

# Product placement in movies media essay



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Many people who saw Home alone remember the scene in the beginning where the McAllister family sits around the table having dinner. Fuller, go easy on the Pepsi, Kevin's aunt said to her son. But this phrase is much more than just a warning against drinking too much soda.

These products are not appearing by accident. In a quest to cut the commercial clutter and declining television ratings, marketers have tried their hand at more subtle or intrusive ways of displaying their products in big-screen movies through what is known as “ product placement”.

Product placement, also called “ embedded marketing”, is defined by the European Union as “ any form of audiovisual commercial communication consisting of the inclusion of or reference to a product, a service or the trade mark thereof so that is featured within a programme”[1]. It is a form of advertising that is used in movies and TV shows where branded products are placed in a movie setting. It usually aims to be inconspicuous and be part of the scene so that the audience will see a product in the natural environment. Product placement practices also exist in music videos, radio programs, video games, plays, novels etc.

Placing branded products in entertainment media like movies is not a new developed concept. There is no doubt that the consumer is more likely to accept product placement in movies compared to traditional advertisements. Product placement can add credibility to a movie. It is easier to identify with a story or with a movie character when they used products familiar to everyday life.

Product placement is a substitute for the traditional TV advertising. It has been used since the invention of the small screen. Product placement or brand placement appeared first in motion pictures as early as the late 1940s and early 1950s. One example was in 1948 in the movie “ Mildred Pierce” where an actor drank Jack Daniels whisky. Since Reese’s Pieces appeared in the movie “ E. T. The Extraterrestrial”, over 20 years ago, product placement has developed and evolved significantly. After the film released, Hersey claimed a 65% increase in sales of Reese’s Pieces candy. This success generate an intensified interest in product placement area which has led to the establishment of agencies that specialize in product placement. Some of the company that provides product placement services are: Creative Film Production, Creative Artist, Krown Entertainment, Norm Marshall & Associates, Robert Kovologg’s Associated Film Promotions, Unique Product Placement, Creative Entertainment Services.[2]This agencies examine film scripts, search for appropriate settings in movies where their clients’ products can be placed and then make suggestions to the film makers.

The product placement in a movie can be as simple as a product being used in one scene (e. g. when a character uses a particular brand of beer or soft drink), a brand being mentioned by a character in the story, or a logo visible in the background of a frame (e. g. when a brand’s logo is visible on a billboard or the side of a truck). At the other extreme, a product placement can be an integral part of the movie. In the movie “ You’ve got mail”, AOL Internet service was an essential part of the movie and was connected to the plot throughout the entire movie. The multifaceted nature of product placement makes it an interesting, complex, marketing practice.

In any James Bond movies, the agent has always been drinking martini, driving luxuries cars, wearing the fanciest suits and the most expensive watches. James Bond movies are famous for being the ones with the biggest amount of product placement. They include mostly upmarket range products.

### CinemaScore

To determine how much a marketer should pay a movie producer for a product placement, Ed Mintz developed a sistem called CinemaScore which is similar to the Nielsen ratings in television advertising.

CinemaScore is the industry lider in measuring movie appeal among theatre audiences. For over 34 years, CinemaScore has been polling moviegoers at major movie releases on opening night to collect demographic information and calculate a distinctive CinemaScore grade. A movie's overall CinemaScore can range from A+ to F.

For example, using the CinemaScore formula, they calculated a \$28, 130 placement fee for the placement of Coke in “ Crocodile Dundee II” based on projected \$100, 000 million revenues at the box office and recall data obtain from exit surveys.

### Types of product placement strategies

Product placement strategies can be categorized by the mode of presentation (the senses activated by the stimulus) into three modes: visual only (VIS), audio only (AUD) and combined audio-visual (AV). The first mode (VIS) involves showing a product, logo, billboard or some other visual brand

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identifier without any relevant message or sounds on the audio track which draw attention to the product (e. g. Danny DeVito drinking Coors Light with the label clearly exposed to the audience in “ Twins”).

The second mode involves the mention of a brand name or a character conveying brand-related messages in audio form, without showing the product on the screen (e. g. Martin Sheen yelling to a waitress “ Get this kid a Molson Light” in “ Wall Street”).

The third mode (AV) involves showing a brand and at the same time mentioning the brand name or conveying a brand-relevant message in audio form (e. g. the main character in “ Wayne’s World” saying “ the choice of a new generation” before taking a sip from a can of Pepsi).

Placements in any of the three modes may be subtle or prominent.

Prominent placements are those in which the product (or other brand identifier) is made highly visible by virtue of size and/or position on the screen or its centrality to the action in the scene. Subtle placements are those in which the brand is not shown prominently (e. g. small in size, a background pop outside of the main field of visual focus, lost in an array of multiple products or objects, low time of exposure).

Mode and prominence are relevant to the ease with which a product can be incorporated into a movie, and therefore the cost to the marketer of reaching an audience in this way. Of the three modes, VIS is the most frequently used, but it runs the risk that viewers will not attend to or recall the product’s presence in the scene in the absence of audio reinforcement. AV overcome this problem, but it is the most expensive and difficult mode to

accommodate. Similarly, subtle placement which can be incorporated into a scene as background and do not require a plausible basis for the overt integration of the product into the action are relatively less costly than prominent depictions.

A worldwide trend in advertising, product placement, is a vehicle for everything from foodstuffs to electronics or automobiles. So, how does it work exactly? It's actually pretty simple. Basically, there are three ways product placement can occur:

it simply happens

it is arranged and a certain amount of the product serves as compensation

it is arranged and there is financial compensation

Sometimes product placement just happens. A set dresser, producer, director or even an actor might come across something he thinks will enhance the project. Usually, this has to do with boosting the level of credibility or realism of the story being told. One example can be found in the surprising use of a can of RAID- an ant killer made by the SC Johnson company- in an episode of the popular HBO series “ The Sopranos”.

According to an article in USA Today, Therese Van Ryne, a spokeswoman for the SC Johnson, said that the company was not approached about the use of their product.

The most common type of deal is a simple exchange of the product for the placement. Let supposing that someone of the crew knows someone who works for “ Honest Tea”. The movie people approach the Honest Tea folks

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with a proposal and the deal is made; in exchange of the airtime, the cast and crew are provided with an ample supply of Honest Tea drinks at work. Sometimes a gift of the product is not an appropriate form of compensation, so money powers the deal.

Why do they use product placement?

To achieve prominent audience exposure, visibility, attention and interest

To increase brand awareness

To increase consumer memory and recall of the brand/product

To create instant recognition of the product/brand in the media vehicle and at the point of purchase

To bring desired change in consumer's attitudes or overall evaluation of the brand

To bring a change in the audiences' purchase behaviors

Product placement can have a significant effect on message receptivity. The sponsor of product placements is likely to gain goodwill by associating itself with a popular program targeted to a specific audience. The more successful the program, the longer shelf life of the product placement. Nielsen Media Research has shown that product placement in television shows can raise brand awareness by 20%.<sup>[3]</sup>Product placements can have a significant effect on recall. For example, memory improves when visual/auditory modality and plot connection are congruent. Verbal and visual brand placements are better recall than placements having one or the other.

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“ To increase brand memory, brands should be prominently placed and be accompanied by an actor in films or television programs. Brand evaluations can become more positive when the placement is more editorial instead of commercial and when non-users of the

brand are reached. Behavior and behavioral intentions are influenced best when the audience has positive evaluations of brand placement, when placements are presented in editorial formats, and when placements are repeated.”[4]

## Conclusion

Product placement is gaining more and more popularity and at the same time has turned into a huge, profitable business for both the broadcasting companies and the producers. In the past decade product placement has become a very sophisticated business.

Today, every movie contains product placement. While in the “ James Bond”- Movies 007 drinks Martini, Will Smith drives a Porsche 911 Turbo in “ Bad Boys”. There could be mentioned thousands of examples like this

“ I think product placement is an innovative way to advertise a product,” Ray said. “ When you show the usefulness of your product by showing how it makes other people’s lives easier, you’ve created an advertisement that is invaluable.” (Neuroscience major Andrew Ray)

Douglas McKinley, an advertising professor at BYU, sees product placement as a necessary monetary help for a film industry.



“ We have all come to accept product placement as a legitimate way to help fund the movie,” McKinley said. “(Product placement can be) good if the product is written into the script so that it looks like part of the landscape.”

The next time you watch a movie try to keep an eye out for products or brand-names you recognize. It is highly likely that you will see one of the major soft drink companies represented. Once you spotted something, see how many other scenes include that product. You will start to see a trend. “ How”, you will wonder, “ can the actor hold the Coke just the right way every time so that the logo is perfectly visible?”