

# Product Placements in Rap Songs: An Analysis of the Inclusion of Brands in Rap Song Lyrics from 2006-2020

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## Abstract

Since the late 1990s, the way in which recorded music is consumed has morphed from ownership to access, resulting in significant losses of revenue for record labels, music publishers, artists, and other ancillary businesses in the recorded music food chain. In effort to offset some of these losses, the aforementioned have sought out new revenue streams, one of which involves product placement in songs and music videos. Once considered “selling-out,” the practice of product placement is not only accepted but embraced today by both artists and the recording industry.

Rap music, the fastest growing genre in the United States, has been identified as referencing more product brands than any other genre. This paper presentation provides examples of some of the earliest product placement in Rap song lyrics, and analyzes the product categories most often intertwined with the lyrics of *Billboard* magazine’s top Rap songs from 2006 to 2020 in effort to understand the messaging.

Keywords: Rap music, product placement, recording industry



**Tricia M. Farwell** is an associate professor at Middle Tennessee State University where she joined the advertising and public relations faculty in the School of Journalism in 2008. Farwell holds a bachelor of arts degree, concurrent master’s degrees and a Ph.D. from Arizona

State University. She has worked in corporate communications for more than seventeen years. Prior to arriving at MTSU, Farwell taught public relations at Arizona State University and advertising and public relations at Morehead State University.

**Ben Stickle** is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice Administration at Middle Tennessee State University. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Cedarville University and a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Justice Administration from the University of Louisville. His research interests include policing, property crime, and emerging crimes. Stickle’s theoretical focus is



crime opportunity and rational choice, specializing in qualitative methods. His research has appeared in the *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Police Practice & Research* and *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, and *Policing: An International Journal*. He is the author of *Metal Scrappers and Thieves* (Springer), co-editor of *Policing Behavior, Hiring, and Crime Fighting: An International View* (Routledge), editor of *Field Studies in Environmental Criminology* (Routledge), and authored over twenty book chapters, reviews, and encyclopedia entries. Also, his research has garnered national and international reach, including over one hundred news reports, presentations in six countries, including at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, and across numerous practitioner outlets.

Stickle has over twenty years of experience in the criminal justice field, including service as a police officer, crime scene investigator, and private security officer. He is a two-time past president of the Kentucky Peace Officers' Association and a Kentucky Law Enforcement Council member. A graduate of the National Forensic Academy (Session XXII), Stickle holds multiple professional certifications and has served as an expert witness on police administration matters.



**Denise Shackelford** began her career in the music industry with Arista Records, a new company on the Nashville music landscape in the early 90s led by respected industry executive Tim DuBois. The label quickly made a name for itself in country music, launching the careers of such greats as Alan Jackson, Brooks & Dunn and Brad Paisley. There, she had the opportunity to be part of the label's unprecedented growth and success, serving first as a regional promotion manager, and later leading the promotional efforts for the company's sister label, Career Records. Following her tenure at Arista, Shackelford joined the artist management firm Spalding Entertainment, where she continued her relationship with Brooks & Dunn and also worked with the firm's other clients, including Jason Aldean, Ashley Monroe, Terri Clark, and Pat Green. In her capacity at Spald-

ing, Denise was involved with the firm's tour marketing and radio promotion efforts, ultimately earning the title of Executive Vice President. In addition to her other roles at Spalding, Denise acted as the management liaison for Kix Brooks (Brooks & Dunn) in his role as host of the long-running, nationally-syndicated radio program, *American Country Countdown*.

After obtaining her J.D. degree from Nashville School of Law in 2010, Shackelford launched The Primacy Firm, a boutique entertainment law firm catering to the needs of creative individuals and businesses. In 2011, she joined the faculty of Belmont University as an adjunct professor. In 2019, she accepted a tenure-track position with Middle Tennessee State University where she currently teaches Survey of the Recording Industry and Music Publishing. Shackelford currently serves as counsel for the Country Radio Broadcasters Board of Directors. She previously served as secretary for the Association of Independent Music Publishers Board (AIMP), and President of the SOURCE Board of Directors (a networking organization for female music industry executives), as well as a member of the Advisory Committee for Country Cares for St. Jude Kids. She is a member of the Country Music Association, Academy of Country Music, the Tennessee Bar Association, and the Nashville Bar Association. Shackelford is an alumna of the Leadership Music program class of 2010.



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