Moviegoers’ Experiences and Interpretations of Brands in Films Revisited

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The article provides further phenomenological understanding of how brand props are interpreted within the everyday lived experience of the movie audience. Building on previous focus group research and on the grounded theory perspective of social science, the authors gathered first-person audiotaped accounts of experiences with brand props as interpreted in relation to movies, moviescning, and social experience. Eight focus groups and 30 depth interviews of nonstudent moviegoers who differed in age bracket and moviegoing frequency were conducted. Constant comparative analysis uncovered three themes related to movie centrality and four themes related to consumption-specific aspects of everyday life. The findings reveal that regardless of age or moviegoing frequency, the informants were active participants in the viewing experience and actively interpreted brands encountered in movies. However, the older moviegoers brands in movies symbolized social change whereas to the younger informants, they symbolized belonging and security. The authors conclude with implications for advertising practitioners and recommendations for future research.

Brand props have played a role in motion pictures for many decades and can be found in movies dating from the late 1940s and early 1950s (The Economist 1991). Movie legend Joan Crawford drank Jack Daniels whiskey in the 1948 drama Mildred Pierce (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993; Troup 1991). In the 1950 movie Destination Moon, four space travelers rocketed to the moon drinking Coke and wearing Lee jeans (Vollmers and Mizerski 1994).

The practice of using branded props in movies started as a casual process. Branded items were simply donated, loaned, or purchased for particular movie scenes to enhance their artistic qualities (Spillman 1989). Today, however, brand placement, the practice of purposely placing brands in the context of feature films, is a multimillion dollar business, driven by marketers’ need to find new media options for brand exposure. Either for barter or payment, movie deals are struck with studios with the hope that Hollywood glamour will add value to featured products and services (Berkowitz 1994; Colford 1991; Solomon 1992).

Elements of the Practice

Participants. Practitioners of brand placement include clients, advertising agencies, public relations firms, movie studio departments, and independent “brokers” who obtain and review movie scripts for appropriate placement opportunities and make arrangements for the incorporation of the brands for the companies they represent (Turotce 1995). Brands typically are featured in a movie in three ways: the product itself is shown, a logo is displayed, or an ad is placed as a background prop (Smith 1985). For placements that involve a direct payment, fees often are based on a hierarchy of brand treatment in the film. Visual exposure is the least expensive, verbal mentions are moderately priced, and character usage is the most costly.

Advantages and Disadvantages. Brand placement has numerous advantages for marketers and moviemakers. It has the potential to offset movie production costs (Alcor 1988), reach captive audiences (Hulin-Salkin 1989), provide relatively greater reach than traditional advertising,
demontstrate brand usage in naturalistic settings (Lor0 1999), create more realistic movie settings (Sapolsky and Kinney 1994), provide relatively cost efficient communication (Deigh 1985), and offer an alternative advertising media option for alcohol and tobacco products, which are restricted from broadcast television (The Economist 1991).

Brand placement also has disadvantages that stem from marketers' and placement brokers' general lack of control over the brand placement process. They include the inability to guarantee the release date or the "success" of a particular film (which can have devastating effects for promotional tie-ins at the retail level) (Holm-Salkin 1989), the possibility of the brand being edited from the film (Bergman 1989), the risk of negative or unclear brand portrayal in the movie setting (Fleming 1990), the difficulty in measuring effectiveness (J. Walter Thompson, USA 1989), and the lack of audience selectivity in the movie medium (Troop 1991).

Controversy Over Brand Placements. Brand placement is not without controversy (Gupta and Gould 1997; Vollmers and Mizerek 1994). Movie critics have expressed concern that brand placement jeopardizes the artistic integrity of movies. For example, Miller (1980) criticizes the motion picture industry not only for excessive brand plugs, but also for the movies themselves, which he claims are becoming just long advertisements.

Consumer advocacy groups (e.g., Consumer's Union, Center for the Study of Commercialism, Center for Science in the Public Interest) protest that brand placement is deceptive advertising which causes moviegoers who are unaware of the persuasive intent of brand placement (Berkowitz 1994) to engage in purchase behaviors. Some have demanded that sponsor identification appear on the screen prior to the movie or at the exact moment of brand name exposure in the film.

Though many advocacy groups have fought to have the practice of brand placement banned or regulated (Bergman 1989; Broadcasting 1989), to date they have been unsuccessful in their attempts to influence formal public policy (DeLorme 1995). The ongoing legal debate centers on whether or not brand placement constitutes commercial speech and is therefore subject to government regulation. For example, Lacey (1993) argues that brand placement of unhealthy products such as cigarettes should be restricted. Snyder (1992) counters that brand placement is not a form of commercial speech, arguing that filmmakers and moviegoers should determine whether and how brand placement should be used, not governmental regulation.

Purpose and Focus of the Study

Despite the tremendous growth and controversial nature of brand placement, only within the last 10 years has research on the practice of placing brands in movies begun to appear consistently in the literature. Friedman (1985, 1986a,b, 1987, 1989, 1991) reported the frequency of brand mentions in forms of mass communication, including popular novels, hit plays, humor, newspaper columns, and music. Movies, however, were not included in his stream of work.

Investigations of brands in movies specifically are accounted for by five published articles (Babin and Carder 1996a,b; Gupta and Gould 1997; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993; Ong and Meri 1994), two dissertations (DeLorme 1995; Vollmers 1995), three master's theses (DeLorme 1991; Steorts 1997; Troop 1991), and 12 conference papers (Baker and Crawford 1996; DeLorme and Reid 1997; DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer 1994; Gupta, Klassen and Balasubramanian 1997; Karth 1994, 1996; Pardun and McKee 1996; Russell 1996; Sabherwal, Pokrovetsynski and Griffin 1994; Sapolsky and Kinney 1994; Vollmers and Mizerek 1994; Zimmer and DeLorme 1997). Though not reporting research specifically on brand placement, other articles (Balasubramanian 1994; Sandler and Secunda 1993; Solomon and Englis 1994, 1996) review the conceptual nature of brand placement (i.e., as a subset of the broader category of "hybrid" or "blurred" messages), discuss public policy implications of the practice, and suggest research agendas for further investigation.

Of the research studies, two analyzed the frequency and nature of brands in movies (Sapolsky and Kinney 1994; Troop 1991), four surveyed practitioner and moviegoer beliefs about the practice of brand placement (Gupta and Gould 1997; Karth 1995; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993; Pardun and McKee 1996), and 14 investigated brand-prop-induced behavior and effects (Babin and Carder 1996a,b; Baker and Crawford 1996; DeLorme 1991, 1995; DeLorme and Reid 1997; DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer 1994; Karth 1994; Ong and Meri 1994; Sabherwal, Pokrovetsynski and Griffin 1994; Steorts 1987; Vollmers 1995; Vollmers and Mizerek 1994; Zimmer and DeLorme 1997). The Appendix provides a summary of research findings.

Building on previous focus group research (DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer 1994) and on the grounded theory perspective of social science (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990), we conducted a study to provide further phenomenological understanding of how brand props are interpreted by moviegoers. Specifically, focus
groups and depth interviews were used to address the question, "How are brand props interpreted within the everyday lived experience of the movie audience?"

With a few exceptions (DeLorme 1991, 1995; DeLorme and Reid 1997; DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer 1994), most researchers have neglected the problem of consumer/audience interpretation. Instead, questions about the relationship between brand props and the movie audience have been reduced to questions of cognitive, attitudinal effects (e.g., Gupta and Gould 1997; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1991; Sabherwal, Pokrywczynski and Griffin 1994) and exposure outcomes (e.g., Babin and Carder 1996; Karrh 1994; Stoeart 1987; Vollmers and Misnerki 1994). To broaden the scope of the research stream and focus attention on consumer experiences and interpretation (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Lock 1987), we took a phenomenological approach to the subject (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). We sought to give voice to the movie audience by providing empirically derived first-person accounts of experiences with and interpretations of movie-encountered brand props. Studies of movie audiences by Blumer (1933) and Custen (1980) underscore the importance of the moviegoer’s interpretive perspective in research on brand placement.

Blumer (1933) explored the influence of movies on audience behavior. He did not focus on one movie in particular, but rather on movie-going in general. Data were collected through multiple methods, such as autobiographical accounts, unstructured interviews, conversations, and direct observations. Motion pictures were found to influence a wide range of behaviors, including childhood play, imitations of adult conduct, daydreaming, emotional experiences, and lifestyles. Blumer concluded that movies, because they shape and influence audience interpretations of the everyday social world, are a training vehicle for the socialization process.

Custen (1980) conducted a multimethod (group and depth interviews) study of moviegoers’ interpretations. Unlike Blumer, he focused on moviegoers’ verbal responses and interpretive engagement with a particular full-length movie, Citizen’s Band. Like Blumer, he sought to gather moviegoers’ accounts in their own language, from their own perspectives, not those imposed by the researcher. Custen (1982) interpreted his data to suggest that audience interpretations of movies cannot exist outside social constructions, as moviegoers tend to discuss how a movie is meaningful to them in some context of their lives prior to and apart from the movie.

The implication of the two studies for product placement research is direct and clear—an interpretive perspective is needed to explore how movie content is actively interpreted and subsequently incorporated into moviegoers’ social experiences, if we, as researchers, are to fully understand the phenomenon of movie brand placement. As noted by Turner (1988, p. 4), “movies might be made by actors, directors, and producers, but they are ultimately made successful by audiences.” The same is true for brands placed in movies.

**Research Approach and Design**

The grounded theory approach, which stresses theoretical discovery rather than theory testing (i.e., mere exposure, learning theory, uses and gratifications, etc.), guided the collection and analysis of generated audience accounts. Grounded theory studies are based on the premise that the processes and products of research are shaped from the data rather than from preconceived theoretical frameworks (Glaser 1992). According to Hirschman and Thompson (1997, p. 46), the methods of grounded theory are especially appropriate when the purpose of the research is to discover consumer-based theories and constructs. We adopted the grounded theory premise, but the results can provide guidance for subsequent research on brand placement and the movie audience, whether that research is qualitative or quantitative.

Following the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Glaser (1992), we used focus groups (Lunt 1996) and depth interviews (Hirschman and Thompson 1997; McCracken 1988; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989) to gather first-person accounts of audience-based experiences with movie brand props, including how those experiences are interpreted in relation to movies, movie viewing, other media content, and other viewing situations. The main distinction between the two methods is in the dimension of social interaction. Focus groups entail a greater chance that informant reaction may be influenced and modified by social interaction. However, the two methods were used in combination because (1) they afford detailed first-person descriptions of how brands placed in movies fit within the context of the moviegoers’ everyday experiences, (2) they allow maximization of both breadth and depth of experiences and interpretations (McCracken 1988), (3) they provide richer data when used together (Fontina and Frey 1994), (4) they assist in constant comparison and saturation of coding categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and (5) the use of the two self-contained methods allows for triangulation of data (Denzin 1978).
Grounded theory continues through various modifications and reformulations as new data and concepts are integrated (Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The modifications of the grounded theory may be from further work by the original researcher(s) or from work by another researcher who brings different questions and interpretations to the data (Charmaz 1983). Hence, we adopted the central analytic framework reported by DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer (1994) as a starting point for empirical elaboration and possible modification.

The method of the 1994 study involved four audiotaped focus groups with 29 college students 18 to 21 years of age who were frequent moviegoers. A 15-minute videotape of movie clips was used as an autodriving technique to stimulate discussion (McCroskey 1986). Convergence of the ideas expressed was achieved after four focus groups had been conducted with eight, four, eleven, and six participants, respectively.

The analysis process involved listening to each audiotaped group discussion three times, transcribing each discussion verbatim, reviewing notes taken during the sessions, and talking with the research assistants about group dynamics. The investigation explored a range of concepts (e.g., conceptualization, knowledge, attitudes about brand placement), but first-person stories of everyday experiences seemed to be the richest, most meaningful information. Hence, a second analysis was conducted to search specifically for accounts of participants' everyday experiences. The transcripts were examined closely by line by line to identify and code participant experiences. Comparisons and contrasts then were made between incidents in the experiences data. Last, the transcripts were reread carefully three more times and the remarks noted in context to verify the coding and analysis process.

Three preliminary themes emerged from the 1994 analysis: appreciating realism (props assisted in suspension of disbelief and added to movie realism, generic props interfered with realism; noticing the familiar (noticed and liked familiar branded products, enhanced realism); and relating to characters (comparison of characters with own lives). To validate and extend the findings of the 1994 study, we collected interview accounts of nonstudent moviegoers' experiences and interpretations of brand props.

**Moviegoers as Informants**

We used theoretical sampling, that is, choosing new cases to investigate on the basis of their potential for helping to elaborate or modify the previously identified concepts and theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The 1994 study involved a homogeneous sample of frequent moviegoers who were college students, 18 to 21 years of age. Building on that work, we maximized differences among heterogeneous sample groups that included both frequent and infrequent moviegoers and two age brackets. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), maximizing differences among heterogeneous sample groups increases the probability that the researcher will collect the widest possible variation of data for a category, while also finding similar patterns—both of which are necessary for the elaboration and transferability of the theory. Further, we purposefully collected experiences and interpretations of nonstudent informants so that constant comparisons could be made with the previous college student-only sample.

Figure 1 is a two-by-two matrix of the interview design, with four quadrants of informants: (1) younger frequent moviegoers, (2) younger infrequent moviegoers, (3) older frequent moviegoers, and (4) older infrequent moviegoers. We expected experiences and interpretations of brand props to differ among the quadrants. A frequent moviegoer was defined as a person who sees a movie at least once a month and an infrequent moviegoer as someone who sees a movie less than once a month (Motion Picture Association of America 1990).

We defined a younger moviegoer as someone 18 to 21 years of age and an older moviegoer as a person 35 to 48 years of age. That particular age distinction was important because it afforded the clear age contrast needed for category saturation while still enabling all participants to provide their own consent to participate. The specific age bracket for the younger moviegoers who were nonstudents enabled us to make comparisons with the experiences and interpretations of college students of the same age in the 1994 study.

**Data Collection**

Personal contacts, flyers, an on-line computer network, local mass media advertisements, and a professional research firm were used to gather a pool of possible study participants from a college town in the southeastern United States. The recruitment process involved telephoning potential informants, providing a brief introduction, and asking screening questions about current college enrollment status, age, and moviegoing frequency (Krueger 1988, 1993). Specifically, we asked whether they would be willing to participate in an informal discussion about "their personal movieviewing experiences" and stated that $10 cash would be given for 90 minutes of their time. For the focus groups, overrecruiting was necessary to
Table 1
Matrix of Moviegoers (Nonstudents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequent Moviegoers* (43 total)</th>
<th>Younger Moviegoers* (50 total)</th>
<th>Older Moviegoers* (49 total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quadrant 1 (20 total)</td>
<td>2 focus groups</td>
<td>2 focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 informants</td>
<td>7 informants</td>
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<td>7 informants</td>
<td>10 informants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8 depth interviews</td>
<td>6 depth interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrequent Moviegoers* (56 total)</td>
<td>Quadrant 2 (30 total)</td>
<td>Quadrant 4 (26 total)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 focus groups</td>
<td>2 focus groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13 informants</td>
<td>7 informants</td>
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<td>11 informants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8 depth interviews</td>
<td>8 depth interviews</td>
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NOTE:
*Younger moviegoers were 18 to 21 years of age, a segment of Generation X (18 to 29 years of age).
*Older moviegoers were 35 to 48 years of age, a segment of the Baby Boomer generation (35 to 49 years of age).
*Infrequent moviegoers had gone to a movie at a theater one or more times a month in the past year.
*Frequent moviegoers had gone to a movie at a theater less than one time a month in the past year.

cover for cancellations and no shows (Stewart and Shamsaani 1990). To minimize the possibility of self-selection bias due to the volunteer sampling process, we made efforts to recruit informants from a variety of socioeconomic, educational, and occupational backgrounds.

A carefully constructed but flexible interview guide was used (Fielding 1993; Merton, Finke and Rendall 1990; Seidman 1991). Though the interviews were unstructured, the interview guide provided an important general framework for the conversation (Greenbaum 1988; Patton 1990). The guide consisted of open-ended questions on first brand-prop-related experiences, other noteworthy brand-prop-related experiences, experiences talking about brand props, brand prop influences, and experiences with brand props in mass media contexts besides movies. Probes were used to encourage elaboration (Lindlof 1995) and the sequencing of questioning was determined by each interview situation.

The focus group interviews were unstructured and primarily self-managed; the depth interviews also were unstructured (Morgan 1988). The interviews took the form of informal converses with friends in which empathy, trust, and understanding were shared (Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989). Thus, the researcher was able to experience the experiences of the informants to gather everyday knowledge (Calder 1977; Kincheloe 1991).

The data collection process involved listening, observing, occasional notetaking, and audiotaping (Lindlof 1995). A research assistant also listened attentively and noted nonverbal communication and group dynamics. Each focus group and depth interview lasted from 80 to 90 minutes, and upon completion the informants were "debriefed" (i.e., told that the topic of the study was specifically brands in movies, asked whether they had any questions or comments, and given an opportunity to discuss their reactions to the interviewing process).

A total of eight focus groups and 30 individual depth interviews were conducted. We made a deliberate attempt to balance the number and gender of participants in the focus group quadrants as well as in the depth interviews. Two groups (of five and seven) of younger frequent moviegoers, two groups (of 13 and 9) of younger infrequent moviegoers, two groups (of seven and 10) of older frequent moviegoers, and two groups (of seven and 11) of older infrequent moviegoers resulted in a total of 69 focus group participants. The 30 interviews consisted of eight interviews with younger frequent moviegoers, eight interviews with younger infrequent moviegoers, six interviews with older frequent moviegoers, and eight interviews with older infrequent moviegoers. A total of 99 different informants participated in the study.

In gender, the participants were divided almost evenly: 49 were women and 50 were men. They held a variety of occupations (e.g., attorney, architect, bank tellers, chefs, child care workers, chiropractors, contractors, dentist, homemakers, insurance agents, nurses, restaurant managers and workers, retail salespeople, schoolteachers, secretaries, singers, writers, veterinarian).
We acknowledge the problem of external validity associated with our informant recruitment. As with most, if not all, qualitative research, generalizability is sacrificed when probability techniques are not used to select random samples of informants from populations of interest. The same problem is inherent in all research, be it qualitative or quantitative, that relies on nonprobability sampling techniques such as convenience, snowball, and quota sampling.

Though not generalizable in the strictest sense of sampling theory (i.e., statistically, projectable to national or local populations of moviegoers), our results are reasonable and suggestive indicators of the studied social phenomena—moviegoers' experiences with and interpretations of brands placed in movies. Our use of multiple methods and emergent design and analysis minimizes, but certainly does not eliminate, idiosyncrasies in the findings. By intentionally sampling different age groups and moviegoing frequency groups for theoretically relevant diversity (Firestone 1993), we identified and examined broad patterns across a wide range of cases. Hence, our findings present grounded "thick description" of the informants' accounts that have applicability to related social conditions (Firestone 1993) and extended relevance to broader cultural meanings (Spriggle 1994).

We do not claim that our results are generalizable in the tradition of probability-based survey work; however, they meet the standards applied to work from the qualitative paradigm. The findings meet the criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985) because our research approach satisfies the standards of credibility (the subjects are adequately described and identified), transferability (multiple methods and cases were used to increase applicability to other contexts), dependability (we account for conditional changes in the studied subject and in the research design), and confirmability (results are reproducible to a certain extent by another researcher). We stress that our results are meant to be suggestive, not conclusive, and should be considered accordingly.

Analysis of Interview Accounts

Data collection, coding, and analysis were simultaneous throughout the study as required by the grounded theory approach (Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1990). The first author moderated all focus groups and conducted all depth interviews. The ongoing analysis process included taking field notes, debriefing, transcribing, coding, memoing, and keeping a reflective journal while asking questions and making constant comparisons between instances in the data, across quadrants, and between methods (Glaser 1978). All comparisons aimed to strengthen or change the central analytic framework developed previously by DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer (1994). By continually comparing as many differences and similarities of specific instances in the data as possible, we generated concepts, categories, properties, and their interrelationships (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Taylor and Bogdan 1984). After each focus group, the moderator and assistant held an audiotaped debriefing meeting in which they discussed logistics, informant profiles, and group dynamics. After each depth interview, the interviewer immediately completed written field notes that included an informant profile, details of interpersonal interaction, and reflective remarks (Erlandson et al. 1993).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim in their entirety, yielding 298 pages of focus group transcripts and 708 pages of depth interview transcripts for a total of 1006 pages of data. The data were coded in an interactive process that involved three levels: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990). One copy of the entire set of transcripts was coded but left intact so the researchers could refer to data in the context of entire interviews.

During the open coding phase each transcript was examined line by line for the occurrence of categories. Next, the researchers taped the coded information onto index cards, color-coded according to quadrant (Miles and Huberman 1984). The resulting 1580 data cards were then sorted into stacks representing the emerging categories. Comparisons and contrasts between the sample quadrants were made by simply looking at the different colors of the cards. During the axial coding phase the cards were reviewed for common themes and then sorted; subcategories emerged and were linked to other categories, and relationships between categories were developed (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The selective coding stage involved studying the data on each of the cards line by line and marking words and phrases that were particularly relevant for strengthening and refining the emerging interpretation. Through the entire process, analytic memos of patterns and emerging themes were created, sorted, and arranged to construct the study's results (Miles and Huberman 1984).

To verify the emerging concepts and themes and our interpretation of informant accounts, two veracity checks were performed. As an internal check, the reflective journal entries were reread, the data cards were reviewed, and the written results were read carefully by a graduate student trained in the qualitative research paradigm. As an external check,
some of the informants were mailed the written results and asked to read and respond to the accuracy of our written account of moviegoers’ experiences and interpretations of brands in movies. Feedback from both checks substantiated the accuracy of the results.

Results and Discussion

Constant comparative analysis of the first-person accounts uncovered three themes related to movie centrality and four themes related to consumption-specific aspects of everyday life. The results are reported in relation to the themes of the DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer (1994) study and by the experiences and interpretations represented by the four quadrants of moviegoers (younger frequent, younger infrequent, older frequent, and older infrequent).

Themes of Movie Centrality

The three interrelated themes uncovered by DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer (1994) among college students—appreciating realism, noticing the familiar, and relating to characters—emerged from the analysis, suggesting that the concepts are related consistently to moviegoers’ interpretations of brands placed in films, regardless of the respondents’ background differences. Greater distinctions in experiences and interpretations emerged between older frequent and infrequent moviegoers than between younger frequent and infrequent moviegoers for the themes. However, more common denominators in experiences and interpretations than differences were found.

Appreciating Realism. To informants in both studies, brand props were significant because they add realism to the stylistic aspects of movie scenery. Gretchen, an older frequent moviegoer, provided the following observation:

...I’m glad it’s [brand props] there you know, for the realism of the movie. I think it makes the movie more realistic...when we’re going to movies we’re trying to put ourselves in the movies. We just want to become absorbed in the movie and it makes it more realistic...if you don’t have too many. [Gretchen, older, age 48, hospital emergency room registrar, frequent, focus group]

Byron, a younger frequent moviegoer echoed Gretchen’s opinion:

...I think it’s good that they’re [brands are] there. I mean because it’s realistic and it’s things that I deal with everyday or if you use you know...I think it’s good. It just adds and it’s more realistic. [Byron, younger, age 21, unemployed, frequent, depth interview]

Elaine, an older infrequent moviegoer, said:

...brands make the costume more identifiable...it’s something that you think ought to be there to make it look like you would really find it in life then. I guess there’s sort of a checklist on what kinds of things you would find at a Kinko’s copy place or what kinds of things you find at a dry cleaners and they’re familiar and so those things are placed in the scene and it helps you identify where you are. [Elaine, older, age 40, veterinarian, infrequent, depth interview]

Other participants voiced similar opinions about brand props: “they help to preserve the integrity of a movie with regard to realism and projecting yourself into that movie”; “it lends an air of reality to it...an air of authenticity.”

Regardless of age or movie-going frequency, informants were impressed when brands were used “appropriately” and judged to be “part of the story,” “naturalistic,” “blended into what’s going on,” “the way normally used,” and “woven in a little bit.” Such placements were interpreted as “props,” “symbols,” and “just part of the movie.”

Traveling in time: Brand props were judged to add authenticity to movies when associated with a particular setting, time period, or context. A comment from Cliff, a younger infrequent moviegoer, makes the point:

...in Forrest Gump. I remember...a bunch of old fashioned...beers and stuff I remember there because it’s back in the sixties and they had all the old fashioned Pabst Blue Ribbon and Schlitz and Stroh and stuff and I liked that a lot because this is a historical type movie and then they had to go back and bring alive all these old beers...with the old beer signs and the old beer and stuff and I thought it was really neat. They had products that didn’t exist. Some of them still do exist but they’re not on as big of a level. But they had to be brought back because of the historical context.... [Cliff, younger, age 21, video arcade manager, infrequent, depth interview]

Older moviegoers were especially talkative about “old brands,” nostalgia, and the resurrection of old times and settings. Arthur, an older frequent moviegoer, provided the following observation:

...Driving Miss Daisy...When you think of the trouble it took to make those scenes where all the cars were from the fifties. There were no foreign cars. There were all American cars. It’s very noticeable. They’re not trying to sell those cars obviously...it was historically accurate. And I was very aware, “Oh, there’s a sixty-three Plymouth”...it was real obvious but it fit. It was historically
right...to go to the trouble to buy hundreds of ears
to do all of that...it sort of really brings it to life
again and...it's a neat experience like you've back
in the fifties again. (Arthur, older, age 44, electrical
supply company owner, frequent, focus group)

Feeling Interrupted: Moviegoers in both studies
diagnosed excessive or inappropriate brand props that
clashed with their expectations of movie scenery.
Consensus across all quadrants emerged that
excessiveness and inappropriateness included
constant repetition of a brand, brands placed in
inappropriate settings (i.e., the brand "didn't need to
be there," was "unexpected," and "not natural"), and
inappropriate camera techniques (i.e., "zoomed in,
"closeups on the name," and "camera sort of locks on
it"). The general opinion was that such "obscene
plugs," detracted from movie realism, were associated
with "promotion intent," and cheapened movies and
the moviegoing experience. Moviegoers did not like
"being sold" and some described were "tacky," " tame,"
and "insulting." One participant said sarcastically,
"What do they expect us to think—that it's just...part
of the natural movie...did they expect us to be that
ignorant?" Evan, an older infrequent moviegoer, stated.

I give a lot more integrity to a movie if I see brand
names that make sense in the context of what I
would expect in real life and not shoved in my face.
(Evan, older, age 48, pottery artist, infrequent, depth
interview)

Ned, one of the harshest movie critics, commented:

I remember the annoyance better than I remem-
ber the product...Particularly if the camera pauses.
If it's not an incidental glance...punning across the
screen and we pause momentarily here and then
that wakes me up from being somewhere else in a
story and I say, "Here I am in a damn commercial
that I paid six bucks to see." It doesn't bother me
that they're there. It bothers me when it becomes a
featured item in a scene. (Ned, older, age 44, school
teacher, frequent, focus group)

Others added that they appreciated brand props as
long as "they don't go overboard," "kept toned down,"
and "don't get out of hand."

Informants in both studies, regardless of age or
moviegoing frequency, also felt irritated and insulted
by generic product props that were judged to interfere
with movie realism and to interrupt the moviegoing
experience. Though informants in all quadrants
reported noticing generic products in movies, the older
moviegoers provided the most frequent and elaborate
evidence (e.g., the movie Jaws). They recalled
times in the past when movies tended to have generic
rather than branded products.

Whether they judged them to be excessive,
inappropriate, or unrealistic, moviegoers were aware
of the persuasive intent of brand props. As in the
1994 study, the informants considered themselves
immune to the persuasive power of brands
encountered in films; they believed that the
appearance of brand props in movies is neither
deceptive, manipulative, nor harmful. For example,
some informants said, "I don't feel that I'm being
taken advantage of," "it's not degrading," "I don't
think it's any kind of brainwashing," "I think it's
harmless," and "I don't think there's anything ethically
wrong with it."

Noticing the Familiar. In both studies, regardless
of age or moviegoing frequency, moviegoers were
particularly attuned to familiar branded products and
services that they themselves had previously
purchased and consumed in their everyday lives. The
following comments provide examples of shared
experiences with familiar brands:

...in the movie A Christmas Story I remember my
mother saying, "I remember the soap that they used" be-
because they used the brand names that were big
back then in the kitchen and she pointed that out to
me and she said, "I remember all those kinds of
soap...the kind of soap that the kid put in his mouth
and the dishwashing soap..." [Maggie, older, age 38,
restaurant manager, frequent, focus group]

Across all quadrants, familiarity and prior
experiences with brand props enhanced movie
enjoyment for the informants. Amber, an older
frequent moviegoer, said:

It's almost a friendly feeling of recognition...that
you can relate to immediately—especially if it's a
well-known thing but it's almost a friendly likeable
feeling. You don't have to...you think that's a fun
or amusing or something but the recognition
factor...reinforces a good feeling for the character,
or for the movie, or the situation... [Amber, older,
age 48, writer, frequent, focus group]

With or without a logo, a brand's commercial,
advertisement, jingle, or slogan was instantly
recognizable to informants familiar with a company's
past advertising. Most previous advertising exposures
mentioned by the informants were outdoor billboards
and TV commercials that appeared in scenes. Valerie,
an older infrequent moviegoer, provided an interesting
eexample of how familiar brands appear in movies:

...the movie Forrest Gump. When they talk about
when he bought into that company with the fruit
on the...logo. He was talking about Apple com-
puter. He didn't have to say the words. But every-
body was kinda going [whispers] "Apple,
apple...talking about that piece of fruit on the top of the stationary. That little machine that you punch things in. Everybody was going, "Apple, apple." They advertised it and really didn't even have to say the words! [Valerie, older, age 43, child care provider, infrequent, focus group]

Some of the younger informants indicated that noticing familiar brands gave them a sense of reassurance that fostered a relaxed movie-viewing experience. Cliff, a younger infrequent moviegoer, observed:

...you recognize something that you used before or some product that you enjoy or whatever. When you see that on the screen it makes you more comfortable or more relaxed...if anything it makes the viewer more comfortable with it. [Cliff, younger, age 21, video arcade manager, depth interview]

Jasmine, another young infrequent moviegoer, commented:

...it's significant because...it makes you feel a part of something because you're not the only one doing it...drinking it, eating it, wearing it...I guess it's kind of American. It makes you feel at home. It makes you feel good to sit in the movies and they eat something that you eat or drink something that you drink—makes for more realistic characters...it makes the movies seem more true to heart when they do stuff like that. When they eat an M&M or...just put a microwave dinner in the microwave because you do that, people do that and I notice it..."That's that weird, they do that in the movies...I thought I was the only one making microwave dinners everyday." [Jasmine, younger, age 20, bank teller, infrequent, depth interview]

As in the 1994 study, informants indicated that the relationship with characters strengthened, and the involvement in and enjoyment of the movie increased, when they noticed "their brands" being used by a movie character, or even featured in a scene. The association between brand familiarity and character identification is supportive and interrelated with the third major theme that emerged in our study, relating to characters.

Relating to Characters. To moviegoers in both studies, regardless of age and movie-going frequency, brand placement was significant in that it provided relevant information about the character's personality, lifestyle, and role in the movie plot (i.e., "it can help identify with a character," "it told something about his character," and "it's part of the character"). In addition to clarifying or strengthening perception of characters, brand placement enabled informants to empathize with and relate to characters and further involve them in the movie. Zach observed:

...in some ways you become one of the characters on stage or you sort of involve yourself vicariously so you can sort of see the world through their eyes hopefully and maybe come away learning from them... [Zach, older, age 40, architect, frequent, depth interview]

Samantha, a younger frequent moviegoer, provided a similar observation:

...noticing brands...makes you more involved in a way because you know something about it and you know a little bit more about what they're doing and it makes them kind of down to earth if a movie star does something that normal people do...just makes you more comfortable I think and makes you feel in there with it. Because I mean...when I watch a movie I like to actually get into it and act out the characters in your mind and it just makes it easier to do that if you can relate with them. [Samantha, younger, age 19, emergency medical technician, frequent, focus group]

Character association with branded props not only enhanced the entertainment value of movies, but also contributed to moviegoers' own self-perception. Meridith, an older frequent moviegoer, provided an example:

...in The Paper...Michael Keaton...drinks like twelve Cokes a day so it's just nonstop. He starts in the morning and you know, just like battery acid and it's just like all day long and I guess when I first saw it I sort of laughed because I drink Cokes in the morning instead of coffee so somebody sort of made that association with me you know like, "Oh, it's like Meridith!" you know, so that really stuck out and people would comment that he was a Cokeaholic. [Meridith, older, age 36, choir director, frequent, focus group]

Being Influenced by Movie Characters: As in the 1994 study, character usage of particular brands extended into the marketplace to influence brand images. Alvin, a younger infrequent moviegoer, admitted:

I like Baby Ruth because it was in The Goonies...I always think of that when I eat them for some reason...it makes me think of Sloth. [Alvin, younger, age 21, infrequent, focus group]

Some informants, especially the younger ones, reported that they often admired movie stars. Hence, when brands were incorporated into the movie star's lifestyle, they would "associate with something that's enviable" and "aspired to have the same brand as the movie star." Occasionally informants reported experiences when they or persons they knew were influenced to buy new products or switch brands to be more like their movie star "heroes." Two examples of positive associations among props, characters, and brand trial are provided in the following comments.

When you see a brand in a movie you usually associate it with that character...In When Harry
Met Sally Billy Crystal said, "Here I am eating Mallomars. The world's greatest cookies" and I had never had a Mallomar in my life and...I had to have a Mallomar. I had to see what it was...I did buy them and they are pretty good cookies but they don't sell them much here in the South and it took a long time before I found them and I found them and I bought, "Mallomars!!!" I was so excited...about something new that I had never tried. But I associate Mallomars now with Harry in When Harry Met Sally and I always think of Billy Crystal when I have that.... [Maggie, older, age 36, restaurant manager, frequent, focus group]

...the movie Stand By Me...the little fat kid says, "Pee is my favorite" or something like that and so for evermore after that I see Pee now and I go, "I want one of those"...I tried them because I just kept wondering...It turned out when I had asked it was something that had been around for a long time that I had never seen. There was one thing though of credibility in that incident because you've got a little kid whose a little overweight. He's a kid you know...even though I know it's a movie, you don't think of him as being duplicisous...obviously he likes sweets so you believe that so you go, "Gosh, that must be really good." [Sahrina, older, age 42, writer, infrequent, focus group]

Reginald, an older infrequent moviegoer, provided the following brand switching experience.

We were at a bar once and that's how I found out it was Gordon gin in African Queen. We were sitting there and all of the sudden the guy was like, "Let me have Gordon gin" and I was like, "Wow you changed, man from Tanqueray to Gordon!" "Hey man, Bogie drank it!" And today he still drinks Gordon gin. He claims it's the best ever because Bogart was his hero and Bogie drank Gordon gin and I'm like, "Wow" and any time we see African Queen he says, "See there!"...It really changed that guy's whole drinking habits! [Reginald, older, age 37, hospital operating room technician, infrequent, focus group]

Elaine, another older infrequent moviegoer, provided an especially articulate interpretation of character usage influence.

...it makes it an option, more of an option that you might try something that you didn't before if you saw it linked with somebody you liked in the same way that you use the brands that your mother used...It may help to make it an option...if I saw successful results or linked it with some positive or some personality that I identify and relate to positively. [Elaine, older, age 40, infrequent, veterinarian, depth interview]

Themes of Consumption-Specific Relevance

Four new themes emerged in the study, each of which is relevant to larger, everyday aspects of moviegoers' consumer behavior. Those themes—tools for purchasing decisions, tools for identity and aspirations, change and discomfort, and belonging and security—represent interpretations that not only are linked to movie-specific aspects of brand prop exposure, but also extend beyond the moviewatching experience to consumption-specific aspects of everyday life. Whereas consensus was generally found across the four informant quadrants on themes of movie centrality, more obvious differences were uncovered among the quadrants on themes of consumption-specific relevance.

Tools for Purchasing Decisions. To most of the informants, brand placements were associated with consumption patterns and decision making. Interpreted apart from the movie itself, brand props were thought to perform such everyday marketing-related functions as reinforcing consumer confidence, reducing cognitive dissonance, and standing as symbols of distrust. In the context of everyday life, brand props were judged significant because they assist in providing useful information for making or reinforcing purchased-related choices, even though their promotion intent was acknowledged by the informants (i.e., "product identification," "name recognition," "trying to make it really familiar," "further ingrain it into your mind," "gets the name out," and "reminding me that these products are actually out there"). Sonny, a contractor who is an older infrequent moviegoer, stated, "...It helps with name recognition. If we see something over and over and over you might just reach out and you know, select that item..." Others expressed similar interpretations.

...brand recognition...if you see something in a movie and then you're at the grocery store. If you recognize the name then you're probably more likely to buy it than its competitor because the name stands out.... [Chad, younger, age 21, electronics salesperson, frequent, focus group]

...It's like I can walk into a grocery store and see a product and recognize it from the movie that I saw it in so I do think it does help with product recognition and you get it. It's put in your head what kind of satisfaction that will bring you and that might influence your buying because the person in the movie seemed to enjoy it and you've got the visual effect of them seeming to enjoy it.... [Hanna, younger, age 20, unemployed, frequent, focus group]
...Chances are if you've heard of something that's been widely advertised or promoted, you would go with it. You would be more inclined to go with that brand because you know, you've heard of it...You can sort of put some trust in it...If it's a product that you've heard of before you probably would tend to go with that first so by seeing it in a movie, it does, I think, have some effect...[Palmer, younger, age 21, cook, infrequent, focus group]

Participants also shared specific experiences.

...I think it was Alien, the first Alien where someone is at a table and pulls out a pencil...a mechanical drawing pencil and it was a real smooth design, very clean and I found out about that and got that after that but I just happened to see it there...You could only get it in a few places in major cities like Atlanta, Memphis, New York, Chicago, LA. Places like that. [Zach, older, age 40], architect, frequent, depth interview]

I own the same type of automobile that was used in Smokey and the Bandit...I bought the car later but it was like two years later...It was a Pontiac Trans-Am Firebird. Same car that I've had for seventeen years...I remember after watching that movie we walked out of the movie theater and looked at each other and said, "Does that make you want to buy a Trans-Am or what?"...and the year that that movie came out, '76, they sold more Trans-Am Firebirds than any previous year before! I saw that...in an actual magazine where it was showing the years of cars for like you know, 1970 all the way up to '78 when I bought mine. [Kurt, older, age 42, movie theater manager, frequent, depth interview]

In particular, older infrequent moviegoers expressed distrust of brands placed in movies. They tended to interpret brand props more in relation to their own consumption experiences and apart from viewing experiences and interpretations than younger or frequent moviegoers. Elaine explained:

...it's a...marketing tool to put products before me in a positive light usually or because of their symbolic meaning too that I'll be reminded of them the next time I make a purchase somehow. I know it is relevant in a marketing sense because I know it happens by design sometimes. I may be suspicious of it, or not necessarily believe everything that I see, or not trust it, or wonder what the marketer was trying to accomplish by trying to get that into the scene so I'm aware of it and either have some response to it apart from whatever is going on in the movie...[Elaine, older, age 40, veterinarian, infrequent, depth interview]

Zoe, a local musician who is an older infrequent moviegoer, stated, "I think it really reflects something real basic about our culture that our main purpose is not to be human beings moved by a story and characters but rather to be urged to be consumers..." Informants in the other quadrants were more positive about brand placements and their relationship to consumption. For example, Chad, a retail salesperson who is a younger frequent moviegoer, elaborated, "...there are a lot of products that we're a lot more aware of because of it. Even if they're not products that we buy we at least know what they are and probably where to get them."

Tools for Identity and Aspirations. The informants judged brand props as tools that allow the reliving of past (nostalgia) events and the vicarious experience of living others' experiences. As such, brand placements were part and parcel of the everyday aspects of social experience, enabling individuals to compare their consumption worlds with those depicted in movies. Arthur, for example, reflected on his experience.

...Raidman the movie with Dustin Hoffman and the fifty-three Buick convertible. I remember that being such an integral part of that movie but I also had an uncle who had a car very much like that so it was sort of reminiscent. I remember talking to people who had gone to see the movie about that. [Arthur, older, age 44, electrical supply store owner, frequent, focus group]

Paul and Trina provided related accounts.

...I have a friend who was just Gap queen. She worked at The Gap and after Reality Bites she just thought that was the greatest thing that they had. The Gap in the movie and she just went on and on, 'Oh, I know how to fold like that! You actually have to learn' and blah, blah, blah. I mean she was, she was just so excited that The Gap was in that movie and we had many conversations about that...[Paul, younger, age 20, clerk, infrequent, focus group]

...I noticed that Lifesaver drink. I had just heard about it...It tastes like Kool-Aid but it's not carbonated. It just has like the color stripes around it like a Lifesaver package...You can get it at the gas station. It's fruit flavored...I can't remember if it was on a TV show or a movie but I was like "Woah, there's that Lifesaver drink?" Because my friend had just gotten one earlier that day at the gas station I used to work at...I associated it with just because I was like, "Woah," you know, 'That's the new thing'...[Trina, younger, age 19, homemaker, frequent, depth interview]

Some informants indicated that such social comparison could be negative or problematic. Overall we found no difference across quadrants for that finding. For example, Byron, an unemployed 21-year-
old frequent moviegoer, said, "...it makes me feel bad but it makes me want that you know. It depresses me a lot of the time when I can't get it..." Leslie, an unemployed younger infrequent moviegoer, said, "...In the technology field there are all these fantastical situations where people can actually afford stuff like that and it will hit the rest of the world five years later but it will be enough to make people wonder and wish..." Those feelings are further elaborated in the expressions of two other informants, Kenneth and Angie.

...guys always talk about the cars that are in the movie. Like if they see a really nice Porche. I mean I don't know about you but I love Lamborghinis and I've seen a Lamborghini in a movie and I'm still striving towards buying that Lamborghini..." (Kenneth, younger, age 21, retail salesperson, infrequent, focus group)

...It makes me want things that I don't have...That I can't afford. In movies you'll see the way people live that you know is beyond your means...brand placement may make the hill even steeper to climb for people that are not already well-established. One of the myths in America which is great—sometimes is true but I don't think it's as true as people think. You can go from rags to riches. I don't think it's as easy as it used to be..." (Angie, older, age 37, attorney, frequent, depth interview)

Brands in movies also were seen as significant in that they enable further understanding and appreciation of the informants' social worlds. Brand props were judged to provide information beyond the specifics of the viewing experience, including a measure of how infrequent worlds compare with the world featured in movies, irrespective of arguments about realism and fantasy. Exposure to previously purchased brands was judged to validate and reinforce identities, consumer decision making, and purchasing patterns. Elaine shared the following interpretation.

...seeing brands in those kinds of presentations validates my existence. I recognize it. Other people out there in the world use the same things that I do. Have the same stuff in their house. Have the same stuff in their car. Wear the same things. So it kind of makes me feel like I'm like them or not like them. These things are mainstream or not mainstream. Where I make a conscious decision not to have those, I recognize that I'm not like many people from my culture who would have things like that..." (Elaine, older, age 45, veterinarian, infrequent, depth interview)

Change and Discomfort. To the older informants, brand props represented signs of cultural change, emotional discomfort, and feelings of concern. Many in the older quadrants reported remembering in their lifetime when movies generally did not have actual brand names placed in the context. To them, brands in movies were associated with the changing nature of everyday life, including the movieviewing experience—from the theater being a "sacred" atmosphere to being a less sacred, more commercial place. More accustomed to a brand-free experience than their younger counterparts, older informants associated brand props with feelings of insecurity, frustration, and fear of change. They interpreted encountered brands as threats to, infringements on, and pollutants of the sacredness of the viewing experience. For example:

...it just seemed that the people who made the movies back in the olden days were really trying to keep things a little purer...They were trying to keep those commercial considerations out of it...The last ten or fifteen years it just seems that everytime somebody has a drink or something the label is pointing at you and you can recognize what it is. (Oliver, older, age 40, tennis coach, frequent, depth interview)

...you can't go to the movies anymore without being confronted with this advertising and more and more it's very obvious that a product has paid a lot of money to get their name in the film. And I think it wasn't so forced in the past because they didn't pay so much money but now they can say, "Hey, we paid you guys a lot of money, you better make sure our product is really out there." (Wesley, older, age 40, schoolteacher, frequent, focus group)

...I feel like in the older films—this may be some sort of nostalgia thing—I don't think it was used that much. I think they pretty much kept to the story and I think now it sort of creeps in now and then or whenever it can..." (Ezra, older, age 40, architect, frequent, depth interview)

The older participants reported that they were still occasionally "surprised" or "shocked" to see brands in movies because they were "not expected." To them, brand props were still relatively novel or unique. Some remarked that "they used to hide" or "camouflage" the brands because "it was taboo" for brands to appear in movies. They generally reported that "all of the sudden" they noticed a lot of brands in movies. The older informants said that when they noticed brands in movies today, they often had the lingering mindset of "they weren't supposed to do that." Sylvia clearly articulated the difference between the older and younger quadrants.

...I think we notice it more, too, because we're the age that we are. We've come through the time when movies didn't do that and I think it's more noticeable to us. I don't think the kids think a
thing about it because they're so inundated with television and commercials and all that kind of stuff but it jars us almost. But we're going to get used to it real fast I believe because its happening so much I think we're going to eventually just tune it out. (Sylvia, older, age 39, media producer and director, infrequent, focus group)

For example, Natalie stated:

I think for me it's more a danger signal. It kind of started infiltrating the movies and I think the thing I'd worry about most is it will get more prevalent and we'll see brands all over the place and it will turn into a big long advertisement. Right now it doesn't bother me that much because it's pretty small but if it accelerates and infiltrates I would be disappointed. I mean you need to have some oasis where you can pay a little more and go watch something that's a little more artistic. (Natalie, older, age 56, professor, frequent, focus group)

Of the four quadrants, the older moviegoers associated brand props with manipulative power and negative consequences for the viewing public, especially children. For example:

I don't know what movie it was but something my child saw and Taco Bell was on there and it was like that's all we eat is Taco Bell because it was on this movie. You should run for the border and all these things because that particular fast food place was in this movie so it must be good therefore we should eat it. I mean constantly... (Cassandre, older, age 46, office manager, infrequent, focus group)

...Boys In The Hood. Look what they started. Chaos on starter jackets. I mean kids were going around killing because this was in the movie one day. And yet it was ninety degrees weather and Boys In The Hood came out in the summer. You look around and you look at these kids out there with big jackets on walking the streets. I mean like what's going on? (Reginald, older, age 37, hospital operating room technician, infrequent, focus group)

That movin Above The Rim... they had these really neat Nike tennis shoes and after (my son) watched this, this is all he's talked about is these green and white and black Nike tennis shoes. "Mom, I've got to have them. It's like, 'Well, ah, I don't know' and I go by myself you know, when I get a chance to check the price out. We're talking about a hundred dollar shoes and I'm looking at this kid going, 'Yeah, right, sure. We're going to buy you a pair of tennis shoes that you're going to wear for two or three months, your feet is going to outgrow them and they've still got good soles in the bottom.' (Ginger, older, age 38, electronics salesperson, frequent, depth interview)

...brand placement makes a big deal of brands...has just added, increased the hassle factor because kids ask you all the time, "I want this, want this..." Not! Um, more pulls and tugs so it's annoyance, it's hassle. (Hugh, older, age 68, administrator, infrequent, focus group)

...years ago like Humphrey Bogart and all the classics. It was one consecutive style. It was commonly the khakis, the white shirts, the nice tie...It's the shift of greed. Where one time we were just satisfied. It didn't matter how much money you had. You still had a suit and a nice hat, and a pair of shoes. Now it's branded. You got to have a certain style shoes, a certain jacket that says certain things, you know. It's just words. Where once it didn't matter. Khaki was a pair of khakis, you know. Now, they're just sending it out there and they're causing chaos among not just kids—even adults. (Reginald, older, age 37, hospital operating room technician, infrequent, focus group)

Belonging and Security. To the younger informants, brand props were associated with an invitation to cultural belonging and feelings of emotional security. Such moviegoers had grown up with brands in movies and were accustomed to the practice. They reported that when a brand is present in a movie, they "just take it for granted" and "overlook it because it's so prevalent." As part of all marketing communications, brand props were described as a "constant barrage" and "just a rumble in the background." In addition to brands in movies, these younger people had grown up with much more marketing and advertising in general. Therefore they expected to encounter brands; as one younger moviegoer put it, "...that's just something that we accept as part of you know, present day in movies..." Others elaborated:

...You grow up and you start watching TV and you start going to movies and you grow up watching this stuff day in, day out and you become so accustomed to it it doesn't register. You don't sit there and consciously pick it out and notice it. You lose that... (Marshall, younger, age 21, glass blower, frequent, focus group)

...it's a better place to advertise. Everything else has gotten kind of used up, you know, everybody is used to seeing advertisements during TV or sporting events...other places like that...In the movie it's something new, something fresh, you know, everybody likes new things...It doesn't really seem new because it seems like it's always been there... (Vinny, younger, age 18, retail salesperson, frequent, depth interview)

In their view, brands in movies strengthened and fostered the sharing of experiences between
moviemakers and characters, between moviemakers and other moviemakers, and between moviemakers and other elements of society (i.e., reference groups, subcultures, and American culture in general). To them, brand props take on significance, beyond the context of a particular movie, because they provide a common bond for self- and group identification. For example:

Forrest Gump Bubba Gump shrimp. Everybody talks about Bubba Gump. It’s just funny the way the whole situation came about in the movie. It’s just funny. I mean, people talk a lot about Forrest Gump. That’s a really good movie. People really, really liked that movie. It’s an interesting thing to talk about...Bubba Gump shrimp and you know, “Life’s a box of chocolates” stuff like that. “Have you seen Forrest Gump yet? Oh, yeah, blah, blah, blah, Bubba Gump shrimp.” [Trina, younger, age 19, homemaker, frequent, depth interview]

...I think people notice it in the movies and they’ll go out and talk about it because you’ll talk about the movie and things will start rolling and you’ll talk about everything—every little point. You just keep rehashing it and you say it over and over again...More people are seeing it and you talk more about a movie than you do anything else. ...[Jasmine, younger, age 20, bank teller, infrequent, depth interview]

Leslie, another younger infrequent moviemaker, stated that brand placement is “just a bit of what our country is about. It’s all so commercial!” Trina echoed:

...I mean this is still America. You can sell out to anybody if you want to and that’s just how America is, you know. That’s what America is all about, you know. Selling out. Getting money...[Trina, younger, age 19, homemaker, frequent, depth interview]

Gene, a 20-year-old infrequent moviemaker, said, “That’s our society. Our society is brands.”

Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Focus groups and depth interviews were conducted to provide further understanding of how moviemakers’ experiences with brand props are interpreted in relation to movies, moviewatching, and social experience. The collected first-person accounts of nonstudent informants are significant in two ways: (1) they validate, refine, and extend the previously developed conceptual framework used in the DeLorme, Reid and Zimmer (1994) focus group study of college student moviemakers and (2) they speak directly to the question of brand placement influence on the movie audience. Our findings, though not conclusive, are suggestive in that they provide a glimpse of how brand props are interpreted and experienced by a cross-section of moviemakers.

The three themes—appreciating realism, noticing the familiar, and relating to characters—uncovered in the 1994 study, emerged again in the accounts provided by nonstudent moviemakers. The themes were found consistently related to informants’ experiences with and interpretations of brand props in movies regardless of the informant’s age (younger/older moviemaker) or moviewatching frequency (frequent/infrequent moviemaker). The emergence of the three themes gives further credence to the notion that they are themes of interpretive centrality to moviemakers’ processing of brands encountered in movies.

Discovery of the four consumption-specific themes—tools for purchasing decisions, tools for identity and aspirations, changes and discomfort, and belonging and security—advances the 1994 findings. Their emergence suggests that moviemakers have interpretive experiences with encountered brand props that extend beyond movie-specific experiences and contexts to consumption-specific situations. The consumption-specific themes, unlike their more movie-specific thematic counterparts, were discovered to vary in interpretive relevance by informant age in particular.

To the older informants, brand props were associated with change in the moviewatching experience; they were associated with states of resistance, discomfort, and concern. To the younger moviemakers, brands in movies were considered part of the moviewatching experience; they were expected and accepted. Encountered brands were not seen as symbols of change by younger moviemakers; they were associated with belonging, comfort, and security.

The interpretive differences are possibly indicative of different perceptions of commercial and noncommercial enterprises held by the two age groups: to older moviemakers, brands in movies may be seen as representative of a transition or shift in the moviewatching experience from a “sacred” to a commercial event; to younger moviemakers, the distinction between “sacred” and commercial may be nonexistent. That explanation remains to be tested. We offer it as reasonable speculation, based on the often expressed notion that commercial/noncommercial boundaries in American popular culture have continued to blur over time (Kunts, Weber, and Dawley 1996; McAllister 1996; Twitchell 1996), a social trend of which older moviemakers should be more cognizant than younger ones.

Regardless of age or moviewatching frequency, as in the 1994 study, the interviewed moviemakers were active participants in the viewing experience. They
learned by viewing brand props and related that learning to movies (including characters and plots), to
the moviewing experience, and to aspects of their
own everyday lives as consumers. As discovered in 1994,
interpretations of brands in movies, like interpretations
of movies themselves (Blumer 1933; Custen 1980), were
part of moviegoers' constructions of social reality. The
informants talked about how encountered brands were
significant to them in some context of their lives prior to
and apart from moviewing and moviegosc. The finding
of audience activity is consistent with the findings of
other researchers, including Blumer (1933), Carey (1975),
Custen (1980, 1982), and, more recently, Hirschman and
Thompson (1997, p. 45) who make the point:

...interpretations of the media are an intrinsi-
cally social and interactive process in which audi-
ences act as passive consumers of media per-
suasion, but rather as active producers of perceived
meaning (emphasis theirs).

In terms of audience influence, our results convey a
clear and convincing message—though brand props are
deliberately placed in movies to produce persuasive
effects, the question of brand placement effects is not
what brand props do to movie audiences, but what
movie audiences do with them. Significance and
meaning of encountered brand placements are not
simply transmitted in film to moviegoers; rather, they
are interpreted as part of the audience's ongoing
everyday experiences that come to life as a reflection
of moviegoers' past, present, and anticipated experiences.

Consequently, whatever audience structuring or
influence may result from brand placement exposure is
best considered and conceived in relation to how brand
props are placed within the context of movies,
moviewing experiences, and the experiences of the
audience as citizens and consumers. Models of brand
placement that isolate and decontextualize the audience
miss the point—the moviegoer is the final arbiter of
influence, not marketing and movie executives.

The implications of our findings are particularly
relevant to three groups: public policy officials,
practitioners of brand placement, and brand
placement researchers. For public policy officials, the
findings address the questions of deceptive practices;
for practitioners, they provide guidance on the
purposeful use of brand props; for researchers, they
afford recommendations for future research.

Implications for Public Policy and
Practice

Public Policy Implications. Critics label brand
placement a deceptive practice and have called on
public policy officials to regulate or even ban the
placement of brands in movies. Evidence from our
study seemingly contradicts the critics' arguments
and suggests that the charge is groundless.

Criticism of brand placement as a deceptive practice
is based on the premise that the appearance of brand
props in movies has a causal relationship to purchase
behavior. Underpinning the premise is the assumption
that moviegoers are unaware of the persuasive intent
behind placements and are naive about the practice
in general. To critics, moviegoers are passive pawns,
at the mercy of powerful brand symbols served up as
movie content.

Our results convincingly demonstrate that
moviegoers are more sophisticated in their
understanding of the practice of brand placement than
critics would have public policy officials believe. As
captured in the reported accounts, moviegoers are
active interpreters, not passive receptors of
encountered brands. Moviegoers (1) are not uniformly
influenced by brand placements, which suggests that
more important factors (e.g., perceived needs, self-
image, past experiences, contexts, demographics)
mitigate direct purchase effects, and they (2) are very
aware of the persuasive intent of encountered props,
a condition that leads to skepticism and resistance of
persuasive attempts. Moviegoers may allow themselves
certain buying indulgences in some buying situations,
and for varying reasons, but they are not deceived into
buying everything they see in a movie.

When we consider deception and brand placement,
perhaps deceived movie audiences should not be the
focus of concern, at least not adult audiences. Our
results suggest that the greater danger might be un,informed public policy officials who are persuaded
to accept the critics' argument.

Practitioners' Implications. Practitioners of brand
placement, especially advertising agencies, are
becoming ever more involved in the orchestration of
brands in movies (Pardun and McKee 1996). Our
findings afford important insights for the proper role
of brand placement in the marketer's communication mix.

First, the findings suggest that practitioners should
acknowledge the potential long-term nature of brand
placement effects on memory. The majority of
moviegoers in our study noticed and remembered
brand placements and were able to describe a variety
of brand placement examples and experiences without
direct aids to recall. Hence, memory for brand
placements in movies seems to endure. Brand
placement can serve as long-term reminder
advertising. In fact, the moviegoers themselves,
regardless of age or moviegoscry frequency, readily
reported that brand placement can strengthen brand
name recognition and acknowledged that brand
placement could be a contributing factor in long-term
influence. Further, because attitudes toward brands
develop over time, brand placement seems to play a
valuable role in a cumulative process of strengthening
and reinforcing brand attitudes already held. Brand
placement can also create associations that can be an
important part of building a brand’s image—a critical
but time consuming part of a total marketing plan.
Indeed, because the process is long-term, the full effect
of a single, isolated exposure to a brand placement
can be difficult to measure.

Second, our research suggests that practitioners
should closely examine brand placement and its
synergistic relationships with other types of brand
exposures that occur in the consumer environment.
The emergence and evolution of integrated marketing
communications has facilitated conceptual and
operational changes in many advertising functions.
In the case of advertising media planning, IMC has
brought forth the “brand contact” concept. During the
course of their daily lives, consumers are exposed to,
and perceive and process, a continual and wide range
of brand and product information—all of which has
the potential to create, shape, or alter brand
knowledge, beliefs, intentions, and use. Unlike
traditional approaches to media planning that place
emphasis on measured and mass media, the brand
contact concept recognizes that all varieties of
communication, including brand placement, can
contribute to a brand’s image and equity (DeLorme
and Nowak 1997). The younger moviegoers in our
study were quick to acknowledge the integrated and
synergistic nature of marketing communications and
the difficulty in separating one influence from various
other sources. Hence, practitioners should
acknowledge that brands in movies do not stand alone
in a vacuum. Rather, brands should be placed to
complement other techniques holistically in a
particular promotional mix.

Third, our findings highlight the need for
practitioners to monitor the treatment of brands
carefully within the context of the particular film(s)
and to study moviegoers’ experiences and
interpretations of those different conditions. Though
brand props were meaningful to the moviegoers in
our study, meaningfulness was linked to specific
movies and particular experiences rather than to
brands in general. In effect, interpretation of brand
props is conditional. Informants often used the phrase,
“it depends,” when talking about brand props.
Meaningfulness was influenced by several factors,
including the treatment of the brand within a movie,
the significance of the movie itself, and the nature of
the featured brand. Hence, practitioners should pay
closer attention to the manner in which products are
being showcased within the film.

Fourth, our results suggest that moviegoers are not
uniformly influenced by brand props in movies.
Practitioners would be wise to consider individual
differences (e.g., age, self-perception, interests) when
planning to incorporate brands in movies—most
notably, the differences between the “older” (Baby
Boomer) and “younger” (Generation X) moviegoers.
As Generation X youth continue to establish
to themselves as vital consumers in the American
economy, it will become increasingly critical for
marketers to communicate with them successfully
(Gilmartin 1994). Yet, that media-savvy generation
has been described as being more aware, knowledgeable,
and cynical toward traditional advertising than previous generations, thus creating
difficulties for marketers (Donaton 1990; Hornblower
1997; Miller 1993; Schreiber and Lenson 1990). Our
study suggests that brand props in motion pictures
contribute to movie realism and feelings of comfort
and belonging that are valued by Generation X, and
therefore could be a particularly appropriate and
effective communication option for advertisers
targeting that age group.

Fifth, consideration of individual differences is
particularly relevant when domestic movies are
distributed to countries around the world. If
Americans differ in their interpretation of brands in
movies, interpretive variation may be even greater
among foreign audiences. For example, many brands
may mean nothing to foreign audiences; others may be
associated not with just brand-specific consumption,
but also with larger cultural values and lifestyles (e.g.,
the American way of life). Brand props that add realism
for American audiences may be considered unrealistic
by the foreign moviegoer; props that Americans consider
pleasurable may create discomfort in foreign audiences.
Those possibilities suggest that practitioners must pay
close attention to brands in relation to movie scenery
and movie characters not only for American audiences,
but also for potential foreign audiences. At the very
least, they should consider the possibility of negative
reactions and misinterpretations on the part of foreign
moviegoers, which in turn could lead to detrimental
effects in foreign marketplaces.

Finally, our study also illustrates the dynamic,
changing environment in which brand placement, as
one form of marketing communication, operates.
58) interpretation of Friedstad and Wright's (1994) work on the persuasion knowledge model, the increasing presence of brands in films may have a growing downside: the overuse of brand props may heighten moviegoers' resistance to persuasion attempts as they become more attuned to and familiar with the specific promotion form. For example, our moviegoers enjoyed the subtle use of brand placement because it added realism to the movie, but disliked excessive or obvious brand exposure because it distracted from movie realism. Practitioners therefore would be wise to commit quickly to research programs designed to explore, describe, and explain the relationships among brand prop exposure, audience reactions and interpretations, moviewatching contexts, and brand placement practices. In particular, they should establish programs to monitor and track changes in those relationships over time.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further academic and industry research is needed on the complex phenomenon of brand placement in motion pictures. Researchers should employ both qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on the research question. Additional insights to what brands mean to the moviewatching audience and how moviegoers react to brand props are particularly important because of the growth of the practice and because of the lack of research on the topic.

Further qualitative work is strongly encouraged because of the emergent nature of the research area. Continued research that takes a phenomenological, grounded theory approach can build on our findings in describing and explaining the significance of brand props to moviegoers from their perspectives. Focus groups and depth interviews of moviegoers from other demographic segments also should be conducted. For example, investigating young children's experiences and interpretations of brand props in movies seems especially critical. Researchers could explore parent-child interaction by conducting family interviews or focus groups that combine both children and parents. Inquiry that investigates brand props and types of consumer relationships with mass media vehicles (Hirschman and Thompson 1997) would certainly be of value. Further, research involving comparisons of theater, VCR, and television moviewatching would contribute to understanding of the role of the physical and social environment in the meaning of brands in film. For example, participant observation techniques could be especially useful in uncovering various contextual conditions.

Quantitative studies of audiences also are recommended. Studies with a random, representative sample of the moviewing public are urgently needed to establish generalizability, including the population representativeness of the seven uncovered themes. Operational definitions of the themes are suggested in Figure 2.

Survey and experimental approaches should be used to study moviegoer reactions to brand props, including recognition and recall effects, cognitive and attitudinal responses, and level of involvement effects. The studies could be designed not only to measure effects, but also to determine their correspondence with receivers (e.g., personality, brand usage), messages (e.g., method of presentation), vehicle (e.g., movie genre), and situational factors (e.g., theater viewing vs. VCR viewing).

Because we found interpretations of brand props to be conditional, several intervening variables are hypothesized to influence the effectiveness of brand props in movies. To encourage and direct future research efforts, we offer the following six working hypotheses stemming from our findings.

H1: Judgment of brand prop congruence with the movie scenery context is an intervening variable in brand prop effectiveness.
H2: Memory of prior consumption experiences relevant to brand props is an intervening variable in brand prop effectiveness.
H3: Empathy with movie characters who are implicitly endorsing brand props is an intervening variable in brand prop effectiveness.
H4: Level of viewer involvement with the movie plot (combination of H1, H2, and H3) is an intervening variable in brand prop effectiveness.
H5: Awareness of previous traditional advertising for a brand is an intervening variable in brand prop effectiveness.
H6: Individual differences (e.g., age, self-image, aspirations, interest in product category) are intervening variables in brand prop effectiveness.

In addition to audience studies, research—be it qualitative or quantitative—is needed to examine other aspects of the practice of brand placement. One obvious research area should focus on groups involved with the production and placement of brand props—marketers, filmmakers, and advertising agencies in the United States and abroad. For example, marketers and filmmakers could be interviewed about the practices and ethics of brand placement; observation techniques could be used to examine the day-to-day operations of motion picture studios or brand
Themes of Movie Centrality

Appreciating Realism—brand props encountered in the context of a particular movie, including scenery, depictions, and story plot, that are congruent and associated with viewers’ interpretations of real life or of the objective world. As such, encountered props enhance the film’s connectiveness to real life and produce positive cognitive and evaluative audience reactions to movie content and moviewviewing experiences.

Noticing the Familiar—brand props encountered in a particular movie that are congruent and associated with viewers’ past experiences and/or knowledge. As such, encountered props enhance knowing and produce positive cognitive and evaluative audience reactions to movie content and moviewviewing experiences.

Relating to Characters—brand props encountered in a particular movie that viewers consider implicit endorsement by characters through visual and/or verbal associations, depictions, and portrayals. As such, encountered props enhance the connectiveness of viewers to characters and produce positive cognitive and evaluative audience reactions to movie content and moviewviewing experiences.

Themes of Consumption-Specific Relevance

Tools for Purchasing Decisions—brand props encountered in a particular movie that viewers associate with and consider in relation to their own purchasing and consumption decisions. As such, encountered props-conveyed information is used by viewers to confirm or disconfirm past or planned brand-related behaviors.

Tools for Identity and Aspirations—brand props encountered in a particular movie that viewers associate with and consider relative to their own self-impressions as consumers. As such, encountered prop-conveyed information is used by viewers to confirm or disconfirm identities and lifestyles.

Change and Discomfort—brand props encountered in a particular movie that viewers consider threats and/or interruptions to the normacy of their own lives. As such, encountered props produce negative thoughts and feelings about social trends and patterns.

Belonging and Security—brand props encountered in a particular movie from which viewers gain emotional security and social connectiveness. As such, encountered props produce positive thoughts and feelings about social bonds and interactional experiences.

References


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Appendix
Summary of Brand Placement Research Findings

Study
Baker and Crawford (1996)
Sample
43 postgraduate students in Scotland.
Method
Self-completion survey combined with oral questions after exposure of a particular full-length film containing several brands.
Major Findings
Found high levels of aided and unaided recall of placed brands. Immediately after viewing, 16% of the sample reported preference for placed brands. Respondents had generally neutral attitudes toward practice of brand placement and recognized it as an element in promotional mix.

Study
Babin and Carder (1996a)
Sample
106 college students
Method
Simulated theater viewing experiment to assess communication effects of 39 brands placed within full-length movie, Rocky III (1982).
Major Findings
Brand salience was significantly greater for treatment than control group for more than 25% of the 39 brands appearing in the movie. No significant differences found between groups in terms of attitudes toward 15 of the brands examined.

Study
Babin and Carder (1996b)
Sample
98 college students (54 subjects for Rocky III and 44 subjects for Rocky V)
Method
Simulated theater viewing experiment focusing on viewers' recognition of 36 brands appearing in each of the full length movies Rocky III and Rocky V.
Major Findings
Viewers correctly recognized brands appearing within their respective movies and also were able to distinguish correctly among brands not present in the movie they viewed. For Rocky III, over 50% of brands were recognized by more than 30% of its viewers and for Rocky V over 33% of brands were recognized by more than 30% of its viewers.

Study
DeLorme, Reid, and Zimmer (1994)
Sample
29 college students who were frequent moviegoers
Method
Made videotape of brands in different movie clips were conducted to better understand moviegoers' interpretations of brand placement.
Major Findings
Participants liked subtle use of brands in movies because it added realism but disliked excessive brand exposure because it was distracting. Generic products were irritating because they interfered with realism and involvement. Participants noticed and liked familiar brands in movies, which were judged to enhance realism. They also felt that brands in movies brought them close to movie characters, reported gathering information about characters and their lifestyles, and compared that information with their own lives.
Appendix
Summary of Brand Placement Research Findings (continued)

Study
Gupta and Gould (1997)
Sample
1012 college students
Method
Survey focusing on moviegoers’ perceptions of ethics and acceptability of the practice of brand placement in movies.
Major Findings
Respondents had generally positive attitudes toward practice of brand placement. Certain product categories such as alcohol, cigarettes, and guns were judged less acceptable for brand placement than others. Individual differences in gender, movieviewing frequency, and relevant attitudes were found to affect acceptability of brand placements.

Study
Karrh (1994)
Sample
76 college students
Method
Experiment to assess communication effects of five brands placed within 33-minute clip of *Raising Arizona* (1987).
Major Findings
Brand salience was significantly higher only for one brand that was prominently and repeatedly displayed. There was no significant difference in brand evaluations. Brand placement may heighten brand salience for less familiar products and when the brand is the focus of a scene or an integral part of the movie plot.

Study
Karrh (1995)
Sample
22 brand placement practitioners who were all members of the professional group, ERMA.
Method
National mail survey to examine professionals’ beliefs about the practice of brand placement.
Major Findings
Respondents believed the most effective brand placements have a recognizable package or design, positive portrayal in the movie, and further promotional support. They consider the best measures of brand placement effectiveness to be recall and recognition.

Study
Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993)
Sample
171 college students
Method
Survey focusing on moviegoers’ attitudes toward the practice of brand placement in movies.
Major Findings
Most respondents did not object to brand placement, thought it was an effective marketing communication technique, and had more positive attitudes toward the practice than toward other, more obtrusive promotional forms. A small minority of respondents objected to brand placement because they felt it was deceptive.
Appendix
Summary of Brand Placement Research Findings (continued)

Study
Cng and Meri (1994)
Sample
75 theatergoers
Method
Theater exit surveys of the full-length films Falling Down and Point of No Return to assess viewers’ brand recall, purchase intentions, and ethical judgments of the practice of brand placement.
Major Findings
Found low unaided recall of brand props with recall ability and patterns differing greatly among individual respondents. Subjects who did remember brands in movies did not indicate increased purchase intentions. Respondents had generally positive attitudes toward the practice of brand placement.

Study
Pardun and McKee (1996)
Sample
445 full-service advertising agency media directors
Method
National mail survey of top 500 advertising agencies in United States to gain a better understanding of their perspective on the practice of brand placement as part of an overall media strategy.
Major Findings
Respondents were relatively knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the practice of brand placement in movies. They acknowledged the positive and long-term role of brand placement in movies, considered the potential for a national audience to be the most important benefit, and expected to increase their usage of brand placement in the future.

Study
Sabrewah, Pokrywcynski, and Griffin (1994)
Sample
62 college students
Method
Experiment focusing on viewers’ recall of one brand placed in a 10-minute movie clip of Days of Thunder which had two conditions: visual and verbal presentation and visual-only presentation.
Major Findings
More subjects recalled the brand placement when it was presented both visually and verbally (65%) than when it was presented only visually (43%). Combination verbal and visual brand props in movies seem to foster information processing and subsequent brand name recall.

Study
Sapolsky and Kinney (1994)
Sample
Method
Content analysis of the frequency and characteristics of brand placements in the films; followup of the Troup (1991) study.
Major Findings
Found an average of 14 brands per movie with comedies and dramas averaging the same number of brands, followed by action movies. No differences were found in the frequency of brands in positive, neutral, or negative contexts. Low-involvement consumer products accounted for 70% of all brands in the movies. Patterns were found in frequency of brand placement by movie genre, product category, and level of product involvement.
Appendix
Summary of Brand Placement Research Findings (continued)

Study
Steortz (1987)

Sample
304 theatergoers

Method
Theater exit survey and telephone survey using Burke day-after recall method to assess the communication effects of 29 brands placed in six different full-length films.

Major Findings
Found that aided recall scores averaged 38%. However, recall depended on placement characteristics, with visual/verbal placements averaging 57% recall followed by verbal endorsements (51%), visual implied endorsements (33%), background props (8%), and the presence of a logo or brand name (8%). Also, character usage of brands produced significantly better recall than brands displayed as background props.

Study
Troup (1991)

Sample

Method
Content analysis of the frequency and characteristics of brand placements in the films.

Major Findings
Found an average of 18 brand placements per movie with comedies having the most placements, followed by dramas. Most brands were displayed in positive or neutral settings. Low-involvement consumer products accounted for 68% of all brands in the movies examined. Patterns were found in frequency of brand placement by movie genre, product category, and level of product involvement.

Study
Vollmers and Mizerski (1994)

Sample
71 college students

Method
Experiment to assess communication effects of one brand placed within a six-minute movie clip of Gorillas in the Mist and one brand placed within a six-minute clip of Mr. and Mrs. Bridge.

Major Findings
Found high aided recall of brands placed within the movie clips, but no significant difference between the treatment and control groups in terms of affect for the products appearing in the films.

Study
Vollmers (1995)

Sample
140 second, fourth, and sixth grade children

Method
Experiment to assess communication effects of children’s exposure to eight placements within the movie Lassie (1994).

Major Findings
Subjects recognized brands in the film and recognition seemed to be influenced by placement type. No change was found in affect or immediate preference toward the placed brands. Children’s ability to recognize the promotional intent of brand placements was found to improve with age.
Appendix
Summary of Brand Placement Research Findings (continued)

Study
Zimmer and DeLorme (1997)

Sample
52 nonstudent moviegoers

Method
Simulated theater viewing experiment involving a full-length film, Doc Hollywood (1991), containing 16 brands to
determine effect of placement type and a disclaimer on recall, recognition, and attitude toward brand placement.

Major Findings
Found a 33% average level of recall and a 55% average level of recognition across the 16 brands. Further,
characteristics of brand props influenced effectiveness. Results showed a positive effect on memory for
placements in the foreground of a scene, verbally mentioned, that used humor, and that involved character
usage. A disclaimer heightened recall and recognition in some instances. Participants had generally positive
attitudes toward the practice of brand placement, but negative attitudes toward disclaimers.