Chapter 5

The Influence of Immersion on Product Placement Effectiveness:
A Synthesis and Review of Product Placement in Traditional and Digital Media

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ABSTRACT

With a focus on the factors that determine the effectiveness of product placements, we compare the use of product placements in traditional and digital media. Despite the enthusiastic use of product placements in both forms of media, research has not provided conclusive results as to the effectiveness of this form of marketing. After reviewing the factors that alter product placement outcomes, we present a conceptual model designed to highlight the processes that we perceive as altering the consequences of product placements. We presume that whether or not a product placement results in positive consequences for an embedded brand depends on a combination of influences that stem primarily from the degree of a consumer's immersion within the media experience. The highly stimulating and self-directed nature of digital media is predicted to produce profitable consequences for embedded brands, making it a prosperous venue for marketers to utilize to feature their brands.

INTRODUCTION

Brands have been integrated within culture narratives for non-promotional purposes as early as Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), within which the *Pickwick* carriage line was featured (Newell, Salmon and Chang 2006). Now, brand integration, or product placement, has become an increasingly popular alternative to conventional advertising. The expectation is that global investment in product placement marketing strategies will increase from $3.46 billion in 2004 to an estimated $6.94 billion in 2009 (PQ Media 2005).

The source of this trend toward rapidly increasing investment in the placement of brands within entertainment media is both due to a change in marketing strategy and new developments in media technology. The more subtle appearance of a brand within entertainment narratives effectively circumvents consumers' resistance to the influence of advertising on their brand preferences and brand choices. Such resistance is more likely to occur in response to more overt forms of advertising (Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan 2006). Moreover, recent technological advancements (e.g., *TiVo*; the availability of television programs online) have given viewers the opportunity to avoid traditional forms of marketing, such as advertisements that are broadcasted during television commercial breaks (PQ Media 2005). As a consequence of these developments, there has been a proliferation of product placement in contexts ranging from motion pictures and television programs to children's learning books (e.g., *The M&M's Brand Counting Book*; Neer 2003), best-selling novels (e.g., *Bulgari*, the Italian jewelry company, sponsored Fay Weldon to feature the brand in the title of her novel, *The Bulgari Connection*; Neer 2003), and video games (e.g., in *CSI 3: Dimensions of Murder*, *Visa*'s fraud-protection service alerts players to a stolen credit card, providing an essential clue for solving a murder mystery; Brown 2006).

Accompanying this growing ubiquity of product placements is the lack of a comprehensive understanding as to its effectiveness at increasing consumers' choice of a brand over its competitors. Indeed, in some cases, product placements have been controversial enough to negatively influence consumers' attitude toward a brand, without any corresponding influence on their actual purchasing behavior. For example, the authors of the best-selling novel, *Cathy's Book: If Found Call 650-266-8233*, recently disclosed that they described characters as wearing specific makeup lines by *Cover Girl* in exchange for promotional ads for the book on *beinggirl.com*, a website aimed at adolescent girls and owned by *Cover Girl*'s parent company. However, pressured by the public and media's criticism of both the brand sponsor and the book's publisher, the book's authors removed all product placements from the book in its newer release. Nevertheless, there was no evidence that the public's negative reaction to this instance of product placement translated into lower sales either of the book or of *Cover Girl* products (Rich 2008). Despite the staggering amount of money spent globally on the embedding of products within entertainment media, this type of incident raises questions as to whether such marketing strategies necessarily translate into changes in consumer behavior.

A growing body of literature reveals that brand placements do not inevitably convey a benefit to the brand with respect to the most relevant outcome variables; consumers' evaluation of a brand over its competitors (i.e., brand attitude) and their actual choice of the brand among competing alternatives (i.e., brand choice; e.g., Cowley and Barron 2008; Law and Braun 2000; Russell 2002). Furthermore, measures of product placement effectiveness commonly rest upon the presumption that a product placement is effective if the experience of encountering a brand within entertainment media is memorable. That is, marketing experts often use success in later remembering a product placement event as a surrogate for the effective-

ness of that event in promoting increases in actual purchasing behavior. If the viewer remembers having encountered the brand within some entertainment medium, the assumption is that the brand will reap the benefits and the viewer will be more likely to select that brand in the future (Babin and Carder 1996; Gupta and Lord 1998). Contrary to this assumption, the evidence suggests that the memorability of product placement experiences do not consistently translate into enhancements of either consumers' brand attitudes or their tendency to select a brand amongst its competitors. In some studies, enhanced memory for a product placement event was found to have a positive relationship with brand attitude (e.g., Russell 2002; Vollmers and Mizerski 1994), whereas, in other studies, enhanced memory for a product placement event was found to have either a negative effect on brand attitude or had no influence on brand attitude at all (Bhatnagar and Wan 2009; Cowley and Barron 2008; Law and Braun 2000; Matthes, Schemer, and Wirth 2007). Clearly, complex associations exist between characteristics of a product placement experiences, the memorability of product placement experiences, and the critical outcome measures of consumers' brand attitudes and brand choices. Consequently, marketers cannot reasonably justify the vast resources currently spent on product placements prior to achieving a sophisticated understanding of how these critical factors relate to one another.

In this chapter, with a primary focus on the factors that determine the effectiveness of product placements, we provide a comparison of traditional and digital media. We define traditional media as media that has been presented in the form of "text and pictures in books and magazines and on radio and TV stations in a way that allowed audience members to attend to a presentation or not" (Vorderer 2000, p. 22). In contrast, we define digital media as media that utilizes new technology (i.e., computers) and "offers their users an opportunity to not only select specific content and respond to it, but also to modify the content that is presented

to them" (Vorderer 2000, p. 22). A critical difference between traditional media and digital media experiences is the degree of consumers' involvement and immersion. We posit that consumers' level of interaction with traditional media generally takes the form of passive involvement and is less absorbing compared to their level of interaction with digital media. As a consequence of the relatively high level of viewer-directed interaction with digital media, we suspect that consumers' attention may be more distracted from product placement events that occur in that context than product placements embedded within more traditional media (see also Glass 2007; Vorderer 2000; Yang, Roskos-Ewoldsen, Dinu, and Arpan 2006). In turn, our expectation is that viewers' distraction from product placement events within digital media would impair their future ability to explicitly recall details of those product placement events. As counterintuitive as it may seem, we suggest that the failure to explicitly recall details of product placement events will often convey more benefits to the featured brand than product placement events that are more explicitly memorable.

During exposure to digital media, the viewer may experience this higher level of immersion most strongly while engaged in online games. Even so, we suggest that other forms digital media, such as browsing content-driven or community-building websites (e.g., blogs, *YouTube* videos, and *FaceBook* pages), are uniquely immersive as well. Hence, an understanding as to how the processing of product placements differ when presented in the context of traditional versus digital media must accommodate for this difference in the viewers' level of engagement. The effectiveness of a single product placement event may well depend on which of these two media categories acts as host to that event. Before turning our attention to the use of product placement in digital media, we will first discuss the use of product placements in traditional media and the evidence that has demonstrated the effectiveness of these product placements.

PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Up to now, the most common method for evaluating the effectiveness of product placements within traditional media have focused on the memorability of the brand featured in the product placement event. Such research often reveals that product placements do enhance future recall of information related to the embedded brand (e.g., Babin and Carder 1996; Gupta and Lord 1998). Nevertheless, a number of studies also reveal that only a tenuous and inconsistent association exists between product placements' role in enhancing memory for brand-related information and enhancement of viewers' evaluation and/or actual choice of the brand among competing alternatives. Research indicates that the association between viewers' future success in remembering a product placement experience and their subsequent evaluation and/or choice of the brand can be negative (Law and Braun 2000), positive (Weaver and Oliver 2000), mixed (Russell 2002; Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2007), or absent altogether (van Reijmersdal, Neijens, and Smit 2007).

For example, research by Law and Braun (2000) emphasized the complexity of using memory measures as a gauge of the effectiveness of product placements. In their study, participants were presented with short video clips that contained products that were seen-only, heard-only or audiovisual (both seen and heard). Their results revealed that the presentation of audiovisual products led to the best performance on subsequent memory measures (recall and recognition measures), but unfavorable outcomes in the brand choice task. In contrast, the presentation of seen-only products led to the poorest performance on the recognition task, but the most favorable choice outcomes. Supporting Law and Braun's initial findings, other researchers have confirmed that factors promoting enhanced success in remembering a product placement experience can result in negative outcomes for the brand, both

with respect to the viewers' attitude toward the brand and their likelihood of choosing the brand among alternatives (e.g., Auty and Lewis 2004; Matthes et al. 2007).

Despite these observations demonstrating that a negative association can exist between the memorability of a product placement event and the viewers' brand evaluations and/or brand choices, other studies suggest that this association can be positive in some instances. Weaver and Oliver (2000), for example, found that exposure to a product placement event both improved recognition scores and enhanced attitude ratings for a brand that appeared in a clip from a television show. Russell (2002), however, found both a positive and negative relationship between memory measures and attitude ratings for embedded brands. In her study, Russell explored the impact of product placement modality (audio vs. visual presentation) and the degree of association between the product placement event and the plot of the sitcom in which the event occurred. The outcome was that both of these factors interacted in complex ways when contributing to both memory and attitude ratings. For auditory placements, the product placement was more likely to be remembered later than for visual placements, regardless of the placement's connection with the plot. Moreover, these auditory placements resulted in the most favorable brand evaluations when the product was highly connected with the plot. In contrast, visual placements resulted in the least favorable brand evaluations when the product placement was highly connected with the plot. Notwithstanding these findings, a recent study by van Reijmersdal et al. (2007) obtained no evidence of an association between memory measures of a product placement event and the favorability of participants' evaluations for the featured brand.

Together, these investigations of the consequence of product placement events within traditional media contexts suggest that a complex relationship exists between characteristics of the product placement event, later success in remem-

bering that event, and the consequences of the product placement for viewers' brand evaluations and purchasing choices. Later in this chapter, we will closely examine the role that various factors play in determining the effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of product placement events. In the next section, however, we will provide a brief overview of current industry trends and previous research that has examined the use and effectiveness of product placements in digital media.

PRODUCT PLACEMENTS IN DIGITAL MEDIA

Although inconsistent results as to the effectiveness of product placements in traditional media makes it difficult to formulate a unified conceptual model of product placement that could be applied to product placements embedded within digital media, we speculate that digital media may be a more consistently effective outlet for product placements. Already, product placements are on the rise in digital media outlets, having been increasingly embedded within blogs, *YouTube* videos, *FaceBook* pages, and online games. Kuchinskas (2004) has reported that *Marqui* recruited bloggers to mention their brand in exchange for a substantial monetary incentive. A new software application, *SplashCast*, allows members of *FaceBook* to post videos on their page that advertisers can modify by placing their brand. Viewers of the video may then select the featured product from a link, which brings them into contact with more information about the brand or to pages that provide the viewer with an opportunity to buy the product (Shields 2008). *Sprint Nextel* has reportedly offered $20 for the first 1,000 *YouTube* videos that somehow incorporates their new *Samsung* phone (Admin 2008). A recently developed website, *PayPerPost.com*, provides a means for advertisers to contact bloggers that they wish to insert product placements within their websites. Similarly, *brandfame.com*

offers a service that both producers and advertisers can use to promote consumers' access to their marketing videos on video-sharing websites, like *YouTube*. Such efforts to take advantage of the product placement opportunities that exist within digital media environments are likely to continue, or even accelerate, in the future.

Given the highly stimulating and self-directed nature of digital media consumption, we expect that consumers tend to become more absorbed and engaged into the media consumption, compared to when merely passively viewing traditional media. In this way, we expect that the immersive processing that occurs when interacting with digital media will promote a basic similarity between viewers' experience of product placements within digital media and their experience with more conventional advertising campaigns that employ a narrative. Marketing a brand by building an engaging story around it, rather than engaging directly in arguments as to the strengths of the brand, has been found to promote forming an association between the brand and positive affect (Green and Brock 2000; Sujan, Bettman, and Baumgartner 1993) and reduces the consumers' engagement in critical thoughts about claims made about the brand (Green and Brock 2000, Escalas 2004, 2007). Presumably, the viewers' engagement into the story stimulates positive emotional responses that can be transferred onto the brand and distracts viewers from developing criticisms of the brand's quality and desirability. Likewise, our expectation is that the immersive quality of consumers' interactions with digital media will convey similar positive outcomes for product placements embedded within those media. In particular, due to the viewers' active engagement in digital media experiences, product placements within those contexts should generally benefit from: 1) positive associations generated by the viewers' interactions and 2) a reduction of the amount of resources that the viewers has available. As with narrative forms of advertising, enjoyment of the digital media experience itself

may convey some positive affective associations onto the brand that appears in that context. At the same time, the high level of mental resources demanded by active engagement with digital media ought to minimize the resources available for viewers to become aware of the marketing strategy embodied by the product placement and should reduce their capacity to engage in negative thoughts either about the brand or about the product placement strategy (Li, Daugherty and Biocca, 2001, 2002, 2003; Nicovich 2005; Wirth et al. 2007; Wright 2002).

In support of these predictions, Lee and Faber (2007) found that the level of immersion influenced the effects of product placements that occurred within online games. When online game players were required to allocate more cognitive resources to playing the game, these players showed low levels of recall for brands that appeared in the online game. That is, players who were inexperienced showed lower levels of recall for the embedded brand, compared to players who were experienced. Moreover, when experienced players where highly involved with the online game, they also performed poorly on a subsequent brand recall task. Unfortunately, evaluative and choice measures were not collected for this study, so the impact of immersion on these measures still needs to be specified. Nevertheless, product placements that are embedded within highly immersive environments, such as digital media, ought to produce more positive evaluative and choice outcomes for embedded brands than product placements embedded within more passively-viewed environments, such as traditional media. Given these predictions, product placements within digital media may provide a most promising venue for marketers to feature their products. In contrast, decisions about whether to pursue product placements within some form of traditional media ought to follow considerations about the viewers' level of engagement within that media experience.

Although we suspect that product placements within digital media will be more consistently effective at enhancing consumers' brand attitudes and the likelihood of choosing a brand among alternatives, these ideas have yet to be rigorously tested. In consequence, we perceive the research literature on the effectiveness of product placements within both traditional and digital media to be quite sparse, particularly when considering the enthusiasm and extravagance with which companies pursue costly product placement initiatives. In the next section, we seek to provide a theoretical foundation for future research on the factors that promote effective product placement events. Our approach treats a single product placement event as not necessarily valuable either for increasing sales of a brand or increasing consumers' positive evaluation of a brand. Instead, we presume that whether or not a product placement event will result in positive consequences for the profitability of a brand will depend on a combination of influences that stem primarily from the degree of a consumers' immersion within the media experience. In subsequent sections of this chapter, we identify several factors that are known to be important in determining the consequences of a product placement event for brand memorability, brand evaluations, and brand choices. What this review of the literature reveals is that factors that enhance memorability of a product placement event will also tend to reduce consumers' evaluations and likelihood of choosing the featured brand. In combination, this research also reveals that high levels of immersion in a media experience will also tend to lower the memorability of a product placement event, producing benefits for a brand on the dimensions of consumers' evaluations of the brand and their choice of the brand among alternatives. We end the chapter by describing a conceptual model designed to highlight the processes that we perceive as giving rise to this negative association between product placement memorability and brand evaluations/choices. In particular, we use this conceptual model

to illustrate our expectations as to why product placements that occur within digital media should tend to be more effective at enhancing sales of a featured brand than product placements that occur within traditional media.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE THE CONSEQUENCE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

The Role of Consumer Presence on Product Placement Outcomes

Presence refers to the psychological feeling of being located and acting within a mediated environment, rather than the true environment in which an individual is located (Grigorovici and Constantin 2004; Li et al. 2001, 2002, 2003; Nicovich 2005; Wirth et al. 2007). In other words, presence is loosely defined as the perception of being in the media in which an individual is viewing. Although presence occurs, to some extent, for all forms of media, presence is expected to be highest for digital media experiences. Presence will be enhanced for digital media because of the immersive nature of this type of media. That is, digital media provides viewers with the opportunity to interact with the media (i.e., actively search the internet for particular websites) and incorporates a number of senses (i.e., visual, auditory and kinesthetic sensations may be involved when playing an online game), which contribute to enhancing a sense of presence when exposed to product placements that occur within this type of media (Wirth et al. 2007).

Research that has examined the impact of immersion within digital media has found support for the importance of this factor in influencing brand evaluative and choice outcomes. Li et al. (2002) found favorable outcomes for products that were advertised using immersive digital 3D advertising. These favorable brand outcomes were found to be driven by the increased sense of presence that

occurred for products that were presented using 3D advertising. Furthermore, the highly immersive nature of digital media environments has been found to also impact the outcomes of product placements. Grigorivici and Constantin (2004) examined the effectiveness of product placements that occurred within a 3D world that induced a feeling of presence in the viewer. Although Grigorivici and Constantin found that viewers performed poorly on recognition and recall tasks, they did show a more favorable preference rating after brand exposure.

Similarly, research by Nicovich (2005) found the participants who were involved with an interactive computerized video game reported positive ratings of advertisements that occurred during the video game.

Thus, although the feeling of presence may interfere with brand-memory performance, presence appears to produce positive brand-evaluative outcomes for product placement that occur within both traditional and digital media. We suspect that immersion and the feeling of presence results in poor memory performance for featured brands, but favorable evaluative outcomes because of the cascading affect that presence has on persuasion knowledge and memory. That is, to maintain the feeling of presence, cognitive resources are allocated to the processing of information that enhances the media experience. As a consequence, cognitive resources that may have been otherwise used to elaborate upon the brand and activate persuasion knowledge are not available; hence, the memorability of the brand will be low, but the evaluative and choice outcomes are expected to be favorable. We elaborate upon this notion by describing how persuasion knowledge and memory processes are influenced by the feeling of presence in the sections that follow.

Persuasion Knowledge

According to the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM; Friestad and Wright 1994), an event is perceived as being a persuasion attempt if the

target (i.e., the viewer or the consumer) has accumulated sufficient persuasion knowledge to identify an agent (i.e., a marketer or a salesperson) as engaging in a persuasion tactic. Given that product placements are being used more frequently as a deliberate strategy by marketers, it is likely that viewers are becoming more aware of product placement events as a form of a persuasion attempt. As a result, viewers may discount the use of the brand within the media context as a motive for purchasing that brand in the future or they may discount the character that is using the product as a true endorser of it. Moreover, they may allocate cognitive resources to processing the brand and become disengaged, frustrated, or annoyed with the medium in which the placement occurs (Bhatnagar and Wan 2009; Friestad and Wright 1994). Recent studies provide evidence for the negative impact that persuasion knowledge has product placement outcomes (Cowley and Barron 2008; Matthes et al. 2007; Russell 2002). Although such product placement events that attract cognitive resources in this way may be memorable, the viewer can react by punishing the brand with lower evaluations and a lower likelihood of purchasing the brand in the future.

Providing more direct evidence of the impact of activating persuasion knowledge, Wei, Fischer, and Main (2008) found that, within a radio broadcast, awareness of a product placement event tended to produce less favorable evaluations for the featured brands. However, listeners' evaluations of brands that were high in familiarity or that were highly congruent with the content of the radio broadcast were not negatively affected by the activation of persuasion knowledge. Moreover, when the product placement event was stated as being a deliberately paid placement by the brand, listeners evaluated the brands more favorably than when listeners were aware of product placement events that were more subtle. This result suggests that negative brand evaluations are most likely to occur when consumers become aware of a product placement event that is meant to be subtle.

Presumably, persuasion knowledge activation is most damaging to brand evaluations when it occurs during what consumers perceive as covert instances of product placement.

We suggest that the level of presence is critical in determining whether or not the activation of persuasion knowledge occurs. Just as narrative processing in advertising has been found to increase positive affect (Green and Brock 2000; Sujan et al. 1993) and reduce critical thoughts (Green and Brock 2000, Escalas 2004, 2007), we expect that the high sense of presence generated by an immersive media experience will minimize viewers' awareness of the persuasion tactics represented by a product placement event (see also Campbell and Kirmani 2000). Due to constraints on cognitive processing, immersion within a media experience will make processing resources less available for becoming aware of persuasion tactics. Consequently, media experiences that are highly immersive will be more immune to the negative consequences commonly associated with persuasion knowledge activation, resulting in comparatively more positive consequences of the product placement event for enhancing consumers' brand evaluations and their tendency to choose the brand over its competitors (Campbell and Kirmani 2000; Friestad and Wright 1994; Wright 1974). As discussed above, digital media experiences ought to be particularly suited for maximizing the effectiveness of product placements, because such experiences generally demand a higher level of consumer immersion and promote a greater sense of consumer presence than traditional media experiences.

Memory

Although past research indicates a complex relationship between the impact of a product placement on brand-related memory and brand evaluative and choice outcomes, we maintain that memory plays a critical role in influencing the relationship between exposure to a product placement and

brand evaluations and choice. We speculate that the nature of the relationship between memory outcomes and evaluative and choice outcomes is dependant on the content of the information that is remembered. By considering how the content of the information remembered from a product placement event alters brand evaluations and selections, we deviate from the approach used in prior research, which has focused on brand-related memory outcomes as being independent from evaluative and choice outcomes. When the medium is not highly immersive, viewers will elaborate upon and remember brand-related information. This allocation of cognitive resources will, therefore, carry forward to negatively impact evaluative and choice outcomes (Auty and Lewis 2004; Law and Braun 2000; Matthes et al. 2007). However, when the media is highly immersive, viewers will experience an enhanced feeling of presence (Grigorivici and Constantin 2004), and will, accordingly, be more inclined to process information related to enhancing their media experience. As a consequence, memory for media-related information will be enhanced, which has been found to positively affect brand attitude and choice (Escalas 2004, 2007). Digital media experiences are expected to result in poor remembering if brand-related information (Grigorivici and Constantin 2004) accompanied by good remembering of media-related information, making them apt for producing positive brand evaluations and selections.

The Role of Product Placement Prominence on Product Placement Outcomes

Another factor that has been previously shown to play an important role in impacting the effectiveness of product placement in traditional media is the prominence of the brand in the media in which it appears. A fairly consistent finding from traditional media is that more prominent brands placements result in better performance on memo-

rability measures, but less favorable brand attitude ratings (Cowley and Barron, 2008; Matthes et al. 2007) or a lower likelihood of choosing the brand among alternatives (Auty and Lewis 2004; Law and Braun 2000). However, other studies suggest product placement prominence produces mixed memory and attitude results (Russell 2002; Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen 2007), or positive results for both product placement memorability and attitude ratings (Weaver and Oliver 2000). Thus, the prominence of a product placement event can produce different outcome matrices, composed of measures of brand memory, brand evaluations, and brand choices.

Initial research within a digital media context by Grigorovici and Constantin (2004) found that brands that were presented obtrusively in the form of billboards within a virtual reality scene were more likely to be remembered, compared to brands that were presented as integrated product placements within the scene. Adding to and qualifying these findings, Lee and Faber (2007) found that memory for brands that appeared focally within an online game were more likely to be remembered, compared to brands that appeared more peripherally. However, this finding was qualified by the interaction between the prominence of the placement, the players' level of experience and involvement. That is, prominently displayed brands were more likely to be remembered by all groups of players, except for experienced players who were highly involved with the game. The authors suggested that this finding indicates that experienced players who were highly immersed in the experience were intensely focused on completing the game, and, therefore, did not have cognitive resources available to process even prominent, centrally-displayed brands.

Despite the frequently poor future remembering of brands featured in digital media product placements, as reported by Lee and Faber and others (e.g., Chaney, Lin, and Chaney 2004; Grigorovici and Constantin 2004; Nelson 2002), memorability of the featured brands improve

when the brand is highly integrated into the digital medium, as with online advergames in which the brand plays an integral role in the game (Winkler and Buckner 2006). Thus, the memory outcomes that result from the impact of the prominence of the product placement support the propositions outlined in our conceptual model. Mainly, when brands are integrated with the media that a viewer is exposed to, viewers tend to remember the brands, which may lead to less favorable evaluative and choice outcomes. In contrast, when brands are presented peripherally, viewers are less likely to remember those brands, which may lead to more favorable evaluative and choice outcomes. Given the different impact that prominence has on brand memorability, evaluative and choice outcomes, it is essential that marketing practitioners deliberately specify the wanted outcomes of using a product placement in order to eschew outcomes that may not be the goal of the product placement.

The Role of Product Placement Modality on Product Placement Outcomes

Another factor that has demonstrated its role in determining the effectiveness of product placements within traditional media is the modality in which the brand appears in the placement. In line with Paivio's (1986) dual coding theory, Law and Braun (2000) found that audiovisual items were best remembered. This advantage was thought to arise because the information was stored as both visual and auditory information. However, the relationship between memorability outcomes and evaluative and choice outcomes appears to be qualified by the congruence between the modality and the prominence of the placement (Russell 2002). That is, since auditory information perpetuates the development of the plot, subtle product placements are incongruent and prominent auditory product placements are congruent with this type of placement. In contrast, since visual information provides the background information

for the plot, prominent product placements are incongruent and subtle visual product placements are congruent with this type of placement. As a consequence of the match between modality and prominence, incongruent information would be expected to receive an atypically high amount of cognitive processing, where as congruent information would not be expected to receive any additional cognitive processing. Indeed, Russell (2002) found results that supported these hypotheses. Mainly, prominent auditory product placements were found to be remembered and to be more favorable evaluated by the viewers. However, prominent visual product placements were found remembered well also, but to be less favorably evaluated by the viewers. These findings emphasize the importance of considering how various factors may interact with one another and, in turn, determine the effectiveness of the product placement event. Nevertheless, the underlying factor that appears to determine product placement effectiveness is the manner in which cognitive resources are allocated. Allocation of cognitive resources away from the product placement event will reduce the memorability of brand, but, ultimately, lead to more favorable evaluative and choice outcomes.

With respect to digital media, to date, there have not been any studies that have examined the specific impact of modality on the effectiveness of product placements. Despite this gap in the literature, the propositions that are outlined in our conceptual model may provide a guideline for practitioners and researchers who are interested in examining the moderating role of modality in the effectives of product placement in digital media. That is, product placements that attract a high amount of cognitive resources would be expected to result in improved memory performance, but lead to less favorable brand evaluations and less favorable outcomes regarding consumers' tendency to choose a brand among alternatives. Of course, given the difference in the way a user interacts with digital media, the relationship that has been

found for modality with traditional media may not be found for digital media. Since many forms of digital media utilize visually rich media, perhaps visual information is treated as more integral to digital media experiences, compared to auditory information. As a consequence, the interaction between modality and the prominence of the product placement may be found to vary depending on the type of media in which the product placement is embedded. Since this proposition has not been tested, investigating the role of product placement modality in digital media would be insightful for both consumer psychology researchers and marketing practitioners.

The Role of Product-Medium Fit on Product Placement Outcomes

The extent to which a product fits within the content of a media experience is known to be an important factor that determines effectiveness of product placements. Lee and Faber (2007), for example, found that inexperienced online game players were more likely to remember product placements that were irrelevant to the tasks required by an online game than were experienced game players. Lee and Faber suspected that inexperienced players are relatively less able to selectively process only information that is related to performing well in the game. As a result, game-irrelevant product placements will be processed by these players, but will tend not to be processed by experienced game players, who are more proficient at selectively attending to only game-relevant information. Findings from other research by Nelson (2002) also supports the notion that incongruent or atypical product placements tend to be better remembered than congruent, or typical, product placements. Despite the greater memorability of incongruent product placements, based on the conceptual model developed in this chapter, this outcome is expected to translate into less favorable evaluation and choice outcomes for the featured brand.

The Role of Consumers' Past Brand Experience on Product Placement Outcomes

Consumers' preconceived notions about brands that appear as product placements may impact the effectives of product placements. Nelson (2002), for example, found that recall for brands embedded within a video game differed depending on the player's previous experience with the brand. Specifically, brands that were relatively novel were more likely to be recalled, compared to more familiar brands. More recently, Wei et al. (2008) presented participants with a clip from a radio broadcast that was manipulated to contain either a familiar or unfamiliar brand. Wei et al. found that evaluations of the familiar brand were favorable, even when participants were aware of the persuasion tactics that were being employed. Thus, the negative effects of activating persuasion knowledge were reduced when consumers had some preexisting knowledge about a brand that appeared as a product placement.

In combination, Nelson's (2002) and Wei et al.'s (2008) findings suggest that although familiar brands that appear in a product placement might be less likely to be remembered, these brands appear to be protected from negative outcomes that may result from activating persuasion knowledge. Possible reasons that highly familiar brands are more effective candidates for product placements is that they are less likely to be remembered by the consumer and may be more integrated with the content of the media experience than less familiar brands (Balasubramanian et al. 2006). In consequence, brand evaluations and choice of a brand will be enhanced for familiar brands even while memorability for the product placement experience is relatively poor. Nevertheless, whether a product placement strategy will be useful for an unfamiliar brand may depend on the objectives of the marketing campaign.

Returning to a recurring theme in this chapter, marketing practitioners should weigh the value

of making a product placement event memorable against the potential cost of consumers' awareness of the product placement causing the activation of persuasion knowledge. In turn, this persuasion knowledge could have negative consequences for other key measures of product placement effectiveness. If the main objective of a product placement is to enhance brand awareness, featuring a less familiar brand in that way might be useful, since memorability of the brand will tend to be higher than for brands that the consumer has less familiarity. Even so, featuring a less familiar brand in a product placement event poses some risk that enhanced memorability of the product placement event will also be associated with lower brand evaluations and a suppressed tendency to actually purchase the brand.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT EFFECTIVENESS: TRADITIONAL VERSUS DIGITAL MEDIA

Throughout this chapter we have provided a review of the literature that describes various outcomes of product placements in both traditional and digital media. The overwhelming finding from this review is that factors that enhance the memorability of a product placement event will also tend to reduce consumers' evaluations and likelihood of choosing the featured brand. In our conceptual model (see Figure 1), we attempt to integrate these findings by outlining factors that alter the manner in which a product placement event is perceived by a viewer.

Foremost among these factors is the degree of consumers' immersion within the media experience. When consumers are highly immersed with the media, as with digital media, we expect that cognitive resources will be allocated to processing information related to enhancing their media experience. In contrast, when consumers are passively viewing media, as with traditional media, we expect that consumers will have cognitive resources available to process brand-related information. The consequence of the availability of cognitive resources when viewing immersive versus non-immersive media influences whether consumers elaborates upon and remembers media-related or brand-related information. The difference between the content of the product placement event that is
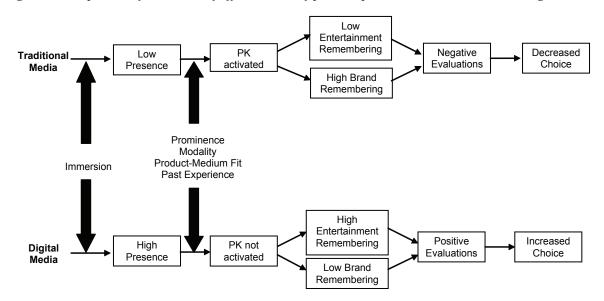
Figure 1. Comparative framework of effectiveness of product placement in traditional vs. digital media

remembered by the consumer after viewing immersive versus non-immersive media ultimately affects the consumers' evaluations of and choice of the featured brand.

In addition to the impact that immersion has on moderating the effectiveness of product placements, the impact of other factors were discussed in the preceding section. Across these additional factors, the underlying cognitive processes that influence the effectiveness of the product placement event are expected to remain the same. Mainly, when cognitive resources are available and allocated to processing brand-related information, evaluations and choice of the featured brand will suffer. However, when cognitive resources are not available and allocated to processing media-related information, evaluations and choice of the featured brand will be prosperous.

Based on our conceptual model, product placements that occur within digital media are expected to produce particularly positive brand evaluations and increase the likelihood of consumers selecting the featured brand. Mainly, consumers who view digital media are expected to become more immersed with the media experience. This increased immersion is expected to induce the feeling of presence and the processing of information related to enhancing the media experience, which, in turn, depletes the consumer of cognitive resources that may have been used to activate persuasion knowledge. Consequently, consumers' will display poor memorability for the brands that are featured during a product placement event. Importantly, however, this poor memorability of the embedded brand is expected to lead to more favorable brand evaluations and increase consumers' choice of the brand. Given the potential profitable outcomes that are predicted by our conceptual model, presenting brands within digital media offers a promising venue for marketing practitioners to pursue to increase the profitability of their brand.

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