Framing Meaning Perceptions with Music: The Case of Teaser Ads

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Teaser ads rely heavily on nonverbal executional cues to communicate. This research suggests that music may function in a manner similar to verbal captions with regard to the meanings viewers attribute to a teaser ad. Whereas previous research tended to examine the effects of executional cues within a single medium (e.g., music, visual element), this research suggests that interactive audiovisual images play an important role in the meaning enactment process. Specifically, music connects with and accentuates selective visual events, as well as selective aspects of a visual event, to draw out the advertising proposition. The implications of these findings are discussed.

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The past decade has witnessed an increase in research that examines the role executional cues play in enhancing consumer response to advertising. Whereas some researchers have examined the meaning enactment process brought forth by corroborative executional cues (McQuarrie and Mick 1992, 1996, 1999; Scott 1990, 1994a, b; Stern 1996), others have examined interactive imageries created by a mix of executional cues (Leigh 1991, 1992, 1994) and coordinated media campaigns (Edell and Keller 1989). Instead of emphasizing the differences between verbal and nonverbal and visual and audio cues on consumer responses, these studies treat different executional cues as parts of an integrative whole that presents the advertising proposition in a persuasive manner. Specifically, prior research has shown that the headline (McQuarrie and Mick 1992; Phillips 2000) and pictorial layout (Williamson 1978) of a commercial, as well as the cultural background of the actors (Grier and Brumbaugh 1999), "frame" the way viewers interpret the ad message. Although relatively more attention has been paid to the effects of verbal (McQuarrie and Mick 1992; Phillips 2000) and visual (Edell and Keller 1989; Scott 1994b) cues, the following comments by an industry professional indicate that music might perform a similar framing function in television advertising:

> If you get a really fast-cut commercial, this sort of thing that you'll get for a sports promotion, ESPN and stuff. A million cuts in a second mode. Tennis ball being hit and people dunking fast hit, and chop, chop, chop, you can very easily put a fast drum, a really fast rhythmic thing with drums, and it'll work with the cut, the beat, literally. You can also put on a slow, elegant piece of music, classical music, and it'll give the images a little more emotion, a little more importance, even a little more poignancy, instead of just bang, bang, bang. If you put a very slow piece of music with that, the music makes you connect with the athlete, and you'll see it as striving and working, and it makes you feel for the athlete even if there is a lot of quick images. Because it is connecting you with the emotional edge, it brings out the more human quality of what you are looking at. If it is hard-driving rock, it's like go get him, pow, youl, that kind of stuff. You can put a different kind of music and drive people's outtake of those pictures quite differently (Wilson 1998).

These comments suggest that music can connect with visual images to accentuate the explicit (i.e., aspects of the environment, the action) or implicit contents (i.e., emotions and relations between characters) of a visual medium (Kalinak 1992). Indeed, many directors (e.g., Chion 1994) and film scholars (e.g., Gorbman 1987) have extended beyond bipolar anchoring and contend that there are hundreds of

possible ways to give an interpretive angle to an image through the use of sound effects.

The current study examines how music influences the communication of ad messages in teaser ads. *Teaser ads* refer to advertising that is highly visual. As a copywriting approach to break through clutter, teaser ads provide incomplete information (Kover 1995) and rely on lush visual images, accompanied by music or other sound effects, to create a desirable image for the advertised brand and its users (Weiner 1999). Because the visual images in teaser ads are often fragmentary, they are likely polysemous and open to multiple interpretations (Barthes 1985a). Because music can perform a broad range of functions in advertising (Scott 1990), the focus on teaser ads herein enables the examination of one type of music–visual relationship. Results of this study will illustrate empirically how music highlights the central proposition that is embedded in lush visual images to negotiate meanings in television advertising.

Overview of the Research

Much of the research on reading during the past 20 years has emphasized that the act of reading is both conceptually (top-down) and data (bottom-up) driven (Neisser 1976; Whitney 1987). Instead of being a passive agent that absorbs information, a reader is led by his or her schema, or preexisting knowledge structure, to actively choose the aspects of a stimulus to pay attention to, make inferences about, comprehend, or ignore (Neisser 1976; Urbana, Faris, and Smeltzer 1997). Thus, what differentiates an experienced reader from a naive reader is not that the former can add information to the stimulus. Rather, the experienced reader is more skilled because the schema sensitizes him or her to features and higher order structures in the stimulus that elude the less experienced reader and is thereby able to glean more information from the text.

In the advertising context, a consumer's life orientation (Mick and Buhl 1992), reading strategy (Stern 1993), and level of familiarity with cultural texts (e.g., television programs, ads, musical repertoire) and consumption symbols (e.g., brands) form the schema that affects how he or she reads a commercial (Hirschman, Scott, and Wells 1998; Otnes and Scott 1996; Scott 1994b). Characteristics of a commercial, such as color highlighting (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1995), presenter type (Grier and Brumbaugh 1999), and music (Hung 2000; Scott 1990), also affect the meanings a consumer draws from the stimulus.

In a recent study examining the effects of music in television advertising, Hung (2000) demonstrates that viewers make sense of the test ads by relating them to other ads, brands, and films with which they are familiar. For example, a viewer exposed to a black-and-white commercial with color tint commented that the advertised coffee was "sort of a Black Label of coffee" (Hung 2000, p. 32). Furthermore, Hung (2000) supports Leigh's (1992) suggestion that the schema is a general perceptual tool that crosses modality. Therefore, viewers can infer from an ad comprised of incongruous music and scenes that the advertised coffee was a strong brew from South America. Viewers could readily assign meanings to the commercial because the rock music and nature scenes reminded them of the Indiana Jones movies, a schema relevant to reading the ad that was not apparent in stand-alone ad elements.

Hung (2000) also describes how music can corroborate with concurrent executional elements to facilitate viewer response. However, the study falls short of delineating the underlying processes. Furthermore, Hung (2000) reports verbatim responses only. Thus, the proposition that music might affect ad viewers' brand perceptions remains to be tested. This study builds on Hung's (2000) and related works, and its research objectives are twofold. First, it provides a statistical test to show that music can evoke images that affect viewers' brand perceptions. Second, it examines at the micro-level how music may help form audiovisual images that influence viewer perceptions. These objectives are examined in Studies 1 and 2, respectively.

Conceptual Framework

Gestalt Perception

As a psychology of perception, Gestalt psychology presumes that a perceptual activity is not a mere recording of sensory information but implies inferences and judgments at the preattentive level (Arheim 1974; Kanizsa 1979; Pomerantz 1981). The purpose of preattentive processing is to parse the perceptual field into units, such as the phenomenal object and the background, and direct attention to the former, which becomes more salient (Neisser 1967). Evidence for this type of processing can be found in grouping and figure–ground segregation tasks. Indeed, Wertheimer (1923) shows that stimulus details that share common features (e.g., the same color) are placed close to one another, or move in the same direction or at the same rate can be grouped into patterns that become salient to the reader.

Whereas discussions of perceptual groupings often refer to visual objects alone, similar groupings may be extended to integrative audiovisual objects. Spe-

cifically, with Mickey-mousing, a Hollywood film scoring technique, the music imitates the action of a scene closely to dramatize the story (Kalinak 1992). For example, a producer can apply punctuated strings (*pizzicato*) to pick up each and every measured step to imitate musically the visual of Mickey Mouse tiptoeing down a hallway. This example suggests that, instead of placing stimulus details that are spatially close to one another, a producer can place complementary sounds and images in temporal proximity (i.e., when the auditory and visual events occur at the same time) to produce audiovisual perceptual groupings that attract attention. Indeed, Marshall and Cohen (1988) have shown that a large triangle in an abstract film became more salient when strong music was used, whereas a small triangle became more salient when weak music was used. These findings suggest that music can reinforce specific visual features in a visual medium.

In addition to the influence of stimulus details, a person is affected by the gestaltist principle of *Prägnanz* in his or her preattentive processing of sensory input. *Prägnanz*, or the minimum principle, states that the perceptual field will be organized in the simplest and best way possible to provide a coherent reading of the text (Pomerantz 1981). Unfortunately, similar to research on perception that equates geometric symmetry with good form (Kanizsa 1979), research on advertising has largely relied on the heuristics of congruency to approximate *Prägnanz* (e.g., MacInnis and Park 1991). However, Scott's (1990) textual analysis of television ads provided examples of alternative approaches to achieve *Prägnanz* using music components. Thus, when in a Honda commercial, the LX model was pressing hard to overtake a truck, sprightly music was used to represent how effectively the engine was working. Or, when a man pitches a match onto a log to start a fire in a Matchlight Charcoal commercial, triumphant chords on the organ are used to usher in images of the ballpark and the glory of a homerun. These examples suggest that music in advertising can create emergent meaning structures to give commercials a coherent reading.

Verbal Captioning

In a discussion of press photographs, Barthes (1985b) suggests that a picture can communicate denoted and connoted messages. The denoted message is value-free and comprises the scene, landscape, or object that the picture depicts. Rather than reading a picture independent of context, however, a reader often refers to the accompanying headline (Barthes 1985b) or brand name (Barthes 1985a) to draw meanings from the picture that are consistent with the text. As a result, the text becomes a cue for the schema that the reader uses to interpret the picture. Thus, a reader faced with the picture of a man depicted as a millionaire could emphasize how wealthy or smart the person appeared to be; a reader faced with the same picture but for which the person was depicted as a murderer could emphasize how terrible or cold-blooded the same person appeared.

Barthes's proposition (1985a, b) has been tested in a recent study in advertising. In this study, Phillips (2000) shows that the presence, as well as a higher level, of verbal anchoring enhances viewers' comprehension and attitude toward print ads that use complex visual images. These works suggest that verbal materials act as "anchors" to highlight meanings in polysemous visual images that are consistent with the verbal caption.

These findings suggest that, as a discursive device (Scott 1990), music in television advertising may act as a contextual element and affect meaning perceptions at two related levels. Similar to verbal captions, music may lend support to a relevant schema so that viewers read the visual images in ways consistent with the music. Furthermore, music could work at the level of specific shots to help viewers organize complex visual materials into meaningful cross-modal gestalts on which they can elaborate. Because the corroborative perceptual groupings are more salient than the background materials, viewers might rely more heavily on the perceptual groupings to project an overall image for the commercial and the brand.

Methods

This research proposes that music in television advertising can entice viewers to "read" a commercial with a particular interpretive angle that is accentuated by the meanings elicited by connective audiovisual signs. Because a teaser ad consists of fragmentary images, different music tracks could connect with and accentuate different visual images, as well as different aspects of the same visual images, to construe differential meanings for the ad and the brand.

The research issue was examined in a pretest and two studies. The pretest helped select a polysemous visual track that would be used to create the test ads. Study 1 provided the manipulation checks by examining viewers' responses to three stand-alone ad elements (one visual track and two music tracks) and two test ads that mixed and matched the music and

video. This design, which uses stand-alone elements as control and treatment elements and the entire commercials as the experimental stimuli, has been used in a previous study (Marshall and Cohen 1988). The objective of Study 1 was to confirm the effects of music and its direction of influence when dubbed onto an identical visual track. Study 2 expanded on the results of Study 1 and provided a detailed delineation of the two commercials. The results of Study 2 indicate how music connects with specific visual images to elicit differential interpretations to the commercials.

To maximize the differences in the research approach, various research methods were used. Study 1 assessed the viewers' responses toward each stimulus using quantitative analyses involving rating scales. A between-subject design was used. Study 2 assessed viewers' responses to the test ads using focus group interviews. A combination of within- and between-subject designs was used. Focus group interviews were used in Study 2 because the method is more sensitive to specific connective audiovisual signs. When taken together, the two studies enable an examination of both the breadth and depth of the research issue.

The Respondents

The respondents were undergraduate students at a university in Hong Kong. With the exception of the pretest, in which 23 respondents participated for free, respondents for either Study 1 or Study 2 received HK$50 (~US$6) at the end of the study. A hundred two students, including 32 men and 70 women, participated in Study 1. Because the research attracted more female participants and because women are generally heavier shoppers than men (Fischer and Arnold 1994), only women were recruited to participate in Study 2. All respondents were between 18 and 22 years of age.

The Pretest

Four commercials—for Nabisco Chips, Ebel Watches, Lion Chocolate Bars, and Raffles Shopping Center—that were judged by an industry professional to be teaser ads were selected from the corporate reel of a multinational music house. None of the commercials had been shown locally. This procedure serves to reduce demand artifacts when music different from the original score is dubbed onto the test commercials.

To select the most polysemous visual track from the four commercials, 23 undergraduate students assessed the videos (without sound) as part of a class exercise. They evaluated the tracks' extent of polysemy using a three-item measure (α=.84) previously used by McQuarrie and Mick (1999). A seven-point scale was used. Results of an ANOVA indicated that the Raffles track was significantly more polysemous than were the other tracks ($F(3,88)=7.83$, $p<.0001$). The mean values (with Duncan groupings) were as follows: $\bar{x}_{Raffles}=14.09$ (Duncan Group A), $\bar{x}_{Ebel}=11.44$ (B), $\bar{x}_{Lion}=11.04$ (B/C), $\bar{x}_{Nabisco}=9.22$ (C). Therefore, the Raffles track was retained for this study.

The Raffles Video. The commercial for the Raffles Shopping Center promoted a shopping mall in Singapore that shares an upscale positioning similar to that of the Pacific Place in Hong Kong, according to the management of the production house that produced the commercials for both shopping malls. The commercials for the two shopping malls share many similar characteristics, and both feature Asian-looking models. Thus, even though the Raffles commercial was designed for another city, viewers in Hong Kong could comprehend the commercial reasonably well.

The Raffles visual track consisted of a series of aesthetic shots featuring young, formally dressed women and muscular men in fairly neutral studio situations. Most of the characters were shown one at a time in a very detached manner. Also, with the exception of the brand identification, for which the name of the mall was shown, no copy was used and no products were featured. Thus, what the characters were doing, where they were, and what they were selling was not apparent. Because the visual images were fairly languid and the characters were not dealing directly with one another, the images were open to multiple interpretations (Appendix).

The Music Tracks. Two music tracks to connect with the Raffles video were selected with the help of an industry professional. During the selection process, the professional picked initially slower music tracks that matched the pace of the visual. Subsequently, he selected music tracks that connected with either the elegant or young images in the video. The selected tracks included the opening of a Baroque concerto (Vivaldi: *L'Amoroso* in E major: Allegro) and a rock song (Garbage: *Supervixen*). According to the industry professional, the classical style of Vivaldi could lend support to the high-class images in the video and give the mall an "up-market/prestige/international lifestyle positioning with a definite appeal to European 'snob value'" (Wilson 1998). Alternatively, the Garbage track could give the video a younger feel and connect with the edgy images. This could position the mall "as a hip and young fashion forward, local designer boutiques vibe. Late teens/early twenties who want to be cutting edge and anti-establishment" (Wilson 1998). When checked against a

Table 1
Factors of Images and Emotions

Ad/Music-Evoked Images	*Items*
Successful (α=.97, AVE=.89)	Upper-class, shrewd, successful, clever
Spirited (α=.93, AVE=.81)	Pioneering, youthful, spirited
Imaginative (r=.82, AVE=.83)	Creative, imaginative
Daring (r=.69, AVE=.70)	Daring, untraditional
Ad/Music-Evoked Emotions	*Items*
Calm (r=.80, AVE=.82)	Serene, soothing
Annoying (r=.81, AVE=.81)	Frustrated, annoying
Boredom (r=.76, AVE=.78)	Drowsy, sluggish
Arousal (α=.92, AVE=.79)	Active, excited, aroused

Notes: AVE=average variance extracted.

metronome afterwards, the selections shared virtually the same tempo. The Garbage track, which included lyrics in its original form, was professionally edited so that only instrumental music was included. Both tracks were reduced to 30 seconds to conform to the length of the visual track.

Study 1

Study 1 provided the manipulation checks to ensure that the participants associated the anticipated images with the Raffles video, the music tracks, and the two ads with both video and music tracks. Emotions that the participants might associate with the selected stimuli also were assessed. Study 1 used an identical questionnaire across all conditions (except for the adjustments made to the stimulus type, such as music or commercial). The questionnaire included a 12-item question relative to the participants' affective/emotional responses (Batra and Ray 1986) and a 36-item question relative to their image responses (Batra 1997). Items for the affective and image scales were arranged in two different orders to reduce potential bias. Seven-point scales were used. A total of 17 to 25 students was randomly assigned to participate in each condition. During the study, the participants were exposed to the stimulus twice before responding to the questionnaire.

Responses to the Image Scale

The participants responded to the statement "The images and personalities projected in the commercial (music) are: ...," followed by a list of 36 items. To facilitate comparison across conditions, responses to the ad image scale were pooled from all five conditions to identify the underlying factors.

Principal component factor analysis (with VARIMAX rotation) identified eight factors from the responses. Four were retained by the Scree test. Common factor analysis confirmed this factor structure (χ^2=47.064 (38df), p=.149). The factors were successful (four items, α=.97, average variance extracted [AVE]=.89), spirited (three items, α=.93, AVE=.81), imaginative (two items, r=.82, AVE=.83), and daring (two items, r=.69, AVE=.70). These images were similar to the brand personality facets discussed by Aaker (1997) with the same names (Table 1).

Music Images. A MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the extent to which the music tracks, Vivaldi (V) and Garbage (G), evoked similar images. Results indicated significant overall differences ($F(4,31)=27.83$, $p<.0001$), as well as significant differences for "successful," "imaginative," and "daring." There were no significant differences for "spirited."

Ad Images. A MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the extent to which the Raffles video (R) and the two test ads, Raffles-Vivaldi (RV) and Raffles-Garbage (RG), evoked similar images. Results indicated significant overall differences ($F(8,120)=4.62$, $p<.0001$), as well as significant differences for "successful" and "imaginative." There were no significant differences for "daring" or "spirited" (Table 2).

Responses to Emotion Scale

Participants responded to the statement "While I was watching the commercial (listening to the mu-

Table 2
Mean Values and Statistical Significance

Music Images	*Vivaldi (n=17)*	*Garbage (n=19)*	*SS*
Successful	17.88	9.32	****
Spirited	13.47	13.11	ns
Imaginative	11.71	4.42	****
Daring	4.88	7.84	**

Wilks' λ: F(4,31)=27.83, $p<.0001$

Music Emotions	*Vivaldi*	*Garbage*	*SS*
Calm	10.71	4.84	****
Annoying	2.82	8.26	****
Boredom	4.59	6.89	*
Arousal	11.59	12.11	ns

Wilks' λ: F(4,31)=16.36, $p<.0001$

Ad Images	*Raffles-Vivaldi (n=25)*	*Raffles (n=18)*	*Raffles-Garbage (n=23)*	*SS*
Successful	17.60	16.72	13.17	**
Spirited	13.96	14.94	12.13	ns
Imaginative	8.40	6.22	4.87	****
Daring	7.96	7.00	8.26	ns

Wilks' λ: F(8,120)=4.62, $p<.0001$

Ad Emotions	*Raffles-Vivaldi*	*Raffles*	*Raffles-Garbage*	*SS*
Calm	8.32	6.00	5.65	**
Annoying	4.28	5.28	7.22	***
Boredom	5.36	4.61	6.87	*
Arousal	13.00	13.39	12.09	ns

Wilks' λ: F(8,120)=3.28, $p<.01$

****$p<.0001$.
***$p<.001$.
**$p<.01$.
*$p<.05$.

sic), I felt: ...," followed by a list of 12 items. Again, responses to this question were pooled from all five conditions to identify the underlying factors.

Factor analysis (with VARIMAX rotation) identified four factors identical to those found in previous research (Batra and Ray 1986). Common factor analysis confirmed this factor structure (χ^2=26.163 (21df), p=.200). The factors were calm (two items, r=.80, AVE=.82), annoying (two items, r=.81, AVE=.81), boredom (two items, r=.76, AVE=.78), and arousal (three items, α=.92, AVE=.79) (Table 1).

Music Emotions. A MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the extent to which V and G evoked similar emotions. Results indicated significant overall differences (F(4,31)=16.36, $p<.0001$), as well as significant differences for "calm," "annoying," and "boredom." There were no significant differences for "arousal."

Ad Emotions. A MANOVA was conducted to evaluate the extent to which R, RV, and RG evoked similar emotions. Results indicated significant overall differences (F(8,120)=3.28, $p<.01$), as well as significant differences for "calm," "annoying," and "boredom." There were no significant differences for "arousal" (Table 2).

Conclusions

Responses to Study 1 confirmed that the video track R was polysemous, scoring a per-item mean of greater

than 4 on two image factors ("successful" and "spirited") and 3.5 on a third image factor, "daring." Meanwhile, the music track V that was significantly more successful, imaginative, and calm than the G track produced the ad RV that scored significantly higher on these dimensions than did R or RG. In addition, the G track that was significantly more daring, annoying, and boring than the V track produced RG that scored significantly higher on annoying and boring than did the other ads, though there were no significant differences on daring among the commercials.

These findings indicate that music can "pull" viewers' meaning perceptions in directions consistent with the music. As well, they provide initial support for the proposition that music can help frame viewers' perceptions of a commercial toward the connecting meaning structure. Study 2 builds on these findings and examines in detail the connective intermodal meaning structures.

Study 2

Design and Procedures

Study 2 was made up of a series of four focus group interviews. Participants in Sessions 1 (RV, RG) and 2 (RG, RV) were exposed to both commercials presented in reversed order. Eight participants in each session watched Ad 1 two times and then discussed it and watched Ad 2 two times and then discussed it. Participants in Sessions 3 (RV, four subjects) and 4 (RG, six subjects) watched one commercial only (two times) before engaging in the group discussion. None of the viewers had prior exposure to either the visual or the music tracks.

Of the 26 women who participated in Study 2, 18 (72%) visited a mall one to two times a week, and 5 (20%) visited a mall more than two times a week. Therefore, the participants should be very familiar with mall environments. When the moderator asked at the end of each focus group session if any of the subjects had heard of or been to the Raffles Shopping Center in Singapore, none expressed having any knowledge of the mall.

The moderator invited the participants to comment on the commercial, the shopping mall, and the target market. The first question posed after viewing the commercial was "Tell me about the commercial." Subsequent questions were driven by comments from the participants. During the discussion, the participants were encouraged to draw on the commercials to substantiate their points. These detailed descriptions of the commercials were used to identify the events that were accentuated in the viewers' mind to give the commercials meanings.

Connecting Music to Visual Images

It is evident from the findings of Study 1 that music can function in a language-like manner, enticing viewers to "read" the commercials from a particular interpretive angle. In the following outline of the findings of Study 2, the positioning of the mall(s) is first highlighted to provide an overview of viewers' perceptions. This is necessary because the participants in Study 2 were all women, whereas the participants in Study 1 were both men and women. Next, the details of the viewers' perceptions are explicated to examine how music might connect with visual images. Specifically, the following describes (1) how music acts as an anchor to affect what viewers perceive in the general ambience of the ad, the viewing environment, and the mall and (2) in more specific terms, how music visually affects the shots to which viewers pay attention and the way they interpret these scenes. Previous work on affect transfer suggests that emotions elicited by music in a commercial exert effects on the viewer independent of the context (Alpert and Alpert 1990; Gorn 1982); however, the following discussion provides encouraging support for the effects of corroborative audiovisual images.

Positioning of the Mall

Raffles-Vivaldi. Similar to those of Study 1, the results of Study 2 indicate that the RV mall would have an upscale positioning. The products sold at the mall were perceived to have a narrow focus, with an emphasis on women's fashion, jewelry, and lingerie, as well as a coffee shop. Designer boutiques such as Chanel, Hugo Boss, and Versace would be expected to be featured. Consistent with the projected image, the target market would be primarily the upper market and leisure class, including "'rich marrieds' (women), thirties, forties, chauffeured, who spend their time shopping and playing mahjong." Other target customers included professionals, executives, and "successful people" who do not need to work but have "lots of free time playing golf, tennis, or squash."

Raffles-Garbage. Unlike that by RV, participants described the mall promoted by RG as young, "in," and active. These images were reflected in the perceived target market that would be "20 to 30" years of age, consist of "hair stylists, designers, models, and young movie stars," and have less conservative or mundane outlooks and professions. The hip image

was also reflected in the products expected, including designer kitchenware (e.g., The Loft), animated character products (e.g., Hello Kitty), and "trendy new products, things I have never seen before." In terms of brands featured, viewers suggested "designer brands, but younger brands, the newly minted, not the type that has been around for decades." When the moderator pushed for specifics, the participants suggested "Guess, DKNY, IT, but *not* Christian Dior." Meanwhile, participants also perceived the mall to be an action-packed place that houses a gym and a food court, thereby allowing visitors not only to browse but also to do things.

Price Range. Although the commercials projected different positionings, participants perceived both malls to be more expensive. When asked how much a shirt would cost at either mall, the answers ranged from HK$400/500 (RG) to $2000 (RV), whereas the average price for a shirt, according to participants, is between $200 and $300.

Music Anchoring

Pace. Although the visual track(s) were played at an identical pace, viewers perceived them to be different when different music tracks were dubbed. These responses were immediate, often representing the first responses elicited in a session.

Time and again, viewers exposed to RG commented that the camera work and change of scenes in the commercial were too fast; some viewers found it exciting, whereas others found it annoying. These comments were especially keen when viewers described their experiences watching RG the second time. One viewer in Session 4 (RG only) suggested,

> I found it annoying, the camera work was too fast. The first time was OK. The second time was annoying. Didn't want to follow anymore. When I saw the opening again, I wanted to turn my head away and didn't want to watch it. It was jumping around too much. It feels uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, a viewer in Session 1, who was exposed to RV and then RG, asked the moderator if she was playing the visual track faster when she showed the second commercial than when she showed the first commercial. This and other viewers in the session expressed their surprise when the moderator assured them there was no change in the visual pace. These responses can be contrasted with responses expressed by viewers exposed to RV (Sessions 1 and 3), in that none of them complained about the pace of the visual track. One viewer exposed to RG and then RV suggested that, after watching the second ad, RV was much more comfortable. Indeed, viewers exposed to RV seldom commented on the pace of the advertising. Instead, they focused on describing the ambience of the mall that was "not like the usual shopping mall with a food court, fast food, stationery shops" but was comfortable, leisurely, spacious, and quiet.

Color, Tone, and Lighting. In addition to different paces, viewers perceived the malls to have different color tones, with RV being darker and RG brighter. Of course once again, the visual tracks were identical in their brightness and color tone. One viewer in Session 3 explained why she perceived the RV mall to be relaxing: "And the tone, it doesn't use colorful tones, but muted tones. It doesn't feel young, is very stable, established. The color, the tone projects a sense of elegance. I can't explain it in words." She elaborated on the implications of the color perceptions after a pause: "Young people, they use red, orange, green. The rainbow colors. Bright colors. But here, it's the darker tones.... It is not a young people's place. Young people are active and colorful."

This viewer's comments can be contrasted with comments made by viewers exposed to RG (Session 4): "Contrast. Big contrast. The set. When they shoot the boy, they use blue. When they shoot the girl, they use orange. When they use blue on the girl, then they use another color for the boy. Very sharp. And the contrast." Another viewer exposed to RG concurred subsequently in the interview by relating Raffles to a local shopping mall: "Have you been to the Festival Walk? The ceiling [at RG] is [similarly] very high, lots of light."

Although the viewers cited were participating in one-commercial sessions and did not discuss the music used, it appears that music affected their perceptions of colors and lights in the advertised malls. These comments suggest that music affects not only the execution of visual elements, but also the perceptions of the advertised malls. In the following section, viewer comments that describe their differential perceptions of specific shots when different music tracks were used are delineated.

Effects on Specific Shots

Arresting Viewer Attention. Although the music in this research was sourced from existing compact disks, there was an example of Mickey-mousing in the opening scene in RG. This shot features a man shown with his mouth open, accompanied by heavy guitar that lasted for the duration of the spot. Several viewers who were exposed to RG in either one- or two-commercial sessions perceived this juxtaposition of music and visual as a "shout." They were drawn to the scene and indicated that "the man shouting" was "in." Al-

though the visual track was identical in both commercials, no viewers exposed to RV were drawn to or commented on this particular scene.

The "shout" portrayed an intermodal gestalt at which the music and visual elements formed a unique perceptual unit that might not be apparent to viewers exposed to either the music or the video alone. Thus, the meaning enactment role played by any one part of the music or video may be influenced by the configuration as a whole, so that a feature that may not be salient in one context becomes salient in an alternative context in which the feature corroborates with other ad elements to create an emergent, global perceptual unit.

Differential Interpretations. Similar to a visual track, particular spots can also be polysemous and open to multiple interpretations. Viewers may be drawn to the same scenes in different commercials, but the meanings communicated by the identical spot could be quite different when accompanied by different music tracks. For example, viewers in Session 3 commented that a man falling back on a bed in RV "seemed so relaxed," but viewers in Session 4 were drawn to the "big, muscular chest" of the same figure in RG, instead of his relaxed mode.

Examples of music functioning as an interpretive lens can be found in other spots as well. In the one-commercial sessions, viewers exposed to RV suggested that the poise of the models in the catwalk "seemed high-class," but viewers exposed to RG suggested that these characters, and especially one wearing "leopard hide" (in fact, a shirt with stripes), were "wild."

Similarly, two viewers in Session 1 indicated that the fire in RV reminded them of burning torches in medieval castles that were cool and dark (though they gave off light), but the fire in RG was hot and exciting. This and the previous comment relative to the color tone of the mall suggested that viewers perceived color and light differently in the commercials.

Viewers also suggested that characters in the shower/bath scenes in RV appeared relaxed, but the same characters in RG were washing with vigor, getting ready to go shopping. These comments indicated that the accompanying music provided an interpretive context that enticed viewers to read the denoted message—be it a reclining male character, models at the catwalk, fire that surrounded the figures, or shower scenes—differently to produce differential interpretations of the commercial.

Discussion

This research provides a framework to examine whether music can help explain the meanings viewers attribute to a teaser ad. The results of Study 1 provide a direct test of the proposition that, similar to verbal captions, music can anchor the meanings viewers perceive in an ad. Furthermore, the results of Study 2 provide encouraging support for the proposition that music can connect with and accentuate specific visual images, as well as specific aspects of a visual image, to communicate ad meanings. Although these findings need to be examined in confirmatory research in the future, they suggest that music corroborates with visual images to alter perceptions of individual visual clips at a deep level. These findings complement Hung's (2000) work by delineating the underlying processes that facilitate meaning enactment involving music and visual images.

Participants in this research appear to have processed the music and visual elements in a commercial in a holistic manner. The verbatim responses illustrated several cases in which the music and visual elements were reconfigured in context to highlight differential features that, when viewed in context, enhanced the processing of the configuration as a whole. These forms of music–visual connectivity appear to be far more complicated than the relationship explained by the unidimensional congruency construct (Kellaris, Cox, and Cox 1993; MacInnis and Park 1991). Because few studies involving music have examined these alternative forms of connectivity, future research should examine the configural properties involving audiovisual images and their prevalence and effects for advertising. Furthermore, future research should go beyond the static view and examine syntactic relations, such as foreshadowing and resolution (e.g., Boltz, Schulkind, and Kantra 1991), that place the music and visual elements at a dynamic level.

This research has relied primarily on focus group data to illustrate the connections between music and visual images. It has been suggested that group processes may encourage unrealistic recounting of behavior (Gordon and Langmaid 1988) and that the dynamics of group interviews are dependent on the researcher's skills and orientations (Wells 1974). Due to these limitations, the findings of this research may include the participants' efforts to rationalize the meanings they perceive, as well as the researcher's subjectivity. Therefore, future research should replicate this study using methods that are more objective, can be assessed in terms of measurement reliability and validity, and allow for statistical inferences at the individual level.

In addition, the design of this research called for the use of a limited number of stimuli. Because only one visual track and two music tracks were used, the

findings herein were inevitably confounded with the genre of the music used (classical versus rock). Future research should replicate this study using a stronger design, such as introducing two different musical selections from each genre (two classical, two rock), to enable a comparison within and between genres. Alternatively, future research could introduce multiple visual and musical tracks in a factorial design to examine the "mutual implications" (Gorbman 1987) that occur between the music and visual tracks.

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Appendix
Details of the Visual Track

Man shouting
Man looking away
Reclining woman in shower
Close-up of woman blowing out candle
Woman shampooing
Woman in bath
Man turning head
Close-up of woman putting on eye shadow
Woman looking sexy gazing into mirror
Man with muscular chest taking shower
Man with muscular chest falling on bed
Woman in evening gown with fire around her
Catwalk—multiple shots of women, fast cuts
Catwalk—man wearing a striped shirt open in front
Partial signage
Three women reading magazines in hair salon
Close-up of one of the women
Reprise of woman with fire around her
Woman behind veil
Close-up of an eye
Oil lamp/clown mask in background
Three women in salon crossing legs
Full signage