

# **HANDBOOK OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN THE MASS MEDIA**

**NEW STRATEGIES  
IN MARKETING THEORY,  
PRACTICE, TRENDS,  
AND ETHICS**

**MARY-LOU GALICIAN, EdD**  
EDITOR

# **Handbook of Product Placement in the Mass Media: New Strategies in Marketing Theory, Practice, Trends, and Ethics**

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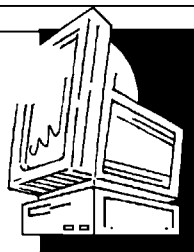
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- **IBZ International Bibliography of Periodical Literature <<http://www.saur.de>> . . . . . 1996**
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# **Handbook of Product Placement in the Mass Media: New Strategies in Marketing Theory, Practice, Trends, and Ethics**

## **CONTENTS**

Introduction: Product Placements in the Mass Media: Unholy Marketing Marriages or Realistic Story-Telling Portrayals, Unethical Advertising Messages or Useful Communication Practices? <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	1
<b>THE PRACTICE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT</b>	
Insinuating the Product into the Message: An Historical Context for Product Placement <i>Kathleen J. Turner</i>	9
The Evolution of Product Placements in Hollywood Cinema: Embedding High-Involvement “Heroic” Brand Images <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i> <i>Peter G. Bourdeau</i>	15
Advertainment: The Evolution of Product Placement as a Mass Media Marketing Strategy <i>Susan B. Kretchmer</i>	37



Merchandising in the Major Motion Picture Industry: Creating Brand Synergy and Revenue Streams <i>Charles A. Lubbers</i> <i>William J. Adams</i>	55
The Extensions of Synergy: Product Placement Through Theming and Environmental Simulacra <i>Scott Robert Olson</i>	65
CONTROLS ON PRODUCT PLACEMENT	
Product Placement and the Law <i>Paul Siegel</i>	89
On the Ethics of Product Placement in Media Entertainment <i>Lawrence A. Wenner</i>	101
The Role and Ethics of Community Building for Consumer Products and Services <i>Dean Kruckeberg</i> <i>Kenneth Starck</i>	133
CASE STUDIES OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT	
A Comparison of Product Placements in Movies and Television Programs: An Online Research Study <i>Beng Soo Ong</i>	147
Product Placement of Medical Products: Issues and Concerns <i>Christopher R. Turner</i>	159
<i>Cast Away</i> and the Contradictions of Product Placement <i>Ted Friedman</i>	171
Brand Placement Recognition: The Influence of Presentation Mode and Brand Familiarity <i>Ian Brennan</i> <i>Laurie A. Babin</i>	185

<i>The Bulgari Connection: A Novel Form of Product Placement</i> <i>Richard Alan Nelson</i>	203
--	-----

## COMMENTARY

When Product Placement Is NOT Product Placement: Reflections of a Movie Junkie <i>David Natharius</i>	213
---	-----

## INTERVIEWS

A Leading Cultural Critic Argues Against Product Placement: An Interview with Mark Crispin Miller <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	219
--	-----

A Rising Independent Filmmaker Argues for Product Placement: An Interview with Samuel A. Turcotte <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	223
--	-----

Harry Potter, Coca-Cola, and the Center for Science in the Public Interest: An Interview with Michael F. Jacobson <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	227
--	-----

A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Media Critic Discusses Product Placement: An Interview with Howard Rosenberg <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	233
--	-----

## MEDIA REVIEW

Screening MEF's <i>Behind the Screens: Hollywood Goes Hypercommercial</i> (2000) <i>Mary-Lou Galician</i>	237
--	-----

## ROUNDTABLE

Product Placement in the 21st Century <i>Edited by Mary-Lou Galician</i>	241
---	-----

## RESOURCE GUIDE

A Product Placement Resource Guide: Recommended Publications and Websites <i>Richard Alan Nelson</i>	259
Index	269

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Mary-Lou Galician, EdD**, is Head of Media Analysis & Criticism in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Arizona State University in Tempe. She has conducted and published research and led national seminars about product placement in the mass media. She is a media literacy advocate.

Known nationwide as “The *Original* Dr. FUN,” she is the creator and presenter of *FUN-dynamics!®—The FUN-damentals of DYNAMIC Living*, a musical motivational program that helps people get “F-U-N,” her acronym for “Fired Up Now!” An award-winning researcher, educator, and performer with more than 25 years of professional experience in print journalism, television, public relations, advertising, and marketing, she joined the faculty of ASU’s Cronkite School in 1983. She has taught a variety of courses related to her professional background and academic research, and she also directed the Cronkite School’s Public Relations Internship Program for nine years.

She has served as National Vice President/Director of FarWest Region and National Board of Directors Member of Women in Communications, Inc. (WICI) and as founding Vice Head and Program Chair of the Entertainment Studies Interest Group (ESIG) of the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC). Her research has been published in *Journalism Quarterly*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *IABD Business Research Yearbook*, *Journalism History*, *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal*, *Popular Music and Society*, and *Journalism Educator*. Her commentaries appear in the professional and popular media, where she has also been interviewed and cited as an expert more than 100 times. She conducts workshops to help academics and professionals “translate” their scholarship and expertise for the public and the media.

Based on her research of what she calls “The Romanticization of Love in the Mass Media,” she created *Dr. FUN’s Mass Media Love Quiz®*, which she has shared via national network television, radio, newspapers, and magazines as well as at national scholarly conferences and on her websites ([www.asu.edu/cronkite/faculty/galician/drfun/](http://www.asu.edu/cronkite/faculty/galician/drfun/)) and ([www.](http://www.)

*RealisticRomance.com*). Her *Quiz* and her *Dr. Galician's Prescriptions*<sup>™</sup> for *Getting Real About Romance* form the core of her textbook *Sex, Love, & Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis & Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals & Their Impact*. She is happily married to Dr. David Natharius, a Professor of Communication, Humanities, and Visuality. Together they conduct “Realistic Romance”<sup>™</sup> workshops, seminars, and presentations.

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# Introduction: Product Placements in the Mass Media: Unholy Marketing Marriages or Realistic Story-Telling Portrayals, Unethical Advertising Messages or Useful Communication Practices?

Mary-Lou Galician

The work presented here by many leading experts represents an exciting compilation of research and commentary addressing the theory and practice of product placement in the mass media—a promotion management subject that is both important and engaging.

Product placement is a \$1.5 billion practice in movies and television and now even novels that partners marketers (who value it for cost-effectively creating consumer awareness) and mass media producers (who rely on it for reducing production and advertising costs). Approximately 1,000 brand marketers utilize it in their advertising mix. Because of the subtlety of product placement embedding and other related promotional techniques, audience members are often completely unaware and, therefore, highly susceptible. The purported influence is so great that product placement's detractors have sought federal regulation of the practice.

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This volume examines the wider contexts and varied texts of product placement and related mass media marketing strategies. The contributors listed in the Table of Contents represent a rich variety of methodological approaches and viewpoints, which should stimulate readers to think about this complex issue in an appropriately multifaceted fashion and to triangulate their own study.

### ***THE ORIGINS OF THE RESEARCH AND COMMENTARY PRESENTED HERE***

My own interest in product placement goes back to the 1970s, when I was an advertising executive in the national headquarters of the Maybelline company, which topped the list of television's cosmetics spenders and advertised in more than 100 women's beauty/fashion and service magazines. I confess to having been pleased when many of those magazine editors gratuitously identified their models' makeup as Maybelline.

Mark Crispin Miller's brilliant critique of product placement—"Hollywood the Ad"—in the April 1990 issue of *The Nation* revived my earlier interest. (Dr. Miller is the subject of a personal interview in this volume.) By then, I was a tenured professor, and I began including a module about the subject in my Mass Media & Society classes. My students always expressed great interest in this controversial issue. In fact, one of my former graduate students—Peter Bourdeau—is responsible for extending my interest to the on-going study that resulted in this volume. I directed his master's degree research of this subject, and we have since collaborated on related publications and presentations that ultimately brought together the experts who are the contributors here.

A great deal of information about product placement and related media marketing strategies is proprietary. However, two unpublished seminal documents served as the foundation of our own work: (1) Samuel Turcotte's excellent 1995 master's thesis, "Gimme a Bud! The feature film product placement industry," proved "a blueprint for conducting the business of product placement, whereby the interests of both the filmmakers and the corporate marketers are maximized" (based on his in-depth interviews with industry professionals and corporate marketers), and (2) a well-constructed content analysis of product placement in the 25 top-grossing films of 1991 that was presented by Barry Sapolsky and Lance Kinney at the 1994 Conference of the Academy of Advertising. Because Coca-Cola was the "uber-placer" in our own research of product placement in top-grossing Hollywood films, Peter entitled the



study *Cue the Soda Can*—paying homage to Sam’s earlier work. (Mr. Turcotte has since produced his own film with a dozen product placements, and this collection also includes a personal interview with him.)

The respected authors of the research and commentary in this volume came together as a result of the first national presentation of the *Cue the Soda Can* study at Media Forum at the 2000 National Communication Association (NCA) Annual National Convention. Because of the great number of diverse concurrent sessions at this annual meeting of the world’s largest communication organization, individual programs often have audiences of only 10-20 people. However, the Media Forum on product placement drew more than 70 educators and professionals who were highly interested in this topic. In addition to sharing the findings (including Peter’s many film captures), I also screened a not-quite-completed version of an exceptionally well-conceived and well-produced educational video—*Behind the Screens: Hollywood Goes Hypercommercial*—at the special request of its Media Education Foundation producers. (A review is included here.)

The significantly above-average attendance validated the broad-based interest in and importance of this subject. Attendees expressed a desire to extend the examination and discussion to a longer timeframe that would also accommodate wider contexts of product placements and other related mass media marketing strategies as well as the related economic and ethical considerations.

And so, the following year at the 2001 NCA convention, we gathered to share our research and our viewpoints in a lively day-long seminar entitled *Video Presentations and Discussions of Product Placements in the Mass Media: Unholy Marketing Marriage, Realistic Portrayals, or Unethical Advertising?* The planners and/or presenters—all represented in the current volume—were Peter Bourdeau, Ted Friedman, Mary-Lou Galician, Susan Kretchmer, Charles A. Lubbers, David Natharius, Richard Alan Nelson, Scott R. Olson, Paul Siegel, Christopher R. Turner, and Kathleen J. Turner. This, too, sparked much interest resulting in additional such panels at NCA, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), and other major forums.

### ***RAISING THE QUESTIONS THAT WE CONTINUE TO ASK***

This group asked and began to answer some of the following questions:

- What are the wider forms and contexts of “product placement” and related mass media marketing strategies (tie-ins, co-ventures and co-promotions, web-based marketing, licensing, merchandising, “theming,” environmental simulacra, etc.)?
- Does product placement enhance realism, as users claim, or is it merely a marketing ploy?
- How does the introduction of pastiche and irony into product placement (e.g., *Wayne’s World*) change its effectiveness and viability? What is the effect of “self-referential product placement”?
- How widespread is the general practice of “synergy” (using multiple media platforms to sell a single product)?
- What are the ramifications of “environmental simulacra”—the advertising of movies or television shows through the creation of theme-park rides (*Star Wars*, *Jurassic Park*, etc.) or locations (*Cheers* bars in airports), which then themselves sell the movie or show and are, in turn, sold by them?
- What are economic and ethical repercussions of such marketing practices?
- Can these marketing practices ever be ethical?
- Should these marketing practices be regulated?
- Advertising succeeds by getting a message through cluttered information channels to overwhelmed consumers. Product placement provides a new channel. What happens when the glut of placements becomes itself overwhelming—and postmodern audiences tire or become disengaged from the practice?
- What do media and consumer critics say about these practices, and what is the role of critics?
- What can/should media consumers do?

We worked hard and learned a lot from each other. I’ve never collaborated with a more congenial and generous group. At the end of our intensive day, we realized we had only scratched the surface, and we knew we had to join forces to share our pooled knowledge and continue this crucial line of inquiry—both in subsequent interpersonal forums and in a single publication that would bring together a diversity of foci and approaches all centered around product placements. You now hold the published outcome in this special issue of *Journal of Promotion Management*, co-published as a book. My 17 colleagues who contributed their research and commentary to this publication and the four additional authorities who are the subject of the interviews that appear at the end of this volume are all nationally respected authorities. I’m delighted and

honored to present their ideas to you. Of course, we'd be pleased to hear from you as well.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND COMMENTARY IN THIS COLLECTION**

### ***The Practice of Product Placement***

First, *The Practice of Product Placement* provides a general context, beginning with media and rhetorical historian Kathleen J. Turner's essay, "Insinuating the Product into the Message: An Historical Context for Product Placement," which sketches the background of the early development of product placement in single-sponsored programs in radio and early television, the introduction of the magazine concept of advertising placement in the 1950s, and the effects of the quiz show scandals.

In "The Evolution of Product Placements in Hollywood Cinema: Embedding High-Involvement 'Heroic' Brand Images," Peter G. Bourdeau and I present key findings of our *Cue the Soda Can* content analyses that document and describe the increasingly dominant role product placements have come to play in the narratives of blockbuster movies since 1977.

Cultural critic Susan B. Kretchmer explores a similar evolution in television and internet entertainment vehicles created solely to spotlight specific advertiser—from the popular Taster's Choice couple ("Sharon" and "Tony") to online advergames—in her essay, "Advertainment: The Evolution of Product Placement as a Mass Media Marketing Strategy."

Then media scholars and practitioners Charles A. Lubbers and William J. Adams shed light on two under-examined multi-billion-dollar revenue producers in the current movie promotion mix—merchandising and promotional/partner ties-ins, two major elements—in their essay, "Merchandising in the Major Motion Picture Industry: Creating Brand Synergy and Revenue Streams."

This foundational section concludes with "The Extensions of Synergy: Product Placement Through Theming and Environmental Simulacra," an examination of a larger part of the focus wherein the normal distinctions between the cinematic world and the real world are obscured, by Scott Robert Olson (whose most recent book, *Hollywood Planet: Global Media and the Competitive Advantage of Narrative Transparency*, contains a critical analysis of product placement as part of global corporate strategy).

### ***Controls on Product Placement***

The second section—*Controls on Product Placement*—provides a closer look at the complex legal and ethical issues surrounding the theory and practice of this controversial industry. As is appropriate for this kind of assessment, some cogent arguments are made and some new questions are raised by mass media law scholar Paul Siegel in “Product Placement and the Law,” an argument against locating product placement within the Supreme Court’s commercial speech doctrine. Lawrence A. Wenner’s “On the Ethics of Product Placement in Media Entertainment” presents a thorough analysis of the ethical challenges and controversies surrounding the practice. Dean Kruckeberg and Kenneth Starck, who are public relations practitioners as well as mass media ethicists, in their “The Role and Ethics of Community Building for Consumer Products and Services,” offer a review of consumer communities that urges the adoption of a public relations approach rather than a marketing viewpoint.

### ***Case Studies of Product Placement***

Several intriguing case studies are delineated in the third section. Beng Soo Ong, an academic who has also worked as a brand placement consultant, in “A Comparison of Product Placements in Movies and Television Programs: An Online Research Study” found that although three-fourths of the sample were aware of the practice in both movies and TV shows, respondents appeared to have less exposure to embedded brands in television than in films.

In “Product Placement of Medical Products: Issues and Concerns,” Christopher R. Turner—who holds an MD degree in addition to a PhD and an MBA—extends the legal-ethical discussion in his examination of direct-to-consumer pharmaceutical marketing and focuses on an episode of television’s *Chicago Hope* touting the use of a medical device that had not earned FDA approval.

Cultural critic Ted Friedman’s essay “*Cast Away* and the Contradictions of Product Placement” argues that Tom Hanks’ 2000 film serves as a valuable case study because of the conflict between its relentless product placement and its dark vision of contemporary global capitalism, four aspects of which are investigated.

In “Brand Placement Recognition: The Influence of Presentation Mode and Brand Familiarity,” Ian Brennan and Laurie A. Babin present

an empirical study that demonstrated audio cues are a significant factor in the success of movie product placements.

*Journal of Promotion Management* Editor Richard Alan Nelson examines an intriguing new form of paid product placement—in novels—in his essay, “*The Bulgari Connection: A Novel Form of Product Placement.*”

### ***Commentary, Interviews, and Roundtable***

The final sections include a variety of more personal reflections. David Natharius’ whimsical commentary “When Product Placement Is NOT Product Placement: Reflections of a Movie Junkie” interrogates the distracting contra-placement practice of introducing fake, generic, or disguised products into films—including a “Sunny” VCR box.

Four experts granted me personal interviews especially for this volume. To preserve the full flavor of their comments, the interviews are presented in Q&A style. First, cultural critic and author Mark Crispin Miller, whose 1990 *Atlantic Monthly* article inspired my teaching and research interest in product placement, reiterates and updates his arguments against the practice. As counterpoint, we next offer the favorable comments of Samuel A. Turcotte, whose master’s thesis stimulated Peter and me in our studies and who has completed an independent film with 12 major product placements that he unflinchingly defends as realistic in terms of the drama and the economics of his movie about wrestling. In the early 1990s, Michael F. Jacobson, Executive Director of the Washington, DC-based Center for Science in the Public Interest (and its Center for the Study of Commercialism), petitioned the FTC to ban product placements or to require movies to list all their placements in their opening credits. More recently, his group launched [www.saveharry.com](http://www.saveharry.com) to urge consumer protest of Coca-Cola’s reported \$150 million payment to Warner Bros. for exclusive global marketing rights to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. And Pulitzer Prize-winning *Los Angeles Times* media critic Howard Rosenberg offers his always spot-on candid insights about the insidious use of television newscasters in all manner of promotions and tie-ins, which he considers unethical.

Interviews with several leading cultural critics (including Mark Crispin Miller) are also included with illustrative clips of popular recent movies and promotions in the Media Education Foundation’s 2000 video *Behind the Screens: Hollywood Goes Hypercommercial*. **My review of**

the documentary lauds this entertaining pedagogical tool that captivates audiences and also teaches important lessons.

Because this collection of research and commentary about product placement was conceived by the majority of the authors who came together from all parts of the country to share their diverse work and viewpoints at national seminars, it is fitting that we end by coming together (albeit it electronically, via the Internet) to offer answers to five key questions and make predictions about the future of product placement. The expertise and energy of this group is apparent in their thoughtful and dynamic *Product Placement in the 21st Century* **roundtable** comments, and I trust that the synergy of my esteemed collaborators' individual responses will stimulate you—as they did me—to begin thinking about a variety of new trends we should watch and studies we should conduct.

The *Product Placement Resource Guide* of recommended articles, books, and websites prepared by Richard Alan Nelson provides a wealth of starting points for this ongoing work.

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# THE PRACTICE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT

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## Insinuating the Product into the Message: An Historical Context for Product Placement

Kathleen J. Turner

**SUMMARY.** The cozy arrangement of marketers embedding their products in mediated messages has its antecedents in radio and television, when sponsors often controlled the entirety of programs, from writing to casting to pitches for the products within the program. This essay sketches the rise and fall of this system as it paved the way for contemporary product placement. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Most of the articles gathered here examine the placement of products into contemporary mediated messages. The collaboration between producers of goods and producers of media, however, has a long history. This essay traces the antecedents of product placement in the broadcast media. My purpose is to offer a historical sketch that will serve as a background for the assessments that follow, rather than a fully developed portrait.

## ***RADIO BECOMES A PROMOTIONAL MEDIUM***

In the eyes of most of those who invented and developed radio—from Guglielmo Marconi to Lee De Forest to Edwin Armstrong—the new medium had a nobler role than to carry advertising. Yet, this disdain was not universal. Key to the difference was a reconceptualization of radio. Originally, Marconi envisioned radio as a wireless version of the telegraph, serving as a means of business communication between one point and another. The fact that others could eavesdrop on the wireless transmissions constituted a problem in this framework. Yet, some innovators saw that “leakage” as an opportunity rather than a problem. Frank Conrad’s experimental broadcasts in his garage in 1920 convinced Westinghouse engineers that radio could be marketed as a broadcasting medium that could inform and entertain hundreds at a time—and in the process, drive the demand for radio sets so that the broadcasts could be received. AT&T, one of the corporate pioneers in broadcasting, took this notion a step further when it wanted to make more money from its radio investments. It turned WEAJ into a “toll broadcasting” station, like long-distance lines: you could pay to get your message to your audience. Thus, the first radio ad aired in 1922, a ten-minute spiel for apartments in Jackson Heights (Barnouw, 1996, p. 110).

The idea of advertising as a means of funding the young medium soon caught on among radio executives. Soon, shows and sponsors developed an integral relationship. The A&P Gypsies and the Ipana Troubadours warbled the virtues of their namesakes, while the Shadow hawked Goodyear tires in between solving the latest mysteries. In “McGee’s Magic Act” (1948), *Fibber McGee and Molly* worked an ad right into



the storyline. About halfway into the program, a knock on the McGees' much-visited door yields Mr. Wilcox, who responds to Fibber's query about an interest in "legerdemain" by saying that he sells magic—in the form of Johnson's Self-Polishing Glo-Coat wax. During the two-minute exchange, straight product-benefit pitches are mixed with jokes. When Molly observes that she's surprised Mr. Wilcox stopped talking about Johnson's Glo-Coat long enough to propose to his wife, he notes that he just asked her to close her eyes and tied a string around her finger—to remind her to pick up more Glo-Coat. Her eyes filled with tears at his thoughtfulness, he reports—as the studio audience chortles. Fibber's role is to gently deprecate the advertising function, as when he asks Mr. Wilcox whether it's possible to have a conversation without bringing in a commercial (the pitch man considers briefly, but concludes it is not). Repeated references to Johnson's Glo-Coat permeate the conversation that is embedded right into the program, so that listeners would continue paying attention.

### **TELEVISION EMULATES RADIO**

By 1929, fully 55% of the programs on radio were not only paid for by advertisers, but created by advertisers and ad agencies (MacDonald, 1979, p. 32). When television emerged as the new mass medium in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it drew wholesale from radio, including programs, stars, and means of revenue: advertising. By 1957, more than a third of television programs were created and controlled by advertisers and their agencies (Head and Sterling, 1982, p. 194; Sterling and Kittross, 1990, p. 398). For example, Camel cigarettes sponsored *Man Against Crime* (1949), starring Ralph Bellamy. The company issued strict instructions to the writers, directors, and actors (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 22-23): "Do not have the heavy or any disreputable person smoking a cigarette. Do not associate the smoking of cigarettes with undesirable scenes or situations plot-wise." Cigarettes were to be smoked gracefully, not puffed nervously—and the creators should never, ever suggest that a character have a smoke to "calm nerves," which might suggest a narcotic effect. No one on the program could cough, and doctors were to be shown only in "the most commendable light." The tobacco company's directions permeated the production.

And Milton Berle, who had been so-so on radio, became a major audience and advertising draw on television. In the early fifties, he headed

the *Texaco Star Theatre*, which started each week with a chorus of Texaco'd guys singing,

Oh, we're the men of Texaco, we work from Maine to Mexico.  
There's nothing like this Texaco of ours.  
Our show tonight is powerful.  
We'll wow you with an hour full  
of howls from a shower full of stars. (Simon, 2001)

Later, Berle's services appeared to the viewing audience courtesy of an automobile manufacturer, as the Buick/Berle show opened with a full minute's worth of title sequence linking star and car both visually and verbally (Berle, 1953). The announcer booms, "It's the Buick Show! It's the Berle Show! It's the Buick/Berle Show!!" as the names are flashed in neon lights. A mixed chorus then croons a ditty about "how I love to drive my Buick" as "Mr. Television" and three comely young ladies cruise down the street in a Buick convertible. Special guests are announced via billboard and voiceover before the choir returns to a reprise on the virtues of the car. Pitches for the carmaker also appeared during and at the end of the program.

Advertising control affected not only entertainment shows but also news programs. A classic example is *Camel News Caravan* (1950) with John Cameron Swayze—yes, brought to you by the same makers of smokes as *Man Against Crime*. The broadcast opened: "The makers of Camel cigarettes bring the world's latest news events right into your living room. Sit back, light up a Camel, and be a witness to the happenings that made history in the last 24 hours. Produced for Camel cigarettes by NBC." Not only did two Camel ads punctuate the newscast, including a vocalist trilling "so mild, so mild!", but a lit cigarette stayed on Swayze's desk throughout the show. The broadcast ends with "John Cameron Swayze saying good night for Camel cigarettes" as the camera zooms in on a cigarette burning in the ashtray.

Cigarette makers did not hold a monopoly on sponsorship. A very young Mike Wallace, for example, delivered the CBS mid-morning newscast, and then walked over to a backdrop to pitch Bond suits, with not one but two sets of trousers!

But networks didn't really like this system: it put them at the mercy of advertisers, who could dictate not only scripts and actors but entire series, and could pull out with a few weeks' notice if they didn't like how a show was going. So Pat Weaver (Sigourney's father) took on this issue once he was appointed president of NBC by David Sarnoff in

1953 (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 59-60). First, he increased program length from fifteen minutes, the standard for radio shows, to thirty and sixty minutes, which made cost of owning an entire show prohibitive for many advertisers. Then, he pushed the magazine concept of advertising placement: rather than a single sponsor owning the entire show, advertisers bought insertions into a program created and controlled by the network. Using these concepts, Weaver created the *Today* and *Tonight* shows—although he had to overcome a taboo for the former, because “like sex and alcohol, television was deemed proper only after sundown” (Metz, as cited by Head and Sterling, 1982, p. 194). These longer shows, created and controlled by NBC, allowed advertisers only to buy insertions rather than the whole kit and caboodle.

The kicker came with the quiz show scandals. Adapted from radio, quiz shows made it big on TV. One example: the audio version of *The \$64 Question* became the vastly richer video version of *The \$64,000 Question*, and thrived. Revlon plastered its name all over the set, from the elaborate entryway through which all entered to the “isolation booth” in which contestants were cloistered for their grilling. As a result, in January of 1956, the chair of the board of Hazel Bishop had to explain ruefully to his stockholders that the surprising loss of revenue in 1955 was “due to circumstances beyond our control” (note the use of television language!), because during the preceding six months “a new television program sponsored by your company’s principal competitor captured the imagination of the public” (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 57-58). By the 1957-58 season, almost two dozen quiz shows aired on network television.

### ***SCANDALS CHANGE SOME BUSINESS PRACTICES***

Yet, this silver lining had a cloud. As Robert Redford’s docudrama *Quiz Show* relates, rumors started circulating in late 1958, and broke wide open less than a year later. Charles Van Doren, whose success on *Twenty-One* led to such popularity that he’d gotten a permanent gig on the *Today* show, confessed that he’d lied: he’d been fed the questions and answers by the producers, and had stumbled and paused intentionally on occasion to help build the suspense. At this point, the producers revealed that Revlon had often instructed them as to which contestants should continue, and which should be helped off the air. A few, they admitted, had confounded them: for example, Dr. Joyce Brothers was considered dull as dirt and therefore designated for elimination, but she kept

answering the questions designed to cut her out correctly (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 122-125; Metz, 1976, pp. 204-215).

What ensued was a national scandal. Our innocence about television was shattered, and it drove the last nail in the coffin of the single-sponsored program. By 1968, fewer than 3% of network programs were created by advertisers, and those few endured increasing control and scrutiny by the networks (Head and Sterling, 1982, p. 194). Nowadays, we see an occasional *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, or a clearly labeled “infomercial”—but the sponsors’ explicit and direct control of television content exited, stage left. Enter, stage right, the contemporary context for advertising—and for advertisers to sneak the product back into the program in a variety of clever ways. The essays that follow delineate some of the many ways in which this sleight of hand has been performed, and explore the ramifications.

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# The Evolution of Product Placements in Hollywood Cinema: Embedding High-Involvement “Heroic” Brand Images

Mary-Lou Galician  
Peter G. Bourdeau

**SUMMARY.** This content analysis of the 15 top-grossing motion pictures of 1977, 1987, and 1997 uncovered 546 product placements present in fully one quarter (24%) of the total running time of the 45 movies. Product leaders were automobiles (21% of all placements), beer (14%), and soda (11%), with Coca-Cola the overall brand leader. Full-display appearances remained dominant throughout. Most appearances were brief; however, “key” placements—lengthier showcases featuring brands in central heroic roles and in idealized images resembling TV commercials—increased over the 20-year period. Other related notable changes were increases in high-involvement placements (89%), implied endorse-

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ment placements (83%) (coupled with a 9% rise in “verbal/hands mentions,” the most valued placement), and “mentioned” placements (75%) (similarly coupled with a 9% rise in “used” placements), and the number of brands placed (32%) along with decreases in liquor placements (60%), association with minor characters (40%) and non-stars (36%), and both “signage” (24%) and “clutter” (20%) placements, the least valued. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Brand names, brand placement, cinema, Hollywood, marketing, motion pictures, movie production, product placement, promotion

## INTRODUCTION

### *The History of Product Placement in Movies*

The history of Hollywood is a tale of the collision of art and commerce (Puttnam and Watson, 1998). Weisberg (1985) suggested that product placement—the practice of purposely placing brand-name products in the context of feature films—is Hollywood’s latest and sometimes stormiest marriage between these competing cinematic interests.

Motion picture studios have been using marketers’ products and advertisements as props in their films for decades (Magiera, 1990b; Turcotte, 1995). Rothenberg (1991) offered evidence that motion picture studios used product placement before the First World War. However, the practice intensified during the 1930s, when studios slowly advanced the idea of promoting products in movies by sending marketers shot-by-shot breakdowns of scripts with promotional opportunities clearly indicated to marketers.

When undershirt sales plummeted nationwide after matinee idol Clark Gable took off a dress shirt and exposed his bare hairy chest on screen in *It Happened One Night* (1934), corporate America took notice (Baird, 1997; Caro, 1996). By 1939, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had become the first studio in history to open a placement office (Rothenberg, 1991), and Walt Disney Studios began selling plates and glassware depicting images from its popular films (“Tie-in Advertising,” 1951). In the first