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Product Placement During the Family Viewing Hour

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Communications

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Masters of Arts in Professional Communication

by

Harry C. (Buddy) Arnold

August, 2006

Dr. John King, Chair

Dr. Jack Mooney

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Keywords: product placement, product integration, brand integration,
branded entertainment, television, zapping, mere exposure

ABSTRACT

Product Placement During the Family-Viewing Hour

by

Harry C. "Buddy" Arnold

The so-called family-viewing hour, the eight to nine o'clock hour of prime time, is one of the most watched hours of television by both adults and children. Advertisers, of course, favor shows that draw large audiences so their product presentations or commercials are witnessed by masses of people. Now, because of videocassette recorders and other similar control devices, viewers are eliminating commercials from their viewing experience¹ and advertisers are clamoring for new ways to get their products into the mind of the consumer.² To counteract this commercial avoidance by consumers, advertisers are embedding products within television programming thereby hindering the viewer's ability to eliminate commercials or product promotions. The result is that products that are normally not viewed become part of the viewing experience. This study revealed that the family-viewing hour is laden with product placements that include a variety of different types of products and brands.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Product Placement During the Family Viewing Hour is an attempt to add to the growing body of information concerning the use of product placement as an alternative to the traditional television commercial. More specifically, this analysis seeks to evaluate the current utilization of product placement during family viewing time, herein defined as the 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. timeslot. According to Kevin Martin, head of the Federal Communications Commission, at one time, the FCC officially designated this timeslot as a time when broadcasters were only allowed to show family-friendly programming, defined as programming intended for multi-generational consumption.¹

Several stakeholders exist for this study. Parents, who may or may not be actively viewing with their children during the eight to nine o'clock timeslot, might well be surprised to learn the types of products that are being included in a particular show and how frequently they appear. In addition, they may be interested in the supposedly subtle manner in which the advertisers are attempting to influence them and their children's purchase behaviors.

Advertisers and the organizations they represent are another group of stakeholders. They, of course, have a direct investment in the practice of product placement. They are attempting to overcome the effects of the aforementioned innovations and negative attitudes while spreading the word or generating "buzz" about the products all with the desire to see increased purchasing behaviors from the mass audience.

Broadcasters and content producers comprise an additional group of stakeholders. They must decide if product placement is beneficial to them and whether it may be deleterious to their

program's ratings. Television programming success is based on the ratings system. Ratings affect the longevity of a show, the network's ability to raise advertising rates based on the show's popularity, and its producers' ability to demand a larger amount for the rights to their show. Though product placement deals may allow generation of capital at the outset, a poorly designed product placement could have a negative impact in the long run.

Ideally, a constructed week of programming would have been used for such a study as is undertaken here. A constructed week may have rendered greater generalizability for the results of the study. However, generating a constructed week and collecting the data for such an analysis was not feasible because of time constraints. This research relied on a convenience sample of one continuous week of programming that, as noted, may affect the generalizability of the results. This study, however, does provide further evaluation of the phenomenon of product placement.

CHAPTER 2

COMMERCIAL TELEVISION AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

The 30-Second Commercial

The tension begins to mount. The *Deal or No Deal* contestant must open one more case. Which case contains a million-dollars? Which case holds one-cent? Show host Howie Mandel directs the contestant to select a case. The contestant chooses case number 16. Tensions rise. Mandel turns to the contestant and asks, “Do you want to know what amount is in the case?” “Yes,” replies the contestant with anticipation dripping from his words. Mandel turns to the model holding the case and says, “Kelli, show us the case!” He spins around to the camera, “After these commercial messages.” The contestant and the audience burst into exasperated moans as the show cuts to a commercial break.²

The 2005 Schnieder/Stagnito Communications Most Memorable New Product Launch Survey found that, in general, 67% of viewing audiences enjoy watching television commercials and 74% of consumers receive most of their new product information from television.³ Network television is a symbiotic relationship between the viewers, the broadcasters, the advertisers, and the corporations that buy airtime. Viewers receive free programming, broadcasters pass on production costs to advertisers, and advertisers and the corporations have access to a mass audience for their product messages. However, this ability to reach a mass audience comes with a large price tag.

According to Fox Network’s Sandy Grushow, the projected expenditure for traditional commercial advertising on the six major broadcast networks during 2002-2003 television season was \$8 billion.⁴ By 2005, that number had grown exponentially. *Business Wire, Inc.* reported

that data compiled by TNS Media Intelligence revealed that in 2005 advertising expenditures on network television totaled \$22.5 billion.⁵

During the 2005-2006 television season, the average cost of a 30-second commercial was \$108,681.⁶ Commercial costs vary based on the timeslot in which they are shown and the popularity of the show that fills the timeslot. For example, the 2006 Super Bowl with about 141 million viewers is a commonly anticipated debut time for many new commercials. Advertisers paid \$2.5 million per 30 second spot according to *Automotive News*.⁷ The typical audience sizes, according to Neilson Media Research, for the top 10 shows for the week ending April 24, 2006 are shown in Table 1.⁸

Table 1. Top 10 broadcast TV programs for April 24, 2006 (Live+SD)

RANK	PROGRAM	NETWORK	RATING	VIEWERS*
1	CSI	CBS	17.1	27.365
2	American Idol Tuesday	FOX	16.6	28.67
2	American Idol Wednesday	FOX	16.7	28.271
4	House	FOX	14.8	24.516
5	Desperate Housewives	ABC	13.3	21.304
6	Grey's Anatomy	ABC	13.3	20.763
7	CSI: Miami	CBS	12.4	18.738
8	Without a Trace	CBS	12.2	17.931
9	NCIS	CBS	10.2	15.564
10	Survivor-Panama	CBS	10.1	17.088

Source: "Top TV Ratings," Neilson Media Research, 2006, <http://www.nielsenmedia.com/nc/portal/site/Public/menuitem.43afce2fac27e890311ba0a347a062a0/?show=%2Ffilters%2Fpublic%2Ftop_tv_ratings%2Fbroadcast_tv&vgnnextoid=9e4df9669fa14010VgnVCM10000880a260aRCRD&selOneIndex=0> (8 May 2006). *in millions

If the average cost per commercial applied universally, advertisers on *CSI* get more ‘bang for their buck’ than do advertisers on *Survivor* because *CSI* garnered nearly ten million more viewers than did *Survivor*.

Technological Innovations

Today, however, the paid television commercial faces powerful adversaries as a result of technological innovations such as the remote control device (RCD), Video Cassette Recorder (VCR), and Digital Video Recorders (DVRs) such as TiVo and Video-On-Demand (VOD). These innovations allow the consumer greater control over viewing. The consumer now possesses a greater ability to eliminate commercials from his or her viewing time.⁹ In spite of the fact that other surveys have indicated viewers’ enjoyment of commercials, according to a 2001 *Brandweek* article, “39% of Americans said they often switch to another channel when ads come on...” and “...another 19% said they turn down the TV or mute it.” Forty-four percent of respondents say the remote control is a “...necessity.”¹⁰

Walker and Bellamy investigated the use of the earliest innovation to affect viewing habits in the home, the RCD. They noted that the RCD provides two control functions for both the individual and the family. The first control function is to “...greatly facilitate program selection” becoming “...a tool for parental control of program content.” The second control function of the RCD is to control a viewers “...interaction with content.” Thus providing viewers with the ability to select alternatives to programming content that they deem undesirable.¹¹

The development and widespread use of the videocassette recorder also adds to viewers’ ability to control viewing. Lin found that the VCR allows for control over content by allowing viewers to select the content that they view thus enabling the “...constructing of a video – programming environment that one desires.”¹² The VCR enables viewers to record content for

viewing at a time other than the regularly scheduled broadcast time period. The VCR further enables non-program content to be eliminated. This new "...programming environment" rather quickly developed into an environment devoid of commercial advertisements. Walker and Bellamy noted the RCD and the VCR, used in conjunction, allow viewers to "...zip through all advertising, promotions, and program openings and endings."¹³ Although still widely used, the VCR is rapidly being replaced by digital recording devices such as TiVo .

A *BusinessWeek Online* article reported, "Consumers in about 9% of U.S. homes currently use TiVo or other similarly functioning digital video recorders to skip commercials, according to Standard & Poor's Equity Research."¹⁴ Based on Nielson Media Research estimates that there are "110.2 million television households in the U.S."¹⁵ Nine percent penetration translates into approximately 10 million households with a DVR. Other research speculates that by 2008, DVR penetration will approach 39%.¹⁶ That figure translates to approximately 43 million homes provided the number of viewer households remains constant, which is an unlikely scenario considering the current U.S. population is expected to reach 300 million in 2006. Advertisers are well aware of the potential negative effects that DVR usage might have on the 30-second commercial. In fact, a study by the Association of National Advertisers and Forrester Research found that "...70 % of advertisers believe DVRs and VOD will reduce or destroy the effectiveness of the traditional 30 second commercial."¹⁷ In fact, a recent survey on DVR use by In-Stat reported in *BusinessWeek* concerning commercial avoidance found that 87% of respondents reported, "...they used the skip function [on the DVR] frequently."¹⁸

The viewers' ability to control content and thus avoid commercials by utilizing the aforementioned technological advances is sometimes referred to as "zipping" or "zapping," depending upon the focus on the research. Stout and Burda use the term "zipping" to describe the

fast forwarding of commercials during a recorded program.¹⁹ Tauber uses the phrase zapping to indicate "...muting of commercials and/or fast forwarding of taped commercials"²⁰ Kaplan uses the term "zapping" to describe the activity of switching channels during viewing.²¹ Tse and Lee define zapping as any behavior that allows for avoidance of commercial viewing and they found that "...the majority of respondents switch channels during commercial breaks."²² Krugman, Cameron, and White evaluated the time that viewers spent actually watching commercials and found that only 33% of possible commercial time was actually viewed.²³ To view the latter finding from a financial perspective, based on the 2005-2006 average cost of \$108,681 per 30 second commercial, if only one minute of a three-minute commercial break is viewed then there is a loss of nearly half a million dollars during every commercial break. If the show is one of the top performers such as *According to Jim*, which garnered \$200,000 per 30-second spot in 2004,²⁴ the loss to the advertisers is \$800,000 per three-minute commercial break. Basic economic theory asserts that the fewer the number of viewers that see the commercials, the higher the cost per unit for the commercials.

The losses are not limited to advertising dollars either. The goal for advertisers is to create product familiarity or, to use the new buzzword, 'brand recognition.' The power of the organizational brand continues to grow year after year. Brands are, in fact, not only tools for selling to the average consumer, they are considered so powerful that their value is often incorporated into the valuation of the parent organization.²⁵

Avoidance of commercial viewing is detrimental to the advertising goal of creating product familiarity. This product familiarity is the first step in the purchase process. Product familiarity may lead to liking, which may, in turn, lead the consumer to purchase behaviors.²⁶ One of the findings by Stout and Burda that is relevant to this study is the finding that "...zipping

hampered subjects' ability to recall and recognize the brand name and ad elements [in the zipped commercials]. These findings reinforce the notion that zipping has a negative influence on human information processing capabilities."²⁷ If brand recall is affected by fast forwarding, it is logical to presume that complete avoidance of commercials eliminates even the slightest chance for brand recall by viewers. Furthermore, it is logical to presume that lack of brand recall will affect brand purchase, which affect revenue for all interested parties.

If revenue decreases for organizations that advertise, then their expenditures for commercial production and broadcast would likely be reduced. This, in turn, would make it more difficult for networks to demand the price per commercial spot needed to continue broadcasting quality programming. Thus, the viewers' programming choices would either be reduced or the quality of the programming would suffer. This degeneration of the aforementioned symbiotic relationship between the viewer and the corporate concerns behind TV would likely leave everyone facing a less than optimal situation.

As a result of commercial avoidance practices by viewers, advertisers are moving toward the use of product placement within television programming to familiarize viewers with their products. Mark Owens of Davie Brown Entertainment, quoted in *Brandweek*, said, "Ad-skipping technology is out there and everyone's trying to prepare for what that may or may not be. Clients are coming to us more and more asking if placement can be a bigger part of the marketing mix."²⁸ Marketing professor Bill Keep of Quinnipiac University noted, "Advertisers are trying to find ways of reaching potential customers in more clever, effective ways that don't cost too much. Product placements have become an increasingly popular way of doing that."²⁹

CHAPTER 3

PRODUCT PLACEMENT

What is Product Placement?

In order to clearly identify product placement during a film or television program, it is necessary to more clearly define product placement. In a study of hybrid messages, Siva K. Balasubramanian chose to define product placement as "...a paid product message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie (or television program)."³⁰ Similarly, media researchers PQ Media define product placement as "...the process that integrates an advertiser's product into selected media, most often television and films for clear visibility."³¹ In either case, product placement is about a particular brand product being seen. For example, when a film or movie script calls for a character to eat crackers, product placement asks the question, "Why can't the actor eat a Ritz© cracker?"

As a result of the evolution of the practice from simple placement of products on a set to the actual incorporation of a product in a script or storyline, the nomenclature of the practice has also evolved. According to an article in *Television Week*, the term "branded entertainment" is the new phrase used to describe shows that involve the use of name brand products as either a simple placement or as a part of the storyline.³² Brand or product integration is the terminology used to describe the act of incorporating a brand into the storyline. Regardless of the terminology used, the idea being related is that brand name products are in the process of becoming supporting actors in the world of television production. According to Steve Wilhite, vice president of marketing for Nissan North America Inc., "...product integration and developing branded

content have become very important for all manufacturers. It's a way of helping put your product and values in a context that hopefully resonates more powerfully with your intended audience."³³

In 1993, researchers at Northwestern University conducted a study of product placements or ad plugs as they referred to them for *Advertising Age* magazine. For their study, the researchers divided the manner in which products were placed within shows into three categories. The first category of product placement was when a brand was both seen and heard during a scene. For example, an actor may walk into a scene and point to his new shoes and say, "Check out my new Nikes." A second placement category was when a brand was heard and not seen. In this instance, the actor may only say, "Has anyone seen my Nikes?" The third category of placement used was when a product or logo was simply shown but no mention of the product or name was made. In this case, the Nikes would simply be lying on the floor or on a bed in reasonable proximity to the actor.³⁴

Other research used similar divisions but categorized the placements as plot connection, auditory, and visual placement. The plot connection category involved an actor clearly identifying a particular brand much as the aforementioned actor might point and mention his shoe brand. The auditory placement means a brand is mentioned in the actor's dialogue without the actual appearance of the brand. The visual category has the product or logo appearing in the scene without mention in the dialogue.³⁵ An *Advertising Age* article reported that ITVX, a product placement evaluator, developed a scale that they use to measure product exposure levels. On their scale, "...the lowest level is simply a clear product logo in the background of a shot or scene. Level 3 is "...background plus a close-up" that includes the product. Level 6 includes not only a product close-up but also a "...hands-on..." interaction by one of the actors. Level 9 adds a verbal mention to the hands on and at level 10 a show's entire episode is written around a

product.”³⁶ Regardless of how product placement is defined, it involves products or brands being incorporated into programming either blatantly or subtly.

The film industry has integrated product placement into movies since the 1940s.³⁷ According to Nebenzahi and Secunda, the first recognized product placement occurred during the movie *Mildred Pierce* when actress Joan Crawford consumed Jack Daniels’ brand whiskey.³⁸ One of the more noteworthy product placements occurred in the movie *E.T.* when the title character was lured inside a house by one of the children in the movie because he liked the Reese’s Pieces candies. A *Business Week* article that appeared just a few months after the movie debuted noted, “...the movie was released on June 11, and Hershey’s reports the product’s June sales jumped about 65% from the month before. July sales are running “...significantly higher...” than June’s.”³⁹ The effect of the placement was immediately felt in this case and proved to be extremely beneficial to the Hershey’s corporation.

Though product placement is now commonplace in the movies, the practice of placing products on television has been cyclic in nature moving from early blatant use of products and brands to no use back to product placement practices as they are evolving today.

During the early decades of television, a show might be sponsored by a particular brand or company such as the *Texaco Star Theater*. The *Wikipedia* online encyclopedia has this entry for the show, “Continuing a practice long established in radio, Texaco included its brand name in the show title. When the television version launched, Texaco also made sure its employees featured prominently throughout the hour, usually appearing as smiling “guardian angels” performing good deeds of one or another kind, with the Texaco logo and theme jingle playing in the background.”⁴⁰ Another early incarnation of products on television involved using the show’s host as a commercial spokesperson during part of the show. One of the more humorous examples

of this was during an episode of the *Dick Cavett Show* when the host left his desk area and walked across the set to an area where a hungry dog and a bowl of dog food were waiting for him. The hungry and impatient pooch could not contain his desire for the food and jumped all over Cavett as he attempted to give the ad pitch about the benefits of feeding the viewers' dogs with the particular brand he was hawking. Finally, an exasperated Cavett put down the bowl of dog food that the dog ravenously consumed as Cavett finished the ad spot.⁴¹

The two examples mentioned of advertising practices during the early decades of television were the rule rather than the exception. As production styles changed and less live television occurred, the nature of advertising on television changed as well. Advertisements took the form of the commercial, typically a 60, 30, or 15-second pre-packaged advertisement about a need the consumer possessed and the need fulfillment capabilities of a given product. However, as technological changes occurred, which are discussed in more detail later, the standard commercial began to suffer. To counteract the changes, product placement has, in some cases, returned to the product integration style of the *Texaco Star Theater*.

Reality TV shows, such as *Fear Factor*, are emblazoned in nearly every scene with their own logo. If a character must obtain a set of keys to unlock one of the challenge elements in the competition, the keys are on a *Fear Factor* keychain. When the contestants are preparing for or discussing a challenge, the discussion usually occurs in front a large banner with *Fear Factor* printed on it. One of *Fear Factor's* corporate sponsors is NetZero.com. Their logo can be seen on the clock that monitors the contestants' speed through a challenge so, their total exposure time is quite significant.⁴²

In fact, reality shows are the bastion for product placement on television. According to an *Advertising Age* article, the Nielson Monitor-Plus Place Views tracking service reported that

there were 106,808 product placements on television in 2005. Seven of the top ten shows for product placement were reality shows.⁴³ A *New York Times* article noted, “NBC’s reality boxing show “*The Contender*” led the field in product placements last year [2005], according to Nielson Media Research. With 7,502 appearances or mentions of commercial products, the show had more than twice as many placements as the next most placement filled series, “*The Apprentice*,” also on NBC.”⁴⁴ With 7,502 product placements occurring on one show and a total of 106,808 product placements occurring in a year, the question arises concerning “How does product placement occur?”

How Does Product Placement Occur?

The foremost organization dedicated to maintaining the integrity of the product placement industry as the various agents negotiate the process is the Entertainment Resources & Marketing Association or ERMA. Interestingly enough, for those who want a “...good detailed article on product placement that includes excellent examples...”⁴⁵ ERMA provides a link to an article on *howstuffworks.com*. The article entitled “How Product Placement Works” asserts, “...there are three ways product placement can occur:

1. The placement simply happens.
2. The placement is arranged and some of the product serves as compensation.
3. The placement is arranged and there is financial compensation.”⁴⁶

The “simply happens” placement occurs without any type of formal contractual agreement to place a particular product or brand. The likely scenario in this instance involves some member of the cast or crew selecting a product to use in a scene because it will enhance the scene though the product itself may not be seen or presented in a favorable light.⁴⁷ Of course,

compensated product placement's goal is to have the product seen as adding to or being a positive in the consumer's lifestyle.

Jack Severson, CEO of Madison Road Entertainment, quoted in a *Detroit Free Press* article said, "Our philosophy is if the brand doesn't make the show better, the brand doesn't make the show. People must not notice the integration, but they must remember it. That's the test."⁴⁸ With the goal of promoting a brand name product by using product placement that is a seamless, integral part of a program while maximizing stakeholder value requires the various agents involved in the process to be well-versed in the art of the deal.

The ERMA website boasts that many of the core members of the organization are considered as "...the pioneers of product placement—the forerunners of branded entertainment and the leaders in the industry."⁴⁹ The site also describes the organization's membership as being "...comprised of product placement and entertainment marketing agencies, corporations, production companies, and studio production resource executives."⁵⁰ A cursory description of the actions and interaction of these agents may provide a framework for how the actual seamless product placements or integrations occur.

The product placement deal is no longer the simplistic process of yesteryear when a marketer knew someone on the production design staff and with just a few words or a couple of favors or as one researcher called it "...a sporadic barter arrangement...,"⁵¹ a product might show up in a scene. Today, most product placement deals, whether in the movies or on television, begin with the Production Resources or Product Placement Department of the studio or production company. According to Trucotte's research, "The first step [in the placement process] is to read and analyze scripts for upcoming movies which are scheduled to go into production. They then do a breakdown of potential product placement opportunities."⁵² From

this point, numerous above-the-line and below-the-line people get involved. These individuals create a list of needed props that are designed to enhance the storyline. Once the list is created, it can be sent to one of the product placement companies that will work with its clients to locate corporations that are willing to allow their brands to be used in a particular film or program in a particular fashion. In the film industry this is the point where the question of dollars and cents comes up. The primary question being, “How much is a corporation willing to pay to have a celebrity wear its jeans or sip their drinks?” The price varies, of course, dependent upon who the star is, how the product will be used, and how much and how often will the product be seen.⁵³ The television product placement industry, however, faces an added element that does not affect the movie product placement industry.

One of the big obstacles to or protection from, depending on one’s viewpoint, product placements in television programming comes in the form of the United States Code and Federal Communications Commission regulations. In both cases, the practice of accepting money for the inclusion of a product in programming without an announcement prior to broadcast that such a transaction occurred is a criminal offense subject to large fines. This rule applies only to stations that are licensed by the FCC to use a publicly owned section of the broadcast spectrum.⁵⁴ As a result, the TV product placement industry must walk a fine line to avoid “...criminal activity...” when placing products on network programming. Some argue that the line is constantly breached, a topic that will be briefly discussed later in this chapter. To date, this researcher has been unable to determine exactly how product placement agencies, producers, and networks circumvent these regulations.

On 15 May 2006, the latest incarnation of the product placement deal-making system launched in the form of the ecommerce site *Embed*. According to a *Fortune* article,

NextMedium, parent company of *Embed*, will launch the site as “...an online marketplace for brands and the entertainment companies that want to integrate them.” The process will let the “...networks and other media outlets post their brand-integration availabilities-say, a car for a prime-time chase scene-and buyers, searching by everything from show ratings to character descriptions, can make an offer.”⁵⁵ The art of the placement deal is a tenuous one at best, but the effort pays off in the benefits to all the players.

Positive Aspects of Product Placement

What is it about product placement that makes it so beneficial to the advertisers and the brands they represent that they would invest the vast amount of time and money required in this practice? Russell found that even the “...most mundane consumer products...” benefit from placement in television programming.⁵⁶ There are actually several powerful benefits to the practice including reduced costs, audience connection, and realism.

Bill Keep, marketing professor at Quinnipiac University in Hamden Connecticut, quoted in the *Detroit Free Press* said, “Advertisers are trying to find ways of reaching potential customers in more clever, effective ways that don’t cost too much. Product placements have become an increasingly popular way of doing that. Trying to create a buzz about your product through association whether through...entertainment interests or a TV character makes sense.”⁵⁷ In a 2004 *Media Week* article John Consoli reported that Les Moonves of Viacom predicted “that in three or four TV seasons, as much as 75 percent of all prime-time, scripted shows on the broadcast nets will carry some element of product placement.”⁵⁸

The expected proliferation of product placement on network television is an affirmation that placement is indeed a way to reach consumers in “...ways that don’t cost too much.” Mandese’s *Broadcasting and Cable* article about the worth of product placement in terms of

dollars and cents explained iTVX’s method for calculating product placements’ value. They developed a “...unique form of media research...” to determine placement value by assigning an advertising value to the placement. In the case of NBC’s *According to Jim*, a typical “30-second-spot rate is \$200,000. Based on the total on-air time of 10 minutes and 56 seconds, the placement of the National Football League was worth an estimated \$9,871,665 (see Table 1).⁵⁹ TNS Media

Table 2. Top 5 product placement deals of 2004

BRAND	PROGRAM	AIR DATE	DURATION	VALUE
NFL	<i>According to Jim</i>	11/30/04	:10:56	\$9,871,665
AT&T	<i>American Idol</i>	5/11/04	:05:20	\$6,267,128
Pontiac G6	<i>Oprah Winfrey Show</i>	9/13/04	:03:43	\$5,363,562
Crest	<i>The Apprentice 2</i>	9/22/04	:02:35	\$4,415,335
Pringles	<i>Survivor</i>	10/14/04	:01:17	\$1,626,612

Source: Joe Mandese, “How Much is Product Placement Worth.” *Broadcasting and Cable*, 13 December 2004, 18.

Intelligence reported, “In the fourth quarter of 2005, an average hour of primetime network programming contained four minutes, 24 seconds(:04:24) of in-show brand appearances. Reality programming had an average of 11:05 minutes per hour of brand appearances as compared to 3:07 per hour for scripted programming such as sitcoms and dramas.”⁶⁰

Though the *According to Jim* placement contained an unusual amount of product placement time for a scripted show, it is easy to see the value of product placement to the advertisers for even a typical amount of placement. Based on their system for putting a value on placements, iTVX placed estimates on some 2002 product placements that fit the more likely

scenario of a placement being just a momentary or limited part of a show. According to iTVX, a three second placement of *All* detergent on *Sex and the City* was valued at \$3,389 and seven seconds on *Everybody Loves Raymond* was valued at \$22,980 for *Sunlight* dish detergent.⁶¹ As mentioned earlier, the economics of product placement is measured not only in terms that compare the placement to typical commercial cost but also in terms of the number of viewers that may witness the placement. Fawcett quoted Mark Weiner, managing partner at PR Data Systems, “If it’s on network TV there’s great value to a product placement. That’s on everybody’s wish list because it reaches so many people”⁶²

The idea that the average show can regularly incorporate four minutes of placement for one product without becoming too obvious or intrusive to the storyline is unrealistic, though a 2006 episode of *7th Heaven*, which airs from 8-9 p.m. on the WB network, came close by integrating the *Oreo*’s brand of cookie into the script repeatedly. Within several successive scenes, each of the actors took turns expressing the fact that the *Oreo* was their favorite cookie while each ate one or more of the cookies as they dunked the cookie in milk or looked for milk in which to dunk the cookie [the cookie in the milk image is a primary image portrayed in *Oreo* commercials]. The *Oreos* were seen in many of the scenes as the actors continued to consume the cookies throughout the hour long show.⁶³ The product was portrayed in a favorable light and in a setting with which many viewers are familiar—the comfort of home and family. This placement is a prime example of the other two major benefits of product placement—audience connection and realism also.

An article in *Television AM* reported a survey by the Association of National Advertisers in which “...42% [of advertisers] said the top benefit of incorporating branded entertainment in to their marketing mix is making a stronger emotional connection with the consumer.”⁶⁴ This

emotional connection can result in many responses from the viewers but the one response sought for by advertisers is the one in which the viewers are motivated to purchase the products seen in connection with their favorite characters. An example of this is provided by insight from Angela Shapiro-Mathes, president of Fox Television studios. In a discussion about the power of the daytime soaps to influence viewers she noted, “The relationship that soap opera characters build with viewers are a marketer’s dream. The characters have credibility with their fans. If a character is eating Lay’s Potato Chips, the audience goes out and buys them. That’s how much fans want to identify with their favorite characters.”⁶⁵ This emotional connection and the power it wields will be further elaborated in Chapter 6 that deals with celebrity endorsers and their affect on viewers.

The other benefit for advertisers as mentioned earlier is adding realism to the shows. Roberto Sonabend, CEO of Princeton Video Image, commented during a 2002 Fox News segment that “...product placement makes shows more realistic. In a normal environment you always see branding, to cover that is artificial.”⁶⁶ The viewers’ appreciation of realism proved to be an important finding in a study conducted by DeLorme and Reid in which they examined moviegoers’ feelings toward brand placement in films.

Respondents to Delorme and Reid’s investigation reported that they liked the addition of brand product placement because it provided realism to the films. They were “...impressed when brands were used appropriately and judged to be part of the story”⁶⁷ Bhatnagar et al. suggest, “Message characteristics such as fit with the context are important. People pay more attention to and internalize claims that have a good fit with the context they are placed in.”⁶⁸ In addition, some of Delorme and Reid’s respondents noted that the use of branded or familiar products allowed them to better project themselves into the movie.⁶⁹ This ability to project oneself is

directly related to the ability to empathize with the characters and the viewer's ability to form an emotional bond with the characters as mentioned earlier. Some respondents even reported that they felt "...a sense of reassurance that fostered a relaxed movie viewing experience."⁷⁰

While appropriate placement enhanced the moviegoers' experience, inappropriate placements had a deleterious effect on their experience. Peter Gardiner, who is a pioneer in branded entertainment, provided an example of this negative impact when he discussed an incident involving himself and his 18-year-old daughter. They were watching *Bound for Glory* on ESPN when the Energizer Bunny made an appearance during a game of the show's football team. Gardiner noted that his daughter response, "Bullshit!" to this poorly scripted placement was an accurate assessment adding, "...it was sort of a negative moment."⁷¹

According to DeLorme and Reid, "Moviegoers in both studies disliked excessive or inappropriate brand props that clashed with their expectations of movie scenery" and "...shameless plugs detracted from movie realism." The moviegoers understood that the placements were clearly an attempt to promote the products rather than an attempt to use the products to enhance the movie.⁷² Bhatnagar et al. note that product placements "...that do not quite fit into storylines are likely to both be noticed as well as raise suspicions of superfluity and of media motives other than artistic expression." They will also likely result in negative scrutiny and any claims about the product will not be trusted.⁷³ Similarly, Russell found that the modality or manner in which the placement occurred and the plot connection of the placement must be inline with one another. When these two elements suffered from incongruity, "...placements were found to adversely affect brand attitudes because such placements appear unnatural and are therefore discounted."⁷⁴ Neither producers nor advertisers want placements to be so salient as to illicit negative reactions from the viewers. Julie Kantrowitz, of Full Circle Entertainment

conjectured in an interview, "...that when consumers grow wary of product placement they may not simply react negatively about the brands involved but they may actually turn the shows off."⁷⁵

It is easy to pinpoint some of the benefits of product placement for both the network and viewers' perspective. On the network side the advertisers are able to reach large audiences for mere pennies on the dollar. When their products are placed properly, they are seen as enhancements to the programming and the emotional connection that viewers can have with their favorite program can motivate them to purchase products showcased on the show. On the other side of the transaction are the viewers. The benefits of product placement also extend to them.

Because producers can defray the costs of production, they are able to continue to provide the content that the viewers most enjoy. So not only do they get to see their favorite shows over and over but because of their typical response to product placement they are able to make deeper more realistic connections to their favorite shows. However, everyone does not view product placement in such favorable light. In fact, to some opponents to the practice it is purely a practice of deception.

Negative Aspects of Product Placement

The seamless integration of products into programming, whether it is a product placement or the more detailed product integration, is essential to the power of the placement, as has been noted previously. The placement that is so salient that it becomes obtrusive is viewed negatively, while the placement that is used in the correct manner and at the appropriate time is viewed as an enhancement to the storyline. However, it is this seamless integration or the subtle intertwining of product and story that is disconcerting to some, for a variety of reasons.

As Balasubramanian noted, “Because audiences are unlikely to be aware of such persuasion attempts [product placements], and may process them less defensively than explicit attempts to persuade, the “hidden but paid” hybrids raise questions related to consumer welfare and education.”⁷⁶ How can a product placement affect consumer welfare and education?

Commercial Alert, founded by Ralph Nader and Gary Ruskin, is a watchdog group whose beliefs about product placement are relatively straightforward. An *Entertainment Law Reporter* article on one of the group’s petitions filed with the *Federal Trade Commission* against the practice contained this quote from the group, “Failure to disclose that advertisers have paid for their products’ appearances in programming constitutes an unfair and deceptive practice in violation of Section 5 of the *Federal Trade Commission Act*.”⁷⁷ Commercial Alert’s petition was denied by the FTC based on a lack of support for its claims. In response to the petition, Mary K. Engle, Associate Director for Advertising Effectiveness, noted that violation of Section 5 requires misleading or unsubstantiated claims about a product benefits. As concerns product placement, “...few objective claims appear to be made about the product’s performance or attributes. That is, in most instances the product appears on-screen or is mentioned, but the product’s performance is not discussed.” The FTC response did allow for the occasional placement that oversteps the boundary but considered such violations so infrequent that overarching regulation was unjustified.⁷⁸ An interesting note to this response denying that deception occurs with product placement comes from the FTC itself. The FTC has established what it calls the “Deception Statement” which is the FTC’s guiding principles for determining if a deceptive practice has occurred. The statement maintains that three conditions must exist in order for deception to have occurred; however, the underlying question, according to FTC Commissioner Orson Swindle [no kidding, Mr. Swindle is in charge of preventing fraud in

commerce], is "...whether the act or practice is likely to affect the consumer's conduct or decision with regard to a product or service."⁷⁹ The intent of product placement, which has been well established in this paper, is to affect the viewer's decision in regard to a product or service.

Another possible negative effect on consumer welfare and education is the subliminal nature of product placement. By definition subliminal means "...involving or using stimuli intended to take effect subconsciously."⁸⁰ In Stringer's article she quoted Jack Severson, CEO of Madison Road Entertainment, who said, "People must not notice the integration, but they must remember it. That's the test."⁸¹ Deery noted, "The subtlety of the insertion is also meant to diffuse viewer resistance to commercial messages."⁸² In fact, the Writers Guild of America noted in a press release that product integration was advertising in disguise and "...tens of millions of viewers are sometimes being sold products without their knowledge, sold in opaque, subliminal ways..."⁸³ It is important to note that the WGA is not strictly advocating the elimination of product placement but it is demanding that if the practice is to continue that Guild members should be compensated for the extra work of writing in a product placement opportunity.

Subliminal communication received a great deal of attention in the 1950s when claims were made that by slipping in a few frames featuring popcorn and butter during a feature film increased sales of those items at the concession stands. Some horror flicks supposedly contained frames with skull and crossbones imagery that were flashed just before particularly scary scenes to increase the reaction from the audience. The reaction to these rumors was to ban such advertising tactics, yet it appears that with product placement the subliminal persuasion method is alive and well. In fact, a survey of ERMA members by Karrh, McKee, and Pardon found that the organization's members maintain a belief that product placement "...can be considered a subliminal communication form."⁸⁴ Strahan, Spencer, and Zanna, in a study on subliminal

persuasion, found that subliminal priming had no effect on its own but when combined with “...a relevant motivational state influenced the pursuit of the goal.”⁸⁵ Applied to the context of this study, just showing a product placement may not be enough to motivate consumers, but showing the product with a star or character that a viewer would like to or does attempt to emulate may greatly influence that viewer to purchase the placed product. This is similar in nature to the charge of deception in that the subtle nature of most placements is an attempt to endear our hearts and minds to the use of a product by an advertisement that isn’t labeled as such.

A third somewhat disturbing trend with product placement is the use of the practice in television news. A *Hollywood Reporter* article on the topic noted that many of the news magazine style programs regularly integrate products into the programs.⁸⁶ The trend that is of greater concern to some is the use of the practice in regular news programming.

In his book *News Values*, Jack Fuller wrote about the need for editorial independence or to better explain, a separation between the news and the advertisers. He noted, “...editorial independence from the advertiser control follows directly from journalism’s truth discipline, which is inconsistent with reporting fact to suit the highest bidder. Even in terms of pure self-interest, news organizations cannot afford to turn their news judgments over to anybody, especially not to individuals or organizations with whom they have business relationships.”⁸⁷

Likewise, Barbara Cochran, President of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, said, “You’re selling the credibility of the news, and if viewers start thinking your news is for sale, then the credibility of your news is lost and your audience is lost.”⁸⁸ Readers or viewers find it essential to trust that the news of the day, be it local, national, or international, is accurate and as reasonably devoid of bias as can be expected. Aaron Gorden of Set Resources, Inc., quoted in the

Hollywood Reporter, said, "...the line, which has always been black and white in terms of what's news and what's commercials, is now being blurred."⁸⁹

CHAPTER 4

FAMILY FRIENDLY TELEVISION?

Television Moves In and Stays

To simply say television made an impact on the family when it came on the scene would be a nearly idiotic statement. Television transformed not only the family but the very houses in which they family lived. Television moved into American homes in the 1950s and quickly became a focal point of the family's activities. The way the living room furniture was arranged had to be adjusted to accommodate this new marvel. When the repositioning of furniture was no longer sufficient the basic architecture of the home was adjusted to meet the need. Television grew from the tiny screens of those early models to the eighty plus inch behemoths of today. The set moved from an honored place in the traditional living room to a room of its own. Along with the numerous peripheral possibilities, the VCR, DVR, Nintendo or Xbox, the surround sound, the...ad nauseum, required to entertain America today, the living room grew too small and a media room was required.⁹⁰

During the early decades of television, viewers' choices were limited at best. The Big Three networks, CBS, NBC, and ABC, dominated the broadcasting landscape. If a viewer wanted to watch TV, he or she had to watch whatever was on a particular channel at the time it was offered. The broadcast landscape has changed over the years, however. Today, there are six major broadcast networks: ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, and the WB. Combine those with the regional broadcast networks of PBS, Telemundo, UNI, and Pax or i as it is now called and the viewer truly has access to a variety of broadcast programming possibilities.

No discussing of viewing possibilities would be complete if CATV or cable as it is commonly called was not mentioned. When cable came into the picture, viewers gained access to programming not under the control of the networks. In those early days the reach of cable was quite limited but it gained ground and viewers. Today, cable's reach is nearly as great as broadcast's. According to FCC Commissioner Kevin J. Martin, "...consumers can choose among more than 230 national cable channels and more than 50 regional networks."⁹¹ For the majority of those channels, the broadcast day is 24 hours, which is amazing compared to the days when the networks signed off at the end of the broadcast day with a waving flag and the national anthem.

In addition to the proliferation of programming options, the control that the viewer has over his or her selections makes television a highly customizable experience. The technological innovations that were mentioned in Chapter 2 have transformed the way the family watches television. The devices allow viewers to shift their viewing day to accommodate their schedules. A favorite show that comes on while the children are supposed to be doing homework or chores around the house is taped and watched when the tasks of the day are done.

Television and the Family

Television does have a place in the home that is not only physical but emotional. It can act as a gathering point for the family even in families that have multiple sets. An interesting study by Finucane and Horvath looked at the manner in which couples used the television. Co-viewing provided couples with more opportunities for relaxation and simple enjoyment of one another's company. This "affiliation" time was considered most significant to respondents as it allowed time to fantasize about places or things that they might like to go or do or to remember things and places they had already been. Some couples used television as a communication

facilitator by using aspects of the programming they were viewing to lead into or flesh out topics of interest. The study did reveal what might be considered a negative aspect of co-viewing as well more specifically issues of dominance or control because of the remote.⁹² This is a fact that should come as no surprise to most.

Additional research by Russell, Norman, and Heckler investigated the way in which people act in relation to their favorite show. They investigated the concept of connectedness which is simply a construct used to examine how a particular program "...influences the personal and social aspects of the viewer's life."⁹³ They confirmed that three levels of connectedness occur in regards to a viewer's favorite show. The first level is the viewer-program level that is basically the "I can't miss my show!" mentality.⁹⁴ This level has people rushing home to view *Lost* or *American Idol* regardless of what there are doing. The next level is the viewer-to-viewer level where "...relationships form among viewers of the same program." This level has people not only using their favorite shows not just as conversation starters but, as means to relate and associate with "...friends, family and acquaintances."⁹⁵ The last level is the viewer-character connection, which will be discussed further in a later chapter.⁹⁶

Christopher, Fabes, and Wilson investigated television viewing by the family and its effects on family life. They found that parents fell into two general categories when it came to their children and television. One group believed that they were highly organized in the manner in which they organized their children's viewing. They felt that they spent more time talking and interacting with the children as they discussed the pros and cons of programming choices. The second group looked at television as an interference to their children's other activities.⁹⁷ Though the researcher did not venture any thoughts on this second group, it seems reasonable to assume that this second group would have fewer televisions and be more stringent in the manner in

which their children were allowed to watch [these are the children who have to do their homework before they can watch TV]. The current problem, which happens to be a long-standing one, is the idea that what is missing from the family viewing experience is programming suited for family viewing.

In 2003, Commissioner Martin called for the reinstatement of the family-viewing hour, challenging broadcasters to provide an hour during primetime "...that parents and children can enjoy together." He noted, "...such a policy existed in the US from 1975 to 1983 as part of the NAB [National Association of Broadcasters] Code of Conduct for Television." The broadcast year of 1974 had seen some especially strong outcries from parents and educators because of the amount of negative programming content. The outcry led to the creation of the Code of Conduct. The mutually beneficial relationship that exists between consumers, content providers, advertisers, and the networks needed to be preserved and the Code was designed for that purpose. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against the NAB's Code on antitrust grounds. Martin noted, "When the NAB Board of Directors, ultimately cancelled the Code in its entirety, the Family Viewing Hour went with it."⁹⁸ Once the code was eliminated, the family-viewing hour disintegrated. A 1987 article in *Society* magazine detailed the findings of a study that found that the family-viewing hour had become the most violent hour on television. In fact, "Nearly nine out of ten "family hours" contained violence and the rate of violent incidents per hour was eight, the highest "violence saturation rate" since 1967."⁹⁹ Martin wrote, "Television today, however, also presents some of the coarsest programming ever aired. Parents who want to watch television together with their children often feel that, despite the increased number of viewing choices, they have little to watch."¹⁰⁰ Even though the official designation ceased with

the cancellation of the Code, during the time from 1983 till the present the eight to nine o'clock hour has been consistently referred to as the family-viewing-hour.

In 2000, *The New York Times* reported that a group of marketers had formed a coalition, known as the Family Friendly Programming Forum, to "...generate more family friendly programming..." intended to be "...suitable for a broader, multigenerational audience and suitable to run from eight p.m. to ten p.m."¹⁰¹ The group's website defines family friendly programming "...in purposefully broad..." terms. According to this group, family-friendly programming "...is relevant to today's TV viewer, has generational appeal, depicts real life and is appropriate in them content and language for a broad family audience."¹⁰² The group conducted a survey in 2002 that found that "...70% of adults claim that TV today is less family friendly than 5 years ago. However, they also believed that TV could be entertaining (51%), informative (41%), and educational (31%) and that TV could encourage creativity (21%) and good citizenship (17%). The respondents considered graphic violence, bodily functions, foul language, and nudity or sexual innuendo as offensive content. The three main changes the respondents wanted to see in programming were: "...more shows which portray parents in a positive manner, more shows that include characters with high moral values and more shows without profanity."¹⁰³ J. Andrea Alstrup, head of the advertising department of Johnson & Johnson, said, "We're not saying everything has to be sweet all the time. We're saying that in the early hours of prime time...there's a need for entertainment that people can enjoy together, intergenerationally."¹⁰⁴ Since its inception the forum has sponsored several hit shows including *Gilmore Girls*, *American Dreams*, *8 Simple Rules*, and others. These shows succeeded and generated over \$600 million in advertising dollars.¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to note this desire to sponsor family friendly programming was not only being pushed by but also funded by

marketers, for it is a current practice that they use even in these family friendly shows, product placement, that prompted this study.

Children and Television

In 2005, the Kaiser Family Foundation released its report Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds. This comprehensive report examined all types of media and the manner in which children employ them and the frequency of that employment. The study was a follow-up to a 1999 study on the same topic. The findings in 1999 led researcher to describe children’s lives as being “...media rich.” The current study produced results that caused the researcher to re-label children’s environments as “...media saturated.” The report stated, “In short, a typical child between 8- and 18-years-old is likely to live in a home equipped with three televisions, three VCRs, three radios, three CD/tape players, two video game consoles and a personal computer.” Table 3 shows the percentage of children in the U.S. that live in homes that possess the particular medium mentioned.

Table 3. Percentage of children living in homes with one or more of each medium

DEVICE	PERCENTAGE
Television	99%
VCR	97
DVR	34
Radio	97
CD/Tape	98
Video game	83
Computer	86
Cable/Satellite	82
Premium channel	55
Internet	74

Table 3. (continued)

DEVICE	PERCENTAGE
IM program	60

Source: Roberts, Donald F., Ulla G. Foehr and Victoria Rideout. "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds." 9 March 2005. < <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/7251.cfm> > (28 May 2006). 10.

The study concluded, "...in at least half of the U.S. homes, TV plays a central role in that it is usually on even when no one is watching, and in that it typically operates during mealtimes. Indeed, in 25% of U.S. childrens' homes, the TV is usually on, is typically on during meals, and there are no parental attempts to control children's TV viewing."¹⁰⁶

A 2003 study under the auspices of the Kaiser Family Foundation revealed some startling information about media consumption among children age six and younger. According to the report:

"Children's homes are packed with media options, including TVs, computers, DVD players ad video game consoles. Nearly all children (99%) live in a home with a TV set, half (50%) have three or more TVs, and one-third (36%) have a TV in their bedroom. Nearly all of them (97%) have products-clothes, toys, and the like-based on characters from TV shows or movies."¹⁰⁷

The survey also found that "...among all parents whose zero to six-year-olds have watched TV, 81% say they have seen their children imitate either positive (sharing, helping) or aggressive (hitting, kicking) behaviors from TV (78% positive v. 36% negative)." As the children get older, a larger percentage of parents report witnessing their children imitate both positive and negative behaviors.¹⁰⁸ This should come as no surprise as it only makes sense to think that the more exposure to the imitated behaviors that the children receive the more likely they are to imitate the behaviors. These findings are in alignment with Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

Bandura asserts that most of an individual's behavior is learned by seeing others act or react in a particular fashion to a particular set of circumstances. He contends that it would be

impossible for individuals to learn all they need to know by trial and error thus learning by observation provides plans for later action. He suggests that four stages are involved in this process: attention, retention, reproduction, and reinforcement.¹⁰⁹

In the case of children and imitation of viewed behaviors on television, social learning contends that in the first stage a child would witness either the positive or the aggressive behaviors and the circumstances in which they occurred. The child would, in the second stage, store this information for later recall. In the third stage, the child would have the opportunity to recreate the stored behavior as a result of some stimulus that enabled recall. For example, a bully at school picks a fight and the targeted child recalls a similar episode from a favorite television program in which the targeted child punches the bully in the eye and the bully retreats. The targeted child might then strike the bully with the anticipation that this attacker will retreat also. The final stage involves the reinforcement of the behavior. Using the previous example, when the child strikes the bully the bully does indeed retreat. This makes the likelihood of the targeted child using force in a future similar situation greater than before. If however, the bully returns the blow, the child receives reinforcement that his or her chosen action does not produce the desired results and is unlikely to repeat the previously stored course of action.

Bandura's theory suggests that for the Kaiser data to be accurate and children do indeed imitate behaviors witnessed on television, then they must also be getting some sort of reinforcement for the behavior to continue either from successful implementation of a course of action or from verbal reward from peers or family. Thankfully, the Kaiser research also found that most parents of children in the examined age groups have at least some rules about what is on and how much it is on.¹¹⁰ If unwanted reinforcement is likely to occur, then the most logical approach is to limit viewing.

Children and Advertising

The idea of family friendly television to most deals with the content of the programming itself. In the studies reviewed thus far and in studies not mentioned in this paper, little is discussed about the content of the advertisements shown during the family viewing hour or any other time that the family might watch together being family friendly. In fact, it may seem that commercials are just mere inconveniences or that they are innocuous enough to not raise eyebrows. However, when you look at advertising and its effects on children the facts are mind-boggling.

James McNeal, who is sometimes called the godfather of kid's marketing, commented for a 2001 article in U.S. News & World Report. He estimated, "...children ages 4 to 12 last year [2000] spent \$29 billion of their own money—from allowances, baby sitting fees, and handouts their parents doled out on trips to the mall." If that isn't enough to boggle the mind, he further estimated that in the same time frame, children had a direct influence on how the family spent another \$290 billion and he estimated that if the figures included purchases as a result of nagging then the 2 to 12 year old group influenced another \$320 billion. The important factor according to John Geraci of Harris Interactive isn't the \$29 billion they spent, it is the \$610 billion in spending that they influenced.¹¹¹

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of television viewing and advertising on children. There are two studies in particular that should be mentioned. The first is a study by Maher, Hu, and Kolbe in which they investigated children's recall of commercials. They concluded that, "...children can recall a reasonable amount of information from a single exposure to a television advertisement and are capable of sharing that information accurately. Visual information appears to more memorable and readily recalled than audio information."¹¹²

Greenberg and Rosaen commented that "...greater television viewing is associated with a desire to have the product and to make the product purchase requests..." which are usually granted resulting in the tremendous dollar amounts that were mentioned previously. They too, noted that children do readily recall commercial information even after one exposure but as the number of exposures increase the desire for the advertised product increases combined with celebrity endorsers the affect of the exposure sees an additional spike in desire.¹¹³

In 1995, The American Academy of Pediatrics examined advertising affects of cigarettes, beer and wine, and sexual behavior in commercials on children and adolescents. Their report noted, "...billions of dollars are being spent to encourage children and adolescents to buy products that are not healthy for them, with American advertising messages often including sexual innuendos in an attempt to sell their products."¹¹⁴ They reiterated the position that children under 8 years of age are incapable of evaluating advertisements and take them as fact and they are unable to separate programming from commercials. Older children can understand the advertisements but the advertised products are generally not good for them.¹¹⁵ Advertisers are aware of this and have made some attempts to govern themselves.

In 1974 the Better Business Bureau and the National Advertising Review Council formed The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU). This group focuses on advertising in multiple mediums in regard to advertising to children 12 and younger. They have adopted several principles to help guide advertisers as they develop content directed toward children. Several of the guidelines deal with avoiding content that could mislead a child about how a product works, how it might benefit them, or even how it might make them more or less acceptable by their peers.¹¹⁶

One of the areas regulated by the FCC is called “host-selling.” This is a technique wherein the host of the program either offers up a branded product for recognition during the show or in a commercial that airs during the program. The FCC prohibits host-selling because this type of “...character endorsement...” can confuse children and further prevent them from distinguishing between program and non-program material.¹¹⁷ CARU recognizes the effect that host-selling can have on children acknowledging, “...studies have shown that the mere appearance of a character with a product can significantly alter a child’s perception of the product. Advertising presentations by program/editorial characters may hamper a young child’s ability to distinguish between program/editorial content and advertising.¹¹⁸ A study by Kunkel on host selling to two age cohorts, 4-5 year olds and 7-8 year olds, found, “...children in both age groups were significantly less likely to distinguish commercial content from adjacent programming when the commercials featured the same primary characters across both types of content.”¹¹⁹ Kunkel also noted that the host-selling figure was likely one that was “...well-known and trusted program heroes...” Using these types of characters produces reactions that may be enhanced by the “...children’s positive affect toward the characters.”¹²⁰

Another area of research that is of interest to this study is in the area of the effects of commercials oriented towards adults that are viewed by children. Gorn and Florshem investigated this very topic in 1985. They found that indeed, “...exposure to commercials for adult products has an effect on children.” They hypothesized that when children view such commercials they make the link between use of the products and “...being an adult.”¹²¹ Buijzen and Valkenburg found that parents can talk with their children about advertising and consumer matters and to some degree they can alleviate the influence that commercial advertising has on the children. Trying to prevent commercial exposure was a much less effective means to

accomplishing the goal of alleviating commercial effects.¹²² For those parents whose children are “nagging” or influencing the billions of dollars in spending noted earlier, it may be a good idea to train the children on how to be a good consumer.

It should be noted that host-selling is not considered to be product placement because host-selling actually has a favorite character espousing the benefits of a product while product placement simply has the character using the product in some fashion. The boundary line appears to be somewhat thin but the line does indeed exist. So, product placement as a practice aimed directly at children and adolescents is allowed though not necessarily savory to all. In a 2005 interview for the *Wall Street Journal*, FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein was asked if there should be a different set of guidelines for controlling product placement for children’s programming as compared to programming for those 12 and older. He responded, “Children’s programming is a particular concern because kids already can’t distinguish between advertising and regular programming content. It’s particularly manipulative when you’re dealing with children to try and insert product placements into the programs themselves...”¹²³ Though the advertisers have a self-regulating set of guidelines, they are not willing to cut themselves off from such a valuable demographic. Until the FCC or FTC say otherwise, product placement will have a place in programming for children and will likely continue as a technique during the family viewing hour.

CHAPTER 5

MERE EXPOSURE

In the discussion on product placement in Chapter 3, the discussion mentioned the fact that the manner in which the products are presented in the programs was of utmost importance. The seamless integration of the product into the script or the placement of the product in such a way as to be seen but not overwhelm the viewer with the feeling that they are being “sold” the product is essential. A poor placement is one that sticks out like a sore thumb, so to speak. This new approach to advertising seems to strongly contrast to the traditional advertising to which consumers are subjected daily, if not hourly or even minute-by-minute. The 30-second commercial, the 30- or 60-minute infomercial, even the billboard on the side of the road seem to function or be based on the notion that consumers want to take the time to read, listen or view what the advertiser has to say. Product placement does not appear to follow this notion but rather seems to only seek to have the product seen with or used by a familiar personality in the form of the consumer’s favorite star for just a moment. This notion of needing only a moment or two of exposure to increase the liking of the product may have its roots in the Theory of Mere Exposure.

In his study of the concept, Zajonc defined mere exposure simply as there being a condition that exists which “...makes a stimulus accessible to an individual’s perception.”¹²⁴ As noted earlier, product placement is the insertion of a branded product or service into some medium of communication that, in this case, is television programming. Thus, a condition exists, because a viewer stopped to watch a show, wherein a stimulus, which in this research is a brand name product, is accessible by means of its appearance in the scene to the individual’s perception. Perception being defined by Webster’s as the “...ability to grasp the object or quality

[portrayed] by the senses.”¹²⁵ According to Zajonc, “...mere repeated exposure of an individual to a stimulus object enhances his attitude toward it...” and just exposing consumers to a product may, in fact, create the necessary motivation for product purchase.¹²⁶ However, he also noted, “...attitudinal enhancement...will be more readily effected for novel objects than for familiar ones.” In fact, he speculated based on his findings, that familiar objects might not benefit from exposure because the resulting effects either do not exist or that the effects are minute.¹²⁷

In a study of preattentive mere exposure or exposure that occurs before the consumer is paying attention, Janiszewski found, “...that attention is not necessary for the formation of sensory traces and mere-exposure-influenced affective responses.”¹²⁸ In other words, the consumer does not have to be paying attention in order for the desired outcomes, be they familiarity, liking or purchase, to occur. The mere exposure to a product or advertisement leaves residual information that was created upon exposure. Mental processing of the exposure included “...feature analysis, memory access, implicit memory formation, and perceptual construction.”¹²⁹ The exposure makes an impression on the mind of the consumer of which they are unaware and the stored info remains unknown until such time as the thinking processes need reinforcement. In fact Janiszewski noted, “The consumer’s inability to remember incidental exposures to a brand, or to know that these prior exposures are influencing their judgments, highlights the effectiveness of this persuasion technique. Incidental exposure has the potential to exert a bias on judgment and choice whenever the consumer lacks information.”¹³⁰ When the time to make a purchase or use decision comes and the consumer is without an explicit list of pros and cons, the decision can come down to the affect that prior exposure to a product via say, a product placement, has on judgment.

In an early study of television advertising, Krugman suggested, “The impact of television advertising is in the form of “learning without involvement””¹³¹ The impact, he writes, is due in part to the notions that “...we rarely feel persuaded by a particular TV campaign...” and because “...TV advertising content is trivial and sometimes even silly.”¹³² As a result of consumers’ attitudes that advertising is trivial and silly, little direct attention is paid to the advertisements, though the consumers’ minds process the information and, as a result, the consumer is educated about the product without direct knowledge or interaction with the product before selection of the product to purchase.¹³³ According to Krugman, “...psychologists have long asserted that the effects of “latent” learning are only or most noticeable at the point of purchase.” The time of purchase acts as a stimulus to bring all the bits of information about a given product together and what had been trivial becomes salient in the purchase decision enabling the consumer to see the product in a whole new light.¹³⁴ He condenses the results of his study with the following:

“I have tried to say that the public lets down its guard to the repetitive commercial use of the television medium and that it easily changes its ways of perceiving products and brands and its purchasing behavior without thinking very much about it at the time of TV exposure or at any time prior to purchase, and without up to then changing verbalized attitudes.”¹³⁵

A study on mere exposure and brand choice by Baker found, “...mere exposure may decrease the perceived risk associated with a brand.... Heavy brand name exposure without any associated information content may be sufficient to give a brand a relative advantage over its competitors.” This, he says, is due in part to the idea that prior exposure gives the consumer a sense of comfort when dealing with the brand.¹³⁶ He also found that advertising strategies that employ mere exposure techniques can benefit the brand at purchase time by acting as a deciding factor when the brand product is competing against products of actual equal quality or products that have as much “...familiarity and perceived performance characteristics...” regardless of

actual quality factors.¹³⁷ In support of Zajonc's work, Baker also found that brands that are already well-known do not benefit as much from mere exposure as do products that are new.¹³⁸

In a study about the possible convergence of a commercial's ability to supply information that enhances the consumer's self and that fulfills external needs, Young found evidence to support the existence of moments during commercial broadcasts that are termed "branding moments." According to Young, "...branding moments occur at the boundary between outer-directed semantic information, which defines a brand's positioning in the world, and inner-directed esthetic information, where experience created by the advertising is attached to self."¹³⁹ As mentioned, semantic information deals with the product itself-what it does, how it works, how it compares to other similar products, or even how much it costs. Aesthetic information is more about emotions and how the information shapes the individual consumer's mind or opinions. It is more about the "look" of the advertisement and the feeling it creates for the consumer.¹⁴⁰ Basically, the branding moment occurs when both the image presented strikes an emotional chord with the consumer and the presented need fulfillment abilities of the product satisfy the consumer's need for information.¹⁴¹

Research by Zufryden, Patrick, and Sankaralingham on zapping and its impact lends what might be considered another confirmation of the notion that mere exposure has some influence. In their study they found that advertising effectiveness for zapped commercials was higher than commercials that were not zapped. They suspect the reason for this is due in part to "...the potential heightening of viewer attention to the TV set at the time of the zap. This is likely to lead to more active processing of advertising around the time of the zap and consequently to greater effectiveness for those ads."¹⁴² This particular research emphasizes the heightened awareness of the viewer at the time of the zap where mere exposure contends that awareness is

not actually required for affect to occur. Additionally, the speculation that greater active processing of information occurs prior to the zap goes against the notion that active processing is not required. However, it seems likely that the focus prior to zapping is not what commercial is on but rather that the show no longer is on. Any information that is gathered from the commercial is done quickly and most likely with out active processing of the commercial. The majority of the zapping research mentioned in Chapter 2 considered the act of commercial avoidance to be the motivation for the zap and did not mention hesitation or evaluation of the commercials that were zapped prior to zapping. So, given the dearth of information, it seems reasonable to mention that mere exposure to a commercial before zapping affects advertising effectiveness. In fact, a study by Lindgaard et al., that investigated how quickly Internet users decide whether they like or dislike a website and if the resulting like or dislike judgment was a mere exposure effect, may well give credence to the contention that the moments before a zap occurs may allow enough time for mere exposure effects. What they found was, "...a reliable [like or dislike] decision can be made in fifty milliseconds." They determined that judgments based on momentary visual appeal might well represent an effect of mere exposure.¹⁴³

Though advertisers in general may or may not be aware of the theory of mere exposure, it does seem that they put faith in the effect of a least getting part of their commercials seen. A 2006 *Business Week* article discussed the upcoming fall television season and how the media buy for the season were progressing. The article noted "...advertisers already are negotiating for perks, including first placement in each string of commercials, so viewers will see some of their ad before they manage to grab the remote. According to Garth Ancier, outgoing chairman of the WB network, "That's all about the DVR."¹⁴⁴

The works cited here all deal with mere exposure and standard commercial advertising. It seems obvious from the research that mere exposure is a relevant theory when it comes to product placement as well. After all, the advertisers are simply hoping to have their product or service appear if even for a moment in a scene with a celebrity who then by nature of the use of the product or service becomes a third party endorser of the product or service. In instances where the viewer's involvement with the show is such that they feel a special connection to the program then, the appearance of a product is beneficial to the advertiser trying to reach the demographic most likely to view the program. If the product appears with the favorite character of the program, then the placement holds an even greater value. The next chapter covers the use of celebrity endorsers which is a major marketing tool in the effort to generate brand loyalty.

CHAPTER 6

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT

The use of celebrity endorsers to enhance the appeal of a branded product is a decades-old advertising technique. Because “ordinary” people have a tendency to idolize or envy the “stars” and the lives they lead, celebrity endorsements provide a pathway for “ordinary” people to connect to the products or brands that the stars represent. In order for a celebrity endorsement to achieve the goals of the advertisers, whether it is increased likeability of the product, increased recall, or the ultimate increased brand purchase, the celebrity must have first made a connection to the consumer or rather the consumer must have made a connection to the celebrity.

Russell, Norman, and Heckler’s research identified three levels of “connectedness” that occurs between television viewers and the shows they “love” to watch. Connectedness, as the researchers defined it, is an attempt to “...capture the extent to which a television program influences the personal and social aspect of the viewer’s life.”¹⁴⁵ The viewer-program and viewer-viewer connections were discussed earlier in this work while discussion of the third type of connection, viewer-character, was reserved until now because this level of connectedness is an essential element in the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements.

According to the study, the viewer-character connection is not merely an extension of the viewer-program connection mentioned in Chapter 4, wherein the viewer favors the whole program and dreads the thought of missing the show. Rather the viewer-character level of connectedness is characterized by the influence that an individual character in a program has on “...a viewer’s cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors.”¹⁴⁶ It is possible that the viewer might develop a sense of connectedness with more than one character in the same show or multiple

characters in other favored shows. Basically, the characters influence the way viewers perceive the world around them, how they feel or think about others, and how they act in various social situations. As most people have roles they take on in life, they may depend on multiple television characters to help define themselves in the various situations common to them and the character. For example a female may be a mother, sister, CEO, or choir member at her local church and she may relate her own life to that of Debra Varone on *Everybody Loves Raymond* or she may relate her professional career to that of Geena Davis in her role as the first women President. Regardless of the number of such relationships, viewers who have a highly connected relationship with their favorite TV character or characters relate the events in the character's lives to their own situations. They may even go so far as to adopt the same clothing style or even hairstyles [remember Jennifer Anniston's hair and the ensuing mass adoption of the style] of their favorite stars.¹⁴⁷

All three levels of connection, especially the viewer-character relationship, require the passage of time in order for the connections to fully develop.¹⁴⁸ Just as interpersonal relationships in the "real" world develop over time in order to achieve ever increasing levels of intimacy, so too do the viewer-character relationships. It takes time to get to know, develop an affection for, and eventually maybe even emulate another person, whether that person is real or fictitious. It is quite interesting to note that an individual's connection to a branded product, be it a favorite program or a favorite brand of jeans, also develops with the passage of time. The brand must be experienced over time to measure the level of satisfaction the product or brand provides to the individual to determine if the brand or program actually meets or fulfills the level of need that the individual possesses.¹⁴⁹

The relationship building process may culminate in the character or brand that is associated with the character actually aiding in an individual's development of a self-concept. Based on their findings, viewers may actually "...think of themselves or perceive themselves in terms of the branded associations they make."¹⁵⁰ In other words, they see themselves not merely as a person but as a person who wears a particular type of clothes or drives a particular type of car. Alperstein found that respondents used celebrity appearances in commercials in the process of creating or maintaining the relationships that they have with the celebrities. The celebrity's commercial appearance allows viewers to "...keep the relationship current..." and it helps to "...enliven, reinforce or alter existing attitudes toward the celebrity." Their use of familiar products in common surroundings helps reinforce the connection that viewers create with their favorite celebrity.¹⁵¹ He noted that the association that viewers make between themselves and the actor/character and the product to purchase seems to support the use of celebrity endorsement as a common practice in commercial advertising. Respondents reported that sometimes they feel as though they are transported to an alternate world where they become involved in the interactions of those who appear in programming and commercials. The respondents also acknowledged possessing, toward their favorite celebrity, "...a physical or social attraction that holds some potential for modeling or imitative behavior."¹⁵²

McCracken examined celebrity endorsement from a cultural standpoint. He noted that even if a fictional character is considered to be credible it is a credibility that is "...a special role-specific credibility." The credibility results because the role of the character is heavily identifiable by the viewers and they give credence to that identification and the resulting desire to connect with the character.¹⁵³ He also determined that the cultural implications of the product's use are determined by the consumers when the "...cultural meanings contained in the

people, objects, and contexts of the advertisements are also contained in the product.”¹⁵⁴ What this means is simply that advertisers promote their products using commercials wherein a particular atmosphere is created for the characters in the commercial; whether that is a true or realistic cultural situation for the viewer is determined by the consumer’s personal use of the product. In addition, he determined that because a celebrity’s persona has developed over a period of time and that the celebrity appeals to a specific demographic, use of the celebrity as an endorser allows advertisers to more precisely target the cultural meanings of the use of the product to the intended demographic.¹⁵⁵

The use of a celebrity endorser requires careful configuration of the product and its associated use benefits and no possible meanings can be left “...untapped.”¹⁵⁶ The situation must only portray the advertisers desired meanings also. This precise combination of endorser, product, and benefits to match the viewer “...is accomplished by filling the advertisement with people, objects, contexts, and copy that have the same meaning as the celebrity.”¹⁵⁷ An example of this comes from the show *King of Queens* where the title characters are in the kitchen cooking dinner. Doug, the husband, is the “typical” guy. He loves sports, nice looking women, and is all “meat and potatoes” when it comes to his opinions and actions. He is basic, no elaborate lifestyle for him. He wants things to satisfy him. Carrie, the wife, has come home from a hard day at work in a law firm and is cooking Doug’s “meat and potatoes” kind of dinner as the camera pans the scene, the bottle of A1 Steak Sauce appears in the foreground in a prominent position. It too, is a “meat and potatoes” kind of product. Here then is an advertisement or rather a product placement that brings all the necessary elements together in order to present the A1 to the show’s loyal demographic. McCracken contends that celebrities appear to consumers as having established

themselves as “...super consumers...” and as such have credibility in promoting a product or brand.¹⁵⁸

An interesting question arises from this “super consumer” idea at this point. According to a previously mentioned *PR Newswire* article, Julie Hall, VP of Scheider Associates said, “...one of the best ways to motivate consumers to try new products is through sampling.... Once a consumer tries a new product through sampling, it’s more than likely he or she will add it to his or her shopping lists.”¹⁵⁹ The interesting question is, “Does the viewer use the celebrity to do his or her sampling for them?” If indeed the viewer is so attached to a character or actor that they seek to emulate them, is it not possible that whatever the star partakes of or samples is thought of by the viewer as having been sampled by them personally? A quote mentioned earlier seems appropriate to mention in this discussion also. Albiniak quoted Angela Shapro-Mathes, President of Fox Television Studio who said, “The characters [from daytime soap operas] have credibility with their fans. If a character is eating Lay’s Potato Chips, the audience goes out and buys them. That’s how much fans want to identify with their favorite characters.”¹⁶⁰ It seems that the answer would be, “Yes, the viewer does use the celebrity to do his or her sampling of the products.” However, finding the true answer is beyond the scope of this research.

Kahle and Homer investigated celebrity endorsement with an emphasis on the celebrity’s attractiveness and that attractiveness’ attraction to consumers and their purchase habits. He found that “...recall of a product was greater with a likeable than an unlikeable celebrity”¹⁶¹ and recall of the product was found to be “...positively impacted by a celebrity’s attractiveness.”¹⁶² In fact, they concluded that physical attractiveness of the source might even be considered a source of information about the advertised product or brand itself. For instance, they concluded that respondents’ judgment that a person who was extremely attractive had achieved that level due to

the particular beauty cream she advertised lead respondents to believe that achieving the level of beauty that the actress had achieved required the use of the specific cream. Hence, the beauty of the endorser was a source of information about how such amazing beauty is achieved.¹⁶³

The research mentioned up to this point focused on the use of celebrity endorsers in television commercials such as Sam Waterston of NBC's *Law and Order* doing commercials for Price Waterhouse. The problem, as has been mentioned, is that the commercials get zapped and if the advertiser paid Sam for his time then they most likely have a great deal of money tied up in the zapped commercial. What does all this celebrity endorsement research suggest in terms of product placement. Well, as Russell noted in her study of product placement effectiveness, it seems to be simply this: "Because they identify with and compare themselves to television characters, connected viewers are very attentive to the surroundings of the characters and get ideas for their own lives from the lifestyles they vicariously experience through television programs."¹⁶⁴ So, if the demographic that Price Waterhouse wants to hit is the same demographic for *Law and Order*, then Sam's character provides the perfect opportunity to combine celebrity with endorsement. Sam then acts as a third party endorser for the product but because of his viewers' relationship to his character they are more likely to *investigate Price Waterhouse* for its possible benefits to them.

One unidentified studio executive said, "Suppose you're doing a movie with Tom Hanks and he walks into a bar and says, 'Give me a Bud.' That's worth something. If he says 'Give me a beer,' and someone gets a Bud, that's worth less. And if there's just a sign on the wall that says 'Bud,' that's worth even less."¹⁶⁵ Not only does this suggest that product placement is effective, it suggests that the practitioners know that the right celebrity combined with the right product can result in big returns on investment for them. The "role-specific" credibility mentioned earlier

combined with the connectedness that Russell, Norman, and Heckler identified would seem to suggest that a product placement geared toward a specific demographic used by a favorite actor of the demographic would experience an elevated recall level by audiences as well as increased purchase behaviors because of their desire to emulate the favorite character/actor. In fact, the combination of celebrity and the mass audience of a successful television show provide the perfect opportunity to place brand products in the hands of or in proximity to the character that the celebrities portray to influence the purchase decisions of consumers.

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This study analyzed the current proliferation of product placement during the eight p.m. to nine p.m. timeslot on four major networks. As this timeslot is supposedly intended for multi-generational consumption, the research questions and hypotheses that arose from the review of literature dealt with comparison between adult and children orientation of product placements.

The resulting research questions and hypotheses are:

RQ1: Are product placements directed toward adults or children during the family viewing hour?

H1: During the family viewing hour, product placements will contain significantly more products intended for adult consumption than products intended for children's consumption.

RQ2: Are products presented more subtly or more blatantly when directed toward children?

H2: Products intended for children's consumption will be presented blatantly significantly more often than products intended for adults will be presented blatantly.

H3: Products that are presented in a subtle manner will have longer placements than products that are presented in a blatant manner.

H4: Products intended for children's consumption will appear for a significantly longer time than products intended for adult consumption.

RQ3: Are the products presented high or low-ticket items?

H5: Product placements aimed at children will occur significantly more often for high-ticket items than for low-ticket items.

H6: High-ticket items will appear for a significantly longer period of time than low-ticket items.

CHAPTER 8

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used content analysis on a convenience sample of weekday programming taken from ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox during the week of October 28, 2003 through November 1, 2003 during the family viewing hour. The result was a total of twenty-eight hours of programming for analysis. The listings of the typical shows for each regular season week were gathered from *TVguide.com*, and each show was assigned a number for coding purposes. An additional number was included to allow for the possibility of an unidentified show that was later given its own separate number. Each show was then divided into sections based on the setting of the scene. For instance, the setting of a doctor's office or a living room may contain multiple interactions of characters as well as multiple camera angles yet be the same setting. A setting change was demarcated by an edit that allowed for either the characters to change location or that allowed for other characters to appear on screen in a different interaction and setting. The unit of analysis was any product placement that occurred within any given setting.

For research question one, coding of the intended demographic was based on the age of the characters that appeared in connection with the product regardless if the product was in their direct possession or simply framed in the shot with them. When both adults and children appeared in a setting in which a product placement occurred, the intended demographic was coded as "either." In hypothesis one, the independent variable is the intended demographic for the product while the dependent variable is the number of product placements. For research question two, blatant placement was signified by the mention, use, or possession of a product by a character in the setting. In contrast, subtle is defined as product placement that appears in the background of the setting. In hypothesis two, the independent variable is the intended

demographic while the dependent variable is the manner of presentation. In hypothesis three, presentation is the independent variable while length is the dependent variable. For hypothesis four, demographic is the independent variable while length of appearance is the dependent variable. For research question three, high-ticket items were those items deemed as having a value in excess of \$100, while low-ticket items had a value of less than \$100. This is a subjective evaluation and effort was made to ensure intercoder reliability by assigning certain products a value during intercoder reliability testing. For example, automobiles are high-ticket items because they typically exceed \$100. Likewise travel associated items such as destinations, transportation, and accommodations were all deemed as having a high-ticket price. On the other hand, items such as foods, magazine, attendance at sporting events or sports teams were assigned a low-ticket price. For hypothesis five, demographic is the independent variable, while the ticket value is the dependent while in hypothesis six, the ticket value is the independent variable and length is the dependent variable.

Each show was coded for coder number, show number, setting begin time, setting end time, appearance of a product placement, brand of product, type of product, length of product appearance in h:mm:ss, target demographic, and estimated value of product. The time code on the VCRs was used as to gather the beginning and ending times of the settings. Product placement was simple a yes or no entry. As there are innumerable brand possibilities, the brands were recorded during coding and assigned a number afterward for statistical analysis. The type of product list was created by combining the product list from Consumer Reports.com (2003) and by additions made during intercoder reliability testing. Intercoder reliability testing was conducting by having each coder view a sample of the programming recorded for the study. Coding was compared and adjustments made such as the addition of product types. Multiple

rounds of testing for intercoder reliability resulted in reliability in of 83% for scene start and end times, 88% for product placement and brand, 100% for type of product, presentation, length of presentation (+/- 3 seconds variation allowed) target demo, high-low ticket on items coded by both coders. The desired sample size was 400 units and the *a priori p* was .05.

CHAPTER 9

RESULTS

Because of empty cells some combining of categories was performed. Anytime that a product was coded as applying to either demographic, the intended demographic was moved into the children category. Also, because celebrity mentions are not actually celebrities holding products or appearing in the shows, they were combined into the low-ticket item category. Six entries were eliminated because it was extremely difficult to determine a value for them. However, the resulting analysis showed that for RQ 1 an overwhelming number of product placements are directed toward adults during the family-viewing hour. In addition the frequency chart (Table 4) shows H1 is supported by the fact that 90.8 % of the time product placements contain products intended for adult consumption.

Table 4. Frequency of product placements directed toward adults and children

TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	FREQUENCY
Adults	781 (90.8%)
Children	79 (9.2%)

N = 860

RQ2 asked, “Are products presented more subtly or more blatantly when directed toward children?” Analysis revealed that 89.9 % of the time products directed toward children were presented in a blatant manner. H2 conjectured, “Products intended for children’s consumption will be presented blatantly significantly more often than products intended for adults will be presented blatantly. This hypothesis was not supported (Table 5) in fact, the percentage of blatant

presentations for both groups was nearly equal with 89.9% blatant presentations when placement was directed toward children and 90.1% blatant when product placement was directed toward adults.

Table 5. Chi-square of blatant presentation to children versus adults

TARGET DEMOGRPHIC	BLATANT	SUBTLE
Children	71 (89.9%)	8 (10.1%)
Adults	704 (90.1%)	77 (9.9%)

Note. N = 860; Chi-Square = .006; df = 1; p=n.s.

Neither hypothesis 3 (Table 6) which stated, “Products that are presented in a subtle manner will have longer placements than products that are presented in a blatant manner.” nor hypothesis 4 (Table 7) which said, “Products intended for children’s consumption will appear for a significantly longer time than products intended for adult consumption.” was supported by analysis.

Table 6. t-test for length of appearance for blatant versus subtle presentation

PRESENTATION	N	LENGTH OF APPEARANCE
Blatant	775	00:00:05
Subtle	85	00:00:04

Note. t = .272; M=00:00:04:27; p = n.s.

Table 7. t-test for length of appearance for children versus adult demographic

TARGET DEMOGRAPHIC	N	LENGTH OF APPEARANCE
Children	79	00:00:02
Adults	781	00:00:05

Note. $t = -1.26$; $M = 00:00:04:21$; $p = n.s.$

RQ3 asked, “Are the products presented high or low ticket items?” Frequency analysis (Table 8) revealed that 86.2% of items were low ticket and 13.8% were high-ticket items. H5 read, “Product placements aimed at children will occur significantly more often for high-ticket items than for low tickets items.” Analysis (Table 9) revealed that the opposite was true in this case. Children were targeted with low-ticket items 92.4 % of the time when product placements were directed toward them, thus H5 is rejected.

Table 8. Frequency of high versus low ticket items

VALUE OF PRODUCT	PRESENTATION
High Ticket	119 (13.8%)
Low Ticket	741 (86.2%)

Note. $N = 860$

Table 9. Chi-square of value of product based on demographic

DEMOGRAPHIC	HIGH TICKET	LOW TICKET
Children	6 (7.6%)	73 (92.4%)
Adults	113 (14.5%)	668 (85.5%)

Note. $N = 860$; Chi-square = 2.84; $df = 1$; $p = n.s.$

Analysis for H6 (Table 10) supported the hypothesis in that the length of appearance for high-ticket items was double the length of appearance for low-ticket items.

Table 10. t-test comparison of length of appearance based on value of product

PRODUCT VALUE	N	LENGTH OF APPEARANCE
High ticket	119	00:00:08
Low ticket	741	00:00:04

Note. N= 860; t = 2.30; $M=00:00:04:17$; $p < .05$

Evaluation of the number of brands and types of products based on frequency of appearance revealed that television programs conducted a tremendous amount of self-promotion and that celebrity mentions are common practices (Tables 11 & 12).

Table 11. Top 10 brands by frequency of appearance

PRODUCT	FREQUENCY
NetZero.com	33 (3.8 %)
Fear Factor	32 (3.7 %)
Survivor	27 (3.1 %)
Reba McIntire	20 (2.3 %)
48 Hrs	19 (2.2 %)
Sony MP3	18 (2.1 %)
Navy NCIS	18 (2.1 %)

Table 11 (continued)

PRODUCT	FREQUENCY
NY Rangers	13 (1.5 %)
Joe Millionaire	13 (1.5 %)
Kenny Chesney	12 (1.4%)

Note. N = 860

Table 12. Top 10 products by frequency of appearance

PRODUCT TYPE	FREQUENCY
TV Shows	309 (35.9 %)
Celebrity Mentions	128 (14.9 %)
Electronics/Computers	87 (10.1 %)
Travel	67 (7.8 %)
Magazines/Books/Newspapers	39 (4.5%)
Food	35 (4.1 %)
Automobiles	29 (3.4 %)
Sports Teams	26 (3.0%)
Beverages	15 (1.7 %)
Movies	15 (1.7 %)

Note. N = 860

CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first research question sought to determine for whom the majority of product placements was intended and the resulting hypothesis suggested that the adults would be the focus of the product placements. Based on the literature reviewed and the results of the analysis, it appears that advertisers are placing products based on the fact that adults are watching during the family-viewing hour by themselves. Research done by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that in the eight to eighteen-year-old age group, only 5% of the time that children were watching television their parents were watching with them.¹⁶⁶ It is no wonder, with the variety of viewing options available today and the proliferation of children having televisions in their rooms that families are not watching together. It makes complete sense from the standpoint of the advertisers to inundate the viewer whenever and wherever possible with the products they represent. Many of the shows have themes and storylines that focus on adults and as a result adults dominate the vast majority of scenes.

As for the second hypothesis, it seemed natural to project that children would be presented to in a blatant manner. So much of the television programming, video games, movies, and music are geared towards high energy in order to attract the younger demographic. It follows then that product placements aimed at children would have the same “in your face” feel even when presented as a part of a television show. Fear Factor is a prime example of blatant product presentation. The settings are all dominated by multiple products that carry the Fear Factor logo and they are all prominently displayed, even the Fear Factor signs that sometimes appeared in the background were of such enormous size that they actually dominated the picture. This show,

however, did not have one child participant and was coded as being aimed towards adults and thus cannot be part of this statistic.

As for H3 and H4, both of which were not supported, it again seemed likely that products with subtle presentation would appear for a longer span of time in hope that the image would impact the consumer more and when the consumers were children that the span of appearance would need to be especially long as children are often distracted by other things while viewing.

Research question three dealt with the value of the product placed in the shows. The placements for low-ticket items far outdistanced placements for high-ticket items. As for H5, again it seemed natural to suggest that advertisers would try to inundate children with high-priced must-have items during the family-viewing hour. This did not prove to be correct. The final hypothesis was supported, however, revealing that high priced items do appear for longer lengths of time, which seems reasonable as the value of mass advertising increases the longer a product appears.

When looking at the presentation of products during television shows, advertisers appear to be putting faith in the theory of mere exposure. According to TNS Media intelligence, "...given the short length of many brand appearances, duration is a more relevant metric than a simple count of occurrences for quantifying and comparing the gross amount of brand activity that viewers are potentially exposed to in the program versus in the commercial breaks."¹⁶⁷ Table 10 reveals that slightly more than 76 % of product placements lasted four seconds or less. As mere exposure suggests, only a momentary appearance that provides the opportunity to take in the data is required. The coders were able to spot and code even the shortest appearing product suggesting that others have the opportunity to notice as well. Complete attention is not required

on the part of the viewer for exposure to take place allowing for the possibility that the viewers may not be focusing on the shows but yet still be impacted by product placement.

Table 13. Top 4 frequencies of length of appearance

LENGTH OF APPEARANCE	FREQUENCY
00:00:01	315 (36.6 %)
00:00:03	161 (18.7 %)
00:00:04	93 (10.8 %)
00:00:02	87 (10.1)

Note: N = 860

The failure of this study to find significant supporting data for three of the five hypotheses in no way alters the fact that this is a phenomenon that needs to be addressed. More clearly defined methods on the part of researchers will aid in generation of accurate and generalizability of information. For example, one study mentioned earlier, differentiated between product placements and ad plugs saying that ad plugs were unpaid brand appearances. Unless they had access to internal memoranda from the shows and advertisers involved, it seems that such a differentiation would be impossible. If Joe in show number one drinks a Bud and it is a paid endorsement, while Sam in another show drinks a Bud without it being paid, how can a coder possibly be aware of the difference?

A simple count of the number of product placements seems only to serve as an indicator of the proliferation of the practice and provides no real furtherance of insight into the practice. Besides a simple count of placements could be accessed via any of the organizations whose function it is to count the placements such as TNS Media Intelligence or Neilson Media

Research. As mentioned earlier, duration seems to be one of the key variables in the practice. This is also another statistic that could be acquired via an existing research organization. With a simple calculation, duration of a placement can be quickly turned into a dollar figure to use in comparison to ad value of the standard commercial.

Karrh et al. found that the belief among practitioners in regards to placement efficacy is, “...placement works best when the brand is either shown in a manner that is integral to the story line or is used by the program’s star.”¹⁶⁸ This provides a research direction for future efforts. Rather than simply counting, researchers can look more specifically at the way the product is integrated into the story. Does it merely act as a background prop or does it progress so far as to become a character in the storyline. After all, ERMA’s website boasts, “ERMA members have the knowledge to make informed business decisions to turn your products into the stars of the screen!”¹⁶⁹ It might be interesting to see if a product actually progress to a leading role in a program, after all, the *Oreo* nearly made it to that level on *7th Heaven*.

Qualitative work is required to investigate additional benefits of product placement. How does insert favorite actor here use of insert product here make insert respondent here feel about insert favorite actor here or about insert product here?

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the stakeholders in investigations such as this one are many and each has a unique perspective to bring to the work. For the researcher, it is an opportunity to examine a phenomenon that has been going on for years but has in recent years taken on new life and is proliferating across the networks at a rapid pace. Educators may chose to focus on the placement effectiveness, recall, motivation to purchase, or any of a number of similar investigations.

Legal aspects of product placement especially during a so-called family viewing hour may be an area of interest to educators. Though advertisements for smoking on television are against the law, characters in movies and programs that air on the broadcast networks mention brand names and regularly puff away. Is there legal recourse for viewers who develop cancer as a result of smoking a cigarette that they witness their hero smoking and in an effort to emulate him they begin to smoke themselves? Distefan et al. found that among adolescents whose favorite movie star smoked on-screen there existed a greater likelihood that the adolescents themselves were more susceptible to smoking.¹⁷⁰ In addition, Sargent et al. found that smoking a particular brand on-screen acted as a third party endorsement for adolescents and "...actor endorsement of a cigarette brand associates a type of person with that brand. As viewers assimilate these images in the context of developing their own smoking identity, their attitudes toward tobacco use become more favorable."¹⁷¹ Charlesworth and Glantz concluded, "The images of smoking in movies both normalize the behavior and downplay the negative health effects associated with smoking, encouraging more tolerant, neutral, or nonchalant attitudes about smoking."¹⁷² So not only does an actor's smoking on-screen increase the likelihood that adolescents will start smoking, continued endorsement of the habit creates a more favorable attitude about smoking. This should be of great concern to researcher and parents alike. Further studies might include an investigation of tobacco use or placement in any form during the specified time or even extending to the whole of prime time.

Drug companies are also getting into the product placement business. Just about any television viewer, at least those who do watch commercials, is continually bombarded with ads for drugs. With the "purple pill" all your ailments will flee or with the right pill the right time is the one you decide upon, etc, etc. The difference between drug placements and drug

commercials exists in the fact that the Food and Drug Administration requires commercial advertisements for any drug to list not only the benefits but also the possible side effects. An article in *Brandweek* questioned the legality of drug product placements because of the lack of a “...balanced account...” of the products. In just a few short weeks of the 2005-2006 television season there were, according to the article, “166 mentions of prescription drug brands...” with ‘...Botox, Viagra, and Prozac...’ being the drugs with the greatest number of placements.¹⁷³

Finally, parents still worry about their children and what they are seeing on television. Whether the issue is sex, alcohol, or a bombardment of products that by way of celebrity endorsement become must haves for the children, parents are fighting a battle that is at the least difficult on the best of days. Researchers, advertisers, educators, producers, and parents all have an equal part in controlling what the children are subjected to by means of the television. Most often these groups take turns abdicating this responsibility either in the name of profits, alternative concerns, or just being too busy to worry about something that can just be turned off. The current trend is unlikely to abate; in fact it may continue to increase. In fact, because of product placement effectiveness, CBS president and CEO Leslie Moonves said, in a *Dallas Morning News* article, that he was actively seeking more ways to use product placement in the shows of his network.¹⁷⁴ And, he is certainly not alone.

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