Product Placements in Popular Music  
(ESCOM, Ghent 2017)
Nicolas Ruth, Benedikt Spangardt

Background
- “Pass the Courvoisier” is the name of one of Busta Rhymes’ songs while Fergie promotes the fashion label Candie’s.
- There are many reasons for musicians to place names of brands and products in their songs’ lyrics: Placements are an additional source of income, part of endorsement deals or should lead to a certain image transfer.
- There are many evidences for the effectiveness of product placements (PP) in general (e.g. Karrh, 1998), but little about the effects of PP in songs (see Delattre, & Colovic, 2009; Ferguson, & Burkhalter, 2014).
- So far, we do not know how many placements there are in popular songs. Songs that reach millions of people every day through radio, music streaming and personal music collections. We do not know how musicians incorporate and frame placements. But these are central aspects that could influence the reception and the effects of the PP.

Research Questions
RQ1: How many PP are present in popular songs over the last 25 years?  
RQ2: How are PP framed in the songs?  
RQ3: In which song parts (chorus, verse, interlude) are the most PP present?  
RQ4: Which types of products were placed in the lyrics?

Method
- Quantitative content analysis
- **Sample**: All songs from the German Top 20 Year End Charts from the years 1990 until 2014 were analyzed line per line. The 480 analyzed songs resulted in 29,030 coding units. 74.8% of the songs were in English, 14.6% in German and 6.2% in other languages. 51.2% of the songs were performed by a male, 28.2% by a female singer and the rest had groups of female and male singers or could not be identified.
- **Procedure**: Every commercial product or brand name mentioned was considered a PP, disregarding whether the coders could tell if it was paid or not. A standardized code book was compiled and pre-tested to secure an inter-subjective reliable measurement for this study.
- **Formal categories**: Publishing year, language, sex of the singer and part of the song (title, chorus, verse, and interlude)  
- **Contextual category**: Type of product (12 types total; e.g. electronics, food, fashion; Holsti’s R = .89)  
- **Rating category**: Valence of placement framing (Holsti’s R = .85).

Results
**RQ1**: 178 PP were found overall. No obvious increase or decrease was identified over the years. There were no placements in the Top 20 of the years 1994 and 1995, a maximum of 31 placements in 1999 and an average amount of 7.12 mentioned products per year (see figure 1).  
**RQ2**: Most of the coded products were framed neutrally (78%), while 16.9% were positively and 5.1% negatively framed.
**RQ3**: Most of the PP were found in verses (57.9%), while only 24.2% were coded in chorus-es and 15.2% in interludes. 5 song titles (2.8%) featured PP.  
**RQ4**: The product type that was coded the most frequently was alcohol (20.2%), followed by media (18%) and vehicles (17%). The least coded type was tobacco (0.6%, see figure 2).  

Conclusion
- Most of the PP are neutrally framed and incorporated in verses. This indicates that products are more likely to be coincidentally than strategically placed by musicians, labels or publishers. Maybe the singers have a certain affiliation to the brand and felt like mentioning it.  
- Like many content analyses point out: alcohol is a predominant topic in popular music, which is sometimes considered as problematic. This becomes especially true when pop stars are endorsed by alcohol brands and therefore incorporate the respective products in their lyrics.  
- We cannot say what the intended effects are that musicians, music industry or companies would like to achieve, but we can tell that product placements are neither as prominent in pop songs as assumed, nor are they framed in a positive way too often.

References