

# Advertising fast food product placement media essay



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Product Placement is a term defined as “ the practice of integrating specific products and brands into filmed entertainment.” Product placement was always evolved into the billion-dollar market of Hollywood. As the costs keep increasing for producing movies, studios become ready to make connections with big corporations, which are willing to place their products in a big, particular film. These big connections have big payments. For example “ direct payments for product placement (for instance in License to Kill Phillip Morris Tobacco paid \$350, 000 for Bond to smoke a Lark cigarette).” Another good example is,

In the biggest co-marketing deal in film history, Coca-Cola paid \$95 million to the producers of Harry Potter for the right to use the film’s logo on its cans in what will become a series of films; the first Harry Potter film cost \$75 million. It went on general release on November 2001 and is expected to be shown on a thousand screens in the UK.

The movie was like the big bang as expected. Harry Potter products everywhere sold in huge amounts and consumers attacked to any product of the movie letting the industry behind the scenes to gain more power. Today all major US film studios seeking for brands to place into a film they are producing. Studios don’t pay to the brand owner but the benefits of product placement advertisement are so big to the product name and the film itself that each side promotes the other. Even some smaller studios are seeking for product placement. These movies usually require the product owners to pay television and billboard advertisements. A small film cannot afford these types of advertisements but product placement can.

Getting a product into a movie is a long and complicated process. Only the largest companies have direct connections with the large studios. Other companies need to contact product placement agencies. These agencies try to attract companies with “ their promises of favorable placements.”

These agents contact studios on the phone and look through the scripts with the studio to find someplace to fit their client’s products.

There are over hundred product placement agencies in the United States. One of the most famous ones is E. R. M. A. (Entertainment Resources & Marketing Association), an agency with the slogan “ Let Us Put You In Movies.” E. R. M. A. has a long list of member studios including 20th Century Fox, DreamWorks, MGM, Universal Pictures, and Warner Bros. This agency also has a longer list of clients and under the food title E. R. M. A. has the most famous fast food brands as clients like Taco Bell, Burger King, Dunkin Donuts, KFC and McDonald’s. These lists are just examples and they are normally much longer.

While time passes more and more companies are realizing the importance and effectiveness of product placement. Companies are searching for the right movie to place their products and taking advantage of the consumer capacity of the movies. Product owners and studios can use different techniques for placing a product. The best product placements are the ones that the product is needed for the movie’s storyline. But these placements are not common. Another good placement of a product is by letting the characters use the products. The best example of this type of placement is from the movie Forest Gump.

In *Forrest Gump*, when Forrest goes to the All-American ceremony at the White House he drinks large quantities of Dr. Pepper. It does not come off as a shameless promotion because the consumption of the product creates the funny confrontation between Forrest and President Kennedy, as Forrest says, " I got to pee".

When people see a movie with product placement they tend to look for the products they see on screen to make these products a part of their lives too like the movie characters they watch. When the consumer see Forest Gump drinking Dr. Pepper and say " The best things about meeting the president was you could drink all the Dr. Pepper you wanted." the consumer looks for the brands name everywhere. Instead of drinking orange juice with their sandwiches the consumers order Dr. Pepper with the sandwich. Or someone else sees the Harry Potter cups of Coca-Cola and forget about the juice and buy the cola.

" When a star uses a recognizable product, people in the audience will pat themselves on the back and say ' look how smart I am, I'm using the same thing as the hero in the movie.' It's the most inexpensive way to get visibility and sales power."

One of the most famous movies of the director Steven Spielberg was *E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). The movie became famous for its cute alien, two cute little children, flying bicycles, interesting story and neat details that everyone who have seen the movie feels emotionally attached to *E. T.*

Almost every review can be found about the movie is positive and this feels like a magic. The receipt from movie's ticket sales worldwide shows \$756,

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700, 000. When we look at the list of top grossing movies of all time at the worldwide box office E. T. is number 10. That facts address an incredible success. E. T. is not only famous for these facts but it is also known as the movie that changed the world of the product placement.

So how did E. T. change the world of product placement? By showing Reese's Pieces as the favorite food of the major character and after the millions of dollars of ticket sales and thousands of people watching the movie in theatres, noticing Reese's Pieces as the favorite food of the character who the viewers have emotional attachments to while watching the movie. E. T. increased the sales of Reese's Pieces by 70%. This amount was amazing and everybody was impressed. One interesting fact about this placement of the movie is how this all started. On the process of producing the movie suddenly the producers came up with the idea of asking for money from M&M for showing M&M products in the movie. But M&M didn't like the idea so their answer was ' no'. In the end everybody agrees that Reese's Pieces made the right decision to say ' yes' to E. T.

After the huge success of the product placement in E. T., advertisement gained even more power. Advertisers started to search for ways to carry their products out of the commercial breaks and move the product to the shows themselves. So the product placement became popular. Some of the most famous examples of product placement are James Bond Series' perfect car BMW, Taco Bell in Demolition Man, FedEx in Cast Away and Ford in Jurassic Park. But the most famous products used in product placements are fast foods and the most famous brand would be McDonald's.

Fast food restaurants biggest advantage is food is a product easy to fit in most movies and in most movies it is acceptable for a character to go to any fast food restaurant when the fact, that in every neighborhood at least one fast food can be found, considered. But McDonald's even made surprising attacks. In a movie about no technology, no electricity, nothing related to our world but only a world belongs to an era when dinosaurs were still around; McDonald's was looking for product placement. In the picture number 1 you can see how McDonald's got into the movie Flintstones.

In the movie, McDonald's wasn't only a restaurant that our heroes choose but also on the sign of the restaurant 'over 19 dozen sold' joke is a flashback of the company's fast growth and power. Actually when we look at the picture carefully or while watching the movie we can easily notice that the scene McDonald's was used, in a way is a complete McDonald's commercial. Workers wearing McDonald's uniforms, a big sign telling how powerful McDonald's is getting, a sunny day, children running, laughing and playing, a full restaurant with happy people. This movie's receipt from ticket sales worldwide shows \$358, 500, 000. Most people who have seen the movie were children and the image of McDonald's for them is the restaurant their favorite characters choose. This image is a little scary even before we focus on the restaurants quality, health issues or morality. While McDonald's and Hollywood are getting richer and richer with these commercials nations get even more addicted to fast food.

Young children (under the age of eight years) are very susceptible to advertisements. If an advertisement for a product attracts their interest, they will ask for it even if it is a product for which they have no need or use.

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(There's the story of the five year old boy who was asked what he would choose if he had just one wish. His answer was " A Tampax, because if I had that I could swim, ride a horse or do anything")

Especially young children influenced to want to eat unhealthy, fatty fast foods. The techniques used in movies by product placement are not very different from the techniques used in fast food commercials to attract children. The messages are the same, having fun in the restaurants, the image of ' being cool' and the tasty food served on these restaurants. These messages work easily on young children.

An average child watches about 10, 000 food advertisements in one year on television and most of these advertisements are for fast food. Today television's negative side is not only commercials anymore, but also the movies, which used product placement, shown on television. Fast food companies attack children and adults, everyone, with any weapon they can find including Internet, magazines, even games.

What impact is this having on youth? Recent statistics indicate that 14% of children are now seriously overweight. 60% of overweight children between the ages of 5-10 years of age already have at least one risk factor for heart disease, including elevated blood cholesterol, blood pressure or increased insulin, and type 2 diabetes.

Even if the audience don't notice the products placed in the movies, that doesn't decrease the effectiveness of the placement. In their minds they still have the image of the product even if they have difficulty in recalling the brand's name because they didn't pay much attention, they have the image  
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stuck in their minds. One other fact is product placement is becoming an issue that people talk about. “ Did you notice that in Flintstones they used Burger King this time. In the first movie they used McDonald’s. I wonder why.” or “ I didn’t understand why the major character was so upset in McDonald’s scene.” getting more common in daily dialogues. People would talk about these products even more often as the studios continue making movies like Bye Bye Love, a movie opens with an almost 10 minutes long scene at a McDonald’s. But one fact is that these kinds of movies don’t get good reviews by the famous critics like Roger Ebert. This quote is taken from his article about the movie from Chicago Sun-Times,

“ The movie opens at a McDonald’s, in a long and shameless product placement. “ Bye Bye, Love” looks, in fact, like a McDonald’s commercial for its first 10 minutes, as the restaurant serves as neutral turf where ex-wives can drop off the kids for their ex-husband’s visitation rights.”

Today product placement doesn’t only exist in movies. It is finding new areas to place the products. For example Bill Fitzhugh, an American author, used product placement in one of his books ‘ Cross Dressing’. Though the book doesn’t feature any scene of people enjoying fast food or anything close to that, “ there are a few scenes involving cocktails.” So the book has placement of little products. Though the book had really bad reviews because of the product placement Fitzhugh still fights for his book.

One recent product placement deal took place between Intel and McDonald’s. “ Sims Online, the internet-based continuation of The Sims, a franchise that has sold more than 19 million units worldwide” deals with

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McDonald's to place the restaurant in the game. With this deal in the game players will be able to buy McDonald's kiosk, sell McDonald's products and eat the products to improve their standing within the game. Electronic Arts announced that before the release of the game there might be even more product placements and it is easy to insert additional product later because of the games online nature. Yet, Sims fans didn't like the idea of the placement and they are arguing on the issue on message boards.

Today our world is surrounded by fast food companies attacks. Junk and fast food is a part of our lives even if we don't want them in our lives. The image shown to us is a happy, colorful life with fast food. The question is not " Do we want it?" The question is " How far would they go to sell us their fast food?" There is no place left to escape from these attacks and fast food is a part of our daily lives whether we want it or not. Fast food industry made people feeding dinosaurs, eat at McDonald's, it is hard to imagine what is next! As Ralph Nader complains " What's next? An entire sitcom shot in McDonald's?" May be one day there will be people living in McDonald's.