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# Baby Boomers' Attitudes Towards Product Placements

By Nicole M. Schmoll, John Hafer, Michael Hilt, and Hugh Reilly

**Abstract:** Including branded products within mass media programming is becoming common. Previous research has focused almost entirely on college-age students' attitudes about placements in movies and television. This research focuses on Baby Boomers and is the first to include questions about multiple media in forming attitudes towards product placements. Six hypotheses were tested. Attitude toward product placement is related to media consumption. Males appear more positive than females. Interactions effects of media consumption x gender and media consumption x age appear insignificant. Analytical results, graphs, tables and managerial implications and representative comments from respondents are presented.

## Introduction

Product placements have been defined as “the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming” (Karrh 1998, p. 31). Russell (1998) has proposed three types of placements: visual, verbal and plot placement. Visual placement, or “screen placement,” simply integrates the brand visually into the background. A verbal placement refers to the brand being mentioned in the dialogue. Plot placement occurs when the product becomes part of the plot, taking a major place in the story line or building the persona of a character...[and] consists of any combination of visual and verbal components (1998, p. 357).

What was at one time a sporadic practice based on bartering agreements, product placement is now a vehicle for “multi-million-dollar integrated promotional campaigns” (Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003, p. 138). Long having been established in the motion picture industry (Turcotte 1995), product placements are becoming increasingly common in video games, music videos and novels (Chang 2003; Karrh 1998; Shanahan 2001). As early as the 1920s product placements were used in radio programs. The practice of product placement within the feature film industry traces its origins to the 1930s when U.S. tobacco companies paid movie stars and athletes to endorse their brands (McKechnie and Zhou 2003). It was not until the 1970s that placements shifted from bartered agreements to paid inclusions (Balasubramanian 1994); however, FedEx, for example, did not pay to be featured in the 2000 movie, *Castaway*, directed by Robert Zemeckis, but it did supply airplanes, trucks, packages and uniforms for the movie and FedEx CEO Fred Smith was an investor in the movie's production company (Friedman 2004). The quintessential example of unpaid-for product placement is Reese's Pieces candy, which rocketed to stardom after appearing in Steven Spielberg's *E.T.*:

“The father of modern product placement was a wrinkled alien...tempted out of hiding with a pack of little-known American sweets called Reese’s Pieces. The confectionery brand’s sales skyrocketed by an alleged 66% after the release of the picture.” (Mortimer 2002, p. 22).

Bob Gamgort, president of Masterfoods USA, which produces the candy, commented that their best placements cost them little or nothing. Gamgort describes a placement of MandM’s candy in the President’s jet on the popular television drama, *The West Wing*, as a decision made by the show’s producers to mimic reality. The real Air Force One, in fact, carries customized boxes of MandM’s on board (Peebles 2003). Another example of unpaid-for product placement is the inclusion of a Saab automobile as a focus of an entire episode on the hit sitcom, *Seinfeld*. Elke Martin, director of Corporate Communications for Saab, USA stated that “it would be very difficult to quantify that [placement] since a 30-second commercial in the show costs \$500,000” (ERMA Web site, paragraph 11). A final example comes with *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, released in July 2004. In this film, two young men drive around for hours, encountering a variety of obstacles as they try to get to White Castle for some “sliders” to satisfy their marijuana-induced craving for cheap hamburgers. An article in the Wall Street Journal reports that “having its name splashed across theaters in a summer movie aimed squarely at its core young male customers could be worth millions of dollars to White Castle” (Marr and Vranica 2004, p. B2). “Warner Bros. Domestic Television is cutting new deals to graphically insert products into TV reruns... using digital technology, they can add any product to a scene or scenes in a re-run TV show. Warner Bros has called this process ‘digital branded integration’ and has already signed deals with CPG brands. Off-network shows targeted are *Will & Grace* and *The Drew Carey Show*”(Johannes 2005).

Daytime television actively pursues product placements as well. ABC made a deal with Revlon to weave the cosmetics company into an ongoing plot development. The deal featured Revlon as a rival to lead character Erica Kane’s Enchantment Cosmetics company, on ABC’s *All My Children*. Revlon reportedly spent somewhere between \$3 million and \$7 million to run ads during the soap opera commercial breaks. In return, it was featured in the plot for three months, with frequent on-air mentions (Stanley 2003).

Product placement is a booming \$1.5 billion business (Galician 2004; Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003; McKechnie and Zhou 2003; Mortimer 2002; Karrh 1998; Turcotte 1995), due in part to the revitalization of the movie-going experience and growth in DVD sales (McKechnie and Zhou 2003). In addition to film and television, product placements can be seen in a variety of other entertainment formats. Product placement is a popular trend in music videos as a means of establishing “street credibility” (Chang 2003, p.18). According to Chang, every record label is pursuing paid product placements, largely because placements can drive down the production cost of a video by 25% to 50%. Chang writes that this trend is “especially true in the image-conscious hip-hop world, where the link between artists and brands is much more pronounced” (2003, p.18). Marketers sometimes favor placing their product in music videos over films because the shorter turnaround time for videos allows them to respond more quickly to potential audience demand.

Today, games are a multi-sensory, virtual reality experience and Americans’ favorite leisure time activity, surpassing even movie going and reading books (Nelson 2002). Americans spent an average of 64 hours playing video games in 2002, which is double what was spent with games seven years ago (Delaney 2004). Activision, a leading game maker, got advertisers such as Samsung, Nokia and PowerAde to spend \$10 million on in-game product placements in 2003, and expects its advertising revenue to grow to \$100 million by mid-2005 (Banerjee 2004). DaimlerChrysler recently discovered when it was able to obtain names and email addresses from 250,000 interested customers by offering them a free downloadable video game called *Jeep 4x4: Trail of Life* on its web site (Delaney 2004). They sold hundreds of the limited edition Wrangler Rubicon to individuals who downloaded the game.

Product placement has even made its way in novels, an area previously thought untouchable by intentional advertising. Shanahan writes that the “book industry has been one of the teeny little corners of the media free of sponsors’ plugs and pitches” (2001, p. 38), until now. Author Fay Weldon changed that with her book, *The Bulgari Connection*, where Weldon was paid an undisclosed sum by Bulgari to feature the Italian jewelry company in its own tailor-made novel (Shanahan 2001). The book was actually a “sponsored novel” which involved more than mere droppings of products into a preconceived plot. More recently, another British author, Carole Matthews, struck a deal with Ford of Britain to change the heroine’s car in her best-selling novel, *The Sweetest Taboo*, from a Volkswagen Beetle to a Ford Fiesta for the paperback edition of her book (Wernle 2004).

### *Social Construction of Reality*

The concern by advertisers and creative producers for product placements to enhance the reality of an entertainment medium, whether it is movies, television, music videos or video games, raises questions about how this practice can be viewed in light of the Social Construction of Reality theory. This theory has three main tenets at its core: “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, p. 61). Social Construction of Reality theory argues that each individual is born into a world where others teach them what reality is. These “others” can be parents, religion, teachers, friends or even, as researchers Lang and Lang (1984) have posited, television. Perhaps more than any other medium, television’s use of close-ups and live coverage of events gives viewers a sense of familiarity with distant or otherwise unknown people and places (Lang and Lang 1984). Pioneering research done by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) offers just one example of a study proving that children learn about how other people live by watching television. Additionally, George Gerbner’s content analysis of violence portrayed on television during 1967 and 1968, performed for the Media Task Force’s Nonviolence Commission National Survey, revealed that most Americans’ conception of violence was based solely on what they saw on television (Gerbner and Gross 1976). These studies offer just two examples where television can be seen as a constructor of social reality. Researchers Solomon and Englis (1994) extend the Social Construction of Reality to include product placements. They argue that product placements are a form of reality engineering constructed by advertisers, saying, “audiences who treat mass media images as reflections of reality may be said to have their realities engineered by marketers” (p. 1). Solomon and Englis further argue that any environment where consumption of information occurs is a possible vehicle for reality engineering through product placement. As viewers watch a movie, television show or music video, or even play a video game, they may be unaware that what appears to be a reflection of reality is really a manufactured construction reflecting a change of goods and services between an advertiser and a celebrity or creative producer.

### *Purposes of This Research*

The first purpose of this paper is to focus on an unstudied segment of entertainment consumers, Baby Boomers, who make up one third of the population, control 20% of the nation’s financial assets and 50% of all discretionary income. Extensive research on attitudes toward product placement has been published using students or college-age subjects but no studies have addressed the attitudes of Baby Boomers, a group whose economic power and influence in the marketplace cannot be ignored.

The second purpose is to investigate the relationship between media consumption and attitude toward product placement. Gupta and Gould (1997) laid the foundation for this inquiry when they found there was a direct relationship between frequency of movie watching and positive attitude toward placement. But like most previous studies, their work was limited to movie consumption. Other authors have centered on TV programs (Hart 2003; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993), but the growth of product

placements has now extended to video, books, games, and DVD/video and internet pages. This research will develop a total media consumption metric that will include numerous media vehicles rather than focusing on just one media.

The third purpose is to determine if there is any gender x media consumption interaction effects. Gupta and Gould (1997) found significant differences between men and women when “ethically charged” products were considered, but to date, an investigation on media consumption, product placement attitudes and gender differences was not uncovered when searching the literature. Such an investigation should provide useful information to advertisers and strategists. Faced with the reality of a segmented audience, advertisers are embracing product placements as a more effective way to generate brand recall and ultimately, influence purchasing decisions than traditional advertising (Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003).

We will briefly review the literature focusing on attitudes toward product placement. The justification for centering on Baby Boomers will follow. This will lead to the research hypotheses. Following that, a discussion of the survey instrument and of the sample will set the stage for the results and discussion of the findings. Limitations of the research and suggestions for further research will complete the paper.

### **Attitudes Towards Product Placement**

“Attitudes are predispositions towards action made up of emotional reactions (affective), thoughts and beliefs (cognitive), and actions (behavioral) components about or towards people and things used to evaluative of people, objects and ideas. Strength of attitude increases with accessibility and knowledge about the topic in question. Attitudes are often learned from other people and are often a defining characteristic of groups...” ([http:// changingminds. org/explanations/theories/ attitude.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/attitude.htm) citing Eagly and Chaiken [1993], Eagly and Chaiken [1998], Fishbein and Ajzen [1975]).

Research has shown that attitude does influence brand and/or product recognition, attitude and purchase intention (Babin and Thompson-Carder 1996; Karrh, Firth and Callison 2001; Gibson and Maurer 2000; Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Krauter 2000; Gupta and Lord 1998; Baker and Crawford 1995). However, Morton and Friedman (2002) cite research on the measured benefits of placements on awareness have been reported as high as 38% on day-after recall (citing Steortz 1987) but only 11% on exit interviews of moviegoers (citing Ong and Meri 1994) and that recall depends on whether the placement was verbal only, visual only or both, and, on general product category familiarity (citing Saberwhal, Pokrywczynski and Griffin 1994; Karrh 1994; Brennan, Dubas and Babin 1999). People who had more positive attitudes toward Internet apparel shopping had greater intention to purchase apparel through the Internet (Eunah, Damhorst, Sapp and Laczniak 2003).

Uncles et al. (2003) suggest there is a rich literature supporting the attitude-drives-behavior contention. From the attitude side, advocates aim to increase sales by enhancing beliefs about the brand and strengthening the emotional commitment of customers to their brand. “Advocates on the behavioral side suggest that most consumers have split-loyalty portfolios of habitually-bought brands and marketing communication acts more as publicity that sustains awareness and offers reinforcement, rather than as highly persuasive information that fundamentally changes their attitudes and/or levels of commitment (Ehrenberg et al. 1998),” (Uncles, Dowling, Hammond 2003, p. 297). An extensive review of the literature led Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) to conclude, “...different people respond to different advertisements in different ways, depending on their involvement. Although attitudes correlate poorly with behavior, possibly because of cognitive bias... affect is relatively more important in low-involvement and non-elaborate situations. Cognitive and affective beliefs may be independent in these

circumstances (Wilson et al. 1989),” (1999, p. 34). Advertising is widely recognized as a form of persuasion, defined as “symbol manipulation designed to produce action in others” (Brown 1958, p. 299). In the case of product placement, advertisers desire that their products be given the most positive flattering treatment possible so that their brands will be associated with contentment, happiness or prestige in consumers’ minds and this will ultimately lead to positive attitudes carrying forward to product purchases (Morton and Friedman 2002), but research also suggests there is no relationship between product placements and self-reported purchase behavior (Tiwsakul, Hackley and Szmigin 2005). Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) provide an extensive review of how advertising works. They observed, “...the so-called ‘mere exposure’ theories, suggests that awareness of the advertisement is not necessary, though awareness of the brand is. According to this approach, consumers form their preferences on the basis of elements such as liking, feelings, and emotions induced by the advertisement or familiarity triggered by mere exposure to the advertisement, rather than product/brand attribute information (Batra and Ray 1986; Gardner 1985; Holbrook and Batra 1987; Janiszewski and Warlop 1993; Mitchell and Olson 1981; Shimp 1981; Stuart, Shimp, and Engel 1987; Zajonc 1980, 1984; Zajonc and Markus 1982)” (Vakratsas and Ambler 1999, p. 32). Regarding ad or brand affectivity Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) go on to say, “Both the cumulative effect of liking and its correlation with sales seem to generalize empirically, but not uniformly. The ARF copy research project (Haley and Baldinger 1991; Joyce 1991) and the study on U.S. prime-time commercials by Biel (1990) suggest that ad likeability is correlated positively with behavior (preference). However, Hall and Maclay (1991) and Stapel (1987) suggest that the influence of ad likeability on brand preference is not strong. Brown (1991) suggests that ad likeability has a long-term effect” (1999, p. 33). This is appropriate for research on product placement because placements are subtle and some would say subliminal forms of advertising which provide no brand information as such, only exposure. And, in the case of TV programs, games and videos, exposure is repeated and often long-term in nature. Thus if mere exposure can create likeability and likeability leads to sales but the influence of likeability does not have a strong influence and requires long-term exposure, product placements would then seem a viable tactic to influence sales. The viewer repeatedly gets a low level exposure to a brand which has little impact, but the repetition of that exposure, literally daily for years in the case of a long running TV program, can have the cumulative influential effect on sales sought after by the advertiser. This raises a level of involvement-attitude-behavior issue alluded to in an earlier cite of Vakratsas and Ambler (1999), stating that different people respond differently depending on their level of involvement.

Nordhielm (2002) addresses level of involvement in conjunction with perceptual fluency/misattribution (PF/M) theory (for a more in-depth presentation of PF/ M theory, she refers readers to Bornstein and D’Agostino 1994; Jacoby et al. 1992; Mandler, Nakamura, and Van Zandt 1987). She defines perceptual fluency as

“the ease with which people perceive, encode and process stimulus information. According to this model ...people often experience increases in their perceptual fluency following stimulus exposure, they generally lack insight into the true cause of such experiences. This is particularly evident in cases of short exposure durations, where respondents might not even remember the prior exposure. In these instances, they can misattribute the cause of their perceptual fluency to any variable that happens to be salient at that moment and can be perceived to be a plausible source of the perceptual fluency. That is, not only do respondents misattribute perceptual fluency as liking but they also appear to misattribute such fluency to nonaffective, descriptive variables as well.... The PF/ M model assumes that if respondents were able to identify the true cause of their enhanced perceptual fluency, they would attribute this fluency to the appropriate cause (past exposure) instead of mistakenly attributing it to liking for the stimulus (Bargh 1992). Thus, any factors that might restrict respondents’ ability to identify the true source of enhanced perceptual

fluency presumably should increase the likelihood that misattribution will occur. For example, if exposure durations are extremely short, respondents should be more limited in their ability to ascertain how frequently they had seen a particular stimulus and would therefore be more likely to misattribute perceptual fluency as liking for the stimulus. Therefore, the PF/M model accounts for the research finding described above, namely, that increases in affective response should actually be stronger when exposure durations are shorter” (Nordhielm 2002, p. 373).

### The results of her experiment

“...suggest the existence of a feature repetition effect, whereby consumers’ affective reactions to products that appear in ads can be influenced by how frequently they have been exposed to a specific feature of that advertisement. Participants’ liking for and intention to purchase an unfamiliar product was greater when the product was displayed against an ad background they had viewed previously a relatively high rather than low number of times. When stimuli are processed in a more shallow fashion, the influence of repeated exposure extends not only to affective response, but to a non-affective descriptive variable as well...Furthermore, observed trends in the advertising environment suggest that increasing clutter will likely constrain consumers ability to process advertising messages more deeply (Ha and Litman 1997; MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991). These factors have lead to a growing interest in incidental ad exposure. For example, Shapiro (1999) examines the level of processing that occurs during incidental ad exposure and the processing effects of such exposure...Examples of ad features that are likely processed in a more shallow manner included logos, typefaces, and ad backgrounds.

One key issue is how time influences the relationship between feature repetition and affective response. Research that has investigated perceptual and conceptual priming suggests that the effects of prior exposure on affective response can actually last as long as one year when the stimuli are processed in a shallower manner, whereas when these stimuli are elaborated upon, these positive effects can diminish within as little as a few minutes (Roediger and McDermott 1992). Hence, repeated exposure to a feature that lends itself to deeper processing may result in wear-out and hence negative affect, but this negative response may dissipate within a relatively short period of time. In contrast, the influence of prior exposure to features that have been processed in a shallower manner may persist for much longer...An individual’s motivation or ability to process a particular feature is limited, he or she may process it consistently in a shallower manner, regardless of that feature’s semantic content. On the other hand, a feature with seemingly little semantic content, such as the Nike “Swoosh,” may become invested with semantic content over time by virtue of the fact that it has been repeatedly associated with certain images and messages. It is also important to note that, although the two levels of processing, shallower and deeper, are presented as separate conditions, it is clearly possible that, with increasing exposure, a respondent may switch from one level of processing to another. For example, a viewer may initially only process the perceptual features of an unfamiliar logo in a more shallow manner, but increasing exposure may cause this viewer to begin to elaborate on certain elements of the logo that may have some symbolic meaning. Hence, although these two levels of processing are examined here as distinct, it would seem important to consider whether and when a respondent might move from one level of processing to another,” (Nordhielm 2002, pp. 373-379).

The Figure 1 labeled as “Nordhielm’s Figure 2” is a reproduction from Nordhielm (2002, p. 382) and graphically shows the magnitude of the relationships she found.

While lengthy, including the specific quotation from Nordhielm suggests a powerful argument supporting the use of product placements and, arguably, the reason for success. If her research is generalizable, product placements would qualify as shallow-processed inclusions and as incidental ads to the movie, TV program, game or DVD in which they are imbedded. Nordhielm’s findings imply that mere low-level exposure but frequent exposure will lead consumers to an affective response to the brand, product, logo,

or slogan. This affective response emanates from a positive attitude the consumer may not be able to necessarily trace back to any point of origin such as a specific traditional ad or subtly imbedded placement... "I don't know why I like it better, I just do."

If there is an involvement-attitude-behavior linkage, Nordhielm's findings indicate even very low level involvement may have powerful effects on attitude and that the affective misattribution would appear to not necessarily be traceable back to any specific product or brand feature which could have been the subject of a traditionally presented ad spanning 15 to 60+ seconds of viewing time. Turning to previous research specifically on product placements, numerous studies of college students' attitudes towards product placements in movies reveal that subjects do not oppose the practice of product placement (Siegel 2004), and some even prefer it to traditional forms of advertising because it, by and large, does not interrupt their entertainment content (Karrh 1998). McKechnie and Zhou (2003) summarized the findings of fourteen research studies between 1993 and 2001, concluding, "Overall, it can be seen that most studies cited... found respondents to have a positive attitude towards product placement generally, although some studies did indicate other findings such as low recall rate, no increased purchase intention and the perception of product placement being potentially deceptive" (p. 351). It should be noted that ten of the fourteen studies cited by McKechnie and Zhou (2003) used only college students, or college-age students, as subjects and the other four identified their subjects as "movie goers." Karrh left the door open for future research, "while college students found a general acceptance of brand Figure 1 Nordhielm's Figure 2 placement... it remains an open question whether the views of college-aged samples – likely a media-savvy group – are shared by other parts of the population" (Karrh 1998, p. 38).

Gupta and Gould (1997) hypothesized that "consumers who more frequently watched movies would be more likely to find product placements acceptable across products than consumers who watch them less frequently" (p. 39). This was based on their assumption that frequency was directly related to enjoyment and "grounded in a congruity approach in which self-concept and various functional aspects of consumption (e.g., product, store) are matched on relevant attributes (Sirgy, Johar, Samli and Claiborne 1991). Therefore, we assume a match in self, movie and product placement attributes" (p. 39). In our research, we would make the same well supported assumptions, but we are broadening the scope to go beyond movies and including TV, music videos, video games and the Internet, and, to focus on an unstudied and economically significant segment, Baby Boomers.

### *Mass Media Consumption*

Media consumption has been generally defined in previous research in terms of frequency. It has been a self-report of frequency of watching TV or movies (Gupta and Gould 1997). For this research, consumption is defined as the degree of agreement with the question "I frequently \_\_\_\_\_." In the case of movies, the statement was completed with "watch movies in theaters." The question was similarly completed for TV programs, music videos, video games and accessing Internet websites. The variable created, MEDIACON, and its calculation, will be explained later.

Previous researchers have focused their attention on movies and to a lesser degree on TV but have not addressed music video, video games or the Internet. No attempt was made to define the term "frequently." Gupta and Gould (1997) found there was a positive relationship between movie watching frequency and attitude toward specifically identified products. McKechnie and Zhou (2003) found that among their sample of American student respondents, frequent movie watchers found product placements more acceptable than infrequent movies watchers, but in their sample of Chinese (PRC) students this was not the case. They conclude, "In both studies, there was evidence of a product/movie-watching interaction for certain product categories, where the more frequently a consumer watches movies, the greater the



likelihood of a higher acceptability of product placement for that product category” (2003, p. 366). Thus, they introduce the notion of an interaction effect, as opposed to only a direct effect, a direction this current research will follow and explain in a later section of this paper. Based on the above background, we would propose to test the following null hypothesis:

H1: There should be no relationship between media consumption and attitude toward product placement.

### *Ethical Sub-dimension of Attitudes Toward Product Placement*

If Nordhielm’s work reflects a general condition, a product placement is arguably as effective, if not more effective, at getting a positive-attitude-positive-response outcome than traditional 15-, 30- or 60-second spots because it does so at a nearly subconscious level during the content the viewer has chosen to consume. But unlike a traditional ad, viewers do not escape, cannot escape, nor want to escape, this kind of advertising by changing the channel, leaving the movie, stopping the game or shutting down the web site since they do not recognize it as “advertising,” and they may be even more likely to buy a product because they see a character they identify with use it in a realistic setting (Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003). The low-level awareness at which product placements often occur may be below the viewer’s radar or, if not, happen so fast or so infrequently the viewer cannot or will have either the time nor inclination to react. If advertisers can weave their products into viewers’ most watched and beloved programs, movies, games, web sites, etc. in a seamless fashion, they may be able to persuade consumers to buy their product without even making a recognizable pitch and this has raised an ethical concern voiced by some researchers (Atkinson 2003; Davidson 1996).

Most studies find respondents have positive attitudes towards product placements, except in the case of ethically-charged products such as alcohol or tobacco (Gupta and Gould 1997; Karrh, McKee, and Pardun 2003; McKechnie and Zhou 2003), but critics of product placement charge the growing practice with deceptively luring consumers into purchase decisions through covert tactics of persuasion (Atkinson 2003; Davidson 1996). In March of 2002, Lauren Bacall appeared on the NBC “Today” Program, telling Matt Lauer about a good friend of hers who became blind from a disease known as macular degeneration. Bacall then mentioned a drug, Visudyne, which had been shown to be an effective treatment for the disease. What Bacall failed to mention was that she was paid by Novartis, the Swiss drug company that produces Visudyne, to do a plug for the product on national television (Petersen 2002). Ethical questions have been raised about the deceptiveness of drug companies using celebrity endorsements without making the public aware that the celebrity is being paid for the message they’re spreading (Turner 2004). In his article entitled “When Does Creativity Become Deception?” Davidson describes product placements as falling into an “ethical spectrum” (1996, p. 12). He argues that most placements are benign, such as substituting a can of Coke for a can of brown soda, and therefore, though deceptive, pose no threat of harm to the viewer. There are other placements, though, that are questionable. Davidson offers the example of questionable product placement when an actor in a doctor’s gown to appear in its advertising about some over-the-counter drug because viewers could be deceived into believing they were receiving [authoritative] medical advice rather than a promotional message (1996, p. 12). Tiwsakul, Hackley, and Szmigin (2005) sampled British TV viewers and found 58% of the respondents felt they were being “subconsciously” influenced by product placements and 34% feeling such influence to be unethical. Fifty-two percent “considered product placements as disguised commercial advertising” (p. 103).

Those who defend the practice of product placement as ethical (Turcotte 1995) argue that studios regulate themselves. This was an arguable point in the 1980’s and 1990’s when a study on the appearance of

branded cigarettes in the 250 top-grossing movies released between 1988-1997 reveals that 85% of films reviewed contained both screen appearance and actor endorsement of major cigarette brands including Marlboro, Camel, Winston, Lucky Strike and others, and that 4% of those appearances occurred in G-rated movies (Sargent, Tickle, Beach, Dalton, Ahrens, and Heatherton 2001). Given the arguments for and against product placements as being ethical, the following null hypothesis is offered:

H2: Media consumption should have no significant relationship to the ethical sub-dimension of attitudes toward product placement.

### *Gender Differences*

Gupta and Gould (1997), studying a student sample in the United States, and McKechnie and Zhou (2003), studying student samples in both the U.S. and China, found significant differences between genders for ethically charged products. However, they tested attitudes towards products, not toward product placements in general and only in a movie-going environment. It is widely recognized that women are a primary target for consumer product promotions because they are the primary purchasers (Skoloda 2005). Product placements are most frequently consumer products. It is logical to assume that product placement marketers are most interested in effecting the attitudes and subsequent behaviors of women, or at least knowing differences do, or do not, exist between male and female targets. Gupta and Gould (1997) hypothesized a significant gender x product interaction (p. 39, H3) and “given a significant gender x product interaction, males will be more likely to accept ethically charged products than females” (p. 39, H4). Since our research does not focus on products but on product placement in general and media consumption, given this foundation we would test the following hypothesis:

H3: There should be significant gender x media consumption interaction effect on attitudes toward product placement.

Previous research has established that men have more positive attitudes and beliefs toward ethically charged products (McKechnie and Zhou 2003; Gupta and Gould 1997; van Roosmalen and McDaniel 1992). Should H3 be supported this previous line of research would suggest the next hypothesis:

H4: Given a significant gender x media consumption interaction effect, men will have a more positive attitude toward product placements than women.

### **Why Select Baby Boomers**

The existing research has produced numerous pieces over the last twenty years focusing on student samples or student-aged samples (McKechnie and Zhou 2003). As previously cited, several of the authors suggest studying other age groups and several specifically suggested samples of “older” people. Despite the growing body of research concerning the practice of product placement, more diverse age populations need to be surveyed for their reactions to and interaction with product placement (Avery and Ferraro 2000; Karrh 1998). Morton and Friedman (2002) suggested their finding based on data from college student advertising classes may introduce a bias. Tiwsakul, Hackley and Szmigin (2005) and McKechnie and Zhou (2003) recommend research expand to alternative age groups and/or diverse educational levels.

An ideal population to study would be adults born between 1946 and 1964 known as Baby Boomers (El Nasser 2004; Fry 2004; Harmon, Webster, and Weyenberg 1999). At nearly 80 million strong, Baby Boomers make up one third of the U.S. population, control 20% of this nation’s financial assets and hold 50% of all discretionary income (Fry 2004). In addition, prevailing attitudes of this population suggest that they favor self-sufficiency, hard work and having an optimistic view of the future (Fry 2004; Gusman 2004).

This age group is important to advertisers for many reasons including, but not limited to, the amount of discretionary income they possess (Strum 2002), as well as their favorable attitude towards spending and consumption (Haynes 2004). As marketers argue for more products to be directed towards Baby Boomers (Crain 2004), it is of value to know what this critical segment of consumers thinks about product placements since it is an increasingly popular advertising practice. Therefore, studying Baby Boomers is beneficial not only because their attitudes towards product placements have not yet been examined, but also because findings related to this age group are arguably more extendable to the general population. Baby Boomers are credited with setting social and marketing trends, and are described as “affluent, mobile, interested in consuming; they respond to changing trends and are advertising literate” (Haynes 2004, p. 31). Baby Boomers have been shown to be more concerned than younger age groups with financial planning, health and leisure activities (Harmon, Webster, and Weyenberg 1999; Moschis, Lee, Mathur, and Strautman 2000). In regards to media consumption and preferences, reports have shown that Baby Boomers are the first generation to be raised on television, and they continue to cite television as their primary source of entertainment (Paul 2003). As they age, Baby Boomers appear to embrace new forms of media. “Boomers have proven to be open and easily adaptable to new technologies and media, be it cable TV, digital TV or the Internet” (Paul 2003, p. 24), and as they age, Baby Boomers appear to embrace new forms of media as well (Hilt and Lipschultz 2004, 2005). In fact, AARP, formerly the American Association of Retired Persons, reported that 10% of their members contact the organization via the Internet, which is 50% higher than the level doing so in 2003 (Levey 2004).

However, since the focus of this research is admittedly limited to persons born between 1946 and 1964, it is reasonable to expect little differences to exist on attitude toward product placements based on age. Previous research on college-aged student samples has not attempted any type of intra-group age analysis since the samples in those studies are even more narrowly focused. Given only a span of eighteen years between the youngest and oldest Baby Boomer, we would hypothesize:

H5: There will be no significant relationship between age and attitude toward product placement.

H6: Given the previous hypotheses, there should be no interaction effects between attitudes toward product placement and respondent's age x media consumption.

### **Survey Instrument**

The seventeen-question survey used in this study draws on the one developed by Gupta and Gould (1997) in their study on the ethical acceptability of product placements among a sample of college students. Responses to the questions were formatted “Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree.” Five questions were replicated directly from the instrument created by Gupta and Gould (1997). The sixth taken from Gupta and Gould was altered slightly from Gupta and Gould's original statement where their word “movie” was replaced with “television show.” The remaining items were developed for this study and are conceptually based on items used in previous studies (Gupta and Gould 1997; Karrh, Frith, and Callison 2001; McKechnie and Zhou 2003; Morton and Friedman 2002). However, none of the previous studies asked respondents to identify their opinions about product placements in media other than movies or television shows. For this reason, additional questions addressed subjects' consumption frequency of, and attitudes towards product placements in video games, music videos and web sites on the Internet. Two additional questions were included to ascertain subjects' level of concern towards product placement in general. The final two questions measured respondents' usage of and attitudes towards product placements in television. Four questions probed the respondents' relative frequency of media consumption (example: “I frequently watch movies in theaters.” Foils: Strongly Agree–Strongly Disagree). Ten questions probed attitudes toward product placements and will

be referred to hereafter as the PPAS (Product Placement Attitude Scale: see Appendix 1). Initial analysis investigated respondents' general attitude toward product placements. The ten-question PPAS had a mean of 31.5 and standard deviation of 5.06 and mode of 31. The response range was 12-50 in a possible range of 10-50. PPAS was normally distributed showing the respondents to be fairly indifferent, that is, few respondents lying outside the  $\pm 1$  standard deviation unit range. The skewness statistic was .124, the distribution is slightly skewed to the right, and the kurtosis statistic was 1.4.

Following the closed-end questions, respondents were given the chance to respond to an open-ended solicitation for comments. There was no leading question to respond to, simply a statement asking them to share any additional comments they might have. The final section asked for demographic information: age, gender, education, ethnicity and number of children.

Media consumption ("MEDIACON") was calculated by summing the responses to five questions regarding frequency of media consumption ("I frequently go to movies;...watch television...watch music videos...play video games...use the internet web sites for entertainment.") As with the other questions, the foils were Strongly Agree (Coded "5") through Strongly Disagree (Coded "1"). The higher the MEDIACON score, the greater the media consumed. MEDIACON's mean was 14.3 (potential scale range=5-25; actual range from respondent data was 5- 23;  $s=3.36$ ; median=14; mode=13).

### *Factor Analysis*

The PPAS was factor analyzed and the resulting produced three components and subsequent rotation sharpened the distinction between the resultant components. Varimax rotations produced the clear threefactor solutions. Factors 1, 2 and 3 explained 55% of the variance. Of the ten items, four were reverse scored questions (see Table 1). Items 1-2 in Table 1 are the "Reality Dimension," items 3-6 are the "Compensatory Dimension," and items 7-9 are the "Ethical Dimension." Item ten in Table 1 splits across all three factors and is therefore not considered as significantly loading on any of the three factors. In further analysis of sub-dimensions of the PPAS, item 10 it not used. Item 10 is included in any analysis involving the scale in its entirety. Factor 1 labeled "Reality Factor" explained 31.2% of the variance. Factor 2 labeled "Compensatory Factor" accounted for 12.9% of the variance and factor 3 labeled "Ethical Factor" accounted for 11.1% if the variance.

### *Reliability*

Reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) was calculated via SPSS 10.0 on the entire ten-item PPAS instrument and on the sub-dimensions identified from the factor analysis. The ten-item internal reliability was  $\alpha = .74$ . For the "realism dimension"  $\alpha = .72$ ; "compensatory dimension"  $\alpha = .65$ ; for the "ethical dimension"  $\alpha = .61$ . The Cronbach's  $\alpha$ 's fall within the acceptable limits as identified by Bearden, Netermeyer, and Mobley (1993). Given the focus of this research, only the ethical sub-dimension will be considered for further analysis.

### **Sample Characteristics**

The researchers identified a convenience sample of Baby Boomers working for an insurance company in a major Midwestern city. A listing of all employees in the age range specified above revealed the enumeration to be 305 qualified employees. Surveys were distributed through the company mail system. The recipient packet included a cover letter, the survey and a return envelope. A total of 264 completed surveys were returned, an 87% response rate. Seventythree percent of the respondents were female, 27% were male. The average age was 47 ( $s=5.2$ ).

### **Results**

Prior to hypothesis testing, correlation analysis was performed to test for independence between variables. The correlation summary is shown in Table 2. The correlation table identifies media consumption and PPAS score to be significantly correlated ( $r=.255$ ;  $p<.00$ ) and the age-ethical sub-dimension significantly correlated ( $r=.149$ ;  $p<.05$ ). It also identifies no significant correlation between age and media consumption suggesting independence between these two variables and makes them acceptable candidates for inclusion as independent variables in the hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis H1 stated that there should be no relationship between media consumption and attitude toward product placement. The results of the regression analysis lead to rejection of H1 ( $t=4.27$ ;  $p<.000$ ;  $F(1, 261)=18.2$ ;  $p<.000$ ;  $r^2=.06$ ;  $\beta_{(std)}=.255$ ). This suggests there is a significant relationship between media consumption and attitude toward product placement and that these two are directly related.

Hypothesis H2 said media consumption should have no significant relationship to the ethical subdimension of attitudes toward product placement. Regression results suggest rejection of H2 ( $t=-2.86$ ;  $p<.004$ ;  $F(1, 261)=8.27$ ;  $p<.005$ ;  $r^2=.03$ ;  $\beta_{(std)}=-.175$ ). There is a significant relationship between the respondents' ethical dimension of the PPAS and the media consumption variable.

Based on the literature cited, previous research results lead to stating in H3 that there should be significant gender x media consumption interaction effect on attitudes toward product placement, i.e.,  $PPAS=f(MEDIACON, Gender, MEDIACON \times Gender)$ . The regression results suggest rejection of H3 interaction effect as well (Tables 3 and 4). When considering the gender variable, media consumption and the interactions, MEDIACON does not enter the equation significantly ( $t=.059$ ;  $p<.953$ ). Gender does not appear significant ( $t=-.954$ ;  $p<.341$ ). Finally, the interaction is not significant ( $t=1.43$ ;  $p<.155$ ). This information implies that from this sample, attitudes are toward product placements are gender neutral. This is not refuting the findings of Gupta and Gould (1997) nor McKechnie's and Zhou's (2003) since the focus in those studies was on specific types of products, not the general concept of product placements as a means of promotion. The findings here would lead one to consider that while there are gender differences, especially with ethically charged products, neither men nor women exhibit any differences in their attitudes toward product placements as a promotional tool. What is promoted is of concern. The fact that products are promoted via placements is not.

H4, "Given a significant gender x media consumption interaction effect, men will have a more positive attitude toward product placements than women," was conditional on the results of H3. Though H3 was not accepted, further analysis was done and MEDIACON data was manipulated to create two subsets, "heavy" and "light" consumers (Variable name=NMEDIACO) similar to McKechnie's and Zhou's (2003) method. MEDIACON scores of less than or equal to the median of 14 were recoded as "Light" consumers ( $n=121$ ), those with MEDIACON scores above 14 were recoded into the "Heavy" users category ( $n=142$ ). Univariate ANOVA analysis showed a significant gender main effect ( $F(3, 259)=3.24$ ;  $p<.07$ ) and a significant media consumption main effect ( $F(3, 259)=7.05$ ;  $p<.008$ ) but the interaction effect did not materialize ( $F(3, 259)=.840$ ;  $p<.360$ ); see Table 5.

An illustration of the gender relationship described above is shown in Figure 2. Heavy consumers, regardless of gender, have a more positive attitude toward product placements than do light consumers (Mean PPAS<sub>(Heavy)</sub>=32.4; Mean PPAS<sub>(Light)</sub>=30.8;  $t=-2.6$ ;  $p<.01$ ). In this sample, females generally had lower mean PPAS scores (mean<sub>(female)</sub>=31.2) than their male counterparts (mean<sub>(male)</sub>=32.5;  $t=1.9$ ;  $p<.06$ ). One note of caution should be mentioned at this point. Such results may hinge on the fact that the number of female respondents outnumbered the male respondents by almost three to one and would there have been more males in the sample, these results might have been somewhat different. This smaller portion of the sample could have contributed to the greater variation observed in the male subset. While the H4

hypothesis was stated on the given condition of a gender x media consumption interaction which did not take place, the suspicion that the males in the sample would have a more positive attitude toward product placements appears to be the case in this sample.

H5 hypothesized that there would be no significant relationship between age and attitude toward product placement (PPAS). The results indicate that H5 cannot be rejected ( $t=-1.51$ ;  $p<.132$ ;  $F_{(1,254)}=2.284$ ;  $p<.132$ ;  $r^2=.009$ ;  $\beta_{std}=-.094$ ). Previous research has generally been confined to an extremely narrow range embracing a college student population. Tiwsakul, Hackley and Szmigin (2005) studied a sample of 50 respondents but 92% ranged in age between 18 and 35 but they did no analysis on the age variable. Similarly, McKechnie and Zhou (2003) worked with samples comprised of 89%+ 18-25 year olds and like Tiwsakul, Hackley and Szmigin (2005) reported no findings relating to age. This research has a somewhat broader range of eighteen years, and for that reason, age was scrutinized. These results indicate that age simply is not a factor in favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward product placement.

The final hypotheses, H6, stated that there should be no interaction effects between attitudes toward product placement and respondent's age x media consumption. Previous research has not investigated such a relationship. The regression results lead to accepting H6, the null hypothesis ( $t=-.297$ ;  $p<.767$ ;  $r^2=.064$ ;  $\beta_{std}=-.176$ ). Table 6 summarizes the findings.

To further determine the relationship between media consumption and attitudes toward product placements, Pearson's product-moment tests of correlation were run on all compared items to see if means varied significantly together, or separately, and in what direction. Results were separated by media format (i.e., movies, television, music videos, video games and Internet web sites) and responses examined accordingly. Findings were broken down by the above listed media formats and analyzed for significance.

Television, as expected, had a high consumption rate. Seventy-three percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they watched television frequently. Analysis revealed a significant relationships between the statement, "I watch television frequently"(Q8) and the statement, "The presence of brand-name products in a TV show makes it more realistic" (Q9). Pearson's product-moment test of correlation indicated a significant positive correlation between the frequency question Q8 and realism question Q9 ( $R=.138$ ,  $p<.026$ ). The frequency question, Q8 and the script question, Q10 did not achieve a significant correlation value ( $R=.059$ ,  $p<.338$ ).

Subjects who more frequently consumed movies should also be more approving of product placements in movies. Q1 ("I prefer to see real brands in movies rather than fake or fictitious brands") and Q7 ("I frequently watch movies in theaters") asked respondents specifically about their attitudes towards product placements in movies and revealed that subjects were evenly divided in their responses to Q7 with nearly 40% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they frequently watch movies in theaters and 43% said they did not frequently watch movies in theaters. Pearson's product-moment test of correlation was run on Q1 and Q7 ( $R=.243$ ,  $p<.000$ ) achieved significant correlation levels. Subjects who frequently consume movies are just as likely as those who do not to approve of the placement of branded products in the movies they view.

Question eleven ("It is okay for musicians to be paid to wear or use brand-name products in their music videos") and Q12 ("I frequently watch music videos") asked subjects specifically about their attitudes towards product placements in music videos and asked them how often they watch music videos on television. A test of frequencies revealed 70.8% do not frequently watch music videos. Although there was a clear majority of subjects who do not frequently watch music videos, Pearson's product moment test revealed a significant correlation in the positive direction between the two items ( $R=.247$ ,  $p<.000$ ).

Once again, the subjects who less frequently watched music videos approved of the use of product placements in them.

Video gaming on the computer or on gaming systems has grown dramatically as an entertainment media. There is growing excitement by advertisers to test the waters of video and computer gaming with product placements. Activision, a leading game maker, got advertisers such as Samsung, Nokia and PowerAde to spend \$10 million on in-game product placements in 2003, and expects its advertising revenue to grow to \$100 million by mid-2005 (Banerjee 2004). Since the average individual engages with a game for 30 hours before relegating it to a dusty shelf, advertisers are given much greater exposure to their target audience than through a television sitcom, music video or even film.

As with the other media analyzed thus far, it would be expected that video gamers would be more approving of advertisers paying to have their brands integrated into the games. Interestingly, as in the other examined media formats, this was not the case. In this sample of Baby Boomers, most subjects (84%) did not play video games. However, more subjects agreed that it was okay for advertisers to include their products in video games (38%) than those who did not approve of the practice (22%) and 40% were neutral. Pearson's product-moment test of correlation was run and showed no significant relationship between the frequency question and the attitudinal question "It is okay for advertisers to pay to have their brands included in video games" ( $R=.009$ ,  $p<.887$ ).

The final media considered was Internet web sites where once again usage frequency and positive attitude should be directly related, given the results of the hypothesis test for frequency and PPAS in general. The subjects' internet usage was high, with nearly 70% agreeing that they frequently use the internet to access web sites for entertainment and/or information purposes. The correlation analysis between the frequency question and the attitude question ("It is okay for advertisers to pay to have their brands included on various web sites on the Internet") produced a significant positive correlation between the two items ( $R=.219$ ,  $p<.000$ ); subjects who more frequently use the Internet are also more likely to approve of product placements in Internet web sites.

#### *Open-Ended Comments*

Participants were given the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question soliciting general comments about product placements. With 66 responses, twenty-five percent of all subjects answered the openended question. The majority of responses (28 or 42%) could be classified as positive towards product placements. Only 16 (or 24%) were negative and 75% of negative statements were against product placement in media directed at youth or against the placement of alcohol or tobacco products in media. Twenty-two statements (or 33%) given were neutral towards product placement. Positive statements fell into two broad categories: those supporting product placement as a function of capitalist society, and those supporting product placement because it injects an element of reality into creative entertainment. Examples of statements were:

- It's capitalism – go for it.
- Regulation/bans of product placement are completely unnecessary in a free market economy.
- We live in a brand name world and to hide it now would be unrealistic.
- Advertisers should pay for the exposure and if the product is accepted, why not? • I personally like things to be realistic, so I believe that real products and situations help drama.
- Product placement is a way to make products more interesting and possibly increase sales of the product. As long as it is being directed to the proper audience, I see no harm in it.
- Unhealthy products such as tobacco and alcohol should be banned from games and movies that may influence youth.

- I have no problem with pop, cars, laundry detergent, etc. being seen in programs. I don't think smoking, drinking or drugs should be promoted in any way.
- I feel very strongly about banning tobacco and alcohol products being advertised or anything related which can be harmful, especially when children can view it.

One of the recent trends in the evolution of product placements is the level of integration placements are achieving in entertainment media. As was discussed in the literature review, advertisers are now paying to write scripts for television shows, which give them more control over how their product is used by the characters, as well as how their product is seen by the audience. A handful of respondents indicated through open-ended feedback that they were against this kind of product placement:

- As long as 'placers' don't have production or script control, it's okay with me.
- Product advertisers should not have any control over placement. That is covert manipulation.
- Overt promotion of a product paid for by advertisers outside of an ad format is not good.

## **Discussion**

The results of this research point to several findings that offer an additional dimension to the literature on product placements. First, as in previous research cited, there is a generally favorable attitude toward product placement. While this research did not consider specific products as other researchers have done, the descriptive statistics associated with the PPAS suggest respondents do not have strong objections to product placements.

In the media formats examined, subjects approved of traditional product placements, even when they may not frequently consume that media. Although music videos and video games were not frequently consumed by the subjects, they approved of the placement of branded products in those formats. In this way, it could not be said that subjects who more frequently consume a certain media format are more likely to approve of product placements in that format. Rather, it seemed that regardless of consumption, subjects were generally in favor of product placements and held no objections to them as long as the products were not cigarettes or alcohol, and so long as they were not placed in media for children as has been pointed out by previous researchers. Subjects held no objections to traditional product placements in television or movies.

The significance of these findings can be related in one word: indifference. Only 30% of subjects agreed with the statement, "I care about product placements." In addition, only 57% indicated that it is important to them to know how advertisers may be influencing entertainment content. Overall, subjects just don't care whether or not product placements are included in the entertainment media they enjoy. On their list of priority issues, product placement does not rank high. Interestingly, while most don't care, some actually prefer product placements over traditional advertising. One subject's open-ended feedback says it best: "I consider product placements a preferable way to receive advertising." Liking its ability to mimic reality, some subjects prefer to receive their advertising as a seamless element, woven into their chosen entertainment, rather than an interruption from it. This finding echoes previous studies, strengthening other research findings which suggest that college students prefer product placements over traditional advertising because it doesn't interrupt entertainment content (Karrh 1998; Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993). Today, consumers are willing to give up personal information in exchange for a free game that they can download off the Internet, even when that game is, in fact, a \$250,000 advertisement for a new Jeep 4 x 4. As Kevin Delaney writes, "Some consumers who ignore TV commercials, it turns out, will eagerly play with a commercial dressed up as a video game" (2004, p. A8).



So, why did this Baby Boomer enumeration approve of product placements, which are ever more becoming cleverly disguised commercials, but disapprove of advertisers writing scripts for television shows? Why do they not care about product placements, but agree that it is important to them to know how advertisers may be influencing the entertainment content they enjoy? The answer may lie in another finding of the present study.

Sixty percent of subjects supported product placements as a means of inserting realism into television shows. Television has been firmly established as a constructor of social reality (Gerbner and Gross 1976; Lang and Lang 1984; Schramm, Lyle, and Parker 1961). Product placements have been understood as engineers of reality (Solomon and Englis 1994), and “hybrid messages” that “... project a non-commercial character” (Balasubramanian 1994, p. 30). For better or worse, we live in a branded world. In order for television to continue to communicate social reality, it must reflect the world it mimics, and this world includes brands. Further, people gather their perceptions of the world around them from, among other sources, television (Gerbner and Gross 1976; Lang and Lang 1984). If the televised world contained no brands, it would cease to be a credible.

People are used to turning to television to help them gain an understanding of the world around them. Effective product placements compliment television’s role of communicating reality by inserting real brands into fictional situations, thereby making the constructed world behind the glass more believable. Product placements are processed by the audience, as Balasubramanian describes, “differently than other commercial messages” (1994, p. 30). When they don’t look or feel like commercials, they are not received as commercials. This explains why product placements were accepted in general by the present Baby Boomer enumeration, but the idea of advertisers writing scripts for television shows, was not. It also explains why subjects’ don’t care about product placements, but do care about the way advertisers may be influencing entertainment content.

Subjects realize that advertisers helping to write television scripts smells like advertising and, in theory, reject it. However, when this method is executed perfectly, how can the viewer tell the difference between a mere product placement and a show whose entire plot has been derived by an advertiser? When it is done correctly, there should be no way to tell whether Diet Coke paid to place a can of its carbonated beverage into the hand of the main character, or whether it paid to devise that character and the entire fictional world it lives and operates in. As long as placements remain subtle and compliment the plot, there is no way for consumers to know that an advertiser has written the script of their favorite TV show, unless, of course, they are recognized in the credits.

### **Methodological Limitations**

There are methodological limitations to the present study. First, the enumeration used in this study was drawn from one company. The fact that they all work for the same company could have influenced the results. For example, had a representative sample been randomly drawn from a variety of businesses and/or households there would have been more men, more ethnic minorities and perhaps a greater variety of educational backgrounds included in the survey. These factors may or may not result in different conclusions, but more importantly, it is not known if the culture of the company played any factor in determining the results of the present study. While results should still be extendable to the Baby Boomer population overall, further studies, employing a more representative base, are needed to confirm or challenge the results discovered here.

## **Implications and Future Research Opportunities**

Future research would do well to examine the role all media play in forming peoples' perceptions of branded products. It would be interesting to consider, for example, if peoples' ideas about fast food or cigarette brands are positively influenced by product placements, and if any connection exists between exposure to product placements and viewers' willingness to use or recommend those products. Product placements may well be the bridge that is able to extend the social construction of reality theory beyond its current bounds of consciousness into the realm of imagination. Additionally, from a critical perspective, it is important to consider the motivation behind the consumer apathy towards product placements revealed in this study. Future research should examine, from a more interpretive approach, non-student populations' attitudes towards product placements. Specifically, a research study employing one-on-one and focus group interviews would allow a more thorough understanding of subjects' knowledge, awareness, perceptions and possible objections to product placements than the current, more quantitatively- oriented format provided. An interview format would allow for more thorough descriptions of current trends in the practice of product placement and subjects' reactions to them.

This study offers preliminary evidence to advertisers and product placement practitioners that a wider portion of the population generally accepts the inclusion of product placements in the entertainment programs they consume. While more research is needed to examine alternative samples of American Baby Boomers, the current study confirmed other studies conducted with college students. Most respondents do not object to the presence of product placements in the entertainment media. With the exception of placing "ethically charged" products in television and movie content aimed at children and minors, subjects in this study largely had no objections to product placement. Future research is needed to confirm these findings among other representative samples of nonstudent populations, but based off the extant literature, and the findings of the present study, advertisers should feel no imperative from consumers to reform the practice of product placement by placing regulations or restrictions upon it. Time will tell if the everincreasing proliferation of product placements in digital information formats as well as more traditional mass media vehicles will result in consumer backlash. But, for now, there is no public outcry against product placement. In fact, as far as current research can tell, there is not even a murmur of rebellion.

## **Conclusion**

The majority of subjects approved of product placements in all media formats examined (movies, television, music videos, video games and internet web sites). No difference in opinion was found among age groups within the enumeration. When disapproval of product placements was voiced, it was towards the inclusion of alcohol or tobacco products in entertainment content aimed at children. Overall, the research in this study strengthened the findings of previous studies examining college students' attitudes towards product placements.

As new media formats emerge in our increasingly digital environment, product placements will undoubtedly be a part of them. Advertisers will most likely rely on product placements as an even more important factor in their marketing mix and brand owners will continue to search for ways to break through the advertising clutter and more effectively communicate their brand to their target audiences. However, as we forge ahead into an arguably over commercialized culture for the foreseeable future, the limits of product placement will be tested. Advertisers and academics alike should not wait for public outcry to force a critical examination of the practice of product placement. Research efforts should be directed towards determining the extent of citizens' knowledge of co-creation activities by advertisers and entertainment producers and, subsequently, their attitudes towards that practice. The question of how

product placements may influence citizens' perceptions of reality as well as their imaginations must be examined in order to expand our understanding of how we are all affected by life in an increasingly commodified American and even global culture.

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**Appendix 1**  
**Product Placement in the Entertainment Media**

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"Product placement" means that on many occasions, real brand-name products (as opposed to fake or generic products) are included in movies, television shows, music videos, video games and in websites on the Internet. These products can be anything from a can of soda to a child's game or an automobile, and are shown either in the background or being used by a character. Often, these brand-name products are included in return for money or promotional benefits from the product's manufacturer to the show's producers. This practice is known as "product placement."

5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=neutral; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree

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1. I prefer to see real brands in movies rather than fake/fictitious brands.
2. Use of brand name tobacco and alcohol products should be banned from PG and PG-13 rated movies.
3. I care about product placements.
4. It is important to me to know how advertisers may be influencing entertainment content.
5. I will not go to a movie if I know beforehand that brands are placed prominently in the movie for commercial purposes.
6. The placement of brands in movies should be completely banned.
7. I frequently watch movies in theaters.
8. I frequently watch television.
9. The presence of brand-name products in a television show makes it more realistic.
10. It is okay for advertisers to help write scripts for television shows.
11. It is okay for musicians to be paid to wear or use brand-name products in their music videos.
12. I frequently watch music videos on television.
13. It is okay for advertisers to pay to have brand-name products included in video games.
14. I frequently play video games on the computer or on gaming systems.
15. It is okay for advertisers to pay to have their brands included on various websites on the Internet.
16. I frequently use the Internet to access websites for entertainment and/or information purposes.
17. I would consider product placements as "commercials in disguise."

Figure 1  
Nordhielm's Figure 2

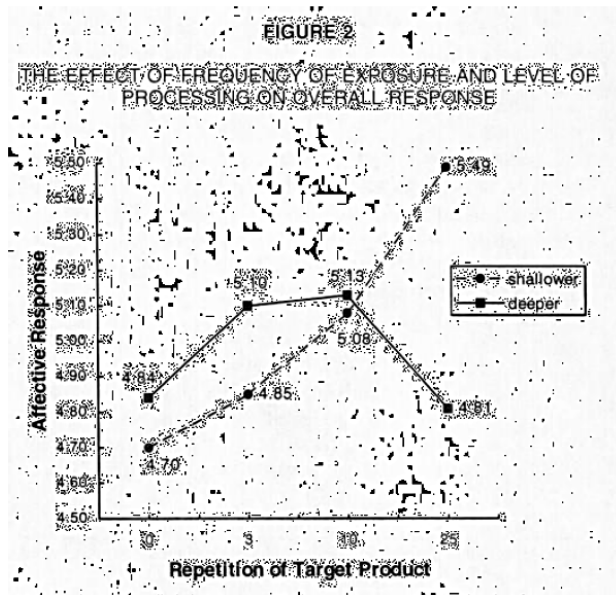


Table 1  
Rotated Component Matrix

	Factor 1 Loading	Factor 2 Loading	Factor 3 Loading
1. I prefer to see real brands in movies rather than fake/fictitious brands.	0.11	0.04	0.87
2. The presence of brand-name products in a television show makes it more realistic.	0.11	0.13	0.83
3. It is okay for advertisers to help write scripts for TV shows.	0.58	0.03	-0.01
4. It is okay for musicians to be paid to wear or use brand-name products in their music videos.	0.69	0.13	0.26
5. It is okay for advertisers to pay to have brand-name products included in video games.	0.70	0.03	0.17
6. It is okay for advertisers to pay to have their brands included on various websites on the Internet.	0.70	0.14	-0.06
7. Use of brand-name tobacco and alcohol products should be banned from PG and PG-13 rated movies.	0.03	0.74	-0.001
8. I will not go to a movie if I know beforehand that brands are placed prominently in the movie for commercial purposes.	0.21	0.76	0.02
9. The placement of brands in movies should be completely banned.	0.22	0.70	0.36
10. I would consider product placements as "commercials in disguise."	0.37	0.03	0.02

**Table 2**  
**Correlation Matrix**

		<i>Product Placement Attitude Score (PPAS)</i>	<i>Ethical Subdimension</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Media Consumption</i>
Product Placement Attitude Score (PPAS)	Pearson Correlation	1	-.740**	-.094	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.132	.000
	N	264	264	256	263
Ethical Subdimension	Pearson Correlation	-.740**	1	.149*	-.175**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.017	.004
	N	264	264	256	263
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.094	.149*	1	-.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.132	.017	.	.172
	N	256	256	256	255
Media Consumption	Pearson Correlation	.255**	-.175**	-.086	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.172	.
	N	263	263	255	263

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3**  
**Coefficients for Gender x Mediacon Interaction Effect**

		<i>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></i>				
<i>Model</i>		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>		
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	
		<i>Sig.</i>				
1	(Constant)	29.654	3.992		7.429	.000
	Media Consumption (High=Heavy; Low=Light)	1.604E-02	.272	.011	.059	.953
	Gender	-2.844	2.982	-.250	-.954	.341
	Gender x Mediacon Interaction Effect	.289	.203	.450	1.425	.155

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable: Product Placement Attitude Score (High=Positive Attitude Toward Product Placement)

**Table 4**  
**ANOVA for Gender x Mediacon Interaction Effect**

		<i>ANOVA<sup>b</sup></i>				
<i>Model</i>		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	575.905	3	191.968	8.066	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	6163.768	259	23.798		
	Total	6739.673	262			

<sup>a</sup>Predictors: (Constant), Gender x Mediacon Interaction Effect, Media Consumption (High=Heavy; Low=Light), Gender

<sup>b</sup>Dependent Variable: Product Placement Attitude Score (High=Positive Attitude Toward Product Placement)

**Table 5**  
**Tests for Between-Subject Effects**

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*Dependent Variable: Product Placement Attitude Score (High=Positive Attitude Toward Product Placement)*

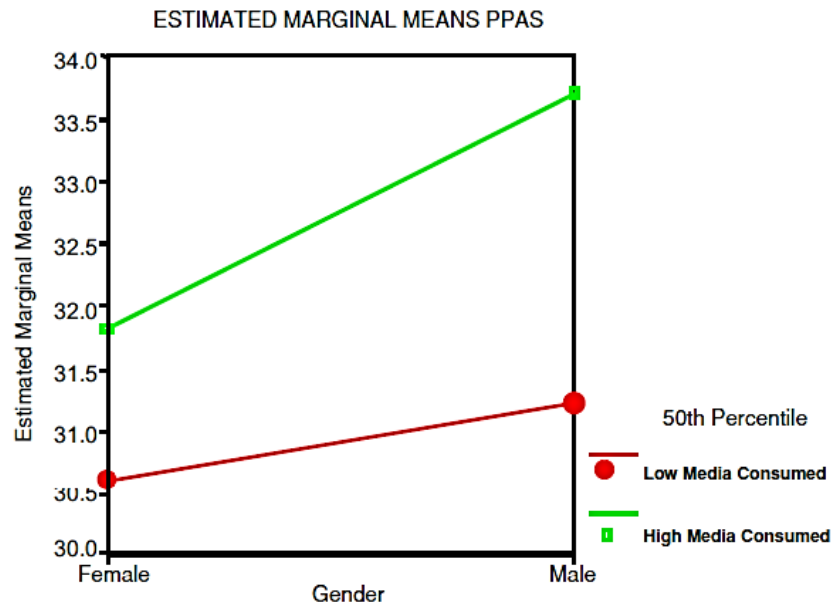
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<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	274.161 <sup>a</sup>	3	91.387	3.661	.013
Intercept	211102.206	1	211101.206	8456.479	.000
NMEDIACO	176.100	1	176.100	7.054	.008
GENDER	80.875	1	80.875	3.240	.073
NMEDIACO * GENDER	20.972	1	20.972	.840	.360
Error	6465.512	259	24.963		
Total	267985.000	263			
Corrected Total	6739.673	262			

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<sup>a</sup>R Squared=.041 (Adjusted R Squared=.030)

**Figure 2**  
**Estimated Marginal Means**



**Table 6**  
**Summary of Research Findings**

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>F-Value</i>	<i>R2 (adj.)</i>	<i>Accept/Reject</i>
H1: PPAS ≠ f(MEDIACON)	4.27; p<.000	18.22; p<.000	.065	Reject
H2: Ethics ≠ f(MEDIACON)	-2.87; p<.004	8.27; p<.004	.031	Reject
H3: PPAS=f (MEDIACON, Gender, [MEDIACON x Gender]). Test for interaction effect.	1.435; p<.155	8.07; p<.000	.085	Reject
H4: Males will have more positive attitude toward PPAS. ANOVA test of Heavy and Light media consumption with gender and interaction effect.		F <sub>(NMEDIACO)}</sub> =7.05; p<.008 F <sub>(Gender)}</sub> =3.24; p<.073 Interaction effect F=.840; p<.36		Accept Gender Main Effects
H5: PPAS ≠ f(Age)	t=1.51; p<.132	2.28; p<.132	.009	Accept
H6: PPAS ≠ f (Age, MEDIACON, [Age x MEDIACON]). Test for interaction effect.	t=.297; p<.767	5.73; p<.001	.064	Accept



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