-a-like created can provide equal effects.

5.2.2 Perceived Quality

Perceived quality consists of *expected quality* and *experienced quality*. Since experienced quality implies that an actual purchase has been made, the expected quality is the one factor a company actually can affect through marketing prior to the purchase. More specifically, the aspects internally controlled are market communication and image. Perceived quality, in particular the underlying factor expected quality, was tested to see if it differs when using an original song or a sound-a-like.

To measure the perceived quality, questions were asked concerning the respondents perception of the quality after having viewed the commercial, as well as their view regarding the general importance of quality in the specific product category. A comparison was made between the two groups who had heard different versions of the song along with the commercial.

This showed that there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of the mean, which only showed a minimal difference of 0,09. In fact, this was the only dependent variable where the sound-a-like actually scored a higher mean than the original song did, which was surprising since it is an easy assumption to make that a famous song would automatically make the consumer perceive the quality as higher. The difference, although not significant, could be explained by the possibility that the crucial parameter is not whether the song is an original or not but rather what the song signals to the listener. The sound-a-like is thus equally powerful in influencing the perception of quality.

5.2.3 Purchase Intention

All marketing efforts ultimately aim to increase sales and therefore the possibility to actively affect purchase intentions is of great importance to a company. Since the experiment did not take place in a real situation where the respondent could actually purchase the product, there is a difficulty in measuring the strength of the actual effect. Although it is still a way to predict how the customers would consider themselves to act when presented with the possibility to purchase (Söderlund 2001).

When assessing purchase intention, the respondents were asked if they would consider buying the product at least once. To overcome the risk that the respondent might normally not consume the product at all, the question was complemented by asking if they would consider purchasing it for someone else.

When merging the questions into one purchase intention variable, the result showed that there is no significant difference in purchase intention when using either an original song or a sound-a-like. This consumer prediction of their own future purchase behavior would also imply that both versions of the song would ultimately yield the same sales results.

Further, regarding to what extent the song was liked by the respondents, data showed a non-significant difference in the comparison of the mean for the original song and the sound-a-like. According to Gorn (1982), a purchase is much more likely to occur when the song is liked by the consumers, which is consistent with the findings. This further supports the conclusion stated above, that the sound-a-like was equally efficient in influencing purchase intention as the original song.

5.2.4 Word-of-Mouth

By assuming homogeneity among the respondents, the spreading of the marketing message through word-of-mouth becomes a possibility, which is of great interest to measure. This is because consumers tend to place great value in the opinions of people they consider to be like-minded.

The measurement of the possible word-of-mouth effect was done by asking about the likeliness of recommending the product to a friend.

When comparing the mean ratings between the sample groups who heard the original song and the sound-a-like the data showed no significant difference between them. Therefore it can be concluded that either version of the song would have yielded the same response in possible word-of-mouth according to this study.

Overall the word-of-mouth rate was low for both versions since it was rated on a scale from one to seven, 2,71 for the original and 2,50 for the sound-a-like. This could be due to the fact that the respondents have not actually tried the real product nor are they regular users of energy drinks and are therefore not confident in recommending it to a friend.

5.3 Managerial implications

The comparison between the original song and the sound-a-like in a commercial provided the result that either one can be used to achieve the same outcome regarding brand equity and its levers brand association, perceived quality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth. The direct implication of this for marketers in particular is the fact that a large share of the budget spent on using a famous song, where there are four parties charging for their work and effort (the writer, the artist, the record label and the music publishers), can be reduced by producing a sound-a-like

instead. The same amount saved could possibly be spent on increasing the spread and frequency of the commercial to be able to reach consumer through the media's white noise of today.

For small to medium sized companies this is beneficial since they often experience a more limited marketing budget in comparison to larger corporations, who are more likely to invest greater amounts for celebrity collaborations in general. A recent example of this is the Swedish travel agency Fritidsresor's commercial, which featured Rod Stewart singing an Elton John song. The commercial was one of the most expensive campaigns the company has produced, and it is believed that the largest share of the commercial was not deriving from the fact that they hired Rod Stewart (to an estimated cost of 1.5-2 MSEK), but rather the royalty fees for the Elton John song "Your song" (Resumé, 2014). This provides some insight into how much the royalty fees actually can amount to.

The possibility of achieving the same results by using a sound-a-like opens up new possibilities for companies who have not yet considered using music in advertising due to its high costs, which enables them to compete with the same marketing tools as the larger companies.

By knowing that both versions of a song can provide the same effects on brand equity, the incentives to illegally use a famous song without paying the royalty fees and other costs associated with it, reasoning that you won't be caught doing so, becomes substantially lower. There is no reason to risk the production of the commercial by using illegal music when you can achieve the same results as with the original song through the sound-a-like, at a cost that is lower than the possible legal penalties.

Collaborations with celebrities in general are characterized by many benefits, but also high risk. By linking your brand closely to an individual, you are automatically in it for both the good and the bad. The attention an artist contributes with to a brand is not always positive. A recent example of a negative spillover effect was when the golf player Tiger Woods' private life damaged his image and therefore also the image of his sponsors.

Assessing the target audience incorrectly is another risk of coupling a brand with an artist: just because the chosen segment enjoys the music of a certain artist, it does not necessarily imply that the artist is someone who they can relate to or even like.

Sound-a-likes are a way to separate the possible negative aspects of musical collaborations from the beneficial emotions it can evoke. Using sound-a-likes opens up for the possibility to use a specific sound to evoke emotions without necessarily being associated with the artist. The associations might not necessarily be negative but rather just not a good fit, even though the sound is.

5.4 Limitations of the result

The sample chosen of students at Stockholm School of Economics limits the research in the sense that it consists of respondents with the same occupation, same age group and geographical area of residence.

The product itself shown in the commercial is also a limitation. The specific product category (energy drinks) is assumed to be frequently consumed among students, which might not be representative for an entire population. The data showed that about 50 percent of the respondents had purchased at least one energy drink during the last year (Figure 4, Appendix).

The majority of the respondents considered the quality of the product to be of small importance, which might affect associations and quality perception. Although the actual mean, if it is high or low, is of less importance. What is of relevance in this study is the mean difference between the two groups, sound-a-like and original. If several different songs would have been used in different surveys, along with an accompanying sound-a-like, tests could also have been done on the different songs' positive or negative effects on the means, rather than just measuring the internal differences between the originals and sound-a-likes.

The choice of song and sound limited the thesis in the sense that only digitized music was used in the survey. Many companies prefer not to use digitized music since it is not coherent with the brand and the wanted associations. The effects on brand equity when using different versions of a non-digitized song was not examined and hence the results are only applicable when using digitized music.

When answering a survey about a low involvement product, the respondent might ponder more than one would do in a real life situation where a purchase is impulse driven. Respondents might have a tendency to second-guess themselves when being questioned thoroughly. Though it is

difficult to capture and measure those instant real life decisions and their affect on the parts of brand equity. In a real life situation there would also be an existing brand that would evoke already existing perceptions, which affect the consumer and his or her decision.

Since the respondents were not supervised when answering the survey there was no sure control if they viewed the commercial or if they heard the music clearly. To mitigate this and increase validity, the respondents were asked to name the artist and song.

An implication of conducting surveys is that it is somewhat forced exposure, which might affect the perception of the music and the commercial. The commercial is also not viewed in its intended context such as TV or Internet.

The rate of interest in music was high among the respondents and therefore the results may be different when exposing a commercial to another audience where the respondents have a lower interest in music. The effects of this are though unknown and it is difficult to have an intuitive guess on how it would affect the outcome.

Finally, what also limits this study and its findings is the relatively short time frame and limited number of responses. A study at a larger scale is more certain to provide generalizable results due to its size, though time is a prerequisite for this to be possible. This could be considered a limitation of this thesis, although the number of respondents is enough to provide a proper statistical result and approximately five months have been invested in the making of the study.

5.5 Further research

Within marketing, research has been done on the effects of music in advertising, although not very extensive. Moreover, the concept of sound-a-likes and their implications on brand equity has not been examined whatsoever.

It is not evident if all types of music would be suitable to make sound-a-likes of. In the case of this study, digital music turned out to be a good music genre to base a sound-a-like on, but if that is the case regarding music with vocals and real instruments (i.e. classical music, rock music) would be relevant to study further. Also, little research has been done on how different types of music affects a brand and its equity, which could be of high interest to companies who find it

important to manage their brands' perception among consumers more deliberately.

By using a sample with an older age range, it would be interesting to see if the same results could be achieved or if the conclusions drawn from this study only is applicable to the specific age group examined; twenty to thirty year old people.

Further, making the commercial appear more similar to commercials experienced in real life on both television and the Internet, and perhaps using existing brands, could yield other results than those of this thesis and possibly link the results closer to real scenarios and outcomes.

It would be interesting in further research to investigate if the proven effects of a sound-a-like on a low involvement and transformational product also could be found when applied to the category of high involvement and transformational products, due to the similar nature of being prone to emotional stimuli (in comparison to informational products). Although, there could be limitations in the application since high involvement products mostly involve high risk, and therefore rationality play a bigger part than emotions in the context of brand equity.

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7. APPENDIX

Figure 1: The Rossiter-Percy Grid

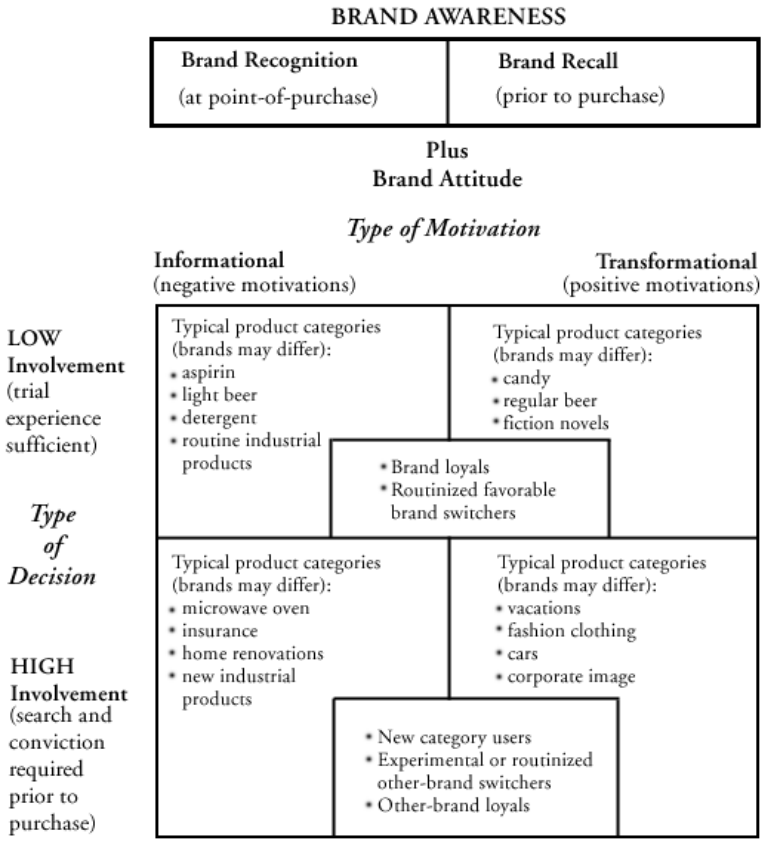

Figure 2: Song Recognition

Question: Did you recognize the song played in the commercial?

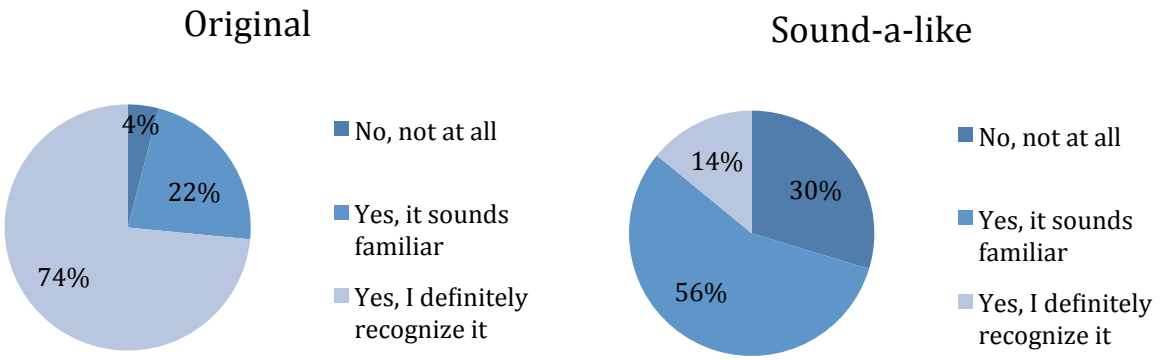

Figure 3: Music Interest

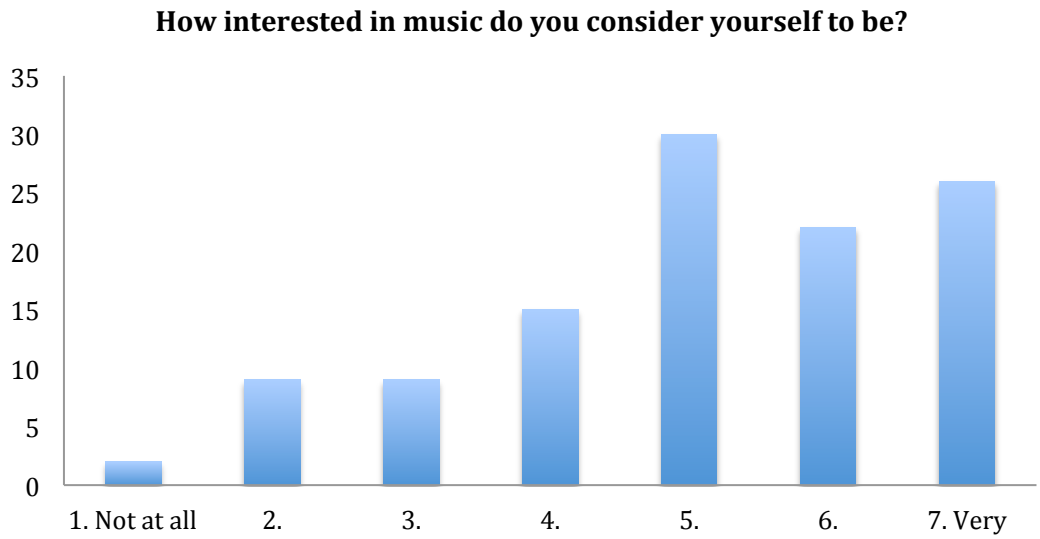

Figure 4: Product Purchase