

RADIO

Luxury brand endorsements in popular song lyrics may influence purchases

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By ERIN SHEA

Luxury brands that are endorsed by being mentioned in lyrics of popular songs likely see more brand awareness among younger consumers and may see an increase in purchases due to star influence.

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A number of brands such as Michael Kors, Tom Ford, Versace, Richard Mille, Maybach, Mercedes-Benz and others have been mentioned in hip-hop, rap, pop and rock songs that have topped the charts. By being mentioned in these lyrics, musicians are giving an organic endorsement of a brand that may encourage consumers to buy certain brands instead of others.

“Popular song lyrics help to create aspirational consumers and embed ideas of social norms and goals to be pursued and achieved,” said Kelly Cooper, marketing manager for [ShopIgniter](#), Portland, OR.

“Mentions in music is a form of product placement as it has the potential to build awareness among current and new audiences, strengthen brand recognition as well as influence memory and purchase intentions,” she said. “Also, in this form, it is integrated into the medium at such a level that it doesn't come across as a promotion or advertisement.”

“The competition for consumer attention is unbelievably high and this type of seamless approach is a way to promote products to a highly captivated audience in a subtle way.”

Musical influencers

A number of different songs have made references to luxury brands.

For instance, rappers Migos, Drake, Meek Mill and Tyga joined forces to create a song titled “Versace.” The song opens with the lyric, “Versace, Versace, Medusa head on me like I’m ‘Luminati.’”

The rest of the song continues to talk about Versace products, the logo and spending money.



"Versace" music video still

Furthermore, rapper Jay Z has a song devoted to fashion designer and fashion label Tom Ford.

The song, which is simply titled “Tom Ford,” repeats the brand’s name multiple times as Jay Z claims that he “rocks” its apparel.

Jay Z makes note of many luxury brands throughout a number of different songs.

In collaboration with artist Kanye West, the song “Gotta Have It,” makes a subtle reference to watchmakers Richard Mille and Franck Muller. Jay Z raps, “Bueller had a Muller, but I switched it for a Mille.”

Later in the song, Jay Z makes a mention to having multiple Maybachs as well.



Kanye and Jay Z's "Watch the Throne" album and tour generated much publicity

There are a few other well-known songs that mention the high-status of owning luxury brands including Big Sean's "Dance," Rick Ross' "Maybach Music II" and 50 Cent's "Disco Inferno."



Mr. Ross with his Maybach vehicle

Endorsement risk

Through a third-party endorsement, luxury brands that are mentioned in songs could have a greater appeal to consumers since it seems as if they are coming from an impartial source.

"Right now, these are artists going out on their own and talking about the brands, which gives them a degree of separation from the brand," said Jeff Barrett, president/CEO of [Status Creative](#), Grand Rapids, MI.

"In advertising, we're seeing a push in trying to create more-organic forms of promotions that people don't expect," he said.

However, there is a drawback since brands are not in control of what lyrics the artists are writing.

"A possible negative result could be if a luxury brand does not want an endorsement from the artist because the brand feels the association could be detrimental to the brand," ShopIgniter's Ms. Cooper said.

"It's hard to imagine a scenario where this could be negative for the brand, but whenever a

brand loses control over the context of the message, there is certainly room for something to go wrong,” she said.

In addition to not having control of context, there is no way to be sure what songs audiences will keep around for years and what ones are disposable.

“If the artist's popularity is short lived, or doesn't align with the brand's strategy and future trajectory, then the lyrics could negatively impact the brand's image and possibly turn the style into a fad,” said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

The next jingle

Since song shout-outs can do a lot to help a brand reach more consumers, brands should take advantage of them when possible such as promoting the song through their social pages or finding ways to work with artists in the future.

In a way, mentions in popular songs could turn into the jingle of the 21st century.

“I think we’re going to start seeing a greater push for this,” Status Creative’s Mr. Barrett said. “If the MTV’s Video Music Awards had an award for most socially-conscious message, then there is a greater push toward messages in songs.

“If consumers are talking about the message more, then people are paying attention to that and there is a greater opportunity there,” he said.

By engaging with the popularity of a song and acknowledging its presence, brands could connect with new consumers.

“This approach can turn into a strong, synergistic endorsement on both the brand and artist's behalf,” Dalia Inc. and FIT’s Ms. Strum said.

“Essentially, this could allow brands to build out their identities and connect to their target market through pop culture and their other interests,” she said.

Final take

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