THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA
Blurring the Lines Between Entertainment and Persuasion
Second Edition

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Product Integration: Current Practices and New Directions

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PRODUCT INTEGRATION: A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Product integration is the practice of incorporating a product or service into a movie, television show, or other medium in return for payment of money or other promotional consideration by a marketer (Gupta & Gould, 1997). Typically, product integration has been referred to loosely over the years as product placement; in fact, the version of this chapter in the previous edition of this volume (McCarty, 2004) used the term product placement to refer to this integration, regardless of the level of the incorporation. Much has changed in recent years with respect to product integration or placement, and far more is known, particularly about the complexity of the practice, than just a few years ago. Therefore, following Lowrey, Shrum, and McCarty (2005) and others, in the present chapter we use the term product integration to refer broadly to the practice of the incorporation of a product or service into a medium under some sort of an arrangement. Product placement is a subcategory of integration where a product is mentioned or merely seen, as when a character in a television show mentions a brand or is seen using a particular brand; product immersion is the term for integrations in which a product or service is an
integral part of the story.* Having defined these two "levels" of product integration, in many ways, product placement and product immersion can be considered on a continuum (Russell, 1998). At one end, there are placements where a product is mentioned briefly or is visible for a moment (e.g., in the movie The Firm, the character played by Gene Hackman says to Tom Cruise's character, "Grab a Red Stripe out of the fridge"—this is the only mention of this beer brand in the movie, and the brand is not clearly visible in any frames of the movie). At the other end of this continuum is product immersion, where the brand is integral to the plot of the movie, as in Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle, where the main plot of the movie revolves around the two protagonists' search for a particular fast food restaurant—the brand is mentioned numerous times, the product is visible and is seen being consumed, product features are mentioned by the characters during the story (e.g., "In fact, just thinking about those tender little White Castle burgers and those grilled onions makes me want to burn this place to the ground and rebuild a White Castle in its place."). Somewhere in the middle on this continuum might be a placement/immersion where a product has some amount of airtime or is discussed, but is incidental to the main story, as when a Maserati is discussed by Tony Soprano and Johnny Sack in the HBO series The Sopranos.1

**IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

An important aspect of this definition of product integration is that the product is placed in a medium in return for promotion consideration or payment. Thus, the mere presence of a brand in a movie, television show,

* The terminology used for these various practices over the years has not been consistent or always clear. For example, Patrie Verrone of the Writer's Guild of America, the union representing writers in television and movie industries, stated to the New York Times, "Product placement is simply putting a branded box of cereal on the kitchen table in a show. ... Product integration is having the characters talk about the crunchy deliciousness of the cereal or provoking them to go out and tell their neighbors to buy that cereal" (Carvajal, 2006, p. 9). Thus, the distinction that Mr. Verrone makes is similar, but not the same, as the one we make here.

1 Lowrey, Shrum, and McCarty (2005) discuss other practices that fall under the umbrella of product integration, specifically, placement-friendly program development, program sponsorship, and client-developed programming. These practices are all forms of product integration, as defined by Lowrey et al., but would not fall on the continuum between product placement and product immersion.
or other venue does not per se constitute product integration. There must be an arrangement between the owner of the brand and the media vehicle. We make this important distinction, which has not always been made when product integration has been discussed, because brands do appear in the stories when no such arrangements have been made. Authors of books routinely describe brands that a character uses to provide richness and realism to the character. There may not be any sort of arrangement between the author and the owner of the brands that are used in the story. Presumably, the author selected a particular brand to help paint the nature of a character, a location, and so on. For example, in Ian Fleming’s novels about the famous British spy James Bond, he uses a number of different guns that are mentioned by brand name, and there is no indication that the mention of any of these weapons was a result of a relationship between the author and the brands.* Similarly, in the book American Psycho, a fictional story that documents the excesses of the 1980s, numerous brands are mentioned, including shirts by Ike Behar, suits by Ermenegildo Zegna, Fratelli Rossetti shoes, Panasonic, Tumi leather goods, among others. There is no evidence of these mentions being matters of arrangement; rather, they lend a sense of indulgence and materialism to the characters in the novel. Courvoisier cognac is in the title and lyrics of the rap song “Pass the Courvoisier” by Busta Rhymes. Although the sale of the cognac increased by double digits in the year of the release of the song, it was not a product placement in that there was not an arrangement made between the distiller and the artist before the release of the song (Roberts, 2002). Perhaps one of the “characters” in a recent movie that may have been assumed by many to be a paid product integration was not: Wilson in the Tom Hanks movie Cast Away (Maynard and Scala, 2006; Michael, 2000). A Wilson volleyball was selected for artistic reasons; the brand name needed to be one that would potentially be a name of a person in that the product becomes a character as the story progresses.

We make the point that when a brand is mentioned in a work of art when there was no arrangement between those creating the art and a brand, this does not constitute a “blurring of the lines”; the brand appearing in the story, movie, television show, and so on is not encumbered by

* In fact, there is evidence that the Walther PPK (the handgun most associated with James Bond) was suggested to Ian Fleming by a gun expert who indicated to Fleming that the Beretta that Bond used in an early novel was a lady’s gun and not one that a spy of Bond’s stature would use (Rifkind, 2004).
a commercial arrangement, and the creator of the art is putting a specific brand in his or her work because it "fits." Of course, from the perspective of a viewer, whether the exposure to the brand is a paid integration or not is immaterial to its potential effect.

A second important consideration with respect to our definition is that product integration can be in a variety of media and venues. Although for years integration was discussed in terms of being in the movies and in television, product integration is showing up in all sorts of places. This has been particularly apparent in the last decade or so. In recent years, arrangements for product integrations have been made such that brands have appeared in video and online games (Jones, 2002; Nelson, 2005), music videos and/or song lyrics (Fitzgerald, 2011; Helm, 2010), and novels (Murray, 2004), in addition to the traditional outlets of movies and television shows. The increase in the number of venues in which product integrations appear, as well as the total increase in number of integrations, is likely due to a number of factors. These include (1) the growing dissatisfaction among marketers with the performance of traditional advertising (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010); (2) a growth in the infrastructure that facilitates product integrations (Russell & Belch, 2005), such as the shift of product integrations from rather informal arrangements or one-time deals to a much more formalized endeavor where firms are engaged to actively seek out opportunities for a brand to be integrated into appropriate venues; (3) perceptions of the success of previous brand mentions in particular venues (e.g., the aforementioned Courvoisier in the lyrics and title of a song has been credited with increasing marketers' efforts to get their brands in songs (Wasserman, 2005)); and (4) an increase in the production costs of movies, television shows, music, and other artistic ventures, which has led producers of these efforts to seek methods of covering the production costs (Crisafulli, 1995; Darlin, 1995; de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Russell & Belch, 2005). These four conditions have likely led to what might be described as a tipping point in product integration in the last decade.*

What appears to be the situation is that marketers of branded products and producers of entertainment are actively seeking mutually beneficial

* Although this explosion in product integrations has recently occurred, the practice has been around for a long time. The actual origin of product placement is unclear, but Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) indicate that it was as early as the 1890s in movies. In spite of this early use of it, it likely remained a matter of informal arrangements until the infrastructure developed to accommodate the level of activity that exists today.
arrangements for what would occur whether or not money changed hands or other considerations took place—branded products appearing in entertainment media. The double-digit growth in paid product integrations across all outlets for most of the years in the past decade point to this explosion of activity (Castillo, 2010); for example, in prime-time TV in the United States, there was a 9% growth in the first half of 2009 (Lowry and Helm, 2009). As new entertainment outlets develop, it is likely that marketers will creatively consider how they can integrate their brands into them as well.

A third consideration with respect to product integration is that it is often controversial. Controversies generally center around two interrelated issues: (1) the stealthy nature of the marketing communications; and (2) the extent to which the integrations affect the creative integrity of fictional or artistic material or, even of more concern, the integrity of journalistic endeavors. These concerns are interrelated in that both deal with the break in the wall that many believe should separate commercial communications from entertainment and editorial communications. Moreover, both of these issues relate to the extent to which consumers may not be receiving the communication that they expected, paid for, and so on.

With respect to the stealthy nature of the marketing communications, the concerns are that people are receiving commercial messages without being aware of their commercial nature. There have been long-standing rules and best practices regarding the identification of commercial messages as such. The payola rules of the FCC would cover product integrations for broadcast media (i.e., television and radio) and indicate that broadcast stations that “have accepted or agreed to receive payments, services, or other valuable consideration for airing material must disclose this fact” (FCC, 2011). In print media, the guidelines of the American Society

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* A somewhat interesting variation on the typical arrangement is reverse product placement (Edery, 2006; Wasserman, 2007), where a previously fictional product from a movie, novel, etc., is later marketed as a real product. Examples of this phenomenon include Bobba Gump Shrimp Co. from the movie Forrest Gump and Potion, a beverage that appeared in the video game Final Fantasy. Probably the most unusual example of this is the restaurant chain Cheeburger Cheeburger. This chain most likely got its name from the Saturday Night Live skit about a diner where the grill cook yells “cheezborger cheezborger” when a patron orders a cheeseburger. This was a take-off on what a real grill cook at the Billy Goat Tavern in Chicago yelled when an order was placed. The tavern was frequented by several of the performers at Second City in Chicago who went on to star on Saturday Night Live (i.e., Don Novello, John Belushi, and Bill Murray) (Billy Goat Tavern, 2011), and there has been a lawsuit filed by the Billy Goat Tavern against the Cheeburger Cheeburger chain with the claim that the chain is using the tavern’s slogan (Barcella, 2003).
of Magazine Editors (ASME) define the best practices for magazines and include a clear statement that advertising must be labeled as such (ASME, 2011). In recent years, there have been concerns raised as to the extent to which these policies have been followed or enforced with respect to product integrations (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009). Furthermore, the FTC, which has broad powers of regulation pertaining to advertising in all media (not just broadcast media as the FCC does), has generally declined to regulate product integrations in movies (Campbell, 2006).

Various consumer groups have pressed for explicit alerts to viewers as to the paid promotional nature of an appearance of a brand (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999). Suggestions for alerts include text scrolls across the bottom of the screen when integrations are occurring or flashing red lights during integrations (Lowry & Helm, 2009).

The potential for the practice of product integration to affect the creative integrity of fictional stories or the editorial role of nonfictional programming (e.g., news) is very real. The perceived danger in fictional stories is that the nature of the plot, characters, and so on will be influenced by those who will pay rather than by artistic considerations. For example, the fictional character James Bond drove an Aston Martin in *Goldfinger* and some of the other early Bond movies. In some recent movies of this franchise, the character has driven automobiles by BMW, a company that engaged in integration arrangements with the producers of the movies. Although the use of a BMW may not bother most who see the movie, a James Bond "purist" may find it odd that a very British spy such as James Bond would drive a German automobile that, while expensive, is potentially within the grasp of a lot of people. It has been noted that product integration deals put uncomfortable constraints on writers (George, 2005)

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*Research has shown that consumers believe that the practice should be more heavily regulated (Hudson, Hudson, & Peloz, 2008), but there is also skepticism about the extent to which the government can regulate it (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009). There may be some merit to this skepticism. The disclosure rules for television allow a show to take care of its disclosure obligation by scrolling at the end of a broadcast rather quickly the names of the brands that received consideration; a former commissioner at the FCC argued in 2005 that this scroll was not really enough, but little has changed in this regard (Schatz, 2005).

† Aston Martin is a high-end British automobile; until very recently, all of the models of the brand were very expensive, hand-built automobiles that few people could afford, but would be appropriate for the British spy, James Bond, who is known as uncompromising in his tastes across numerous product categories. Although a relatively expensive automobile, the German-manufactured BMW may seem to some in the movie audience that it is not an appropriate vehicle for James Bond in that it is a German automobile and is within their purchase capability.
and as the stakes get higher, it is likely that there will be more pressures to change the creative endeavors to fit the needs of the marketers. As Gary Elliott, a vice-president of Hewlett-Packard, has stated, "We absolutely expect to have input.... We have to look at the scripts. We have an agency that understands how our products are going to be treated and how we'd be viewed within the production" (George, 2005, p. 34). The concern over the control of the artistic aspects of the story is such that the Writer's Guild of America has denounced the practice of product integration and has pushed for a code of conduct with respect to it (Carvajal, 2006).

The potential for integrations to affect nonfictional programming is a concern as well. In fact, research indicates that the public accepts product integration in entertainment programming to a greater degree than integration in news via video news releases (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009).* Legitimate news outlets have traditionally had extremely strong norms about the separation of commercial speech from editorial speech and concerns about advertisers influencing the nature of editorial speech. As an indication of these norms, David Brinkley was criticized by other journalists for his decision to become a spokesperson for Archer Daniels Midland after he had retired from news broadcasting (Lafayette, 1998). Recently, however, there are indications that products are showing up in interesting ways in news programming. Starbucks has made a deal with Morning Joe, a show with a news and editorial format featuring Joe Scarborough, to be featured during the show via graphics and mentions (Stelter, 2009). Although the brand is not contributing to the news or opinions expressed, there is an implicit indication that the particular brand of coffee is endorsed by the opinion leaders featured on the show.

**PRODUCT INTEGRATION AS MARKETING COMMUNICATION**

Given that product integrations can vary from a casual mention of a brand in a single scene of a movie to a brand being a major presence in the story, supported by joint advertising and promotion of a movie and brand, it is

* A video news release is a "fake" news story created by a marketer, public relations firm, etc., to appear as a regular news story.
perhaps inappropriate to characterize all of them as essentially the same thing. They can differ quite a bit and, most likely, the way and at what level viewers process them can vary as well. Having stated this caveat, product integrations can be compared to other forms of marketing communications in a number of ways, in that all product integrations share some common aspects with one another, but are different than other forms of marketing communications.

Balasubramanian (1994) considered product integrations as one type of a hybrid message, a combination of advertising and publicity. He considered hybrid messages as ones that are paid for in ways that are typically true of advertising (i.e., paid commercial messages in which the payer has much control over the message); however, they are “communications that project a non-commercial character” (italics in original) (p. 30). Balasubramanian reasoned that since these messages do not seem to the receiver to be a commercial message, they are likely processed differently from how commercial messages such as advertising would be processed.

As Balasubramanian noted, product integrations are generally paid for in some manner, just as with advertising, but integrations are not identified as paid persuasion efforts by sponsors, which makes them similar to publicity, such as news stories. Therefore, the sponsor gets the best of both of these traditional forms of communication, advertising and publicity. That is, the sponsor has some limited control over the communication (subject to editorial considerations of the movie, television show, or other venue), but the communication is not usually identified explicitly as a persuasion attempt; thus, the effort to persuade is not made salient to the audience.

In a similar discussion, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998) considered product integrations in their characterization of different kinds of marketing communications and how integrations might differ from other kinds of communications. They argued that different marketing communications can be considered along two dimensions: (a) the extent to which the sponsor of the message is disguised and the fact that the message is a paid advertisement is disguised, and (b) the extent to which the persuasive message is secondary to the main message of the communication. Product integrations can be contrasted to traditional advertising (and other marketing communications) along these dimensions. In the case of advertising, the sponsor of the product is not disguised, and the fact that it is a persuasive effort by that sponsor is generally clear to the audience. With respect to the second dimension, the advertising (persuasive) message is the salient part
of the communication and not secondary to any other message. In contrast, a good product integration is different from an advertisement on both of these dimensions. The integration of the product in a scene in the movie, for example, is not connected with the company as an explicit attempt to persuade; the brand is presented in the context of a story. Considering the second dimension, the persuasive effort is generally secondary to the main communication of the movie or television show.* Although Nebenzahl and Jaffe’s main interest related to the ethics of the communications as a function of how communications are presented to the audience in relation to these two dimensions (e.g., they argue that product integrations would be less ethical than advertising because integrations represent hidden, disguised persuasion attempts), these dimensions can illuminate the ways viewers might process the messages.

Therefore, the discussions of Balasubramanian (1994) and Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998) indicate that the noncommercial and somewhat hidden, secondary nature of product integrations makes them inherently different from traditional advertising, and this suggests that viewers may not process them in the same way as they would an advertisement. Friestad and Wright’s (1994) discussion of consumers’ persuasion knowledge is relevant to considerations of how consumers might process product integrations differently from advertising, given the hidden and secondary nature of integrations. Friestad and Wright viewed persuasion knowledge as a set of interrelated beliefs consumers hold that relate to persuasion attempts by marketers. These beliefs focus on the perceived goals and tactics marketers use to persuade consumers, the perceived appropriateness and effectiveness of these tactics, as well as the consumers’ perceptions of their own ability to cope with marketers’ persuasion efforts. Friestad and Wright suggested that when consumers are confronted with a communication, a fundamental change of meaning occurs when the communication is recognized as an attempt to persuade. When consumers recognize a communication as a persuasion attempt, they will process the message differently than if no such recognition occurred. They may get distracted from the message, disengage from the communication, and develop assessments of the persuasion effort and the company related to the communication. For example, when consumers

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* Product integrations are, in general, secondary to the main communication. However, in some extreme examples of product immersions where a brand is very central to the theme of the story, it could be argued that the integration is part of the main communication, as was the brand White Castle in the movie Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle.
view an advertisement featuring a spokesperson they admire, their evaluation of the message, the product, the spokesperson, and the company may be different than if they were unaware that the advertisement is a paid persuasive attempt. There is a change of meaning with respect to the message that the spokesperson is presenting. The message is interpreted in the context of this persuasion knowledge generated by the awareness that the advertisement is a persuasive communication. For a product integration in a movie, television show, or other outlet, however, a consumer’s persuasion knowledge may not be activated, because there is a lack of identification of the integration as a persuasion attempt. Therefore, the hidden and secondary nature of product integrations may not activate the processes that typically put a consumer on guard in the case of advertising.

We suggest, therefore, that the stealthy nature of product integrations is one attribute that might be important in making them work as a promotional tool. However, although the promotional nature of product integrations is often disguised, this is not always the case. Alternatively, the connection between the product integration and the movie is sometimes made clear to consumers through joint advertising and promotion. The launch of the BMW Z3 roadster in the James Bond movie GoldenEye included TV and print advertising, a press launch in Central Park, a Neiman Marcus catalog offer, and publicity on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno; all of these clearly connected the Z3 to the movie GoldenEye (Fournier & Dolan, 1997), thus making it apparent that there was a tie-in between the product and the movie. In particular, the advertising campaign featured both the car and the movie. There are numerous other examples of product integrations in movies made public via tie-in advertising. Therefore, although it is typically not made salient to viewers that an integration is a promotional effort at the point in time the viewers see the integration, it is somewhat common that the connection between the product and movie is made in advertising and promotional materials. In fact, some professionals argue that promotional tie-ins are key to the success of product integrations. McCarthy (1994) reported that a product integration executive attributed the accompanying promotion to the success of Reese’s Pieces in the movie E.T. in that “Hershey spent a lot of money at retail to let everyone know what E. T. was eating” (p. 32), since the bag and candy may not have been apparent in the frames of the movie.

Thus, at first glance it would seem that there is a contradiction between the assumption that product integrations derive their success from their
disguised nature and the fact that many of the successful integrations are ones in which the consumer is made aware of their commercial nature via the accompanying advertising and promotion. It should be considered, however, that at the time that the consumer is seeing or hearing the product integration, its commercial nature is not emphasized, even if the connection has been made in other promotional activity. The product is placed in the context of a story; and it may be that this context is important for success.

To consider this apparent contradiction, it is instructive to note that product integrations are similar to one kind of advertisement in that they involve the presentation of the brand in the context of a story. Wells (1989) discussed two kinds of advertising formats: lectures and dramas. Lectures are advertisements that present outwardly to the audience, similar to what a speaker would do in a lecture hall. The television audience is spoken to and is presented with an argument and evidence. According to Wells, an effective lecture presents facts to be believed and should be credible in the presentation of these facts; it is generally clear that there is a persuasion attempt being made. In contrast, Wells suggested that a drama advertisement draws the audience into a story. Drama advertisements are like movies, novels, and other stories in that they can present a lesson about how the world works. An important aspect of a drama advertisement is that it works by allowing the audience to make an inference about the advertised brand from the story that is presented in the advertisement; this inference may provide a stronger impression than if the audience had been told the point through a lecture format. Wells indicated that an effective drama advertisement must engage the viewer and must be believable as a story. Part of the effectiveness of drama advertisements is that they draw the viewer into the story in such a way that the viewer forgets that the story is a persuasion attempt. With drama advertising, the normal skepticism that consumers may have with respect to advertisements is reduced when they see the product in the context of a story. This idea is consistent with the work of Deighton, Romer, and McQueen (1989) on the use of drama to persuade. They found that viewers "are less disposed to argue and believe the appeal to the extent that they accept the commercial's verisimilitude and respond to it emotionally" (p. 341) in the case of drama commercials, compared to argument commercials (i.e., lecture advertisements).

A product placement or immersion could therefore be considered as the ultimate form of drama advertising. The product is in the context of a
story, but unlike the 30-second story typical of most television advertisements, the product is in a story that generally lasts over an hour in the case of movies and 30 minutes or more for a television show. Thinking of a product integration in this way may help explain why an integration may be successful, even when viewers are aware of the promotional tie-in between a movie and the product through the promotions and advertising. To the extent that the plot of the movie draws the viewer in, similar to a drama advertisement, the viewers will see the brand in context and will not think about it as a persuasion attempt.

Therefore, in the same way that a good story makes us forget that the main character is an actor we may know from other roles,* a good product integration may be one that fits with the story in such a way as to make us forget that it is there to persuade us. This idea of “fit” is critical and relates to the notion of seamlessness to which practitioners in product integration have often referred. According to Dean Ayers of the Entertainment Resources Marketing Association,

> The word that comes up a lot in our work is seamless. . . . We’ve found that most people do prefer to see a can of Pepsi or some other familiar brand rather than one that just says “Soda.” But nobody wants to pay to see a commercial. (Crisafulli, 1995, p. 4)

When product integrations do not achieve a level of seamlessness, problems can arise. As stated by Gary Mezzatesta of Unique Product Placements, “When the audience snickers and says, ‘I wonder how much they paid for that,’ you know it’s bad” (McCarthy, 1994, p. 32). Thus, when a product placement sticks out as an obvious commercial plug, it may activate viewers’ persuasion knowledge, as well as distract them from the drama.

Although product integrations are likened to drama advertising, there is an important distinction that should be emphasized. A drama advertisement is designed from beginning to end as an advertisement. The purpose of the story is to sell the product. In the case of a product integration, the integration is often secondary to the main story. The story that unfolds

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* For example, when we see George Clooney play Danny Ocean in movies, we are not thinking about the protagonist as George Clooney, who we may know from other movies or from his political causes; rather, we are thinking of him as the slick and savvy person who outwits the owner of a casino. We are drawn into the story, and it is not salient to us that Clooney is an actor whom we have seen in a variety of other roles and has a personal life about which we know some things.
is generally not designed as an advertisement for particular products.* Although it may not be specifically designed to do so, it may well be the case that the story incidentally presents a key selling point for a brand. For example, the performance characteristics of the Mini Cooper, a particularly small automobile featured in The Italian Job, were important to the storyline and were made apparent in several scenes of the movie. Although it was not a paid integration, in an episode of Seinfeld, Drake’s coffee cake is mentioned as “the plain cake with the sweet brown crumbs on the top.” Numerous examples come to mind of movies or television shows that present the luxurious life and suggest the kinds of brands that those who live such a life would use (e.g., Sex in the City), thus providing a clear, albeit subtle, selling point for a placed product.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

Although all product integrations share some common characteristics, they can differ from one another in a number of ways. A brand can be visually present in a scene, or it can be mentioned and not seen. An integration can be a brief placement or the product can be an integral part of a character or the story. Therefore, it is likely that they can operate in very different ways, depending on the nature of the integration (see Chapter 3). Similar to how advertising can work at different levels (i.e., inform, persuade, remind, etc.), product integrations can operate at different levels depending on the extent to which and how the integration is woven into the movie, television show, or other venue.

Russell (1998) characterized product integrations in a three-dimensional framework. The first dimension she considered was the extent to which an integration is visual. An integration can be purely visual, such as a product placed in the background of a scene (e.g., a truck with the logo of the placed product on the side). The level of visual placement can also vary as a function of the number of times it is seen, or whether it is

* This point could certainly be challenged in that some movies have so many product integrations in them that they appear to many as simply vehicles for brand communications. According to a Marketing Week article, the James Bond movie Die Another Day was referred to by many critics as "buy another day" (Alarcon, 2008, p. 8).
seen at all. Russell's second dimension was the auditory or verbal nature of the integration. The brand may not be mentioned at all in the dialogue of the story, can be mentioned several times, mentioned with emphasis, and so forth. The third dimension that Russell considered was the degree to which the integration is connected with the plot of the story. This dimension is really the same as the continuum we talked about at the beginning of this chapter: the continuum with a brief product placement at one end and a total product immersion at the other end. At one level, a brand can simply be one that is visible in a scene of a movie and not connected to the main part of the story. In this instance, it may only be a prop. For example, in movies we often see a billboard or the side of a truck with a brand name on it that is in the background of the action of the scene. At the other end of this dimension, an integration can be intimately tied to the plot, as in *You've Got Mail*, or closely connected to the nature of the character, such as the type of car that James Bond drives or the brand of wristwatch he wears.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES AND PRODUCT INTEGRATIONS**

The dimensions discussed by Russell (1998) illustrate the complexity of investigating how consumers may process product integrations. The multidimensional nature of product integrations, and how they can differ on each of these dimensions, suggests that a variety of psychological processes can be considered as operating when a viewer sees a brand in the context of a movie or television show.

At the most basic level, when product integrations involve brands that are merely seen or mentioned in a story, the process may be as simple as affective classical conditioning or mere exposure. As Baker (1999) explained, affective classical conditioning is a matter of pairing an unconditioned stimulus (e.g., a beautiful scene) with the conditioned stimulus (e.g., a brand of product) such that the good feelings associated with the scene are transferred to the brand. Although often discussed in the context of advertising, it is easy to see how such a psychological process is a potential way that product placements can work. Russell (1998) suggested that products in the background of a scene may often be processed by this nonconscious association between the brand and the movie. The
conditioning process simply requires that a viewer make an association between the response to the scene or movie (i.e., the good feelings) and the brand that is placed.

If affective conditioning is indeed the process at work for simple and brief product placements, this poses a potential complication for the placement of a brand. When viewers are watching a movie or television show, they typically experience a variety of both positive and negative feelings during the course of the story, including joy, anger, fear, disbelief, hatred, and sadness. It may be difficult to predict which feeling will be associated with the brand. There is the possibility that a negative feeling will be linked to the brand. For example, in a scene of the movie The Silence of the Lambs, crumpled Arby's wrappers and cups were among the debris in the rather shabby house of the serial killer hunted by Jody Foster's character in the story. Focus group respondents reported a negative association between Arby's and the character in the movie, indicating that if they ate at Arby's, they would be reminded of the killer (Fournier & Dolan, 1997).

A second possibility is that the construct of mere exposure may explain simple product placements (Vollmers & Mizerski, 1994). Mere exposure suggests that a viewer will develop more favorable feelings toward a brand simply because of the repeated exposure to it (Baker 1999). Janiszewski's (1993) work showed that mere exposure may result in more favorable attitudes toward a brand, even though the person does not necessarily recall the exposure to the brand. It would seem that mere exposure may help explain some types of product placements, particularly ones involving brands presented as props in one or more scenes of a movie.

Clearly, many product integrations are more involved than a simple mention of the brand in the dialogue or the logo visible in the scene. As noted earlier, product integrations are often intimately tied to the character in the story or to the storyline. For example, the brands associated with James Bond are closely tied to the nature of the character; in fact, the brands that James Bond uses help define him as a character, they are part of his essence. Although conditioning or mere exposure may well be a part of why these work, there may be higher-order processing related to integrations in these circumstances. A transformational process has been suggested as such a possibility (Russell, 1998). Transformational advertising, as discussed by Puto and Wells (1984), is advertising that transforms or changes the experience of using a product such that it becomes more than it would otherwise be, making it "richer, warmer, more exciting, and/or
more enjoyable” (p. 638). Numerous examples of transformational advertising come to mind for such products as jewelry, perfume, automobiles, and liquor.

In a similar way, a brand embedded in a movie can transform the experience of using it. The product is not just seen in its functional sense, but becomes the brand that is considered in the context of the story. It is, as Puto and Wells’ discussion would suggest, endowed with the characteristics associated with the movie. A BMW is not just a well-made German automobile, but is the car that James Bond drives. AOL is not just a way to connect to the Internet, but the way that the trendy New Yorkers in You’ve Got Mail do so.

A similar notion is that of lifestyle advertising (Solomon & Englis, 1994). Solomon and Englis argued that lifestyle advertising associates a product with a way of life, perhaps presenting it in the context of a glamorous life or the good life. These ads can act as “models of living.” Similarly, a product integrated in a movie can profit from the model of living that the story presents. An admirable character using a particular brand tells the audience that this is the brand of that product category that is “in” or “cool,” or the way to the good life. It is likely that such a process may have been helpful to the success of Red Stripe’s integration in the movie The Firm.* The two main characters who briefly discuss the brand of beer were wealthy lawyers visiting the Cayman Islands. The integration of Red Stripe in that context suggests that it was the “in” beer for such important professionals.

It would seem that the issue of the extent to which a brand is connected to the plot is indeed a very fundamental distinction between types of product integrations, as we and others (e.g., Russell, 1998) have argued. That is, whether the integration is connected to the plot or simply a prop would seem to be a basic qualitative difference in types of integrations. Connection to the plot makes an integration a different phenomenon and brings to bear a whole set of psychological processes that are likely absent for a simple prop placement. It is suggested, therefore, that product integration is a complex, multidimensional concept that may operate at different levels and affect viewers though a variety of psychological processes. The next section will consider some of the academic research on product integrations.

* The sales of Red Stripe increased by more than 50% shortly after the placement of the brand in the movie (Buss, 1998).
RESEARCH ON PRODUCT INTEGRATION

As the use of product integration has increased over the past three decades, there has been an increasing interest in it among academic researchers. Until rather recently, studies on product placement have generally related to three topic areas: the prevalence of product placement in movies and the nature of placements, the attitudes and beliefs regarding the practice of product placement, and the effects of placements in movies and television (DeLorme & Reid, 1999). Very recently, research has emerged that is attempting to understand the complexity of product placement. Rather than presenting an exhaustive review of the academic literature, this part of the chapter will consider some of what is known from research on product integration in order to give readers a feel for the nature of the research on the practice.*

STUDIES INVESTIGATING CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT PRODUCT INTEGRATION

Some of the academic research has focused on the attitudes and perceptions of consumers regarding the practice of product integration. Early studies in this area (e.g., Gupta & Gould, 1997; Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993; Ong & Meri, 1994) were efforts to determine whether consumers find the practice objectionable, given the stealthy and “deceptive” nature of the product placement, as claimed by some consumer groups. These studies tended to find that, in general, the majority of people in the United States do not find the practice objectionable. In fact, the results of the Nebenzahl and Secunda study showed that the respondents preferred product integrations to traditional advertisements, and the authors of that study suggested that this preference relates to the notion that advertisements are perceived as intrusive and annoying, whereas the unobtrusive nature of product integrations make them more palatable to consumers. More recent research

* For a more in-depth discussion of the prior work on product integration, see DeLorme and Reid (1999) or Karrh (1998) for examinations of early work on the practice; for a discussion of more recent work on product integration, see Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan (2006) or Van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit (2009).
(e.g., Schmoll, Hafer, Hilt, & Reilly, 2006; Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung, 2009) confirms this general finding of an overall favorable view of product integration in the United States. Furthermore, the studies by these two sets of authors suggest that consumers see product integrations as a means of providing realism to movies and television shows.

As is the case with consumers’ attitudes toward most things, evaluations are often complex and nuanced. Recent research has attempted to consider the complexity of consumer evaluations of product integration. Although the practice of product integration tends to enjoy an overall positive evaluation, its acceptance varies as a function of a number of variables. The 1997 study by Gupta and Gould showed that attitudes about product integrations differ by product class. Specifically, integrations involving products that are controversial (e.g., tobacco products and alcohol) are perceived as less acceptable than noncontroversial products. Differences as a function of product class have been demonstrated in more recent research as well in that Sung, de Gregorio, & Jung (2009) found that the practice was perceived as less acceptable for products such as guns, cigarettes, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, and feminine hygiene items compared with relatively value-neutral products such as automobiles, electronics, and cameras. It should be noted, however, that consumers’ views regarding the acceptability of advertising differ across product categories as well (Barnes & Dotson, 1990; Gupta & Gould, 1997); thus, it is likely that consumer attitudes about the use of product integration for controversial products would be similar to their beliefs about the use of any marketing communications for these products.

There is mounting evidence that consumers’ attitudes regarding the acceptability of product integration differ as a function of the venue in which the integration resides. As noted previously in this chapter, product integrations are appearing in a number of different media, including novels, songs, music videos, and video games, as well as the traditional venues of movies and television shows. Some recent research has considered the acceptance of the practice in different media. A study by Nelson, Keum, and Yaros (2004) indicated that brand integrations in computer games were generally perceived positively by game players as such placements

* It should be noted that much of the academic research on product integration has been among samples of U.S. consumers. The acceptance of the practice has been shown to vary across counties (Eisend, 2009).
were considered to add realism to the games. Sung and de Gregorio (2008) found that consumers' attitudes regarding placements in video games and songs were generally positive, but more negative than for integrations in the traditional venues of television and movies. Furthermore, they showed that for each medium, consumers' attitudes about the appropriateness varied as a function of genre. In television, for example, product integrations were perceived as more appropriate for reality shows and situation comedies than for dramas and cartoons. Placements in hip-hop, pop, and country songs were perceived as more appropriate than in classical, Christian, or jazz genres.

**STUDIES INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRODUCT PLACEMENTS**

The most active area of academic research on product integrations relates to the effects of placement on viewers. The effects have generally been considered in terms of memory (recognition and recall), evaluation of the brands, and purchase intention. A 1994 study by Ong and Meri found that recall of placed brands was weak for many of them. Babin and Carder (1996a) found that product integration was mixed with respect to making brands salient to viewers, and this study found no effect of the viewing of product placements on brand evaluations. In another study by Babin and Carder (1996b), the researchers investigated the ability of viewers to recognize brands they saw in a movie they just viewed, and to distinguish these from brands not in the film. Results showed that, in general, respondents were able to differentiate between brands that were in the movies they saw and brands not seen. Vollmers and Mizerski (1994) found that recall of brands in clips of a movie was very high, but there was no apparent effect of the integrations on the attitude toward the brands.

These early studies on the effects of product integration yielded mixed results with respect to the recall or recognition of brands placed in films; these studies generally showed weak or nonexistent effects of placements on brand evaluations. The mixed and weak results of these early studies on effectiveness are, in part, because these studies generally failed to recognize the multidimensional nature of product integrations. That is, they tended to treat all product integrations as similar, regardless of modality.
(visual or verbal), level of plot connection, context, and seamlessness. In any area of study, the nature of the inquiries become more sophisticated as the field matures. This appears to be true for investigations related to product integration in that more recent endeavors have attempted to consider these complexities of the practice.

Gupta and Lord (1998) conducted a study that compared the effectiveness of product placements of different modes (visual, audio) and prominence of the placement, using recall as the measure of effectiveness. The results showed that prominent product placements were remembered better than advertisements, but advertisements were remembered better than subtle placements. Explicit audio product placements were remembered better than subtle visual placements. Brennan, Dubas, and Babin (1999) investigated the relationship of type of placement (prop or more integral to the story) and exposure time with recognition of the integration. Their results showed that integrations more central to the story were remembered better. The effect of exposure time was a little less clear. Exposure time did not relate to recognition for background placements, but there was some indication that length of exposure was related to recognition for placements that were more central to the story.

Although recent research continues to suggest that differing levels of brand integration do lead to differences in levels of brand recognition and attitudes toward the brand (Yang & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007), some cautionary considerations are warranted. Homer (2009) found that repetition of prominent brand placements can impact brand attitudes negatively, but not so with more subtle placements. Van Reijmersdal (2009) found that more prominent placements have a positive impact on memory, but a negative impact on brand attitudes. Yoon, Choi, and Song (2010) showed that consumers' attitudes toward a brand are more positive when a placement is seamless than in instances when the placement appears more intrusively. Furthermore, recent research has shown that the context of the placement in terms of the information value of a program (Van Reijmersdal, Smi, & Neijens, 2010) or the character that uses the product (Van der Waldt, Nunes, & Stroebel, 2008) can have effects on consumer attitudes. These findings point to the complex and nuanced nature of the practice of product integration. More exposure may, in general, be better for a brand, but it may depend on the extent to which it is done carefully and seamlessly.

In recent years, the research on product integration has continued to develop and take on new questions as the practice expands. For example,
research is beginning to emerge on the effectiveness of product integrations in different media. Mackay, Ewing, Newton, and Windisch (2009), as well as Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker (2010), have investigated the effect of product integration in computer games. Delattre and Colovic (2009) considered brand placements in songs, and Brennan (2008) focused on the integration of brands in literature. Research has also continued with respect to important questions related to product integration, such as the ways in which these marketing communications are processed (see Chapter 4).

**CONCLUSION**

In recent decades, there has been an increase in the use of product integration as marketers attempt to find new ways to communicate with their customers. Moreover, there has been a proliferation of venues in which such integrations have appeared. In addition to the traditional media of movies and television, product integrations are now populating video games, novels, songs, and music videos. Although many marketing practitioners seem to have an intuitive understanding of how product integrations may work, until recently academic research had lagged behind in discovering how product integrations operate as a form of marketing communications. Studies conducted over the last 20 years or so are showing promise in terms of a systematic understanding of the practice. In particular, the most recent academic endeavors have acknowledged the complexity of the phenomena of product integration. Many of these studies have moved us further along in our understanding of the psychological processes relevant to the effectiveness of product integrations in a variety of circumstances.

**REFERENCES**


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