

**'Dancing With Handcuffs and Shackles': How Product
Placement Is Adopted By the Chinese Film Industry.**

Wei Li

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University of East Anglia
School of Art, Media and American Studies**

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Abstract

This PhD researches the role of product placement in modern Chinese cinema, exploring the shifting discourses and textually-specific practices that are unique to the practice of product placement within the Chinese film industry.

Existing studies have focused almost exclusively on the Hollywood film industry, and have analysed product placement in terms of its effectiveness with audiences, and as a potential influence on consumer behaviour, often from a psychological or marketing viewpoint. This study approaches product placement from industrial and textual perspectives, more interested in the process of product placement in film production: how trade press reports, state and industry discourse, and practitioner commentary, frames product placement within the Chinese film experience. Therefore, this is a shift from work on the consequences of product placement, or simplistic notions of good/bad product placement, to an investigation of the discursive and textual strategies used by the Chinese film industry when using product placement in modern film production. This allows the thesis to focus on how the Chinese industry offers an illusion of serving the public, able to use its expertise to position product placement as what an assumed audience wants. Examining different players in product placement deals such as film producers, product placement agencies, brand companies, and the Chinese government, also allows the study to consider the shifting hierarchies of expertise and power. Within this, the study identifies and analyses two specific power relationships: state vs film industry, and creativity vs commercialisation.

Alongside industrial commentary, the study examines the textual status of product placement through close *mise-en-scène* analysis of a range of contemporary Chinese film examples. It identifies three elements –

narrative, character, and genre – as key areas where product placement is most overtly displayed, visualised and embodied, and considers the impact this has on narrative coherence.

Through this combination of discourse analysis and film analysis, the study is able to critically investigate the role product placement plays within the modern Chinese film industry.

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Introduction

As marketers continue to vie for the attention of an increasingly fragmented consumer market, they have turned to a variety of communication channels in their efforts to reach customers. One of the channels they have exploited more frequently in recent years is product placement, the placing of branded products in movies.

— John A. McCarty (2004, 45).

The Chinese film industry has grown rapidly in the age of globalisation. In addition, with its huge market in comparison with other film market in the world, it has become more powerful in the global cinema market. Although Hollywood has been recognised as the dominant film industry in the global market for many decades, the power of Chinese film industry has been steadily increasing since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Indeed, some scholars have stated that the Chinese film industry will overtake Hollywood in years to come. For example, Michael Curtin asserted that 'If the twentieth century was – as *Time* magazine founder Henry Luce put it – the American century, then the twenty-first surely belongs to the people that Luce grew up with, the Chinese' (2007, 2). Andy Willis and Leung Wing-Fai have taken a similar view on the increase of the power of the Chinese film industry, stating, 'Films from East Asia have provided some of the biggest box office and critical hits of recent global cinema' (2014, 2). Additionally, Wang Jianlin, Chairman of Dalian Wanda Group, has implied that the Chinese film industry could be an influential force in global cinema. He stated that the Chinese film market has developed much more quickly than expected, expanding by more than 30% every year for the last six years (Wang, 2014). These statements from academics and practitioners in the film industry imply that it is necessary to study the Chinese film industry. Its strong growth in the age of globalisation is motivating

practitioners and academics alike to pay attention to its past development and what it is doing today.

The Chinese film industry has been seen as structurally different to other national cinemas, which potentially offers the particularity of product placement model in Chinese film industry from other film industry. With the success of Chinese films in the worldwide¹, Chinese image has been changed, and Chinese culture and Chinese history has been more realized by the world. As Khoo and Metzger indicated, “China and things Chinese are understood to be reshaping structures of aesthetic, economic and political power across the Pacific and beyond” (Khoo and Metzger, 2009, 14). Chinese linguistic and cultural context has powerfully contributed to the images of China in the world. And many researchers present the specificity of Chinese cinema, such as powers of the state, and structure of the film industry (Lu, 1997; Berry, 2010; Lim and Ward, 2011). It has powerful influence the dissimilar use of product placement to other film industries.

Since the turn of the century, the Chinese film industry has undergone a remarkable transformation from traditional Chinese cinema to the modern industry we see today. In order to develop industrialisation and commercialisation, the Chinese film industry, similar to other film industries, is constantly changing and expanding in a continuous search for profit. Similar to the Hollywood film industry, the Chinese film industry has adopted product placement as an important expansion strategy. The concept of product placement has been recognised and explored by Western scholars and film industry practitioners for many years. It has been identified as a new and efficient tool for promoting and advertising a product or brand, and many brand practitioners and film practitioners believe product placement has increased their profits

¹ Some Chinese film directors’ productions have achieved various awards in the worldwide, such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000), *The World* (Jia Zhangke, 2004), *The Assassin* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 2015), and so forth.

(Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993; McCarthy, 1994; Delorme and Reid, 1999; Gould, 2000; Kaijansinkko, 2003). In Western industrial practice, most film and television studios have product placement departments, and product placement is considered to be a visible promotional medium. This stresses the importance of product placement in the film industry. Thus, studying product placement and its role in the modern Chinese film industry extends the existing literature on this element of modern film production into another national context, challenging and developing our understanding of the impact and importance of product placement in global terms.

At this point, the definition of the period of the 'modern Chinese film industry' should be clarified. In this study, this period is defined as being from 2000 to 2013. This is in accordance with the Chinese film scholar Yin Hong, who defined the start of the period as being the beginning of the twenty-first century, when technological development and commercialisation led to clear and significant improvements in the industry (Yin and Wang, 2004). The emergence of product placement since that time is a crucial reflection of industrialisation and commercialisation in the modern Chinese film industry.

The importance of product placement for the Chinese film industry has become something of a discussion point in recent years: a number of comments from industry practitioners and Chinese academics have noted a significant shift away from Hollywood's dominance in product placement operations, although some Chinese scholars and product placement practitioners still consider Hollywood to be the pinnacle of product placement (Fan, 2013; Ji, 2013; Li, 2013; Wang, 2013). In 2011, the Chinese brands Lenovo, Yili Shuhua Milk, TCL and Metersbonwe were placed in the film *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (Bay, 2011). This was the first time that Chinese brands had been placed in a Hollywood blockbuster. More importantly, it demonstrated that the Chinese film industry had begun to cooperate with Hollywood. This

collaboration with Hollywood sparked a heated debate about product placement in films (Chinanews, 2011). At the same time, product placement deals with Hollywood led to a series of reflections on product placement in Chinese films. Central to this has been the growing importance of the distinctive operational structure and processes of product placement in the Chinese film industry. The model of product placement operation in the Chinese film industry has shaped internal and external power relations from an industry perspective and demonstrates that the Chinese film industry has shifted away from Hollywood to some extent.

In addition, this shifted relationship with Hollywood is reflected in the rapid growth of the Chinese film industry that has taken place since the end of the twentieth century. The power of the Chinese film industry has increased in the global film market as above stated. In order to expand its commercialism and industrialisation, the Chinese film industry is constantly changing. Furthermore, like Hollywood, the Chinese film industry has sought additional expansion approaches. Thus, product placement evolved as an important expansion strategy for the development of the Chinese film industry. As stated in the quotation from McCarty at the beginning of this chapter, product placement deals are a complicated industrial phenomenon in the film industry. Product placement deals involve diverse perspectives and conceptions. In the statement, McCarty identifies product placement as a new communication channel from the perspective of branded marketing, and is concerned with the role of consumers in the concept of product placement. It suggests that McCarty approaches product placement by highlighting the marketing elements and the issue of audiences. However, the framework of this study goes beyond McCarty's approach to examining the concept of product placement in films. In particular, this study aims to approach the investigation of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry from an industry as well as a textual perspective. Rather than considering the

consequence such as the effectiveness of product placement, this study is concerned with examining the Chinese film industry's adoption of product placement as a strategy.

The title of this thesis has been taken from a metaphor used by an industry practitioner to describe product placement deals in the modern Chinese film industry: 'dancing with handcuffs and shackles' (Wang, 2010). This metaphor reveals the restrictive relationship between the Chinese film industry and the state in relation to product placement. Whilst 'dancing' represents the creativity in relation to the artistic elements when integrating product placement into a film, 'handcuffs' stands for the constraints placed on the film industry (profit-driven, in particular), and 'shackles' symbolise the interventions of the state. Thus, this metaphor suggests that product placement operations are restricted by the Chinese film industry as well as by the Chinese state. More importantly, this metaphor raises the issue of how to solve this problem and how to achieve the right balance among the various participants in the collaborative process of product placement in the Chinese film industry.

When considering the potential meaning of the metaphor 'dancing with handcuffs and shackles' the issue of balance is a central one, because the metaphor implies that a power struggle exists. Thus, balance is the foremost implication of the metaphor. The term has various meanings in different contexts. In wider sense, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of 'balance' is 'a situation in which different elements are equal or in the correct proportions' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Balance is used to describe equivalent relationships between two or more different elements. Specifically, as the essential meaning of the term suggests, the issue of balance in product placement deals is closely related to two specific aspects. On the one hand, it is vital to find a balance between the essential characteristics of product placement in films: that is, the creative and commercial aspects. This highlights the

conflicting concepts of product placement, with balance implying product placement should be implemented on a scale that integrates its commercial and creative nature in equal measures. On the other hand, from an industry perspective, balance refers to the relation between 'handcuffs' and 'shackles'. This contains two layers of meaning. The first is the balance between the Chinese film industry and the state, while the second is the balance among the various industry practitioners involved in the collaborative process of product placement deals. From this perspective, balance means the way in which power is distributed in product placement deals. Even though the Chinese film industry has tried to find a balance when putting in place product placement deals, the various participants draw on their expertise and privileged position to retain as much power as possible. Thus, as the goal of the Chinese film industry when pursuing product placement deals, the issue of balance is a significant thematic point in the Chinese film industry's adoption of product placement.

The concept of balance has been shown to be the most important issue for product placement in film productions. Thus, the main argument of this study is that the specific structure and dynamics of the Chinese film industry shape the understanding and use of product placement in film productions. Specifically, this study focuses on answering the following main research questions:

- Compared with the Hollywood model, how, specifically, does the Chinese film industry implement product placement in film productions?
- How do the unique characteristics of the Chinese film industry shape product placement in film productions?
- How has the power hierarchy shifted in relation to product placement in the Chinese film industry?
- How do different groups of Chinese film industry practitioners talk about the creative and commercial characteristics of

product placement in films in order to maintain their actual and potential power?

- In relation to the creativity of product placement, what is the relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films?
- How is product placement associated with character in Chinese films?
- How has product placement been influenced by genre in modern Chinese films?

Through a critical investigation of the questions shown above, this study suggests that the Chinese film industry has adopted product placement in ways that are distinct from those of Hollywood, because of the Chinese industry's particular structure and operational procedures. It is crucial to reflect upon the Chinese film industry's shifting relationship with Hollywood, which suggests that the industry has emerged from Hollywood's shadow.

This introduction includes three main sections that provide an overview of this study. First, a review of the literature on product placement in films needs to be considered: in Western as well as Chinese contexts. The literature review identifies the gaps in the existing research and enables this study to provide a sound understanding of which gaps need to be filled. The second section explains which methodologies have been adopted in this study and how they are used for particular purposes. The final section outlines the structure of this thesis.

Section 1. Literature review: product placement in films

Product placement is a complicated and cross-disciplinary concept. Due to its complex nature, it has been studied by Western and Chinese academics from the perspectives of various disciplines; for example,

assessment, marketing and history. There is no doubt that the concept of product placement in was introduced much earlier to Western cinema than to Chinese cinema. Segrave (2004) has claimed that the concept of product placement in films can be traced back to the silent era, and a variety of academic studies have used Hollywood as a successful model case study to demonstrate what product placement is and how it works in the film industry (Synder, 1992; Balasubramanian, 1994; Vollmers and Mizerski, 1994; Karrh, 1998; Nebenzahl and Jaffe, 1998; Russell, 1998; Gupta and Balasubramanian, 2000; Russell, 2002; Wasko, 2003; McCarty, 2004; Russell and Belch, 2005; Redondo, 2006; Hudson, 2006; Newell, 2006; Lehu, 2007; Wiles and Danielova, 2009). The literary contexts of product placement in Hollywood provide a wider theoretical framework, which has been largely adopted by Chinese scholars of product placement.

However, this does not mean that Chinese scholars have simply accepted the ideas of Western scholars without adding their own contributions. It should be understood that Chinese scholars have embraced Western scholars' approach to studying product placement, but have reconstructed this approach and have added their own contributions specific to the practice of product placement in Chinese cinema. This is due to product placement emerging much later in the Chinese film industry than in Hollywood and in other national cinemas. In order to construct a theoretical framework for product placement in films, this section will focus on four main aspects of previous studies on the subject: definitions of product placement; the history of product placement in Hollywood; types of product placement; and major debates around product placement in films.

1.1 Definitions of product placement

In 2004, the concept of product placement was discussed by Chinese academics for the first time. Cui Peng introduced the topic of product

placement in films in the article 'Product Placement Starts to Become Popular'. In this article, Cui claimed that the Chinese had learned about product placement in films from Hollywood, and that to a certain extent the immaturity of product placement in Chinese cinema was due to the 'fifth generation'². He suggested that the fifth generation have a powerful position in the Chinese film market and that they favoured artistic creativity over commercial strategy. As Cui stated, 'Only if they (the fifth generation) are short of money will they use product placement to enable them to finish their film productions' (2004, 91). Cui's assertion highlights the conflict between artistic creativity and commercial features. This potentially demonstrates the complexity of the concept of product placement in films.

However, Cui did not provide an explicit definition of product placement in films. One year later, in 2005, Liu Hong and Song Xiaotian provided Chinese academia's first definition of product placement. Liu defined product placement in films as being unlike traditional advertising, because it is very permeable and is integrated into other mediums. They claimed that the function and purpose of product placement are the same as those of traditional advertising, but product placement is more effective (2005, 163). Since then, more and more Chinese scholars have started to study product placement from an academic perspective. Zhang Xiaoqin defined it as a type of cross-industry combination that integrates a branded product or service into film production, which, as part of a film, is sold to cinema-goers in order to achieve the purpose of selling a product or service (2008, 55). The definitions of product placement in Chinese academic works correspond with the definitions of product placement in Western literature.

² The 'fifth generation' specifically refers to those who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982. Examples of fifth generation filmmakers are Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, Tian Zhuangzhuang and Zhang Junzhao (Zhu, 2003).

As mentioned before, the Western literature on product placement in films is of considerable importance to this study, because Western academia has conducted a great deal of research on the concept of product placement. However, Western scholars have identified and defined the concept of product placement in films in a more systematic and refined way, emphasising three important dimensions: text (content), industrialism and commercialism (nature) and audience (purpose).

In terms of the text dimension, the definition of product placement highlights the thing that is inserted into the context of the film, such as a product or brand name, packaging, signage, or a verbal mention. Williams and her colleagues provided a concise definition of product placement as 'the purposeful incorporation of commercial content into non-commercial settings' (Williams, Petrosky and Hernandez, 2011, 1). This definition emphasises that product placement is a hybrid production that combines commercial content with film contexts. In terms of hybrid, Balasubramanian identified product placement as a platform for communicating commercial messages (1994). These commercial messages contain product information (name, function and appearance), branded information (name, logo) and brand identity (culture, image). This information is what constitutes product placement to be integrated into the film context. It reflects to the commercial nature of the product placement. Thus, some Western scholars define product placement within the dimension of commerce.

With regard to industrialism and commercialism, product placement is defined as an expansion strategy and a marketing tool for the industry. Turner defined it as 'contracting to insert a partner's products into an appropriate context on screen as a means of offsetting production costs' (2006, 10). Turner suggested that, from the perspective of the film industry, product placement reduces the risk of investment by obtaining finance from advertisers before a film is released.

Additionally, Wasko indicated that product placement is an important form of commercialism in Hollywood, and that it is an industrial expansion strategy applied to the film industry (2003, 154). In contrast to Turner and Wasko's industry perspective, McCarty identifies product placement as a marketing communication strategy: he claimed, 'The multifaceted nature of product placement makes it an interesting, albeit complex, marketing practice to understand and strategically use' (2004, 47). McCarty suggested that product placement is a new form of marketing communication strategy that skilfully conceals from the audience the attempt to persuade. This kind of definition is closely connected with another way of defining product placement, which emphasises the term 'audience'. Some Western scholars highlight the purpose of persuasion when defining product placement in films.

In terms of the 'audience', product placement is defined as the intent to influence audiences' behaviours. Balasubramanian defined product placement as a hybrid message, which is 'a paid product message aimed at influencing movie audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie' (1994, 29). This definition explains that product placement in films is a form of paid advertising that transmits a specific product message to a film's audience, and may intend to influence audiences' attitudes and behaviours. The definition emphasises the purpose of product placement and reveals the importance of the audience in how it operates. The audience, as the receiver of the commercial information and the target of the product placement, should be an important participant in its operation. Many scholars have explored how product placement influences audiences' attitudes and even their behaviours (Gupta and Lord, 1998; Brennan, Dubas and Babin, 1999; Karrh, Frith and Callison, 2001; Karrh, McKee and Pardun, 2003). However, this study criticises the argument that the audience's power has been weakened by the Chinese film industry through the practice of product placement.

Most of the previous studies have focused on the perspective of audience, rather than on the textual and industry perspectives. In other words, many scholars place more emphasis on exploring how product placement influences audiences' attitudes and behaviours. However, this study will concentrate on the textual and industry perspectives on product placement in the Chinese film industry. Thus, it is important to provide a definition of product placement from these perspectives in order to examine how the Chinese film industry refers to the concept and practises it in the twenty-first century. In addition, a definition of product placement in films in a textual and industrial context establishes a fundamental framework for what product placement is; this assists this study to explore product placement in commentary from the Chinese film industry and in textual practice.

As discussed above, Chinese academia has followed Western academia's research findings on product placement in films. This is partly because the concept of product placement has existed in Hollywood for a long time, and especially because of the success of product placement in *E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial* (Spielberg, 1982). Thus, the following section will focus on two important moments in the history of product placement in Hollywood. These large milestones have exerted a powerful influence on the development of product placement in film productions and the way in which Chinese scholars have studied the concept in the modern Chinese film industry.

1.2 A historical overview of product placement in Hollywood

Providing a historical overview of product placement in Hollywood will explain why the Hollywood model can be so successful for cinema in other countries and why it has had a powerful influence on the Chinese film industry. This study suggests that two important periods in the history of the development of product placement in Hollywood must be considered: the moment when product placement emerged, and its

flourishing in the 1980s. These two historical periods, especially product placement in the 1980s, have motivated Chinese scholars to study the subject academically. Chinese academics embraced the successful example of Reese's Pieces in *E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial* as an important explanation of why the study of product placement in films is so significant, but they have paid less attention to how this was identified as a successful example (Zhang, 2008; Di, 2011; Qian, 2012). The success of Reese's Pieces in *E.T.* is important for the industry and academia alike, because it brought financial success to the film production and brand, while being assessed as being properly integrated into the film story by many scholars (Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993; Babin, 1996; Newell, Salmon and Chang, 2006; Lehu, 2007). Even though it was this success that attracted attention to the notion of product placement on a large scale, product placement can be traced back to the silent era (Segrave, 2004), as mentioned previously. This reveals how product placement was first practised in films.

The emergence of product placement in Hollywood during the silent era demonstrates the cross-conceptual nature of product placement and the rivalry between art and commerce, which is of vital importance to the debate in the Chinese film industry. Product placement did not attract as much attention then as it does today; according to Segrave, 'As the silent movie era came to an end advertising was only a very minor part of the motion picture industry. Product placement and onscreen ads as we think of ads today were close to non-existent' (2004, 17). Segrave suggested that product placement did exist in the early period, albeit in a very minor way. Newell provided further explanation of product placement's existence in early cinema:

The term product placement did not come into scholarly or trade use until the 1980s, so locating product placement within the mass media industry must begin with a brief look at industry

terms that began during the early growth of movie marketing: exploitation, tie-ups, and tie-ins (2006, 576).

This suggests that product placement existed in early cinema in less explicit ways than it does today, and that it was not as commercial during this period as it is in the modern era. However, the association between art and commerce began in the era of the silent film. Although this relationship was not as intensely competitive as it is today, the potential power struggle in product placement deals was revealed (Segrave, 2004). Thus, this important historical period of product placement in Hollywood potentially exposes the contradictory nature of product placement in films, which is very relevant to the issue of the balance between art and commerce in relation to product placement in the Chinese film industry.

Another important moment for product placement in Hollywood occurred in 1982. However, Chinese scholars have neglected to consider how this was identified as a success. In 1982 product placement began to attract numerous interests within the film industry, because of the huge success of the placement of Reese's Pieces in *E.T.: The Extra Terrestrial*. As Segrave stated, 'Then the legendary placement in the 1982 release *E.T.* was made. Its success for the candy product Reese's Pieces ushered in a period of spectacular growth in product placement' (2004, 164). The manufacturer, Hersheys, obtained tangible profits: *E.T.* was immensely successful, and sales of Reese's Pieces increased by 80%. This success sparked a shift in the film industry's revenue models, as major corporations looked to replicate this advertising success for their own products and brands (Segrave, 2004). This event became a milestone in the history of product placement, and strongly influenced the operation of product placement in films. Even though the Chinese did not immediately recognise the importance of product placement for the development of their industry, they were influenced by this milestone event since the Chinese film industry

started to become industrialised and commercialised. In the meanwhile, Chinese scholars have identified the success of Reese's Pieces in *E.T.* as their motivation for exploring product placement in film production. However, these academics paid more attention to the financial success of Reese's Pieces than to the successful integration of the product placement into the film context. Thus, this important historical moment has provided the motivation for this study to investigate the relationship between product placement and film elements from a textual perspective.

With regard to product placement from a textual perspective, the types of product placement in films must be clearly identified.

1.3 Types of product placement

Due to the long history of product placement in Hollywood, Western scholars began to study product placement earlier than Chinese scholars. Thus, Chinese scholars are mostly in agreement with Western scholars on the theory and principles of product placement in films. Specifically, Chinese scholars have embraced the categorisation of product placement by the Western scholar Russell; however, they have tailored Russell's work to the context of the practice of product placement in Chinese films (Zhang, 2008; Shen and Li, 2009; Qian, 2012). Before considering the Chinese scholars' taxonomy, this study will review Russell's work on categorising product placement, which established a fundamental framework for the Chinese scholars. This study draws upon the example of product placement in the Hollywood film *The Terminal* (Spielberg, 2004) in order to apply Russell's taxonomy of product placement in films. Although there are many other examples in Hollywood, *The Terminal* is one of the most widely discussed by the Chinese media in relation to product placement, and this study believes that the product placement in *The Terminal* perfectly exemplifies Russell's categorisation.

Russell identified three main categories of product placement. The first is the visual presence of a product on screen. Product placement can be purely visual, such as a product shown in the background of a scene. In this instance, the product may simply be a prop. For example, we often see a billboard or a brand name on the side of a lorry in the background of a scene. The level of visual placement can vary as a function of the number of times a product is seen in the film or whether it is seen at all. The film production team of *The Terminal* built an airport for the set, located in a large hangar at LA Regional Airport³. Everything functioned on the set as it did in real life. Several shops can be seen in the film, such as Starbucks, Brookstone, la Perla, Discovery Channel, Burger King and Hugo Boss, all of them part of the visual background of the airport scenes in the film.



Figure 1. *The Terminal*

The second category of product placement according to Russell's taxonomy is auditory. In this type of product placement, the brand

³ Baike.baidu.com (Accessed April 2012, available from: <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/334772/8160496.htm>).

name may not be mentioned at all in the main dialogue of the story, but it might be mentioned several times in less important dialogue or might be mentioned with emphasis. For instance, Viktor Navorski, the main character in *The Terminal*, says: 'Hugo Boss – a little bit expensive, but valuable'. Later, Amelia, the other main character in the film, asks Viktor: 'You change the suit, Hugo Boss?' The product is emphasised through the conversation between the two main characters.



Figure 2. *The Terminal*

The last category of product placement according to Russell is the degree to which the placement is connected with the plot of the film. In this type, a product can be intimately tied to the plot or closely connected to the identity of the character, such as the type of car that James Bond drives or the brand of wristwatch he wears. In the above example of Hugo Boss in *The Terminal*, the main character Viktor needs an expensive suit to wear on an important date with Amelia. Therefore, as part of the plot Viktor goes to Hugo Boss to buy a new suit. Thus, in this case, product placement plays an important role in the story of film. The product placement is also closely associated with other elements of

the film (film elements). This will be explored further from a textual perspective in the Chapter 4 of this study.

While Russell's framework provided three categories of product placement, Chinese scholars reconstructed and refined the taxonomy. Specifically, Zhang stated that visual product placement could be further refined to include two specific methods: close-up product placement and scene product placement (2008). According to Zhang's taxonomy, close-up product placement is when the product's symbolic packaging, its name or its logo appears in a close-up shot, while scene product placement is when the product appears as part of the scene (2008, 55–56). This raises the issue of how to categorise product placement. Zhang's taxonomy was created from the perspective of film and cinematic technique. A common issue in Chinese academia in relation to the study of product placement is that there is no coherent or unified perspective when defining the categories. For example, Shen and Li (2009), and Qian and Zhu (2012) introduced a new, more complex category of product placement in films, which is known as 'image product placement'. In Shen and Li's taxonomy, image product placement refers to a particular city or tourist area, such as Xixi Wetland in *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008), while other categories include dialogue, script, and scene product placement, similar to Zhang's taxonomy (2009, 140). Qian and Zhu expanded the concept of image product placement to cover a brand image being placed in a film and a brand identity that is closely integrated with a film narrative (2012, 109).

However, Shen and Li and Qian and Zhu's taxonomies consider product placement from a product, brand or advertiser's perspective as well as from a film perspective. The fact that Chinese scholars have classified product placement from different perspectives within the same taxonomy is an important issue. It results in overlaps between different categories of product placement in films. Therefore, this study prefers

to categorise product placement from the filmic perspective and follows Russell's taxonomy as a wider framework. Thus, the basic types of product placement in films in this study are: prop product placement (usage and scene product placement) in the visual dimension; dialogue product placement, in the verbal dimension; and script product placement, in the dimension of integration with the plot.

The primary reason for this study's categorisation of product placement from the filmic perspective rather than from the perspectives of brand or cinematic technique is that this study will approach product placement mainly from industrial and textual perspectives. The taxonomy of product placement from the filmic perspective explicitly reflects the close link between product placement and films. This allows this study to maintain consistency when examining product placement in modern Chinese film productions. In other words, this study keeps to the categorisation of product placement from the textual/filmic perspective, which has been developed from Russell's taxonomy of product placement in films.

1.4 Academic debates on product placement in films

Throughout the Western literature on product placement in films, there are three major research areas of interest: the advantages of product placement; how product placement influences audiences or changes audiences' attitudes; and how product placement is implemented by the film industry. However, their work has focused on Hollywood films and the Hollywood film industry, rather than on other national film productions and other national cinema, especially that of Eastern culture. It allows this study to reveal the ways in which product placement has been adopted by the Chinese film industry, and contributes an understanding of product placement in modern Chinese films to the wider comprehension of product placement in national cinema. Moving back to the Chinese academia, these scholars have

focused most of their attention on explaining the basic theoretical framework of product placement, rather than investigating how it is practised in films and how the Chinese film industry manages and implements product placement deals. The Chinese literatures allow this study to approach product placement from industrial and textual perspectives.

Specifically, some scholars positively affirm that the advantage of product placement is that it is very competitive with traditional advertising (Nabenzahl and Jaffe, 1998; Morton and Friedman, 2002). Nabenzahl and Jaffe (1998) claimed that product placement as a form of marketing communication can be contrasted with traditional advertising, because a product placed in a scene in a film is not connected with an explicit attempt by the company to persuade, as the brand is presented in the context of a story. Additionally, Morton and Friedman (2002) stated the particular advantages of product placement over traditional advertising, which include reduced costs, avoiding attempts to deliberately persuade, and a broad and sustained impact. However, they highlighted the advantages of product placement in films, while ignoring the potential negative aspects. Although this study does not provide a value judgement on 'good' or 'bad' product placement in films, the practice needs to be critically evaluated rather than solely emphasising the positive aspects.

In terms of the audience, the issue of how product placement influences attitudes and behaviour is another major area of study. Some Western scholars have designed research to test whether product placement influences an audience's behaviour, or how it captures the audience's attention, or how it makes audiences to remember the products featured, in order to examine the effectiveness of product placement in practice (Gupta and Lord, 1998; Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006; Scott and Craig-Lees, 2010). Gupta and Lord designed an experiment to test hypotheses on the recall effects on

audiences of various types of product placement in films (1998). They suggested that a good product placement has a strong recall effect on audiences, whilst audiences probably move with ease from an intentional placement. Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan developed this idea by creating an integrative conceptual model to capture how product placement influences audience outcomes. They claimed that the model depicted execution/stimulus factors⁴, individual-specific factors⁵, processing depth⁶, and message outcomes that reflect placement effectiveness (2006). Scott and Craig-Lees, rather than considering the influence of product placement on audiences, explored the perceived quality of audiences' cognitive and emotional engagement with products placed in films (2010). Although these Western scholars critically investigated the effectiveness of product placement on audiences, they neglected to consider the impact of film elements on the effectiveness of product placement. Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan concluded that 'Future research should examine the processes that creative professionals use to combine brands with actors, characters, and story lines' (2006, 137). This implies that the link between product placement and film elements is important. Gupta and Lord did provide some discussion on the integration of prominent product placement with film elements; however, the central film elements are more closely linked with product placement. This study will critically argue that product placement is closely associated with the central film elements by positive integration or unmatched disruption in the Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6.

⁴ Includes program type, execution flexibility, opportunity to process, placement modality, placement priming (Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006).

⁵ For instance, brand familiarity, judgment of placement fit, attitudes toward placements, involvement/connectedness with program (Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006).

⁶ It means degree of conscious processing (Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006).

Additionally, with the advantages of product placement, some scholars have claimed that product placement is applied to the film industry as an expansion strategy, especially by Hollywood (Karrh, McKee and Pardun, 2003; Wasko, 2003; Lehu, 2007). Karrh, McKee and Pardun organised a survey to examine how Hollywood practitioners understand the effectiveness of product placement in films. Karrh, McKee and Pardun (2003) claimed that product placement introduces a trade-off between financial and creative considerations, and argued that film directors are more powerful than placement sponsors (2003). Wasko indicated that product placement is a crucial expansion strategy applied by Hollywood to seek profit (2003). Lehu focused on product placement deals, investigating the reasons to engage in product placement and the product placement methods used in Hollywood, as well as drawing on the concept of brand in product placement deals in Hollywood (2007). However, these Western scholars have investigated product placement within the Hollywood film industry only, and have not considered the cinema of other countries. Karrh, McKee and Pardun failed to examine the shifting power relations among different groups of practitioners in the film industry. These gaps allow this study to explore how product placement in Chinese cinema differs from its practice in Hollywood, and to examine the power hierarchy among practitioners involved in product placement in the Chinese film industry.

The Chinese literature has paid most attention to the development of product placement in the Chinese film industry, focusing on the advantages and disadvantages by constructing a framework for its development (Zhang, 2008; Chen and Lu, 2009; Shen and Li; 2009; Gao, 2011; Wang and Ma, 2011; Qian and Zhu, 2012; Wan, 2012; Xu, 2012; Zhang, 2014). Specifically, Zhang Xiaoqin (2008) provided an understanding of the development of product placement in contemporary Chinese cinema by investigating the types and advantages of product placement, and how it should be developed in the future. She claimed that the development of product placement in

the Chinese film industry would be led by Hollywood. However, Zhang's assertion completely ignores the specific conditions for development in the Chinese film industry. As the Chinese film industry has a different history of development and a different structure, it follows that its product placement model will be different from Hollywood's model. The complexity of product placement deals in the film industry shapes diverse practices of product placement in different film industries. It cannot simply be advocated that Hollywood's model should be emulated by the Chinese film industry. Zhang has disregarded the complicated factors in the history of development of the Chinese film industry.

Furthermore, Gao claimed that a negative aspect of product placement in films is that the inability to predict how successful a film will be makes product placement a risky strategy for brand companies (2011). This raises the issue of managing this unpredictability in order to mitigate the risk, and further suggests the importance of evaluating product placement after a film is released. Gao claimed that this issue is specific to product placement practice in Chinese, which provides scope for this study to examine the power hierarchy in product placement operations in the Chinese film industry that may be behind this issue.

Qian and Zhu (2012) highlighted some negative aspects in relation to product placement in contemporary Chinese cinema. They argued that product placement in domestic films is simple and crude, and that successful product placement should attempt to achieve a more equal balance between marketing communication and film content (2012). Qian and Zhu shed light on the power struggle between commerce and creativity, but did not demonstrate how this relationship has been maintained by the Chinese film industry. Therefore, there is room for this study to explore the implications of power relations for this issue.

To sum up, the Chinese scholars prefer to cite the fact that product placement is still developing in the contemporary Chinese film industry as the reason for any issues, and provide suggestions for how product placement should be practised. However, they pay less attention to why there are so many issues around product placement in the Chinese film industry and to the real concerns about how product placement is being adopted in modern Chinese films. Therefore, this study aims to provide an understanding of product placement in Chinese films from an industrial as well as a textual perspective. The next section will introduce the methodology employed by this study to address the various issues relating to product placement in the modern Chinese film industry from textual and industry perspectives.

Section 2. Methodology

The main focus of this study is to answer the question ‘How has product placement been adopted by the Chinese film industry in the twenty-first century?’ In order to do so, this study approaches product placement from industrial and textual perspectives. Therefore, this study uses mixed methodologies to critically investigate how product placement has been adopted in the modern Chinese film industry.

Because this study explores product placement from industrial and textual perspectives, discourse analysis and textual analysis have been selected as the main methodologies. Discourse analysis enables this study to reveal how the Chinese film industry makes comments on product placement and how the various industry practitioners assert their power in the implementation of product placement. This study will follow Ginosar and Levi-Faur’s approach to discourse analysis (2010). Although these researchers focused on analysing industry discourse on regulation policies, particularly in the European Union and Canada, this study will expand their approach to examine the power relation between the Chinese state and the Chinese film industry, and

among the different groups of industry practitioners, with regard to product placement deals. Meanwhile, the textual analysis provides a concrete approach to examine how product placement is carried out in modern Chinese films. The resources of textual analysis are according to the selected discourses in this study. This study will build on Russell's textual analysis of product placement in sitcoms (2006), extending the approach to contemporary Chinese films. The mixed-methodology approach will help this study to fill the gaps in the existing research, and will make this study a full-scale, logical framework from industrial and textual perspectives.

Specifically, some Chinese scholars have claimed that product placement is cross-conceptual by nature and have implied that this is the cause of a potential power struggle, as discussed in the literature review. This gap allows this study to expand the concept of power relations from an industry perspective by examining how the Chinese film industry talks about it in its discourses. In this study, the discourse analysis reveals how various practitioners in the film industry present product placement in film production, and how they use their identities as 'experts' to maintain their power in product placement practice. By examining their discourse in the trade press and on official websites, this study will investigate how practitioners present their attitudes toward product placement deals and explore the shift in different power relations, such as the relationship between the state and the film industry, and between product placement agencies and brand companies. Additionally, discourse analysis provides an opportunity to examine how practitioners talk about how product placement in the Chinese film industry differs from practices in Hollywood. The discourse analysis enables this study to examine how product placement has been implemented in modern Chinese cinema from an industry perspective and, more importantly, it reveals what the Chinese film industry proposes to do by looking at what they say in their discourses.

The main sources of discourse are *China Entrepreneur*, *Beijing Business Today*, *Ifeng.com*, *Entgroup.cn*, and *Mtime.com*, and all data and industry reports have been taken from Entgroup. Discourses were selected from traditional trade publications and web-based resources, because these two types of source report product placement deals in particular ways. Using both types of sources adds to the objectivity of this study and its analysis of how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement deals in film productions. It also allows this study to examine how a range of industry practitioners discuss issues relating to product placement deals in different mediums in order to provide a representative framework for how product placement has been discussed within the industry. Specifically, *China Entrepreneur* and *Beijing Business Today* are important trade publications; they are recognised as two of the most influential business publications in mainland China. The *China Entrepreneur* has been referred to as ‘the spiritual paradise of entrepreneurs’ (Sina.com, 2007) and was once recognised by the China Dominant-journalism Development Centre (CDDC) as ‘the most trusted economic magazine’ (Sina.com, 2007). *Beijing Business Today* is the largest daily business newspaper in Beijing. It publishes the latest news and in-depth reports, which are republished on 300 mainstream sites including Sina, Sohu, Tencent, and Netease (Baiké, 2015). However, the web-based resources strengthen the discourse analysis, because they contain and integrate a wider range of information and content. On the one hand, *Ifeng.com* is one of the most widely used portals in China, and integrates content produced by a number of professional media organisations. It contains a large amount of information about product placement in films. On the other hand, *Entgroup.cn* and *Mtime.com* focus on film, providing professional reviews, statistical data and overviews of the film industry in China. Thus, together these five sources provide a relatively full resource database for examining how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement deals in order to maintain actual and potential

power, as well as for constructing an industrial framework for product placement practice in film productions.

This study focuses on product placement in the modern Chinese film industry, which is defined as the industry in the twenty-first century by Yin and Wang (2004); therefore, the discourses selected are from 2000 to 2014. By searching within this particular period using the key words 'product placement in films'⁷, 64 relevant articles were found. The sources included *China Entrepreneur* (5 articles), *Beijing Business Today* (7 articles), *Ifeng.com* (34 articles), *Entgroup.cn* (12 articles) and *Mtime.com* (6 articles). The 64 articles were coded and analysed, and it was noted that the issues of state intervention, commercial strategy and creativity were the dominant topics in these 64 articles. The discourses cover different groups of practitioners in the Chinese film industry who have participated in the process of implementing product placement deals in film production; these include producers, directors, product placement agents, brands, and government employees. These practitioners play major roles in product placement deals and their commentaries are crucial for reflecting the status quo of product placement in the Chinese film industry, which has been neglected by previous researchers in their studies of product placement.

Alongside commentary from the film industry, throughout the literature on product placement in Western and Chinese academia, there is a lack of serious research on product placement in film texts. The majority of scholars fail to consider that the most important element of product placement in film productions is the film itself. This creates a huge gap in our knowledge of how product placement is shaped by, or linked to, the film text. Therefore, there is scope for this study to examine how product placement is adopted in modern Chinese films from a textual perspective. The purpose of product placement in

⁷ In this study, 'films' refers to films shown in cinemas, and does not include videos and microfilms.

films is to put commercial information about a product into a non-commercial setting. Film is an important medium in which to carry out product placement; thus, there is a demonstrable relationship between product placement and film elements. Textual and mise-en-scène analyses allow this study to explore this demonstrable relationship by looking at the film texts. It also helps this study to investigate how product placement has been adopted in modern Chinese films by looking at how different film elements shape the way in which product placement appears on the screen.

To approach product placement in modern Chinese films from a textual perspective, and based on the selected discourses from the Chinese film industrial practitioners, 15 modern Chinese films were chosen as crucial cases for demonstrating the relationship between product placement and the central film elements, and how these elements influence the embodiment of product placement on screen. These 15 films are the most discussed in relation to product placement in domestic films in the commentary from the Chinese film industry. This study aims to provide an understanding of the relationship between product placement and film elements to fill the gaps in existing studies. Fourteen films does not represent a large sample for product placement studies, but this study prefers to examine representative examples, rather than to investigate every example of modern Chinese cinema. The 15 selected films are representative examples of Chinese cinema in the twenty-first century, and have been evaluated as crucial cases by the Chinese film industry. They have been much discussed by Chinese academia in the literature and by film industry practitioners in the discourse (Ifeng, 2013; Mtime, 2013; Entgroup, 2013). The selected films include *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001), *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003), *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), *The Banquet* (Feng, 2006), *Call For Love* (Zhang, 2007), *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008), *If You Are The One 2* (Feng, 2010), *Go LaLa Go* (Xu, 2010), *Aftershock* (Feng, 2010), *What Women Want* (Chen, 2011), *Love Is Not Blind* (Teng, 2011), *I Do* (Sun,

2012), *Lost In Thailand* (Xu, 2012), *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013), and *No Man's Land* (Ning, 2013). These films have been selected based on two specific aspects: authority and significance. From the point of view of authority, the director Feng Xiaogang plays a dominant role in relation to product placement and is a powerful authority on product placement operations in the Chinese film industry. He is known as the 'Father of product placement'⁸ because he was the first Chinese director to include product placement in his film productions, and the Chinese film industry states that Feng has always been the first choice for advertisers (Ifeng, 2014). For instance, the CEO of He Run Media, Wang Yifei, stated that Feng had broken a new record for product placement in Chinese films⁹, and said that his film productions are as important as Hollywood blockbusters for advertisers in the Chinese film industry (Wang, 2014). However, Feng Xiaogang's films have sparked many controversial debates about product placement; for example, academics have questioned the influence of product placement on artistic works¹⁰. Meanwhile, the film industry considers product placement to be an inevitable trend for the industry's development¹¹. Therefore, Feng's film productions are crucial to an investigation of how the Chinese film industry is developing the concept of product placement in film

⁸ Many publications give this title to Feng Xiaogang, including *cqnews.com* (2010), *Chinanews* (2012), *Ifeng.com* (2013), *He Run Media* (2013) and *people.com* (2014), among others.

⁹ In 2013 Feng Xiaogang's *Personal Tailor* made 80 million RMB from product placement (Wang, 2014). In 2003, *Cell Phone* raised just 7 million RMB of income from product placement (Luo, 2013). Over a decade, product placement income in Feng's films has increased tenfold.

¹⁰ For example, the Editor in Chief of the *Guang Ming Daily*, Li Chunli, claimed that advertisers and film producers should be professional, branded products should be portrayed honestly to audiences, and film producers should control the balance between art and commerce (Li, 2010).

¹¹ For example, the president of Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Wang Zhonglei, stated that product placement is necessary for the development of the Chinese film industry and is an important part of its commercialisation and industrialisation (Wang, 2013).

productions, and Feng is the most well known and influential film director in the practice of product placement in modern Chinese films.

However, in relation to the issue of significance, it is vital to consider other film directors who are important for product placement practice in the Chinese film industry. Therefore, this study considers productions by six other film directors to support some of the evidence of the relationship between product placement and film elements in modern Chinese films. Product placement in productions by these six directors have also been discussed thoroughly in the industry commentary. Specifically, Chinese film critics have referred to *Go LaLa Go* as a film with ubiquitous product placement (Ifeng.com, 2010). This sparked controversial debates about the quantity and types of product placement in domestic films, especially commercial feature films. The product placement in *What Women Want* was assessed as being the most successful by the Shanghai International Film Festival in 2011 (Entgroup, 2011). The Chinese film industry recognised this as a crucial professional award in relation to domestic product placement, especially because it is rare to find a professional award specific to product placement in films in China. *I Do* was the first Chinese film to adopt a brand name as its title and to integrate the brand identity into the film narrative (Brain Media, 2012). In the discourses of the Chinese film industry, *Love Is Not Blind* and *Call For Love* are also critically discussed as being representative examples of product placement in low-budget domestic films (Mtime, 2013). However, in the flourishing era of product placement, *No Man's Land* is an exception: although it is a commercial film with good box office sales and a good reputation, it includes no product placement, which is direct contrast with the popularity of product placement in China today (Li, 2013; Mtime, 2013). Therefore, this study considers these 14 films as crucial cases for a critical investigation of how product placement has been adopted in modern Chinese films from a textual perspective.

It is also noticeable that the cases selected is potentially link to the particular historical moment of the development of product placement strategies in Chinese cinema. Since the new century, Chinese film industry has undertaken a remarkable transformation from the traditional pattern to the new industrial pattern. Product placement as an important instrument for commercialization and industrialization in Chinese cinema significantly contributes to promote the development of Chinese film industry in the globalization era. The selected cases in this study are from the 21st century, because product placement has started as a vital strategy being adopted by the Chinese film industry from that moment. In order to improving competitiveness, Chinese film industry has explored its own model of product placement by absorbing the Hollywood's successful experiences and innovating its own specific operating pattern in the Chinese film productions.

To sum up, discourse analysis and textual analysis are sometimes studied together in linguistic disciplines. Fairclough claimed that textual analysis is a part of discourse analysis (1992). In addition, Van Dijk drew the concept of text and context into the study of discourse analysis (1980). However, in this study, discourse analysis and textual analysis are distinguished from each other and are necessary for examining the role of product placement in modern Chinese films from different perspectives. On the one hand, discourse analysis helps us to understand how the Chinese film industry describes product placement deals in film production, and how practitioners maintain their identities to express their views on product placement through their specific utterances from an industry perspective. On the other hand, textual analysis sheds light on how the Chinese film industry implements product placement in its productions, and how central film elements shape and reshape product placement in modern Chinese films. The industry discourses on product placement reveal what the industry is attempting to achieve through product placement deals. At the same time, the textual analysis provides practical evidence of what has been

said in the industry discourses. In summary, from an industry perspective, two dominant topics are necessary to be considered by coding the selected discourse resources: the state power in relation to product placement deals in the Chinese film industry; and the issue of creating product placement in films. From a textual perspective, modern Chinese films contain strong cultural practices of story telling and the construction of context. This study aims to analyse to what extent these factors influence product placement in the modern Chinese film industry and distinguish it from the Hollywood model.

It is necessary to highlight that many industrial studies adopt interview as their main methodology, which was also considered as major method for investigating Chinese film industry in the first attempt. However, this study is not able to access to all participants in product placement deals, and the resources are limited. Therefore, this study dropped the interview as the main methodology to approach product placement from industrial perspective. Compare to the interview, discourse analysis helps this study to access to more industrial materials and human resources. Discourse analysis potentially overcomes more or less constraint of limited resources, and covers more comprehensive aspects. In addition, the discourses in this study are selected from Chinese official trade presses and professional film data bases, which has already covered extensive aspects and perspectives in product placement deals. Thus this study combines discourse analysis with textual analysis to explore how product placement is adopted by the Chinese film industry.

Section 3. Chapters Breakdown

In order to answer the core research question of what role product placement plays in modern Chinese film productions, this study is divided into two sections (Discourse analysis section and textual analysis section), and six chapters.

The first section provides an overview of the history of the Chinese film industry and a discourse analysis of the industry framework in terms of product placement in films. It aims to examine how practitioners in the industry frame product placement deals in their discourses from an industry perspective. The second section focuses on researching the practices of product placement in modern Chinese films from a textual perspective by conducting a close *mise-en-scène* analysis of a range of modern Chinese films.

Although the primary focus of this study is on the use of product placement by the Chinese film industry in the twenty-first century, the first section puts product placement in the industry into a much wider context in the beginning, establishing a wide historical framework upon which subsequent chapters will build. Therefore, Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the development of the Chinese film industry from the era of early cinema until the present day. In a broader sense, this chapter examines how the historical development of the Chinese film industry is influencing product placement in modern Chinese cinema. Particular attention is paid to the patterns of change and continuity in the Chinese film industry. The chapter argues that these patterns have shaped the way in which product placement has been adopted by the industry in the new century. To be more specific, from an internal perspective, this chapter suggests that the structure of the Chinese film industry has altered in the twenty-first century, although it is still controlled by the state. This has generated a specific type of operational model of product placement in films, which differs from the Hollywood model. The chapter criticises the importance that some Chinese scholars have placed on the Hollywood model, and brings in the major external factor: the Hollywood film industry. From an external perspective, the Chinese film industry's relationship with Hollywood has shifted many times throughout its history. In spite of the fact that the Chinese film industry is becoming more powerful in the

global market, Hollywood is still a powerful influential factor in its development.

After setting up the historical frame for the Chinese film industry, this study moves on to Chapter 2, which begins to look at the industry aspect of this research by examining how power relationships between the state and the film industry are reflected in product placement deals. It does so by analysing the discourses of the Chinese film industry in the Chinese trade press and film websites. This chapter provides the first reflection on the idea of balance in the operation of product placement in film production; that is, how practitioners in the industry deal with the challenges of the struggle between state control and industry development. Based on the industrial commentary on product placement deals, this chapter argues that the Chinese film industry is more powerful than the state in product placement operations. Under the Chinese film industry's particular model of product placement discussed in Chapter 1, although the industry maintains more power than the state in relation to product placement, there is a power hierarchy among the groups of industry practitioners involved in the product placement operations. Thus, this chapter looks at how different groups of practitioners interpret and defend their actual and potential power in their discourses by using their expertise in product placement deals.

Moreover, in recent years a new trend has emerged: that of Chinese brands being placed in Hollywood blockbusters. This raises the important issue of how the Chinese film industry collaborates with Hollywood in relation to product placement. This chapter suggests that the Chinese film industry has developed more competitive power in these deals. This is mainly reflected in the Chinese film industry's critical assessments of the influence of Hollywood blockbusters on the development of Chinese product placement. In order to examine how the industry talks about product placement deals under state control,

this chapter focuses on three power relations: audiences vs industry, Hollywood vs China, and product placement agency vs other participants in product placement operations. It is important to consider these three power relations because the Chinese film industry uses these terms more frequently than others in their discourses, and all of them are important participants in product placement deals in films.

Chapter 3 investigates the concept of balance in product placement in film production by examining how the Chinese film industry describes the power relations between creativity and commerce in product placement. Due to the complexity of product placement existing in the completely different conceptions, how to achieve a proper balance between creativity and commercialism has become a vital issue for the Chinese film industry. This chapter argues that the Chinese film industry dialectically states that the creativity and commercialism in product placement can coexist, even though product placement is based upon completely different conceptions. This could imply that the Chinese film industry emphasises collaborative relationships in its product placement discourse, which is also reflected in how Chinese practitioners criticise author-God theories by emphasising the power of collaborative creators. Furthermore, in a wider sense, the Chinese film industry, like other film industries, provides the illusion that they give audiences what they want. However, this study proposes that the Chinese film industry prioritises commercialism and profit, rather than what audiences really want. Even though practitioners criticise the crude and overt methods of product placement in modern Chinese films in their discourses, their discourses also reveal the industry's intrinsic pursuit of profit.

The final three chapters focus on the implementation of product placement in modern Chinese film productions from a textual perspective. The textual analysis investigates the three central film

elements: narrative, character, and genre. These elements are identified as the key areas where product placement is most overtly displayed, visualised and embodied, and considers the impact that this has on narrative coherence. Previously, scholars have rarely paid attention to the relationship between product placement and these film elements. This study posits that product placement in modern Chinese films is closely related to film narrative, characters and genre. Additionally, the industry discourse from the first three chapters offers crucial context for the textual analysis of product placement, as the final three chapters indicate. Specifically, when discussing product placement deals, the Chinese film industry highlighted the importance of balance. This is strongly reflected in the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film elements, such as the integration of product placement with the narrative, and the close connection between the types of products placed, character types and genres. In addition, the Chinese cultural experience offers the specificity of Chinese film storytelling, and even Chinese film genre. This potentially influences the embodiment of product placement and its relation to the film elements.

Chapter 4 examines the first demonstrable relationship – between product placement and the key film element, film narrative – from a textual perspective. This chapter argues that there are two types of relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films: integration and disruption. On the one hand, the Chinese film industry always says that it is pursuing the right balance between creativity and commercialism in the practice of product placement in domestic films, and the integration of product placement within the film narrative is crucial to achieving this balance. The proper integration between product placement and film context is also highly praised by Western scholars and Chinese scholars through looking at how they define the concept of product placement in films and how they categorise types of product placement in films. Thus, in order to explore how product placement is integrated into film narrative, Chapter 4

investigates three aspects of product placement: the purpose, the degree, and the method. These three aspects are closely related to the definitions and categories of product placement presented in the literature review. Specifically, the purpose of product placement is related to the brand's marketing communication strategy. This chapter suggests that brand identity and brand image are integrated into the narrative of the film through product placement. In addition, the depth of product placement can be divided into 'deep' and 'shallow', which, to some extent, reflects the method of product placement. In a broader sense, the methods of product placement include visual and auditory aspects, while deep and shallow product placement fall within the visual and auditory dimensions. Following the categorisation of product placement discussed in this study, this chapter also suggests that script product placement, as a form of deep product placement, is integrated into film narrative either visually or aurally; while prop product placement and dialogue product placement, as shallow product placement, are less integrated into the film narrative either visually or aurally. However, on the other hand, the presence of product placement can be disruptive, distracting the audience's attention from the film narrative. Thus, this chapter also examines how film narrative is disrupted by the presence of product placement in modern Chinese films.

Following this, the study will move on to the more specific and practical perspective: how product placement is performed in films. Chapter 5, therefore, investigates the relationship between product placement and character in modern Chinese films. Film character is one of the most crucial elements of the film story, and is as important to the film narrative as narrative time and narrative space. Film character plays a concrete role by performing product placement within the film narrative. Thus, this chapter suggests that there is a close relationship between product placement and character in modern Chinese films. Specifically, this is manifested in particular types of film character being

matched with particular types of products placed in films. Film characters have particular identities, personal experiences and emotions, which are associated with the embodiment of product placement on the screen through their performance. At the same time, how product placement is embodied on the screen is closely related to actors/actresses' performance skills. In order to construct a framework for the relationship between product placement and character in modern Chinese films, this chapter uses film performance theory to demonstrate how Chinese film characters influence product placement on screen. In particular, this study explores how different characters perform product placement with particular traits, such as gestures, movements, inflections and intonations.

However, character identity is shaped by the conventions of different genres of film. As Grant claimed, 'Genre movies are those commercial feature films which, though repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations' (1986, ix). Thus, Chapter 6 will focus on examining the demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre in modern Chinese films. To develop this idea, this chapter will start with the theoretical framework, considering the relevant film genre theory in Western literature. Integrating film genre theory into the study of product placement extends our understanding of the concept of product placement and provides a new perspective from which to study it. Next, the chapter will consider a wider framework in order to investigate how product placement is used in conventional film genre in Chinese cinema. The chapter will then move on to a specific investigation into how product placement is associated with particular genre of Chinese film. Academics in product placement studies have largely ignored the issue of whether film genre influences how product placement is implemented on screen. However, this chapter suggests that product placement is not shaped by film genre, but that film genre has some influence on the way in which product placement is embodied in the narrative context. Additionally, in

relation to Chinese film genre, this study provides a historical overview of the origin and development of New Year films in Mainland China. Overall, this chapter provides a distinctive understanding of the demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre in Chinese cinema, and adds insight into how film genre theory is practised in other national cinema and cultural contexts.

In conclusion, this study provides a crucial understanding of the role of product placement in the Chinese film industry, which contributes to the theory on product placement in other national film production. The main focus of this study is to answer the question of how product placement is adopted by the Chinese film industry from an industry and a textual perspective. It is specific to Chinese experiences of product placement in film production. In the majority of previous studies, Hollywood has been the sole object and example of product placement in films. Although there are numerous examples of successful product placement in Hollywood, other national cinemas have started to explore this profitable and creative realm. The Chinese film industry, as an important national cinema, is paying attention to product placement in film production as well. Product placement in film production has developed rapidly in recent years. On the one hand, the Chinese government is encouraging the development of product placement in film production through its policies and regulations. On the other hand, the Chinese film industry has found more ways to develop various aspects of product placement, such as transnational cooperation in product placement deals. Therefore, a critical investigation of the role of product placement in the Chinese film industry is needed.

It is notable that Hollywood's influence on Chinese film practice has been overstated by many researchers in the existing literatures. This study critically advocates that Chinese cinema creates its own cultural preference of aesthetics, narrative, and even commercial operation, although Hollywood-style historically shaped the development of

Chinese cinema in the initial phase within various aspects such as producing, exhibition, and distribution. There are two compelling reasons. Firstly, from historical perspective, China banned the most of entertainment and artistic activities during the Cultural Revolution for a decade. Therefore, from 1966 to 1976, there were no Hollywood's film imported or screened publicly in China. In this situation, Hollywood's impact was nearly zero in that period of time. Secondly, since the 21st century, China has grown rapidly, which is the fastest growth economy in the emerging economies. Under such impressive economic growth, Chinese film industry has attracted extensive attentions from various perspectives in the world. The huge market offers Chinese film industry particular advantage for exerting its power and impact at global level. In this context, Hollywood's impact on Chinese film practice is not such dominated as previous scholars presented.

It is also necessary to emphasize that the stardom is not addressed in depth in this study, although the stardom is realized as an important component for embodiment of product placement on screen. There are two compelling reasons for why the stardom is not further involved in this study. Firstly, this study aims to examine the relationship between product placement and the characters in the film productions, rather than explore the relationship between product placement and the stars. Even though the stars are closely related to the characters in films, but the stardom study belongs to the completely different field and is involved in desperate theoretical frameworks. It is not the main concentration in this study. Secondly, the theoretical framework of stardom is complicated and it has been researched for a long time. The concept of the star can be identified as various ways, such as a product of mass culture, an industrial marketing instrument, a social sign, a product of capitalism, and a figure consumed for his personal life. It is essentially related to extensive areas. Compare to consider product placement in such comprehensive areas, this study prefers to focus on

the specific areas. Therefore, this study investigates how product placement is associated with the film characters rather than with the stardoms.

Chapter 1. A Historical Overview of the Chinese Film Industry

Even without the threat of competition from foreign films, China's motion picture industry has faced a formidable pair of constraints, caught between the growing market pressures of the economic reform programme and the Communist Party's enduring political demands.

— Wan Jihong and Richard Kraus (2002, 421).

Introduction

Although the concept of product placement has existed in Hollywood for many decades, the Chinese film industry is still attempting to find a more balanced approach to its operation. In order to investigate product placement in modern Chinese cinema, it is important to understand the Chinese film industry. This knowledge provides a foundation for understanding the distinctive role of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry and allows for a better critical investigation of product placement in that industry. Thus, this chapter aims to identify what the Chinese film industry is and explain how it has developed from a historical perspective. It establishes a historical framework for the industry's development from the early cinema era to the twenty-first century. This chapter argues that the modern Chinese film industry has undergone some changes, but there is still continuity in its development during the twenty-first century. Wan and Kraus (2002) claimed that the power relations between the film industry and the state in Chinese cinema are complex and have influenced the structure of the industry today. However, Hollywood has always been a dominant influence on the development of the Chinese film industry.

Hollywood is a powerful external factor that has influenced the development of the textual (narrative structure, film storytelling, and so on) and industrial (structure, expansion strategies, and so on) aspects of Chinese cinema. Therefore, this chapter also provides an understanding of how the relationship between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood has shifted. Additionally, successful instances of product placement in Hollywood suggest that Hollywood's commercial model of product placement is a feasible approach for expanding the industry. In addition, it reminds the Chinese film industry that product placement is an effective strategy for increasing industrialisation and commercialisation. Therefore, this chapter suggests that the emergence of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry is due to internal demands and external influence.

First, it is necessary to summarise the history of the Chinese film industry, because it has undergone a remarkable transformation in order to become the modern film industry it is today. A historical overview provides important insight into social change and movement. Since its early beginnings, Chinese cinema has changed in diverse ways in terms of technological development, social movements, and market demands. Several of these transformations have influenced the structure of the industry and expanded its industrial and commercial development. The growth of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry is directly related to the industry's history of development. In addition, from an academic perspective, previous studies on product placement have paid more attention to the history of product placement in Hollywood than in other national cinema (Segrave, 2004; Lehu, 2007). Meanwhile, Chinese scholars have investigated product placement in films without considering the historical factors (Zhang, 2008; Qian, 2012). The historical overview of the Chinese film industry in this chapter reinforces a crucial understanding of the extent to which things have changed and what the continuities are and provides an understanding of how these

transformations and continuities influence the practice of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry. As a result, the historical overview enables the rest of this study to critically investigate the role of product placement in modern Chinese cinema from an industry perspective.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section aims to examine the history of Chinese cinema from the early cinema era to the end of the twentieth century. An internal development perspective is taken in order to demonstrate the characteristics of the historical periods of the industry. However, the formation of the industry was also influenced by external factors; thus, the second section examines how these factors have shaped the development of the industry. This focuses on how the relationship between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood has shifted from the time of early Chinese cinema to the beginning of the twenty-first century, and explores how Hollywood, as a powerful external factor, has shaped the development of the Chinese industry. Next, this chapter regains an internal perspective to view how the Chinese film industry is being run in the twenty-first century.

The third section identifies patterns of change and continuity in the industry in the twenty-first century. It provides a definition of the modern Chinese film industry, and contrastively examines what has changed in the processes of production, distribution, and exhibition since the beginning of the century. Alongside these changes, there is a potential continuity that might be obscured by the emphasis on change; this continuity is state control. It illustrates that there is a power struggle rival between the state and the film industry and that the state has a strong impact on product placement in modern Chinese films.

The final section of this chapter provides an overview of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry, including a brief history

of the milestones in its development and how the Chinese model of product placement can be distinguished from the Hollywood model.

Section 1. A historical overview of the Chinese film industry from the early cinema era to the twentieth century

The Chinese film industry has developed over approximately 100 years, from the time of the Qing Dynasty¹² until today. The period of early cinema in China began in 1896, when the first film was released and exhibited in the country (Zhang, 2004). In the historical context of its development, various factors and landmark events have affected how the Chinese film industry has changed from past to present. The industry has been restructured many times due to significant factors of 'internal power' and 'external impact'. In this study, 'internal power' is defined as how the Chinese film industry has constructed and shaped itself and how the Chinese government has dominated and interfered with the industry. 'External impact' generally refers to Western influence, especially that of Hollywood. This section aims to explore, from a historical perspective, how internal power shaped the development of the Chinese film industry up until the end of the twentieth century.

Before becoming an authentic 'industry', Chinese cinema had been developing for many years. Briefly, the history of the Chinese film industry before the twenty-first century can be divided into six periods: (1) early cinema; (2) popular entertainment cinema; (3) social realist cinema; (4) revolutionary propaganda cinema; (5) critical realist cinema; and (6) the modernisation of the Chinese film industry. During that time, there were six generations of Chinese filmmakers; these

¹² The Qing Dynasty is from 1636 to 1912 (Baiké.Baidu.com, accessed September 2015, available from: <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/5405/13482963.htm>).

represent the chronological approach to the development of Chinese cinema taken by Chinese film scholars such as Zhu Ying (2003).

As mentioned previously, a domestic film was released and exhibited in China for the first time in 1896, marking the beginning of the period of early cinema in China. This period ended in 1929, when the crisis-ridden film industry struggled to restructure itself and an impending technological change emerged (Zhang, 2004). According to Zhang's historical framework of the Chinese cinema (2004), the early cinema period can be divided into three phases. The first, known as 'cinema as attraction'¹³, lasted from 1896 to 1921. During this period, Chinese filmmakers treated film as a new technology, trying to appeal to audiences; hence, with potential financial and educational benefits. In the second phase, known as 'cinema as narration' (from 1922 to 1926), Chinese filmmakers began to treat film production as a business by organising production companies with clear objectives and investing in distribution and exhibition chains. The third phase of early cinema, from 1927 to 1929, was 'cinema as speculation'. Cheap, primitive genre films and severe competition among film studios overwhelmed the market and resulted in financial ruin for enormous companies in China (Zhang, 2003; Zhu, 2003; Zhang, 2004). During the early cinema period, the first filmmakers to introduce motion pictures to China emerged, such as Zheng Zhengqiu (*Orphan Rescues Grandfather*, 1923). These first-generation filmmakers experimented with various styles and genres and eventually settled for commercial entertainment features in the 1920s.

After the early cinema period, the Chinese film industry entered a period of popular entertainment cinema. This period is also known as 'pre-war cinema', because the first wave of entertainment, in the early

¹³ In 1986, Tom Gunning provided an understanding of the cinema of attraction in early film. He claimed that 'one can unite them in a conception that sees cinema less a way of telling stories than as a way of presenting a series of views to an audience' (1986, 64).

1930s, was interrupted by the Sino-Japanese War and the Chinese Civil War. This period provided 'escapism, along with cinema's commercial and, to a certain extent, artistic functions' (Zhu, 2003, 5). Chinese film productions actively and effectively competed with Hollywood imports for the first time. Costume drama and martial arts-ghost drama (which combined Kung Fu legends with ghost stories) were the most popular genres, with all the financial success coming from them. As Zhu indicated, 'Costume drama's popularity among overseas Chinese was crucial for the Chinese film industry to make a profit and attract investments, since prosperous Southeast Asia promised both the market and the capital' (Zhu, 2003, 184). This was the first time that the Chinese film industry was able to compete with Hollywood; the majority of Chinese theatres had been dominated by Hollywood films before the emergence of costume drama. At the same time, martial arts-ghost drama created a new genre of Chinese film. *Burning of the Red Lotus Temple* (Zhang Shichuan, 1928) is representative of the martial arts-ghost drama in the popular entertainment cinema period. According to Zhu's data, in 1929 'the production of martial arts-ghost films reached its height, with an annual output of 85 pictures' (Zhu, 2003, 190). Eventually, the quality of martial arts-ghost dramas became mixed, with some high quality and some poor quality, and in 1931, the Nationalist government banned material arts-ghost films altogether, officially ending the period of popular entertainment cinema. In the same year, Japan invaded north-east China and established a puppet state in Manchuria. During the mid-1930s, the puppet state policy opened the door to the leftist film movement. The second generation, such as Cheng Bugao, Shen Xiling, Cai Chusheng, Shi Dongshan and Fei Mu, cultivated a realist tradition that blended classical Hollywood films with traditional Chinese performing arts (Zhu, 2003; Zhang, 2004).

The period of social realist cinema lasted from the late 1930s to the late 1940s. This period can be divided into two phases: the wartime phase and the post-war phase (Zhang, 2004). In the wartime phase, from 1937

to 1945, commercial filmmaking returned to Shanghai and continued well into the occupation, when Japanese forces sought to restructure Shanghai's film industry in line with the Manchurian model. The third generation of filmmakers began to appear during this period. They practised film production in the Communist Army and made political documentaries under the Party's doctrine. Some filmmakers worked on wartime drama in Chongqing, while others stayed in Hong Kong, where they promoted patriotic films (Zhang, 2004). The post-war phase, from 1946 to 1949, was controlled by the Nationalist Party. The Nationalist Party confiscated the Japanese studio facilities in Shanghai and Manchuria and established its own system of filmmaking and distribution. However, this period ended on 1 October 1949 with the founding of the People's Republic of China and the takeover by the Communist Party.

In 1949 the Chinese film industry moved into the revolutionary propaganda cinema period, which coincided with Mao Zedong's era and lasted until 1976. Some Western scholars, such as Berry (2004), have referred to this period as 'classical cinema'. Berry states that this period of Chinese cinema was similar to Hollywood classical cinema, because Chinese cinema dominated the market. There were no competing filmmaking activities in the Chinese film industry at that time, and the distribution of foreign feature films was also limited. After the Communists came to power in 1949, Mao's insistence on subordinating the cinema translated into state control. A series of moves integrated the film industry into a socialist command-based economy. At the same time, the leadership by a state body was reinforced by state ownership. In 1950 distribution was organised through networks of regional film-management companies, which in 1951 became a state monopoly that owned and operated all commercial theatres in China. On the production side, the whole of the commercial film industry was nationalised in 1953. In the same year, the first five-year plan was begun, which pushed for more economic development. From 1954 to

1965, the Chinese government treated the film industry an effective weapon of propaganda and expanded its operations. To spur economic growth, film studios were restructured; for example, Shanghai Studio become the Shanghai Film Corporation. The period of revolutionary propaganda cinema encompassed the Cultural Revolution, which lasted for 10 years (from 1966 to 1976). This is frequently referred to as 'the decade of chaos', and has been identified as an obstacle for the development of Chinese culture, especially within the realm of entertainment. The government banned the majority of cultural entertainment activities during the Cultural Revolution, which had an impact on the film industry. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, from 1967 to 1969, the production of films was suspended. "A total of 589 films and more than 1,000 documentary, animation and educational titles that had been produced during the previous 17 years were sealed and stored (Zhang, 2004). As the nation became submerged in factional fighting and political persecution, film production resumed with the filming of the 'revolutionary model plays', which led to a new era of Chinese cinema. The fourth generation of Chinese directors emerged during this period; they included Wu Yigong, Wu Tianming and Zhang Nuanxin, among others. This was the first generation of professional filmmakers to receive formal film training, which took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s under the socialist educational system.

Following the Cultural Revolution came the period from the late 1970s to the early 1980s known as 'critical realist cinema'. In 1977 and 1978, the two years that immediately followed the Cultural Revolution, cinema became a popular means of venting frustrations and filmmakers were too busy condemning political persecution to bring their films out of rigid ideological confinement (Zhang, 2004). However, in the second half of the 1970s, a landmark event – the Economic Reform – brought about a huge change for the Chinese film industry and played a significant role in determining the parameters and possibilities of

Chinese cinema as an economically viable and culturally motivated institution. As Zhu evaluated, the Economic Reform had a strong influence on the marketisation and privatisation of the Chinese film industry (Zhu, 2003). In this period, the fifth generation, including Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Zhang Yimou and Zhang Junzhao, who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982, made experimental art films that challenged the social realist tradition. Their successes in domestic art films, such as *Yellow Earth* (Chen, 1984) and *Horse Thief* (Tian, 1985), created a new wave of Chinese cinema, which took stylistic cues from European art cinema and departed from the classical Hollywood format.

As the development of Chinese cinema moved from the modernisation of film art in the late 1980s to the modernisation of film economy in the late 1990s, the issue of cultural identity shifted from one of culture to one of economics. The state invested heavily in propaganda films, while encouraging private companies to produce ideologically acceptable artistic and commercial films. During this period, under the shadow of the fifth generation's global recognition and the box office pressure of the commercialised film industry, the sixth generation's film productions were mostly low budget, and reflected post-modern life in urban China (Zhu, 2003; Zhang, 2004). The sixth generation included Hu Xueyang (*A Lady Left Behind*, 1991), Zhang Yuan (*Beijing Bastard*, 1993), and Li Xin (*Falling in Love*, 1995). In the mid-1990s, two things happened in Chinese film industry that changed the balance of the political economy in post-socialist cinema. First, the Chinese government announced the '9550 project' in 1996 to endorse state policy and support Party propaganda through film production. The 9550 project encouraged state studios to compete for government subsidies (Yin, 1998). The other new development was that the state allowed the China Film Corporation to participate in transnational capitalism and distribute blockbuster imports from Hollywood in order to attract audiences back to the cinema. This measure began in 1994

and was limited to 10 films a year until 2002; indeed, these blockbusters attracted audiences immediately (Zhang, 2003). This suggests the importance of Hollywood film productions for the Chinese film industry.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the Chinese film industry has been influenced externally by Hollywood. From the early period of Chinese cinema, the American film industry was a dominant influence; for example, in terms of the format of film narrative, film genre, and the construction of the film industry itself. However, the Chinese film industry's relationship with Hollywood is not unchanging or permanent, and has shifted in various ways throughout the industry's development. It is necessary to examine this relationship, because it is one of the most important external factors to influence the development of the Chinese film industry. As Hollywood dominates the global cinema market, any change in its relationship with the Chinese film industry have direct and indirect effects on the practice of commercialisation and industrialisation in modern Chinese cinema. Therefore, the following section examines how external changes have influenced the development of the Chinese film industry.

Section 2. Changes in the Chinese film industry's relationship with Hollywood

The relationship between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood has fluctuated over the years. Although Hollywood has always influenced the financial, technological and industrial aspects of the Chinese film industry, the strength of this influence has depended on the power of the Chinese state and the internal development of the Chinese film industry. In the twenty-first century, the Chinese film industry has become a strong competitor and, with its huge domestic market and its rapid growth, it is powerful enough to resist Hollywood's cultural

imperialism. However, before the beginning of the new century, there were three main phases in the industry's relationship with Hollywood.

The first phase of the relationship was one of domination versus resistance, and lasted from the early period of Chinese cinema until the 1940s. Chinese cinema existed in Hollywood's shadow for many years. Most of the early films shown in China were imported from Western countries, such as America, France, and Britain, and foreign merchants acted as distributors. On the economic side, both industrialisation and privatisation had not yet caught up with China when the motion picture was introduced in China. Lack of domestic capital investment placed Chinese resources under indirect foreign control, as much of the finance came from the United States. Most of the early Chinese domestic films were co-produced and were dependent on foreign capital and technology, mostly provided by Hollywood. Several Chinese researchers have provided evidence for this assumption. Zhu Ying claimed that in the early development of Chinese cinema:

Both the entertainment wave and the institutional restructurings shared the same goal in their attempt to compete with Hollywood for the Chinese market. Hollywood's dominance in the Chinese market continued throughout the second half of the 1920s, occupying 90 percent of screen time (2003, 191).

According to Wang, 82 per cent of films in 1933 were imported from Hollywood, while the percentage of imported films reached 89 in 1936 (1998, 62); this demonstrates that Hollywood dominated the film industry in China during the 1930s. In terms of technology, especially camerawork and post-production, the Chinese filmmakers relied strongly on foreign expertise at first, especially that of Hollywood; however, they managed to learn the basics along the way. With regard to exhibition venues, films were originally shown in traditional teahouses, then in opera theatres, and finally in modern cinemas. In the

early years, the Chinese film industry relied on teahouses and traditional stage performances to attract audiences. In teahouses, viewers sat at a table with snacks and tea while they watched a film. After the teahouse era, films were shown in opera theatres. However, with the progression of technology and the modernisation of Chinese cinema, modern cinemas were built and films were no longer shown in the old-fashioned opera theatres.

The dominance of foreign distributors and imported films in the Chinese market was perceived by some as yet more proof of Western imperialism in China, and provoked a strong nationalist reaction. This was evident in audiences' resistance to imported films portraying China and Chinese people in an unsympathetic way, and in domestic film practitioners' move away from Hollywood-led foreign imports and toward the establishment of a national film industry. For example, according to Zhang (2004) claimed, the Chinese government established its own powerful Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1917, which acquired professional equipment, such as cameras and printing machines, from America and installed them in its photography studio. The Commercial Press produced more than 40 domestic films in 1919, and tried to promote Chinese culture by marketing their productions overseas. In 1927, to compete with Hollywood's distribution and exhibition of films in China, the Chinese government decided to build its own theatres in Shanghai, Beijing and other big cities. In the early years of the People's Republic of China, Chinese film producers thought of the cinema as a tool for social reform in order to create a stronger China and, by making a profit, rescue the nation, which was currently in crisis (Zhang, 2004). Even though Hollywood dominated early Chinese cinema in terms of financial input, cinematic technology and artistic creativity, the attitude of resistance held by the early Chinese film industry implied that it aspired to compete with Hollywood and change the power balance.

From the 1940s to the 1990s, the relationship with Hollywood entered into its second phase: imitation vs innovation. Before the 1940s, Hollywood still had a noticeable presence in the remote areas controlled by the Nationalist Party (Zhang, 2004). Chinese classical cinema still shared some institutional features with Hollywood that had been inherited from the pre-Communist industry; as a result, Hollywood was used as the main model during the period from 1949 to 1976 (Berry, 2004). However, after the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese film industry developed rapidly in the 1980s with the emergence of the fifth generation and started to explore developing a unique approach in areas such as genre, narrative, and methods of storytelling (Zhang, 2004). The fifth generation created stylish Chinese art films, but the popularity of Hollywood motion pictures still attracted Chinese audiences and affected what they wanted to watch. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Hollywood had more of an influence on Chinese audiences' tastes than on Chinese domestic cinema.

In the 1990s, the changing relationship with Hollywood entered its third phase: competitive cooperation. In the 1990s China's economy was gradually transformed from a planned economy to a market economy. Many industrial sectors abolished the planned allocation system. Entrepreneurs invested new resources in more profitable sectors, benefiting the film industry. The film industry's high profit margins and its ideological importance ensured that it was the subject of commercial investment as well as state control (Gong, 1997). 'Hollywood's sweeping second entry into the Chinese film market dramatically marginalised the Chinese film industry's share of the domestic market' (Zhu, 2003, 1). Facing strong competition from imported Hollywood blockbusters, some Chinese filmmakers decided to seek possible remedies. Hollywood's institutional structure and the popularity of its narrative formula has heavily influenced the models of Chinese filmmaking and marketing. At the end of 2001, China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which led to a small

shift in the relationship between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood. Specifically, the Chinese film industry needed to open additional screens to show films produced in the United States. At the same time, the industry began to accept investment from other countries. Hollywood film studios brought their economic models to the Chinese market. As Wan and Kraus claimed:

The Chinese film industry and Hollywood may become partners in pushing the Chinese government to relax ideological control and enforce laws to protect the industry from local protectionism, piracy and other unfair business practices. For the Communist Party, Hollywood's technical mastery in mass entertainment offers cues for reforming its own propaganda. (2002, 432).

This suggests that the Chinese government needed Hollywood's advanced techniques to create new propaganda through film productions. In other words, it revealed that the Chinese film industry is controlled by the state; thus, the cooperative status quo of the Chinese film industry with Hollywood is initially a reflection of the state's intentions for its propaganda. This characteristic of the Chinese film industry is also reflected in its product placement deals, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

However, from industry perspective, the relationship between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood has shifted from one of unilateral dependence to one of interdependence. In recent years, the Chinese film market has become Hollywood's biggest overseas market. The professor in film study from CEIBS Jiang Jiongwen (2014) claimed that Hollywood has been paying more attention to its overseas strategy because the domestic film market in America is saturated. In addition, Hollywood's box office successes rely mainly on the overseas market, especially the Chinese market. For example, the box office takings for

Iron Man 3 (Black, 2013) in the American market came to 0.4 billion US dollars, while the figure was about 0.8 billion US dollars for the entire overseas market, with the Chinese market accounting for 0.12 billion US dollars¹⁴ (Box Office Mojo, 2013). Jiang (2014) stated if there was no overseas market, Hollywood exported-oriented blockbusters would lose everything. The overseas market is mainly supported by the Chinese market. Hollywood needs the Chinese market in order to support its film production.

In terms of technology, 3D viewing is enhancing audiences' cinematic experiences. According to the *New York Times*, *3D Avatar* recorded 0.2 billion US dollars in Chinese cinema market in 2012. In 2012, there were 229 IMAX screens across China. The Chinese government encouraged 3D and IMAX films by relaxing the restrictions of its policy on imports (*New York Times*, 2012). In 2012 China imported 14 (in addition to the usual 20 imported films per year) 3D and IMAX films from Hollywood, and became the second biggest film market in the world (BBC Zhongwen, 2013). This suggests that the power of the Chinese film industry has gradually increased and is subtly shaping the relationship with Hollywood. On the other hand, the Chinese film industry needs non-financial support from Hollywood in terms of technology, strategy, commercial mechanisms and regulation systems.

To sum up, this section has examined the Chinese film industry's shifting relationship with Hollywood from a historical perspective. Ever since the period of early Chinese cinema, Hollywood has had a major influence on Chinese cinema through cultural imperialism, by controlling capital investment and by shaping the narrative format of film. With its powerful cinematic technology, Hollywood has dominated the Chinese market in production, distribution and exhibition. Initially,

¹⁴ Available from:
<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=ironman3.htm>
Accessed: 8th August 2014.

it shaped the development of the Chinese film industry. However, the Chinese film industry has never stopped exploring its own methods of industrial development: from resistance and imitation in the early years, to innovation and corporation at the end of the twentieth century. The changes in the Chinese film industry's relationship with Hollywood suggests that the power balance has shifted; as a result, this may influence the practice of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry.

The next section investigates how the Chinese film industry has developed in the twenty-first century by examining two aspects: first, major changes in production, distribution and exhibition; and second, the continuity of state intervention. This pattern of change and continuity in the Chinese film industry are crucial to how product placement has been adopted.

Section 3. The development of the Chinese film industry in the twenty-first century: change and continuity

At a time when all countries are paying attention to the development of their soft power¹⁵, the film industry is regarded as an important cultural force. With this in mind, the Chinese government has put forward the goal of 'going global' for the Chinese film industry. The Chinese film industry has experienced a period of extraordinary growth in the twenty-first century. This has been reflected in production and box office figures. According to data from Entgroup (2013), the number of features produced per year has quadrupled: from 82 in 2000 to 330 in 2006. Additionally, total film box office revenues rose from 960 million RMB (about 96 million GBP) in 2000 to 2.62 billion RMB (about 262 million GBP) in 2006, while domestic film box office revenues increased from 280 million RMB (about 28 million GBP) in 2000 to 1.2

¹⁵ The term 'soft power' here means the export of culture (Keane, 2010).

billion RMB (about 120 million GBP) in 2005. Moreover, new box office records for domestic films have been set one after the other. For example, in 2002, *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001) made 11 million RMB (about 1.1 million GBP) in about 40 days, eventually making 42 million RMB (about 4.2 million GBP) and setting a new record for the Chinese film industry. However, in 2003 Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) established a new record of 250 million RMB (about 25 million GBP) for domestic screenings (Entgroup, 2011). Later, *House of Daggars* (Zhang, 2004), *The Promise* (Chen, 2005) and *The Banquet* (Feng, 2006) proved the seemingly unstoppable expansion of Chinese cinema, each of them gaining revenues of between 140 million RMB (about 14 million GBP) and 170 million RMB (about 17 million GBP) in the Chinese domestic market alone. By 2013, total box office revenues had amounted to 20 billion RMB (about 2 billion GBP) in China (Entgroup, 2014).

Aside from the euphoria over box office revenues, there is no doubt that the Chinese film industry has undergone rapid development. Therefore, this section will provide a more recent history of the development of the Chinese film industry, focusing on how it operates in the twenty-first century. In order to develop it, this section will examine the patterns of change and continuity in the industry in the twenty-first century. However, this requires a definition of the Chinese film industry. This provides a wider framework of the Chinese film industry in this century, and it is helpful for investigating the role of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry.

3.1 The definition of the Chinese film industry

The question of whether the Chinese film industry can be categorised as a 'film industry' has created a controversial debate in Chinese academia. Thus, before providing a historical overview of the Chinese film industry, the definition of film industry should be identified. However, there is no exact or unified definition. This study prefers to accept

Wasko's approach to defining film industry. She defined Hollywood as 'an industry that produces and distributes commodities and, thus, is similar to other industries that manufacture and produce products for profit' (Wasko, 2003, 2). She also stated that the film industry is not like other industries, as it operates in a particular economic system with a set of unique characteristics. Based on Wasko's definition, Chinese cinema can be categorised as a film industry, because it has a complete structure that includes production, distribution, and exhibition.

However, some Chinese academics disagree with this approach to defining the film industry. For example, Xiang Yong (2012) has indicated that the Chinese film industry cannot be categorised as such because it does not conform to the definition of film industry on the industrial level. Specifically, according to Xiang's statement, the Chinese film industry relies on the box office for most of its revenue. He proposed that the film industry should be linked to general economic cycles and that the links in the filmmaking process (production, distribution, and exhibition) should work together in order to make a profitable contribution to the film industry (Xiang, 2012). Many Chinese academics, such as Li Guangdou (2004) and Zhang Ying (2007), as well as practitioners in the film industry, such as Ji Erwei (2010) and Peng Kan (2013), share similar opinions to Xiang Yong on the definition of the Chinese film industry. They prefer to say that Chinese film industry is on the way to develop industrialisation and commercialisation.

Although the definition of the Chinese film industry is a controversial issue, this study believes that the Chinese film industry, with its specific features, is one of industrialism and commercialism. The social change and technological development that has taken place in the twenty-first century has resulted in transformations to its structure and production, distribution and exhibition processes. This is stimulating the Chinese film industry to integrate development on an industrial level.

3.2 Changes in the Chinese film industry during the twenty-first century

Since the beginning of the century, four major changes have taken place in the Chinese film industry in relation to the processes of film production, distribution, and exhibition.

- The value attached cinematic format has changed. Films as part of cultural productions are combining artistic value with commercial value.
- With the development of technology, the pattern of film consumption has moved from simplification to diversification.
- The constitution of film production has changed. Non-state-owned institutions are participating in the process as leaders.
- External factors have more influence on the development of the Chinese film industry.

Those four major changes are reflected in various aspects of the processes of production, distribution and exhibition. Specifically, in the process of production, there are five manifestations of these new changes. First, film production output is experiencing a period of explosive growth. For example, Yin and Wang (2004) claimed that 212 films were produced in 2004, which is far more than the previous film-production record set in 1992¹⁶. This provides a product basis for expanding the film market in the development of Chinese film industry. Second, sources of investment in films are becoming more diverse. Today, three main sources of investment provide capital for Chinese film production: overseas investment, state-owned film-production companies, and funds from government institutions. This is in opposition to the simplification seen in the past. Third, the scale of investment in films has expanded, with the total amount of investment

¹⁶ Before the twenty-first century, film production output peaked at 170 in 1992 (Yin and Wang, 2004).

in film increasing significantly. For instance, *House of Flying Daggers* (Zhang, 2004) received 290 million RMB (about 29 million GBP) of investment, which was the first time investment in a Chinese film had exceeded 100 million RMB (about 10 million GBP). Fourth, in general, the state-owned film-production companies are in decline. They have undergone reform and restructuring since the turn of the century; thus, some have been closed down, while some have been made part of other companies. The China Film Group Corporation is the most important state-owned film-production company producing, distributing and exhibiting films today. Finally, with the decline of the state-owned film-production companies, private companies are leading film production in China. For example, Huayi Brothers Media Corporation is a large private company that has produced a large number of successful films, such as *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), *Kung Fu Hustle* (Zhou, 2004) and *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013).

In terms of distribution, the four major changes listed above are manifested in four ways. First, private distributors have become major institutions in the Chinese film industry. In 2004, the State Administration of Radio Film and Television of China (SARFT) put in place the Provisional Film Enterprises Business Qualification Entry Regulations in order to make more private film-production companies eligible for distributing domestic films. The regulations provided more opportunities for private film production companies to participate in the process of film distribution, encouraging these companies to become the main distributors in the modern Chinese film industry. Second, the industry has exploited the concept of the release schedule, constructing it in a way that attracts fragmented audiences¹⁷; for example, creating a Valentine's Day schedule, Oscars schedule and summer holiday schedule. Third, the Chinese film industry has begun to

¹⁷ The term 'fragmented audience' was coined by Vogel in 2001. Additionally, Drake cites the concept of fragmented audience in his assertion that 'the film industry had to work hard at attracting an increasingly fragmented audience' (2008, 67).

recognise the importance of marketing its products. Previously, the industry had not realised the importance of film marketing, and the majority of domestic film productions lacked a marketing budget. However, since the turn of the century, the industry has increased investment in promotion; for example, the promotional marketing costs for *House of Flying Daggers* were 30 million RMB (about 3 million GBP), which was equivalent to 30 per cent of the film's total investment. Additionally, with the development of the Internet and other communication platforms, distribution outlets are multiplying, which is shaping the structure of the Chinese film industry. With the technological developing, the film industry has gradually broken through the constraints of time and space, and film industry has become a dynamic component of the media industry. Film distribution outlets are now multiple and diverse (Yin and Wang, 2004).

In the process of film exhibition, three changes have taken place in the Chinese film industry this century. First, more domestic films are now screened than imported films. As Yin claims, with the success of *Hero* (Zhang, 2002) and other domestic films, the box office for domestic films is exceeding that of imported films for the first time (2004). Second, domestic films are expanding into the overseas market. For example, some Chinese blockbusters, such as *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*, have created new box office records in the overseas film market. According to statistics published on Xinhuanet.com¹⁸ (2015), the total box office takings for *Hero* in the overseas film market exceeded 1.1 billion RMB (about 110 million GBP). This is empowering the Chinese film industry in the global film market and is increasing its external influence. Finally, with the development and popularity of cinematic technology, the number of cinemas has increased in most Chinese cities and the technical equipment has been improved in many

¹⁸ Xinhuanet.com is a state-owned news institution, and aims to report global news and information. The data available from http://www.js.xinhuanet.com/2015-07/20/c_1115980898.htm

existing cinemas. Since the beginning of the century, the Chinese film industry has added 36 new cinema lines, and there are 1,188 cinemas with 2,396 screens in the whole China (Yin and Wang, 2004, 12). This is a significant increase in comparison with the past.

These changes in the Chinese film industry have influenced its internal development and shaped the expansion of its industrialisation and commercialisation. As a vital expansion strategy, it can be argued that the emergence of product placement is due to these patterns of change in the industry. However, it is easy to ignore aspects of continuity in the Chinese film industry and overemphasise the changes. It is important to consider the continuity of the industry in the twenty-first century, because this is what characterises its structure and its operational model of product placement.

3.3 The continuity of state intervention

Compared with Hollywood, the Chinese film industry is less independent of government intervention. Indeed, the Chinese film industry is still controlled by the government. Even though Hollywood helped shape the structure and development of the industry during the early period, the structures of the two film industries differ. From a historical perspective, Zhu Ying indicated that economic reform in the form of decentralisation, privatisation, conglomeration and globalisation has equipped the Chinese film industry with a modern economic lexicon but has not helped it gain independence from state intervention (Zhu, 2003, 72). Its structure is shaped and restructured by SARFT, which was established in October 1949 as the government department responsible for managing all cultural and entertainment arrangements in China. In 2013, SARFT was merged with the General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP) to become the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China (SAPPRFT). Because the Chinese film industry does not have full

control rights over its operations, the state still has a powerful impact on how the industry develops and how it is constructed in the twenty-first century.

A member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Cui Yongyuan, claimed that the structure of the Chinese film industry is unsound and imbalanced (2012) because of the trend for Chinese films to be high-budget, feature famous actors or be blockbusters (*dapian*). Everything in the Chinese film industry is commercialised. Cui indicated that the film industry should be more varied, because film is a cultural product; therefore, the structure of the film industry should be balanced instead of following homogenous commercial patterns (high-budget, featuring stars, or blockbusters) (Cui, 2012). However, the main reason that the Chinese film industry follows a homogenous commercial pattern is that the government, through its economic institutions, is motivating the film industry to become more commercialised. With encouragement from the government, the Bank of Beijing, China Merchants Bank, Minsheng Bank and other financial institutions started to provide funds for film projects. However, to mitigate potential risks, banks generally choose to fund blockbusters, such as *The Assembly* (Feng, 2007), *The Flowers of War* (Zhang, 2011) or *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate* (Xu, 2011), while other small and medium-sized film projects and small film companies – even those with great potential – find it difficult to obtain funds from Chinese banks (Gu, 2012). An additional domestic motivation is that some film industry practitioners excessively enthuse about the success of Hollywood and aim to emulate it.

Aside from this, the historical factors cannot be ignored. Throughout the history of its development, on the one hand, the Chinese film industry has always been controlled by the government: the Qing Dynasty, the Manchurian government, the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party. On the other hand, to develop the film industry and

seek new markets for Chinese cinema, the Chinese government has to make 'going global' policies¹⁹ and choose the process of commercialisation and marketisation. Thus, state forces and market forces are simultaneously exerted on the Chinese film industry.

The situation of the Chinese film industry in the twenty-first century is complicated and controversial. Specifically, this relates to the conflict between market and state forces. On the one hand, the Chinese film industry has started to emulate Hollywood patterns and has become more explicitly commercial through the practices of merchandising film products and featuring products in films. On the other hand, it is impossible for the Chinese film industry to free itself from state control for historical reasons. Therefore, there is a conflicting power relationship between the state and the film industry, which is closely related to the operation of product placement in modern Chinese films.

Section 4. Product placement in modern Chinese cinema: an overview from an industry perspective

Due to the internal changes and external influences discussed previously, product placement is an inevitable aspect of expanding the commercialisation and industrialisation of the Chinese film industry today. From an internal perspective, the simplification of the industry's profit model has led to a shortage of investment. This has become a crucial motivation for the emergence of product placement in the industry. In order to adapt to the market economy, the film industry has had to reorganise its structure and explore new strategies to promote the development of industrialisation and commercialisation. Thus, product placement has been recognised by the Chinese film industry as an effective strategy for obtaining additional profit. From an external

¹⁹ The 'going global' policy in relation to the cultural industry is an important strategy in China, which is issued in 2000. It aims to promote Chinese culture to the world (Hu, 2004).

perspective, the successful examples of product placement in Hollywood have established it as a referable and feasible approach. Looking to Hollywood, the Chinese film industry has realised that product placement can be a powerful expansion strategy. Therefore, internal and external factors have stimulated the emergence of product placement in the Chinese film industry.

4.1 The development of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry

In the Chinese domestic market, product placement has undergone four important stages of development. The 1999 film, *Sorry Baby* (Feng, 1999) represents the first attempt at product placement in Chinese film production. The Bank of China was placed in the film as a background prop, as Figure 1.1 shows.



Figure 1.1 *Sorry Baby*

A year later, a second, aural product placement was made in *A Sigh* (Feng, 2000). The company European Classic Estates was verbally inserted into the film in a conversation between the heroines.

After that, product placement in Chinese film productions entered a period of exploration, starting with *Big Shot's Funeral* in 2001. Since then, product placement in domestic films has taken various forms, with representative productions including *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003) and *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004). During this period, product placement in domestic films became more diverse: rather than simply being background props or verbal placements, products began to be associated with the film context.

Since 2008, product placement in Chinese films has been operated on a large scale, and since then it has seen tremendous growth. A large number of products and brands have been embedded in domestic films; for example, 10 different brands appear in *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008) in visual and verbal formats, while as many as 20 can be found in *If You Are The One 2* (Feng, 2010). Additionally, in 2010, *Go LaLa Go* (Xu, 2010) promoted 40 brands spanning several areas of life, such as clothing, food, drink, cars and mobile phones. With the rapid growth of product placement in modern Chinese films, especially from a quantitative perspective, the controversial issue of how to achieve a balance between art and commerce has become increasingly urgent for practitioners in the Chinese film industry.

In 2013 product placement in the Chinese film industry entered a new era, with revenues exceeding 1 billion RMB (about 0.1 billion GBP) (Entgroup, 2013). Product placement revenues in *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013) came to 80 million RMB (about 8 million GBP), which set a new record for the domestic film market (Wang, 2013). The rapid growth of product placement in domestic cinema is attracting serious amount of attention to the distinctive role of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry.

4.2 The distinctive role of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry

Braester (2005) claimed that the Chinese film industry began to enter the advertising age at the end of the twentieth century. Entgroup (2014) claimed that the Chinese film advertising market increased from 330 million RMB (about 33 million GBP) in 2008 to 2.8 billion RMB (about 280 million GBP) in 2013. With the rapid growth of the Chinese film advertising market, product placement has been treated as an efficient marketing tool. Many Western academics have indicated that product placement is uniquely useful for promoting sales, and that it brings tangible and intangible profit to the film and manufacturing industries, as previous research discussed²⁰. The Chinese film industry has recognised that product placement plays two important roles in the structure of the industry: first, it provides powerful financial support; second, it helps commercialise the industry more quickly.

In terms of financial support for the Chinese film industry, similar to Hollywood, the revenues from product placement can cover partially increasing high cost of filmmaking. According to Entgroup data, in 2012 revenues from product placement exceeded 600 million RMB (about 60 million GBP). Feng Xiaogang's *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013) made over 80 million RMB (about 8 million GBP) from product placement before the film was even released, while the total investment was only 50 million RMB (about 5 million GBP)(Entgroup, 2013). In the process of commercialising the Chinese film industry, as illustrated by Feng's *Big Shot's Funeral*, commercial operations have been a priority for the domestic cinema in recent years. In addition, product placement has become a reliable and efficient source of the large investment required to produce high-budget films. Generally, revenues from product

²⁰ In the introduction to this study, the review of the Western literature on product placement provided an understanding of how Western academics have explored product placement and what they have researched.

placement are paid by the brand companies before the film is made, as opposed to other methods of generating income, such as selling DVDs (Wang, 2013). Zhang, Gries, Gui and Shook claimed that ‘The rush to produce Chinese blockbusters is motivated by the leading producers’ conviction that high-budget films are the only way to secure financial returns in a risky business environment’ (2007, 37). In order to reduce the risk of investing in high-budget films, Chinese film producers have put their faith in product placement. Because product placement provides efficient financial support for the Chinese film industry, and is part of its expansion strategy, the Chinese film industry has become more commercialised and is now closer to being a ‘full-fledged’²¹ film industry like Hollywood.

4.3 The operational model of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry

The practice of product placement under the Hollywood model involves four participants: the brand company, the film studio, the product placement agency, and a third-party evaluation company. Briefly, the brand company, also known as the advertiser, is responsible for providing the products and identifying what ‘message’ they want to transmit to the audience and what goal they want to achieve. It is also important to point out that the manufacturer can directly participate in creating the product placement scripts. The responsibility of the film studio is to offer a film script and identify where the product placement can be inserted. As Wasko summarised:

This department (studio) serves as an intermediary between the filmmakers and the corporate marketers or their agents. The studio executives who are dedicated to product placement

²¹ In 2003, Wasko used the term ‘full-fledged’ to describe the Hollywood film industry. She stated, ‘During the 1980s, product placement evolved into a full-fledged industry’ (2003, 155).

frequently interact with film producers, prop masters, and other production people, as well as with executives from other studio department (2003, 157).

The product placement agency is in charge of matching the right product to the right plot, and negotiates with brand company and the film studio. Finally, the third-party evaluation company collects relative data from audiences and evaluates the effectiveness of the product placement, creating a report for the manufacturer, film studio, and product placement agency.

However, these responsibilities are different in the Chinese film industry. Specifically, it operates a particular commercial mode of product placement that is dependent on the film-production process. In Chinese product placement practice, there are three roles: the manufacturer, the film studio, and the product placement agency. The manufacturer's responsibility is to introduce the product it wants to promote and for what purpose, and to decide what information it wants to convey to the audience. The film studio provides the film script to the product placement agency, and the film producers decide on the product placement deals. The most important role, with the most responsibilities, is that of the product placement agency. The product placement agency participates in almost every part of the process. For example, it creates a product placement script for the manufacturer and film studio, while representing the film studio and the manufacturer in negotiations. It is also responsible for monitoring the execution of the product placement during the making of the film; if there are any problems, the agency is responsible for communicating with the film director in order to make modifications. After the film is released, the product placement agency has a full evaluation system for collecting and analysing data from audiences.

The Chinese model of product placement differs from the Hollywood model in many ways, especially in relation to the vital role of the product placement agency. To be more specific, under the Hollywood model, the film studio has the right to decide the product placement deal, which is made not only by producers and other management employees, but it is also decided by those who are 'above-the-line', such as writers, directors, and actors (Wasko, 2003). However, in the Chinese model, only producers have the right to make decisions about product placement deals (Wang²², 2013). Another difference is that in the implementation of product placement, the product placement agency has more responsibilities in the Chinese film industry. In other words, the other participants, such as the film studio, have fewer responsibilities and less power. For example, in Hollywood the film studio identified where the product placement script can be integrated into the film script, whereas in the Chinese film industry this is done by the product placement agency, which creates a specific product placement script that is added to the original film script. Additionally, there is no third-party evaluation company in the Chinese film industry; its responsibility is carried out by the product placement agency. Unlike Hollywood, the Chinese film industry does not pay enough attention to this important link. This final link is necessary, because it is the only way to examine how effective the product placement is, what kinds of product placement really make sense to audiences, and what product placement audiences like. A final difference is that in the Chinese film industry the manufacturer does not generally get involved in creating product placement scripts. All creative tasks are the responsibility of the product placement agency.

It is clear that the product placement agency has been empowered in the Chinese film industry's model of product placement, which is very different from Hollywood's model. At the same time, the responsibilities of the film studio and manufacturer are relatively fewer. The power

²² From film producer Wang Fenglin's interview.

balance in the process of implementing product placement in China is not the same as in the Hollywood industry. This raises a question of whether this uneven distribution of power is influencing how Chinese practitioners maintain their power. Does empowering the product placement agency imply that this agency has more privileges in the operation of product placement? The particular operational model of product placement in the Chinese film industry has led to debate about how different groups of practitioners contend their actual and potential power in product placement deals.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical overview of how the Chinese film industry has developed since the early cinema period, and has examined the patterns of change and continuity in the industry during the twenty-first century. Internal development and external influence has led to the emergence of product placement as a crucial expansion strategy for the Chinese film industry in this century. This chapter has also provided an overview of how product placement has developed in the modern Chinese film industry, and examined the distinctive role of product placement in the structure of the industry. Through a comparative approach, this chapter has also examined the operational model of product placement in the Chinese film industry. In comparison with its role in the Hollywood model, the product placement agency is empowered by the Chinese film industry.

The Chinese film industry has been developing for approximately 100 years. Significant events have influenced and reshaped its structure, such as the Economic Reform and joining the WTO. This, in turn, has led to changes in the industry's relationship with Hollywood. In the early cinema period, Hollywood played an important role in constructing the Chinese film industry; the industry learned everything about producing films and structuring itself from Hollywood. Even during the Economic

Reform, when the Chinese economic system was transformed from a planned economy to market economy and China's film industry moved toward modernisation and marketisation, Hollywood still had very strong influence on the structure of the Chinese film industry. However, rather than dominating Chinese film production, distribution and exhibition in a direct and obvious way, Hollywood controlled audiences' tastes and influenced what they wanted to watch. This motivated the Chinese film industry to produce its own blockbusters, such as *Hero* (Zhang, 2002).

However, in the twenty-first century government policies have altered the structure of the Chinese film industry. The Chinese government issued new policies to support the film industry at a macro level. For example, in 2010 it issued guidelines on promoting the prosperity and development of cultural industry, and identified the film industry as strategic in the realm of culture. Although the government has supported the film industry, altering its relationship with Hollywood, the industry is still mainly under government control. A particular characteristic of the Chinese film industry is that it is not fully independent.

In terms of the industry's financial structure, practitioners have mentioned that product placement has grown rapidly and has made significant contributions in recent years. It plays an important role in determining the structure of the industry, as it has become the second highest source of revenue after the box office. At the same time, product placement has stimulated the explicit commercialisation of the Chinese film industry, becoming an important part of the industry's expansion strategies in China. Additionally, the operational structure of product placement has been designed for the specific circumstances of the Chinese film industry; therefore, it differs from Hollywood's mode of operation with regard to product placement. In the Chinese model, the

product placement agency has a more powerful role, taking on the most responsibilities in the operational process of product placement.

In the complex conditions of the Chinese film industry, with rivalry between commercial and state power, product placement has initiated a controversial debate among academics and practitioners about whether art or commerce is more important. This issue needs to be resolved urgently by the Chinese film industry. At the same time, the historical debates around state vs industry and art vs commerce are crucial themes for an examination of how different groups of practitioners in the Chinese film industry exert their actual and potential power through their discourses in the trade press. Therefore, the following two chapters will analyse these discourses.

Chapter 2. Discourse Analysis: Power Relation Between the State and the Film Industry in Product Placement Operations

Although product placement in films and advertising ‘tie ins’ have been used extensively in the European and US film industries, these kinds of commercial techniques were not common in China until the beginning of the 1990s. The industry’s role as a source of state-funded propaganda did not allow much time for commercial techniques of film financing to develop.

—Lucy Montgomery and Brian F. Fitzgerald (2006, 413)

Introduction

As claimed by Montgomery and Fitzgerald in the quotation above, the development of the Chinese film industry has been shaped by powerful state intervention. Montgomery and Fitzgerald (2006) have suggested that the state has restricted the development of product placement in the Chinese film industry. However, when stating why product placement emerged later in this industry than in other film industries, Montgomery and Fitzgerald ignored the power of the film industry itself and the intense demand for the expansion of the industry. As discussed in the previous chapter, a range of changes in production, distribution and exhibition processes since the beginning of this century have had an impact on the structure of the Chinese film industry. This is mainly reflected in the new power relationship between the film industry and the state. Since this transformation, the power of the Chinese film industry has grown rapidly. At the same time, the power of the state has reduced to some extent, even though SARFT continues to regulate the film industry. Additionally, in relation to

product placement deals in modern Chinese cinema, the power relationship between the film industry and the state has been a controversial issue among different groups of industry practitioners. Therefore, this chapter will focus on examining how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement in the trade press in relation to the competitive relationship between the state and the film industry. It will argue that the film industry takes a more dominant position and maintains more power than the state in the operation of product placement practice.

In order to develop this idea, this study will consider internal and external perspectives. From an internal perspective, there is a power hierarchy among the industry practitioners, who include government employees, film producers, product placement agents, brand representatives and professional consultants. This chapter will concentrate on identifying how different groups involved in product placement deals assert their power when discussing these deals in the trade press and on official film database websites. From an external perspective, this chapter will focus on how practitioners discuss product placement deals in relation to the specific term 'Hollywood'. In recent years, more and more Chinese brands have been willing to place their products in Hollywood blockbusters; this has been a phenomenon of great importance in the Chinese film industry. It is driving more and more cooperation between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood, with brands such as Lenovo, TCL, Metersbonwe and Yili Shuhua Milk featuring in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, and Zoomlion and TCL in *Iron Man 3*. This chapter will argue that when collaborating with Hollywood, the Chinese film industry is able to maintain more competitive power, and that the positive influence of Hollywood blockbusters is being critically assessed by Chinese practitioners. It suggests that the shift in the relationship with Hollywood regarding product placement deals is a reflection of the growth of the Chinese film industry in the global cinema market.

It is necessary to examine how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement deals in discourse. As a crucial industry expansion strategy, how to implement product placement is a serious issue for the Chinese film industry with regard to industrialisation and commercialism. Meanwhile, although the structure of Chinese film industry has changed, it is still required to provide state propaganda in China. This complex and unique characteristic raises the issue of how the Chinese film industry operates product placement practice under state control. The structural changes made to the industry this century have caused a shift in its power relationship with the state. This is an important motivation for examining a further question: how does the Chinese film industry assert its power in product placement deals? Examining the industry's commentary can assist us to understand the power hierarchy and power relations in the implementation of product placement by the Chinese film industry from an industry perspective.

This chapter will use discourse analysis to critically explore how different groups of Chinese film industry practitioners use their expertise to assert their power and how the power hierarchy is reflected in the different power relations. Discourse analysis is helpful and feasible approach to investigate how these practitioners use language to build their power and to construct a framework for their part in product placement operations. As Gee claimed, 'Discourse analysis is the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but also to do things' (2011, 1). Therefore, discourse is not solely what people say; more important are the implications behind their words. Discourse analysts believe that discourse is structured and forged contextually, and that it reveals actions (Heritage, 1987; Silverman, 1994; Gill, 2000; Clayman and Gill, 2004). Therefore, discourse analysis is concerned with the strategy people employ to create different kinds of effect. In relation to this study, the analysis of how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement deals will

reveal how power relations have shifted in practice, and what effects the industry seeks to create in product placement. The discourse analysed in this chapter has been selected from the sources Mtime.com, Entgroup.cn, Ifeng.com, *Beijing Business Today* and *China Entrepreneur*. Mtime.com is a professional database for reporting and communicating information about films and is the largest film community in China, while Entgroup.cn is the country's most professional entertainment portal, providing the most authoritative industry data. Ifeng.com, *Beijing Business Today* and *China Entrepreneur* strengthen these resources from an integrated perspective. Ifeng.com is the leading integrated website in China, while *Beijing Business Today* and *China Entrepreneur* are influential trade magazines. All these resources provide a wealth of material for a critical investigation of how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement under state control.

It is necessary to explain how the discourses have been selected. Two steps were followed: first, the key phrase 'product placement in films' was entered into the internal search tool of the selected resources sites in order to identify relevant articles. Second, the discourses were coded and clustered into similar themes in relation to industry strategy and state intervention in product placement deals. After filtering the discourses encompassing the theme of industrial development vs the state, the selected discourses were clustered by specific terms within the thematic framework. Additionally, all discourses in this chapter have been translated from Chinese by the author of this study, and have been proved by the other Chinese translator. During the translation process, the author attempted to retain the meaning of the Chinese when selecting each specific word, taking into consideration cross-cultural issues.

In order to construct a logical industry framework, this chapter is divided into two sections: first, to investigate the shift in power

relations in product placement deals, and second, to further examine how industry practitioners assert their power through their commentaries on product placement deals in domestic films and in Hollywood blockbusters. Specifically, the first section will take an internal perspective to investigate three power relations: state vs industry; industry vs audiences; and product placement agency vs other participants. First, through examining the power relation between the state and the film industry, this section will argue that state power may have declined in relation to regulation, because of the lack of regulations specific to product placement in film production. Second, the specific term 'audience' is mentioned frequently in practitioners' discourses. This section will demonstrate that the Chinese film industry, like other film industries, creates an illusion that it gives audiences what they want, but in fact prioritises profit over meeting audiences' demands. In the Chinese film industry's operational model of product placement, the role of the product placement agency has been emphasised, and it enjoys more responsibility than it does in the Hollywood model. Thus, in this section, the third power relation – between product placement agency and other participants, such as brand companies and film producers – will be explored by looking at how product placement agencies assert power in their discourse.

The chapter will then follow an external perspective, examining how the Chinese film industry talks about product placement in Hollywood blockbusters. This section will argue that the power of the Chinese film industry has grown in collaboration with Hollywood on product placement. Two power relations will be discussed: the Chinese film industry vs Hollywood, and Chinese product placement agency vs Hollywood product placement agency.

Section 1. Internal power hierarchy in product placement operations

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, product placement has been discussed in various ways by different groups of practitioners in the Chinese film industry. Several recent changes to the industry have empowered practitioners to take a more dominant position in product placement operations. Meanwhile, the power of the state has been weakened. As discussed in the previous chapter, the alterations to the structure of the industry have resulted in private film enterprises, rather than the state, leading the industry's development. The role of the state has become one of regulating the film industry on a macro level. This corresponds with the continuity of the Chinese film industry in the new century: state intervention. Even though the industry has been encouraged to develop itself in the twenty-first century, the state still exerts control by formulating the policies and regulations the industry must operate under. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the particular model of product placement operations in the Chinese film industry provides an indication of how power has been distributed. In relation to product placement deals, the regulatory role of the state is incomplete, which further weakens state power in this area.

1.1 The state vs the film industry

The structure of the Chinese film industry determines its power relationship with the state. The issue of the regulating product placement has become a focus of contention. Although the state has realised the urgency of regulating product placement in films at the legislative level due to antipathy among audiences, no specific regulations have been issued. Meanwhile, industry practitioners present the issue of product placement as a whole, rather than direct concerns about the regulation of product placement in films. For example:

1. Product placement as a new form of marketing should be regulated, and some related legislative suggestions have been submitted to the state legislative institutions, such as product placement not being allowed to affect the media content. (SAIC²³, 2010).
2. Studying the issue of product placement needs to be strengthened, and specific regulations on product placement will be issued as soon as possible. (SARFT, 2011).
3. Currently, some film producers and some film investors fear that piracy has reduced profits, and choose to increase the amount of product placement to ensure profit. This is leading to product placement becoming an overused phenomenon. (Zhang²⁴, 2010).

In example 1, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce of the People's Republic of China (SAIC) uses the words 'regulated' and 'legislative' to indicate the state's position as a regulator of the film industry on the macro level. This implies that the state is asserting a dominant role by posing as the regulator for the Chinese film industry in relation to product placement deals. It reveals the devious way in which the state is attempting to maintain its power in relation to product placement deals in the modern Chinese film industry. The pretence of regulating product placement is also reflected in SAIC's shirking of responsibility; SAIC uses the phrases 'related legislative suggestions', 'have been submitted' and 'legislative institutions' to defend itself from having to deal with the issue of product placement in films. According to SAIC's discourse, regulating product placement in films should be the responsibility of legal departments: SAIC mentions that it has submitted the related regulatory suggestions to the 'state legislative institutions'. The phenomenon of passing off responsibility to

²³ SAIC is abbreviation of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce of the People's Republic of China.

²⁴ Zhang Hongsen is the former deputy director of SARFT.

other state departments reveals that the function of each government department is not explicit, which potentially leads to regulatory issues remaining unresolved. To some extent, this weakens the state's power in relation to product placement deals in the modern Chinese film industry. However, the terms 'suggestions' and 'regulated' in example 1 also imply that the state retains the power to intervene in the development of the film industry, even if this power is not as explicit or as strong in relation to product placement in films.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning the official tone of the language used by the government institution. The tone suggests the inviolable authority of the state. In particular, terms such as 'should', 'cannot' and 'media content' suggest that, by formalising what 'should' be done and what 'cannot' be done, the state sees itself as a god who controls and compels the Chinese film industry, rather than assisting to regulate it. In addition, the term 'media content' positions the state as controlling everything from a commanding height. 'Media content' encompasses film, television, radio and even game content. This highlights the dominant role of the state in determining the structure of the film industry. As indicated in the previous chapter, historically the Chinese film industry has always been controlled by the state, despite the fact that in the twenty-first century the industry has been moving toward commercialisation and industrialisation. However, on the other hand the use of 'media content' in the discourse also implies the rationality of the state intervention: SAIC explains that state intervention is necessary because product placement has already affected media content. This mirrors the state's decisive attitude toward the overuse of product placement: that is, product placement needs to be regulated by the state.

SARFT responds differently to the issue of the lack of regulation on product placement in films, as illustrated in example 2. SARFT uses the phrase 'will be issued' to assert the state's regulatory role, and implies

that the state has already filled the gap in product placement regulation and that the related departments will take the appropriate measures to resolve this issue. However, the phrase 'as soon as possible' suggests uncertainty about when the specific regulations on product placement in films can be made known. This uncertainty potentially undermines and challenges the authority of the state in product placement deals, because it implies that the state is not ready to formulate the regulation mechanism and that it is shirking responsibility. Additionally, in this discourse SARFT tries to detract attention from its failure to fulfil its duty by blaming other practitioners through its use of the words 'studying' and 'strengthened'. This implies that SARFT believes that the reason for the delay in formulating the specific regulation about product placement in films is that the Chinese film industry and product placement researchers have not investigated product placement in films in enough depth. That is, the lack of research has led to a corresponding gap in the regulatory system.

In particular, the Chinese state asserts that practitioners in the film industry should take responsibility for the imperfections in the current situation of product placement in films. In example 3, the former deputy director of SARFT, Zhang Hongsen, indicates that one of the faults in the industry's adoption of product placement is that it has become an 'overused phenomenon'. In addition, SAIC (example 1), another state department, highlights the issue that product placement has 'affected media content'. The discourses suggest that the different sections of the state have different perspectives. Specifically, SAIC, as the institution overseeing the economy and the administrative enforcement organ, monitors and regulates the all markets. Thus, SAIC focuses on the media in general, rather than on a specific section of that industry or product placement in particular. However, SARFT is responsible for the film industry specifically, and emphasises product placement rather than the 'media content'. Additionally, Zhang, as a state representative, highlights why product placement has been overused in the Chinese

film industry at the beginning of his discourse. He professes to take an industry perspective to interpret the issue of product placement in films by using the terms 'reduced profit' and 'ensure profit'. This implies that the state is attempting to obtain more power by showing it understands the film industry. The words 'fear', 'choose' and 'conduct' also demonstrate that the state has constructed a framework to show it is well aware of the film industry's perspective in relation to product placement deals. The state advocates itself as higher position than the film industry by illustrating an understanding and attempting to set out product placement issues from the industry perspective. However, the state's use of the phrases 'some film producers' and 'some film investors' suggest that the Chinese film industry should be condemned for its overuse of product placement in films. This can be seen as a distraction by the state in order to shift the focus of the debate on the regulatory issue of product placement in films.

Throughout the discourses considered in this study, practitioners in the film industry demonstrate less concern than the state about the regulation of product placement in films. An examination of the 64 news items and articles from the selected sources found that the regulatory issue of product placement is discussed by the state only. This suggests that the film industry is essentially profit-driven; thus, it has not paid attention to the issue of regulating product placement. In addition, the state has emphasised the importance of regulating product placement in films and expressed how they have hardly attempted to formalise the regulation of product placement in the discourses. However, some specific terms reveal a huge gap in the regulation of product placement in films, which has potentially weakened the power of the state in relation to product placement deals in the Chinese film industry. Even so, the state does still have an indirect influence, as reflected in the film censorship performed by SARFT. If the content of a film touches upon sensitive themes or topics, the film is not allowed to be shown in the cinema. It follows, therefore,

that product placement in those films cannot be seen by audiences. This is the risk that a brand company has to take. Thus, product placement, the existence of which depends on the film, is influenced by the state's film censorship. However, this is not the main area of focus in this study; this research prefers to concentrate on the industry perspective rather than the state perspective. In the adoption of product placement in the Chinese film industry, the state is not the sole participant. Thus, the next section will examine the discourse of another important participant: the audience.

1.2 The film industry vs. audiences

Almost every participant in product placement deals mentions 'audiences' responses or feelings' in the discourse. However, the controversial question is: does the Chinese film industry really care about audiences? Caldwell (2008) claimed that one of the lies told by film industry practitioners is that the status quo is a logical result of natural selection, audience responsiveness, and viewer democracy. Business executives claim they are just 'giving the public what the public wants', and use statistical measures, box office figures and ratings to prove this adage (Caldwell, 2008). The Chinese film industry takes a similar stance, but does so in a different way. Specifically, the industry uses not only box office statistics, but also 'audiences' negative feelings' to prove that they are catering to audiences. The Chinese film industry misleads audiences by providing the illusion that the industry has an emotional understanding of what audiences want to see. For example:

1. Product placement has an inevitable and embarrassing issue, which is that too much product placement or inappropriate product placement would lead to audiences' negative responses, while natural and invisible product placement would not

achieve the promotional effectiveness expected of advertising by brand companies. (Wang, 2013).

2. Negative comments from audiences are normal, because Chinese audiences do not have enough cognition of product placement, which is a modern aspect of Chinese cinema. At the same time, the Chinese film industry is in the early phase of commercialisation and industrialisation, and we need product placement to help the film industry to develop. There is still not enough product placement in the Chinese film industry. (Wang, 2012).
3. Whatever the type of film advertising, advertisers do not want to generate a negative response from audiences or customers, while they do indeed want to affect consumer behaviours. (Zhang, 2013).
4. Data shows that brand advertisers favour only the films that releasing screenings reach over 20,000 viewers and attendance rate is more than 70 per cent this year. (Wang, 2013).
5. Nowadays, there is a wider and wider choice of media channels; thus, audiences are not concerned about the channel, but rather the content. The audiences can choose where they view advertising, such as at the cinema or on television, but the advertising content will not be changed. (Wang, 2013).

In example 1, Wang Yifei as the manager of He Run Media²⁵ takes the product placement agency's perspective, using words like 'inevitable' and 'embarrassing' to describe the issue that Chinese film practitioners face when making product placement deals in film production. This suggests that operating product placement in film production is

²⁵ He Run Media is the representative product placement agency in the Chinese film industry. It is established in 2007, and it has been operated many successful cases of product placement in films, especially Hollywood blockbuster, such as Zoomlion in *Iron Man*, Ping An in *Personal Tailor*, Mengniu in *Rio 2* (Carlos Saldanha, 2014), and so on. (Available from: <http://www.herunmedia.cn/about.asp>, accessed 12th September 2013).

challenging. It implies that product placement agencies have worked hard to resolve these issues and develop better product placement practices, but that this process takes time and the issue will not go away; therefore, product placement should not be blamed. Wang Yifei tries to find an excuse for the product placement agency's role in the negative aspects of product placement, shifting the focus away from the product placement agency's abilities and responsibilities and towards the concept of product placement itself. In his discourse, he also mentions 'audiences' negative responses', which can be understood as positing that product placement agencies pay attention to audiences' feelings when designing product placement in films. Nevertheless, a product placement agency essentially is the intermediary between the film studio and the brand company, and its role is to maximise the benefits they receive. As an important part of the Chinese film industry, the product placement agency is a profit-driven institution.

In addition, Wang Yifei uses three adjectives to describe product placement: 'inappropriate', 'natural' and 'invisible'. To be more specific, Wang claims that the way in which product placement is being used in film production is not quite appropriate²⁶, which implies that the practice should be revised to be more 'natural' and 'invisible' in order to avoid negative responses from audiences. However, 'natural and invisible' product placement does not really mean that audiences cannot recognise it when they see it. Chinese film practitioners expect audiences to be able to recognise product placement without feeling negative emotions, which is idealistic in relation to the efficiency of product placement. In this discourse, Wang provides the product placement agency's point of view from an industry perspective in order

²⁶ In Wang's discourse, the original Chinese for this term is 'qia dang'. The Chinese 'qia dang' differs from 'zheng que' (correct or right). It suggests that the usage of product placement is not related to the right or wrong, correct or incorrect. The term 'qia dang' is more used to describe the extent rather than an absolutely certain judgement as 'zheng que'.

to claim that he is well aware of what audiences think because he possesses the necessary professional skills and expertise. By using the term 'expert', he implies that the product placement agency, as a specialist, is familiar with all aspects of product placement. This coincides with the Foucault's power-knowledge theory. Foucault claimed that knowledge is power, which can be understood as power arising from the way in which an organised system of knowledge fixes things and gives them a certain order (1980).

Chinese film producers share a similar perception of power and knowledge in relation to product placement. In example 2, Wang Fenglin, a Chinese film producer, supposes that Chinese audiences do not understand the purpose of adopting product placement in films by using the phrase 'enough cognition'. He is suggesting that Chinese audiences do not accept product placement in films because they do not have the expertise to understand it. In addition, example 2 supports Caldwell's assumption that the film industry provides an illusion for its audiences. The phrase 'negative comments from audiences are normal' implies that the Chinese film industry is not really concerned about how audiences feel about product placement: it equates 'negative' with 'normal'.

In addition, as one of the most important participants in the operation of product placement deals, the film producer uses the words 'modern' and 'early phase' to seek an explanation for the phenomenon of negative audience responses. From the perspective of film producers, product placement is necessary to extend and develop the film industry in a way that is more explicitly commercial and industrial. However, the fact that the practice is in its 'early phase' has been used an excuse for a long time by the Chinese film industry. In 1997, product placement appeared for the first time in a Chinese film production, *The Dream Factory* (Feng, 1997). Almost 16 years later, in 2013, the Chinese film industry was still using the phrases 'early phase' and 'exploration

period' to evaluate the development of product placement. Why does the Chinese film industry continue to use these phrases? The primary reason is that they have already become a universal and convincing excuse for any negative situation and phenomenon in the industry. In relation to product placement deals, the omnipotent excuse is that product placement has indeed developed, although many aspects of this development have been slow. However, saying 'there is still not enough product placement' in film production, rather than that there is too much, reveals the position taken by the Chinese film industry in product placement operations. The Chinese film industry asserts its power by blaming audiences for their lack of expertise rather than exploring the essential reason for the issue of product placement itself. Additionally, it reveals that the Chinese film industry considers its own development as being more important than what audiences want.

However, the state's perception of this issue challenges the industry's assertion. In example 3, Zhang Ying, a representative of a state-owned institution, highlights why advertisers want to use product placement. From her explanation, we can see that market forces have a powerful influence on the practice of product placement, even though the film industry is under state control. She mentions three different objects in her discourse: 'audiences', 'customers' and 'consumers'. The concepts of these three terms are not the same: 'audience' is a term for people who watch a show through any medium, while 'customer' and 'consumer' are generally used in the field of marketing. The distinction between the concepts of 'customer' and 'consumer', as Blythe indicates, is that a customer may or may not be a consumer, because a customer purchases goods, but a consumer uses them (2008). Zhang Ying uses the three terms together when discussing product placement, which implies that the state controls everything and she as a representative of a state-owned institution possesses professional knowledge to be able to deal with product placement.

According to Zhang's discourse, the state takes a more comprehensive approach to the treatment of product placement deals as a promotional tool. The state has considered 'advertisers' benefit' and 'audiences' feeling'. Additionally, Zhang uses the word 'whatever' at the beginning of her discourse to show that the state deals with product placement deals on a macro level. From the state's perspective, the state does not simply consider how product placement promotes a product's sales; it is more concerned with how it promotes the development of the Chinese film industry. This can also be understood as the state attempting to obtain more power in product placement deals in order to compete with the Chinese film industry.

In example 4, although Wang does not mention 'audience' explicitly, he uses 'attendance rate' to imply the power of the audience in product placement deals. The 'attendance rate' refers to how many people have watched a specific film, which is closely related to the term 'audience'. The product placement agency representative uses this term, as well as numbers such as '20,000' and '70 per cent' to show how important audiences are in product placement deals. However, this discourse supports Caldwell's argument that the industry is more concerned with numbers than with audiences' opinions. The term 'favour' in the discourse reveals the power that the product placement agency possesses. It suggests that the agency understands what its brand company clients like. At the same time, rather than creating product placement that caters to audience preferences, product placement agencies as film industry practitioners assume that audiences will welcome the way in which they create product placement in films. All of this implies that the product placement agency is familiar with brands' and audiences' perspectives on product placement, and that the expertise offered by the agency enables it to control all aspects of product placement deals.

According to example 5, Wang assumes that ‘audiences are not concerned about the channel, but rather the content’. This implies that Wang as an expert has used his knowledge power to claim he understands audiences’ demands. The reason is that audiences are not familiar with the channel, and do not know how to create the content. In example 5, Wang uses the word ‘choose’ to demonstrate that audiences are taking part in a democratic process. However, this is an illusion presented by the film industry. Wang, as a representative of a product placement agency, has already judged audiences’ demands based on his own expertise; thus, audiences do not authentically participate in product placement deals. Therefore, audiences choose what films they want to watch, but they have less choice about what product placement they want to see.

Although the Chinese film industry always mentions the ‘audience’ and claims to understand ‘audiences’ responses’, the industry’s commercial nature plays a larger role than its emotional one. However, audiences do have a particular power in product placement deals, which cannot be overlooked. Specifically, although the film industry determines what product placement takes place, audiences affect whether it becomes financially successful. When talking about how audiences have influenced the film industry in Hollywood, De Vany claimed that audiences indeed have a strong influence on film industry practice. He stated:

If viewers like the film and spread the word, it will earn high revenue in the following weeks. But, if viewers do not like the film, the large opening audience transmits a large flow of negative information and revenue may decline at a rapid rate (2004, 44).

This describes how product placement deals achieve their financial goals. For example, in 2013, Entgroup carried out research into the

effect of product placement on consumer behaviour after the release of *So Young* (Zhao, 2013). The report showed that changes in consumer behaviour toward some low-profile brands, such as Orient Watch, Kappa, and Huang Guoshu Tourism, were much more obvious than changes in consumer behaviour toward high-profile brands. Almost 60 per cent of people surveyed said that if they were considering purchasing an item, they would purchase the products or services shown in *So Young*. (Entgroup, 2013). This provides strong evidence that product placement has a powerful influence on consumer behaviour, and that audiences as customers have the power to determine the financial value of product placement.

Regarding the key term 'audience' in product placement deals, the Chinese film industry is more concerned with its own development than with its audiences. However, the state sides with the audience on the issue of product placement in films. This reveals two things: first, that the Chinese film industry has an extremely powerful position in the operation of product placement in films; second, that when the Chinese film industry takes a dominant position, the state attempts to represent audiences to assert more power for itself for contending with the Chinese film industry.

The selected discourse in this section has shown that product placement agencies participate more actively than the rest of the industry in discussions about product placement in films. Furthermore, the selected discourses imply that product placement agencies are the experts in product placement deals. Thus, the next section will focus on how the role of the product placement agency is discussed in the industry commentary.

1.3 Product placement agency vs other participants

As indicated in the previous chapter, the product placement agency plays the most important role in the operational process of product placement in the Chinese film industry. Compared with other participants in the Chinese film industry, this agency has been given more responsibilities and has been empowered. Thus, this section focuses on how the product placement agency's role is discussed by the agencies themselves and by other practitioners. For example:

1. He Run Media does matchmaking. Actually, 'matchmaking' means platform. On one side are the clients; on the other side is content. We do not match them in a disorderly or irrational way. (Wang, 2013).
2. He Run Media positions itself as a branded content integrated marketing platform... I think integrated marketing is the better way to advertise products and brands through films. (Wang, 2013).
3. Additionally, if film director includes your product placement as discussed, but finally the scene of product placement can be cut, because the film director suddenly feels the product placement and film narrative content do not match. Thus, it is necessary for us to make a very detailed agreement on whatever in the negotiation stage or contract execution stage. (Li, 2013).
4. The success or failure of a project will depend on the strength of the executive ability of product placement agencies. (Li, 2013).
5. There are many product placement agencies, but their ability to negotiate is completely different. Product placement agencies are the key and necessary part of product placement in film production, and they are the determinants of whether the transaction is successful in general. (Fan, 2013).

In example 1, Wang, as the manager of product placement agency, uses a metaphor to describe what a product placement agency does; his use of the term 'matchmaking' sheds light on the emotional aspect of a

product placement agency. Matchmaking is a personal and romantic process, and generally refers to the action of bringing two people together, usually for the purpose of dating or marriage. The 'matchmaking' in Wang's discourse shares a similar view, but adds a particular meaning. Specifically, it refers to bringing together two clients: films and brands. A product placement agency matches the right brands with the right films.

Furthermore, Wang uses the phrase '[not] disorderly or irrational' to qualify his agency's approach to matchmaking. A product placement agency has a wealth of resources, which makes it more powerful than other industry practitioners in product placement deals. Moreover, the large number of films and brands available enables product placement agencies to do their matchmaking in an organised and logical way. The main point here is that product placement agencies employ a particular system for selecting film production companies and brand companies. He Run Media's placement of Motorola in Feng Xiaogang's *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003) is a good example of how the selection and evaluation system works. *Cell Phone* is all about how mobile phones influence people's everyday lives. After evaluating the film script, He Run Media began to create a product placement script. At the same time, He Run Media had an in-depth understanding of the mobile phone brand Motorola's brand culture, its brand market position and its target market. Thus, He Run Media was able to bring Motorola into contact with *Cell Phone*, because the theme of the film was a perfect match with the Motorola brand. Product placement agencies are extremely well acquainted with what film producers are looking for and the goals that brand companies want to achieve.

In example 2, Wang says that a product placement agency is a 'branded content integrated marketing platform'. Some Western academics, such as McCarty (2004) and Lehu (2007), agree that product placement is an efficient integrated marketing communications tool. By describing the

product placement agency as a 'platform', Wang stresses the unique and close relationship among agency, studio, and brand. Product placement agencies are familiar with their clients' brand cultures and brand identities; they know what message brands want to transmit to audiences; and they know what brands want to get out of product placement in film production. For example, He Run Media has a separate department that investigates and analyses all the information available about its brand and film producer clients, such as brand identity, brand culture, what the reputation the brand wants to build through product placement, and what kinds of films are suitable for each brand.

In examples 3 and 4, Li Ying²⁷, another representative of a product placement agency, discusses the agency's role as 'negotiator'. She uses the phrases 'negotiation stage', 'contract execution stage' and 'executive ability' to emphasise the importance for the agency of how the details of the contract are finalised with film studios and brand companies, how they communicate and negotiate with their clients in order to achieve collaborative goals, and how product placement is carried out during filming. Product placement agencies are capable of resolving some of the current issues around product placement deals in the Chinese film industry if the agencies have paid enough attention to developing its executive ability. For example, if an agency improves its executive ability, it can avoid wasting unnecessary time and money on product placement in Hollywood blockbusters. Specifically, if a brand has not developed an overseas market, placing it in Hollywood films is not a good use of money or time. Even if the audiences are able to recognise the brand or product, they cannot buy it if the enterprise does not cater for an overseas market.

²⁷ Li Ying is President of Reach Glory Media. Reach Glory Media is an important product placement agency in the Chinese film industry, and has extensive experience of product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Iron Man 3* and *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Bay, 2014).

Additionally, brand companies share a similar perception of the role of the product placement agency in negotiation. This suggests that brands rely on these agencies to manage product placement in films. In example 5, Fan, a manager of a well known Chinese clothing brand, describes the role of the product placement agency as 'key', 'necessary', and 'determinant'. Different from how the product placement agency positions itself, the adjectives used by the brand representative Fan suggest that the agency is the most important factor enabling the brand company to place its products in films. This highlights the strong position of the product placement agency in the process of product placement in films. Meanwhile, it also reveals that brand companies rely heavily on product placement agencies to communicate and negotiate with the film studio in order to close product placement deals. In this case, the brand company is suggesting that the product placement agency has been offered more power in product placement deals by the Chinese film industry.

Further to the assumption that product placement agencies have been empowered by the Chinese film industry, these agencies also play an important role in external product placement deals. The following section focuses on external collaboration in relation to product placement, and argues that the attitude of the Chinese film industry toward Hollywood has shifted away from idolisation and toward critical evaluation, especially in product placement deals.

Section 2. External power relations: Hollywood vs the Chinese film industry

In recent years, a new trend has emerged for Chinese brands to place their products in Hollywood blockbusters. This reflects the shift toward competitive cooperation in the industry's relationship with Hollywood in the twenty-first century, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Collaboration between the Chinese film industry and Hollywood in relation to product placement deals is increasing, and the Chinese film industry is becoming more competitive with Hollywood's practitioners in product placement deals. Although Hollywood is still a powerful force in the global film market, the power of the Chinese film industry has rapidly increased. This is reflected in its product placement deals with Hollywood. This assumption is manifested in two main aspects: the Chinese film industry in general, and the Chinese product placement agency in particular.

2.1 The growth of the power of the Chinese film industry in product placement deals

As stated by McDonald, 'Hollywood, in conjunction with the US government, early on recognised the worth of the huge Asian market for its films and for the consumption of everything 'American' that those films depicted, especially China' (2008, 278). Nowadays, the Chinese film industry has enough economic power to have a 'voice' in the Hollywood industry, and China is one of Hollywood's most important markets. Thus, when collaborating with Hollywood, the Chinese film industry critically evaluates the value Hollywood offers, rather than being completely overpowered. For example:

1. We had similar thoughts of doing product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, but finally we gave it up, because when faced with such a 'triple-high' transaction, not every company has the ability to accept the high risk. (Fan, 2013).
2. Generally in Hollywood, if the box office takes 10 billion dollars, Hollywood will make over 90 billion dollars of profit from copyright, advertising, and so on. However, the Chinese film industry has many limitations in this regard. (Ji, 2013).
3. We also have a process of selection with regard to Hollywood blockbusters. Specifically, we need to identify which Hollywood

blockbusters are worth our product placement. We have some survey databases that show the box office takings of Hollywood films. The number of imported films is limited in the domestic film market. Therefore, we have to select Hollywood films carefully. (Wang, 2013).

In example 1, Fan, a representative of a Chinese brand company, classifies product placement deals in Hollywood blockbusters as a high-risk transaction. Here in Fan's discourse, 'triple-high transaction' refers to the transaction involving a high input, a high output, and a high risk. This raises the following question: what does a 'high-risk' transaction mean? In relation to product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, the phrase means that the effectiveness expected in return for the price paid cannot always be achieved, because there are many unpredictable factors that affect its success. For example, some Hollywood blockbusters are re-edited when they are imported into China, and it is likely that the edited version will not contain the original product placement or that the subtitles may misinterpret brand messages. Furthermore, some product placement is specific to the Chinese version of the Hollywood film, which does not have any function with regard to extending Chinese brands' overseas markets. In Fan's discourse, she uses 'we' to distinguish Chinese brands from Hollywood, which implies that she is highlighting the role of Chinese brands in product placement collaboration with Hollywood. She suggests that Chinese brands are able to actively refuse to work with Hollywood by using the expression 'we gave it up' rather than saying that Hollywood rejected the idea. Fan's discourse reveals the shift in the power relation between the two film industries. This is in line with the current relationship of competitive cooperation with Hollywood discussed in the previous chapter.

However, the product placement agency presents a different opinion on the power relationship between the Chinese film industry and

Hollywood in relation to product placement deals. In example 2, Ji, a representative of a product placement agency, uses figures such as '10 billion' and '90 billion' and the words 'copyright' and 'limitation' to claim the gaps between the two industries. Ji represents Chinese film industrial practitioners who speak highly of Hollywood, and advocates a worshipful attitude toward Hollywood in relation to product placement in films.

Ji's discourse suggests that the Chinese film industry can learn something from Hollywood with regard to 'copyright' and 'advertising'. Copyright is a long-standing issue in the Chinese film industry, because the phenomenon of piracy cannot be ended easily. Film piracy is the unauthorised copying and showing of a copyrighted film. It is a worldwide problem that goes against the interests of the film industry, and it is more serious in China for complex historical, economic and political reasons. According to the *Annual Report on the Development of the Chinese Culture Industry* published in 2003, 92 per cent of the audio-video market in China was made up of pirated products (Ye, 2003). In 2006, a research report by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) revealed that in 2005 the Chinese film industry lost approximately 1.5 billion US dollars in revenue to piracy, while the major US studios lost 565 million US dollars to piracy (Landreth, 2006). With the development of the Internet, online piracy has gradually become the most prominent form of piracy in the Chinese film market; even the pirated DVD industry has been hit, not to mention the damage it is doing to the legal film industry. However, the Chinese central government is trying to support the culture industry, which includes the film industry, as a new engine for the development of the national economy, transforming its structure from being dependent on investment and exports to being driven by domestic consumption (Li, 2011). Therefore, improving copyright protection has become an urgent issue for the Chinese government, as copyright is deemed to be essential for the development of the culture industry.

Another product placement agency representative, Wang, has a different perception of Hollywood. Wang's discourse presents a critical attitude toward Hollywood's promotional function for Chinese products. In example 3, Wang questions the reliability of Hollywood blockbusters for product placement deals by using the terms 'selection', 'identify', and 'select'. These words in the context of his discourse imply that not every Hollywood blockbuster is valuable for Chinese product placement, because of various factors such as box office, film genre and brand identity. Thus, a product placement agency like He Run Media has system for selecting appropriate Hollywood blockbusters. The 'selection' in Wang's discourse reinforces Fan's assertion that the Chinese film industry is challenging Hollywood's dominance; it suggests that the Chinese film industry has provided a critical value judgement on Hollywood's ability to promote Chinese brands.

In addition, the terms 'survey database' and 'carefully' in example 4 reveal the strength of the Chinese product placement agency in relation to product placement in films. In particular, the Chinese product placement agency takes on the responsibility of evaluating the effectiveness of product placement. Thus, the agency has access to authentic evidence in the form of multiple resources and a large amount of data to reasonably support the agency to manage product placement in films. The resources and data give the agency more practical experience of product placement in films. This reveals a distinction between the roles of the product placement agency in China and in Hollywood. The wealth of the Chinese agency's practical experience makes it more aware of the demands of Chinese brands. As a consequence, the Chinese product placement agency has gained competitive power in its collaborations with Hollywood.

2.2 The power of Chinese product placement agencies in product placement in Hollywood blockbusters

The Chinese product placement agency takes a dominant position in its collaborations with Hollywood. Thus, how does the Chinese product placement agency maintain its competitive power and its ability to contend with Hollywood product placement agencies? What is the distinction between product placement agencies in China and in Hollywood? The answers to these questions have the potential to reveal how the power relation between the Chinese film industry and the Hollywood is perceived by the Chinese film industry. By examining how Chinese product placement agents talk about their collaboration with Hollywood can help us to understand how this relationship has changed. This section suggests that Chinese product placement agencies have been empowered in this regard. For example:

1. Hollywood blockbusters are more suitable for commercial operations, and Hollywood blockbusters can help brand companies to achieve the best effectiveness. (Wang, 2013).
2. In the Hollywood film industry, there are many product placement agencies as well, which is the most serious challenge for domestic product placement agencies. With more and more domestic enterprises wanting to do product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, when we negotiate with Hollywood film producers, we will carry multiple brands; thus, our 'bargaining chip' is increasing. (Li, 2013).
3. The Chinese product placement market is not too bad in the world, but compared with the Hollywood film industry, we have numerous things to learn. In Hollywood films, the box office only occupies 20 per cent of all profit; but in the Chinese film industry, the box office occupies 80 per cent. Additionally, brand content integrated marketing in the Chinese film industry is particularly uneven. The good effectiveness of product

placement focuses on a few films only, whose box office takings can be guaranteed. (Wang, 2013).

In example 1, Wang uses positive words such as 'suitable' and 'best' to evaluate the exalted position of Hollywood in his discourse. However, as a representative of a Chinese product placement agency, he also implies that the agency is a specialist that is well aware of everything in relation to product placement in films. Specifically, on the one hand, Wang uses the term 'Hollywood blockbusters' to suggest that high-budget film productions are better for promoting a product's sales and building brand reputation in product placement deals. According to his discourse, only 'Hollywood blockbusters', which must be differentiated from ordinary Hollywood films, are valuable for commercial transactions. What distinguishes Hollywood blockbusters from other Hollywood films? In this case, 'Hollywood blockbusters' are high-budget films that are aimed at a mass market with associated merchandising (Neale, 2003). Thus, Wang implies that the investment budget in the film is important for product placement deals, and that high-budget film productions are superior. On the other hand, Wang uses the terms 'more', 'can help', and 'achieve the best' to highlight the strength of the Chinese product placement agency. This part of the discourse also implies that the product placement agency is asserting its power, as it suggests that the agency explicitly perceives what Hollywood blockbusters can offer and knows what Chinese brands want from those films.

Li Ying, President of Reach Glory Media (Rui Ge Media), another product placement agency, illustrates how the agency's power is manifested in external collaboration. In example 2, Li mentions the issue of the competition between Chinese and Hollywood's product placement agencies. She uses a phrase taken from gambling, 'bargaining chip', to imply that product placement deals in Hollywood blockbusters represent a high risk. She is implying that it is like gambling, which

corresponds with the brands' concern about the 'triple-high' risk of investing in Hollywood discussed in the previous section. Specifically, it costs Chinese brands more to place their products in a Hollywood blockbuster than in a domestic film. For example, TCL Corporation spent over 10 million US dollars on global marketing expenses for *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (Bay, 2011) in addition to the cost of product placement (Li, 2013). When placing a product in a domestic film, Chinese brands need only to pay the cost of product placement, which saves a large amount of money on overseas advertising.

At the same time, however, compared with the majority of domestic film productions, Hollywood blockbusters attract far more attention from audiences. According to Entgroup's report, *The Top 5 Box Office Films in China* (up to 2014), the top five included three Hollywood blockbusters: at the top of the list was *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Bay, 2014); second, *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009); and fifth, *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (Bay, 2011) (Entgroup, 2014). The very successful box office rankings of Hollywood blockbusters has attracted Chinese brands. However, such attractive transactions are inevitably accompanied by a high risk, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

Li's use of 'bargaining chip' as a metaphor for product placement deals in Hollywood blockbusters not only implies the high risk involved in these deals, but also suggests that China has become more powerful in Hollywood. Furthermore, Li uses the term 'serious challenge' to describe how powerful Hollywood is and suggest the harsh competition Chinese product placement agencies face when placing products in Hollywood blockbusters. On the one hand, the power of Hollywood is implied as an excuse: if a product placement agency fails to negotiate with Hollywood, it can be assumed that this is because Hollywood is too powerful. On the other hand, from the discourse, the product placement agency is also attempting to prove its own power and ability by suggesting that it is able to successfully place Chinese brands in

Hollywood blockbusters, despite Hollywood being such a powerful rival.

In order to assert its actual and potential power as a specialist, the product placement agency criticises the Chinese film industry in relation to product placement operations by emphasising how successful Hollywood is. Compared with Hollywood's success, the product placement agency perceives itself as existing apart from the rest of the Chinese film industry, and challenges the certain issues around how the industry adopts product placement in films. Specifically, in example 3, Wang Yifei describes product placement deals in China as 'not too bad', but says that 'numerous things' should be learnt from Hollywood. He uses 'not too bad' rather than 'good' or 'bad' in his evaluation of product placement deals in the Chinese film industry, which suggests that there are positive and negative aspects to these deals. On a positive note, he implies that product placement deals in the Chinese film industry have developed and progressed, which he considers 'not too bad'. According to Entgroup's research, the turnover of Chinese film advertising market has reached 2.8 billion RMB (about 280 million GBP), and has increased by 77 per cent since 2012 (Entgroup, 2013). Within the Chinese film advertising market, product placement deals have seen the most rapid growth. By 2013, the revenue received by brands as a result of doing product placement had reached 1 billion RMB (100 million GBP)(Entgroup, 2013). However, from a negative point of view, revenue from product placement accounts for a small percentage compared with box office revenues. Therefore, Wang's discourse implies that product placement in the Chinese film industry has room for improvement, and that it would be best to develop it in future by referring to how it is done in Hollywood. Wang mentions 'the Chinese film industry' twice in his discourse, which strongly suggests that the product placement agency identifies itself as separate from the Chinese film industry when discussing product placement. The construction of Wang's discourse may suggest that his product

placement agency asserts its power in parallel with the Chinese film industry, even though the agency is a major player in product placement in the Chinese film industry.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored commentary from within the industry about the conflicting power relationship between the Chinese film industry and the state in relation to product placement deals. Based on the selected discourses, this chapter has suggested that the Chinese film industry takes on the dominant position in product placement deals in films, while the state's power has gradually weakened due to the huge gap in regulations governing product placement in films. In particular, product placement agencies assert the dominant power in the practice of product placement deals in the modern Chinese film industry. A number of the discourses selected provides precise proof of this assertion. Additionally, there are three reflections of power relationships within product placement deals in the Chinese film industry from internal and external perspectives.

The first reflection can be observed in the power relation between the Chinese film industry and its audiences. According to the discourses from the film industry, the industry provides 'audiences' with the illusion that they participate in product placement deals, and 'audiences' negative responses' have become an excuse for the unsatisfactory development of product placement. The Chinese film industry claims that it provides what audiences want, but it does not really allow audiences to actively engage with product placement. Lack of expertise has become the reason film industry practitioners give to explain why audiences cannot participate in product placement deals: audiences do not have professional knowledge of how product placement operates and is created. However, despite the fact that the Chinese film industry determines what product placement is created,

audiences have the ability to influence what product placement becomes financially successful.

The second reflection is manifested in the status quo of the empowerment of the product placement agency in product placement operations. The role of these agencies in the Chinese film industry is different from the role of Hollywood agencies. Specifically, the Chinese film industry has empowered product placement agencies so that they do more than simply act as an intermediary between brands and films. These agencies have more power than the rest of the film industry in every part of the process. For example, they are responsible for creating the script for the product placement, and for monitoring and regulating the execution of the product placement while the film is being made. After the film is released, a specific agency department evaluates the effectiveness of the product placement and conducts related research to collect data about product placement.

The third reflection can be observed from an external perspective. The Chinese film industry has adopted a critical approach to collaborating with Hollywood on product placement deals. At the same time, because product placement agencies have been empowered by the Chinese film industry, the Chinese industry depends on them to negotiate and communicate all the arrangements with Hollywood in relation to product placement of their brands in Hollywood blockbusters. As Foucault's power-knowledge theory (1980) indicates, knowledge is truth that creates power from the way in which systems are organised. Chinese product placement agencies have more knowledge of Chinese brands than Hollywood agencies do, which increases their competitive power. They understand the identity of Chinese brands, what those brands want to express, what reputation and image they want to build through placement in a Hollywood film, and so on. Furthermore, the power of the Chinese film industry in Hollywood has increased. As the discourse from Li Ying claims, China's share of the 'bargaining chips' is

increasing. To cater for the huge Chinese cinema market, Hollywood is willing to place Chinese brands in its blockbusters.

Throughout the selected discourses in this study, as well as the specifics of the operational model of product placement in the Chinese film industry and the structure of the industry, another focus of discussion is on the creativity of product placement. This is mainly concerned with the commercial and artistic natures of product placement. Therefore, the following chapter will examine how the Chinese film industry talks about the relationship between creativity and commercialism in product placement operations.

Chapter 3. Discourse Analysis: Creativity vs Commercialism in Product Placement in the Chinese Film Industry

Symbolic creativity can enrich people's lives, but often it is banal or mediocre. Sometimes it meekly serves power, or it promotes commercialism over creativity and knowledge.

—David Hesmondhalgh (2013, 7)

Introduction

The definitions of product placement in films provided by Western and Chinese academics suggest that there are completely different conceptions of product placement, and raises the issue of how product placement is implemented in films. This has initiated a controversial discussion in the Chinese film industry around the issue of how the creative elements of product placement can be reconciled with its commercial nature. As well as the power relation between the Chinese film industry and the state discussed in the previous chapter, practitioners are very concerned about the balance between creativity and commercialism in relation to product placement in film productions. In the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, Hesmondhalgh identifies a link between creativity and commercialism and suggests that this connection sheds light on power relationships in the creative industries. This can also be applied to the practice of product placement in the film industry. As a hybrid production that combines commercial and creative elements, how product placement is carried out mirrors the power relations in the Chinese film industry. This chapter will argue that there are completely different concepts of product placement; thus, the issue of how to achieve a balance between creativity and commercialism is particularly important for the Chinese

film industry when industrial practitioners talk about product placement in films.

It is necessary to highlight why it is important to examine commentaries from different groups in the Chinese film industry on the key themes of creativity and commercialism in product placement. The most important reason is that the commentary reflects the distribution of power in the adoption of product placement by the Chinese film industry. Furthermore, it reveals how each participant asserts its particular power to challenge others in the collaborative process of creating product placement. In addition, considering how the Chinese film industry discusses the creativity of product placement in film production will extend the understanding of the concept of creativity in other national cinema. As indicated in the introduction to this study, the Chinese cinema market has become one of the biggest in the world, and the growth of its power has potentially influenced its relation with Hollywood. There are more and more transnational collaborations between Chinese brands and Hollywood blockbusters through Chinese product placement agencies, as discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, how the Chinese film industry treats and understands the creativity of product placement in film production has become increasingly important and is of value to investigate. Moreover, from the internal perspective, since the introduction of the TV Commercials Ban²⁸ in 2012, which limited traditional advertising, product placement has become more prevalent. The popularity of this form of advertising is causing the Chinese film industry and its audiences to pay attention to the issue of creativity and commercialism.

²⁸ The TV Commercial Ban (Xian Guang Ling), introduced by SARFT, is a national ban on all TV stations broadcasting adverts during TV dramas. The first version of the ban was issued in 2010. On 11 October 2011, SARFT added further regulations to the ban, which came into effect on 1 January 2012 (Baike.baidu.com, accessed March 2014, available from: <http://baike.baidu.com/view/6940655.htm>).

This chapter will use discourse analysis as the main methodology. The resources for the discourse analysis in this chapter have been selected from the same trade presses and the same mainstream news websites as for the last chapter: Mtime.com, Entgroup.cn, Ifeng.com, *Beijing Business Today* and *China Entrepreneur*. After coding and analysing the selected discourses, the issue of creativity of product placement in film productions was identified as the other dominant topic in the Chinese film industry. The commentators selected are product placement practitioners in the Chinese film industry, including directors, producers, brand consultants, brand managers and product placement agents. These practitioners represent the diversity of voices and provide a range of insights into the subject of creativity in product placement in film production.

It is necessary to note that the resources referred to above have been chosen for two reasons. First, the discourses on the creativity of product placement in film production are discursive in the Chinese film industry, which means it is difficult to collect valuable discourses from one resource. Second, the five sources support each other. *Beijing Business Today* and *China Entrepreneur*, as important financial resources, offer economic points of view, while Mtime.com and Ifeng.com report on product placement from the perspective of the film industry. At the same time, Entgroup provides professional data and evidence to support the other resources.

In order to develop the main research question of how the Chinese film industry talks about the different conceptions of product placement in films, this chapter is divided into three sections, each examining one of three arguments. The first section will argue that although product placement is based on different conceptions, the Chinese film industry dialectically states that creativity and commercialism in product placement can coexist in film productions. The second section will suggest that practitioners critically challenge the author-God theory by

highlighting their expertise, and that they stress the power of collaborative creators rather than of individual artists. This leads to the assumption that expertise is more important and powerful than the rest aspects of film industry in product placement deals in the Chinese film industry. In other words, it suggests that there is a conflicting power relationship between artistry and professionalism. As indicated in the last chapter, the product placement agency takes the dominant role in product placement deals in the Chinese film industry, particularly in relation to the creativity of product placement in film productions. Thus, the final section will argue that product placement agencies maintain a professional position in order to control the creativity of product placement in films.

Section 1. Dialectical thinking that product placement exists in different conceptions of creativity and commercialism by the Chinese film industry

Within the industry commentaries in the selected discourse, the terms 'artistic' and 'commercial' are widely discussed; therefore, these are considered to be key thematic terms in relation to the creativity of product placement in the Chinese film industry. The question of how to achieve the right balance between art and commercialism in the creation of product placement is a crucial consideration for the industry. However, the relation between the conceptions of creativity and commerce in the realm of product placement is complex. Thus, this section will focus on how practitioners talk about the balance between artistic creativity and commercial promotion, and will suggest that practitioners advocate that art and commercialism in product placement can be reconciled: the central issue is to maintain a balance between them. For example:

1. As content production, brand companies have started to consider the value and aesthetic trend of the film itself. The box

office, ratings, and all statistical measures are not the sole frame of reference for brand companies. In order to control the range of risk, brand companies have to intervene in the creative process of film production. (Dan, 2011).

2. Compared to pure artistic production, the artistic creation of product placement has various constraints, which is like dancing with handcuffs and shackles. It does not simply provide aesthetic pleasure. (Wang, 2011).
3. The artistic creation of product placement is full of emotion, which allows consumers to access spiritual pleasures while accepting the product information. (Wang, 2011).
4. Crude product placement will lead to audiences' contradicting emotions; as a consequence, audiences cannot concentrate on the film content. (21cn.com, 2011).
5. Product placement falls into the 'innovation trap'. Many film directors and producers try hard to suck money²⁹, while giving the principles of marketing aesthetics up. As a result, the creativity of product placement is misguided³⁰. (Ma, 2012).
6. Product placement has to coincide with reality. Although film production is an art form, product placement must conform to the requirements of the public in real life. (Entgroup, 2013).
7. If there has a suitable brand to participate in the early phase, I am willing to use it, because product placement can significantly reduce the investment risk. I believe if the film director is able to appropriately control the balance between artistry and commercialism in product placement, audiences will accept product placement. (Lian, 2013).

²⁹ To 'suck money' in Chinese is *xi jin*, which is a modern term to describe the act of obtaining money quickly. It is used more in the context of stars, celebrities, and economic activities.

³⁰ 'Misguided' in Chinese is *pao pian*. This is the popular term from the Internet, and is used to represent something that deviates from the original intention in a negative direction.

In example 1, Dan, a consultant for a brand company, describes the relationship between creativity and commerce by stressing the importance of diverse factors rather than statistics alone. Dan expresses that brands are more concerned about the creative content ('content', 'value' and 'aesthetic') than the commercial benefit ('all statistical measures' and 'not the sole frame of reference'). Additionally, she asserts and maintains the brand company's power in the creative process of product placement in films by using the words 'control' and 'intervene'. This implies that a brand company plays an important supervisory role in the creation of product placement in film production. It is an interesting and controversial point that one purpose of product placement is financial promotion; however, Dan describes that brand companies consider the creative aspects ('aesthetic trend') before the commercial aspects, such as 'the box office, rating, and all statistical measures'. Dan's discourse indirectly suggests that the relationship between creativity and commercialism in product placement can be reconciled. It also provides a contradiction to Caldwell's theory that industry is concerned with numbers, rather than what audiences want (2008). Compared with film industry practitioners, brand companies are more concerned with artistic creativity than with statistics. This reveals the purpose of product placement for brands. Although brand companies consider product placement to be an important aspect of the commercial promotion of their brand image and product sales, they are more concerned about the impact of product placement on the brand's development. That is to say, the brand companies highlight the importance of artistic creativity in product placement, because it aims to promote the brand image through product placement in films. The brand company will not do anything to obtain impressive numbers at the expense of damaging the brand image or culture. From the brand company perspective, increasing sales is important, but protecting the brand image is even more crucial. Therefore, the brand company emphasises the coherence of the artistic creativity of product placement in films.

In example 2, Wang Li, a representative of a product placement agency, expresses a specific point of view that the relationship between creativity and commercialism is restricted; he uses the word 'constraints' and the phrase 'pure artistic production'. His perception provides evidence to support Hesmondhalgh's argument that 'the relationship between creativity and commerce is a matter of negotiation, conflict and struggle' (2013, 82). Wang uses a metaphor ('dancing with handcuffs and shackles') to describe the conflict between creativity and commerce. As a rhetorical strategy, this suggests that the artistic element of product placement ('dancing': artistic) cannot be freely creative, as it is constrained by many factors ('handcuffs and shackles': commercial). Wang is not the first or only person to advocate this idea. The German critical theorist Adorno, in the book *Aesthetic Theory*, argued that 'The work of art aims at the balance between subject and object without any assurance that it will succeed. This too is an aspect of the illusory quality of art' (1984, 238). Adorno claimed that alleged creative freedom is illusory in artistic work, which has strong objective force by creators. However, Wang argues this from a different perspective. He suggests that the creator's objective force is not the only constraint of creativity in product placement in film production, as he uses the plural 'handcuffs and shackles', which implies that there are various limitations. To be more specific, first, the artistic creativity of product placement is limited by audiences' demands. Second, in order to satisfy mass audiences, this creativity becomes standardised rather than original. Third, creativity in product placement serves a promotional function (profit driven), which is in contrast with art for art's sake. The idea that there are limitations to the creativity of product placement reflects the different essences of creativity and commercialism.

In example 3, Wang Li, a product placement agent with professional knowledge about product placement and the aesthetic realm, stresses

the importance of artistic aspects in relation to the creativity of product placement in films. Wang elevates the meaning of the term 'emotion' to the level of the 'spiritual'. In addition, Wang uses the phrase 'spiritual pleasures' to highlight that the power of the commercial aspect of product placement dominates that of the creative aspect. This connects with the idea of a distinction between creativity and commerce; that creativity is a 'pure gaze' without pleasure, while commerce is a 'naïve gaze' involving the pleasure of the senses (Bourdieu, 1984). Wang suggests that creativity in product placement in film production favours the taste of popular aesthetics ('access to the spiritual pleasures while accepting the product information') in order to achieve a commercial purpose (the promotional function for the brand company) of product placement in the film production.

In example 4, the Chinese business press uses the term 'contradictory emotions' to indicate audiences' negative responses to the creative method of product placement in film production. This is described as 'crude' by the Chinese business press. The linguistic meaning of 'crude' in English is 'in a natural or raw state, not yet processed or refined' (Oxford Dictionary, 2014). This implies that the speed of development of the creativity of product placement in film production is still slow, despite the fact that there has been a rapid growth in product placement deals in the Chinese film industry. In this context, 'crude' means that the content of the product placement does not match the film content. In other words, the product placement is done in a blunt way, which affects the aesthetics of the film. Additionally, the Chinese business press argues that the issue of the creativity of product placement in film production leads to 'audiences' contradictory emotions'. The phrase 'contradictory emotions' is used to describe how audiences feel about product placement in films, rather than using the phrases 'negative responses' or 'negative feelings'. The word 'emotions' implies that audiences experience product placement in film production through feelings, and actively recreate product placement

by themselves. At the end of the first discourse, 21cn.com claims that 'crude' product placement may be the reason why audiences dislike a film. Therefore, the quality of the creativity of product placement has become an excuse for the failure of Chinese films. Specifically, if the box office takings do not meet film producers' expectations, the producers can blame 'crude' product placement. However, film producers neglect the importance of the film content.

Additionally, in example 5, Ma, a product placement agent, extends the idea of constraints to the creativity of product placement in film production. She uses the metaphor 'innovation trap' to state the condition and understanding of creativity in product placement, which is related to Petrie's concept of creativity (Petrie, 1991). The concept of creativity refers to the idea of innovation and repetition within an artistic work, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

However, Ma suggests that being profit-driven (to 'suck money') leads to the issue ('innovation trap') of creativity in product placement. She implies that it is difficult to reconcile the relationship between creativity and commercialism to achieve a good balance. Ma states that in order to maximise profit, the creative/artistic aspect ('give the principles of marketing aesthetic up') must be compromised.

Additionally, Ma uses a causal sentence as a strict and logical approach ('as a consequence') to highlight that commerce (to 'suck money') is a powerful element that constrains ('misguided') creativity ('aesthetic'). The construction of her statement suggests that creativity in product placement in film production is trapped in a vicious cycle, and that commercialism is the cause. This can be viewed as stating that directors and producers compromise on the creative aspect (the 'aesthetic') due to a desire for to get rich quick (to 'suck money'). In turn, this leads to the creativity of product placement being 'misguided' (that is, an 'innovation trap'). Therefore, Ma's discourse reveals that commercial promotion is more important than artistic creativity for the Chinese

film industry in relation to product placement in films, even though practitioners propose achieving a balance.

However, Entgroup, as an important practitioner of product placement, provides a different insight into this issue, which involves another theoretical framework. In example 6, Entgroup states the different conceptions of creativity and commercialism in product placement by mentioning the issue of product placement and reality, which is tightly related to basic film theory. Kracauer, describing the basic property of film, stated, 'Film is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and, hence, gravitates toward it' (1999, 172). Entgroup, from an external perspective, asks whether creativity and commerce are irreconcilable or whether they can be reconciled in a productive dialectic; that is, the creativity of product placement has to comply with the basic feature of motion pictures: reality. According to Petrie's summary of Kracauer's theory, 'film could be regarded as art because film-makers needed to enlist artifice in order to create the illusion of transparency which generated a creative tension crucial to the work of art' (Petrie, 1991, 24). Entgroup possesses authentic data and reports to investigate current developments in product placement in the Chinese film industry. Thus, it takes an observer's perspective. Further, it highlights the importance of artistic creativity in product placement in films in its discourse, suggesting that making artistic creativity consistent with reality is one solution to the problem of getting the right balance between artistic creativity and commercial promotion in product placement.

In example 7, Lian Yiming, a director and a film producer, uses the terms and phrases 'suitable', 'the early phase', 'appropriately control', and 'balance' with regard to the relationship between creativity and commerce in product placement. Specifically, he suggests that the meaning of 'suitable brand' has two layers, which also explain the rules of product placement. First, 'suitable' refers to the idea that the brand

identity (including its culture and image) must match the storyline and genre of the film, and the product 'message'³¹ must tie in with the film plot. Second, if there are several different brands that match the film genre and storyline, 'suitable' has a financial meaning: the amount a brand company is prepared to invest becomes the sole criterion for eliminating brands in the competition for product placement deals. As industry practitioners describe, some product placement deals adopt competitive bidding in order to select a brand company (Dan, 2011; Wang, 2013).

Additionally, Lian highlights the importance of achieving a 'balance' between art and commercialism in a successful product placement deal by using the phrase 'appropriately control' to assert film producers' specific power in product placement deals. The term 'balance' is important in describing the relationship between creativity and commerce. In this context, the Chinese meaning of balance translated in English is a situation in which different elements are equal or in the correct proportions (Oxford Dictionary). Moreover, Lian uses the words 'believe' and 'if' to explain an assumption of a perfect situation ('appropriately control the balance') of creativity of product placement in film production. He says 'the film director is able to ...' and 'the audiences will accept...' to assert and maintain his power as a film director and producer. Directors and producers play very different roles in the creative process of film production. Therefore, the understanding and consideration of the concept of creativity differs among creators and business people. As Petrie summarises, 'The director looks after the inner content of the film, the direction in fact [...] The producer looks after the production' (1991, 180). Being a director as well as a producer, Lian Yiming has a double identity; thus, he considers the creativity of product placement from the perspective

³¹ Product placement is defined as a 'hybrid' message by Balasubramanian (1994). It is a process of disseminating information about a product in non-commercial settings.

of the artistic creation of the content as well as from a production overview. This suggests that artistic creativity and commercial promotion do not come into conflict if the right balance point is found.

Various groups of practitioners in the Chinese film industry have different perceptions of the creativity of product placement in film productions; they emphasise different aspects of artistic creativity and commercial promotion in accordance with their positions. However, the creativity of product placement in films is a collaborative process, which involves diverse creators. Thus, how do these different creators assert their power and how is the power hierarchy constructed in the Chinese film industry? The next section will examine the shift in the power relation between film directors and collaborative creators in relation to the creativity of product placement in films.

Section 2. Changes in the power relation between individual artists and collaborative creators

Essentially, the creativity of product placement lies in the relationship between author/director and other collaborative creators. According to auteur theory in film study, the author/director gives birth to a completely artistic work; thus, the author/director has privilege over others to control anything that relates to his or her artistic work. However, the director is not the sole element in the creativity of product placement; this is a collaborative process that involves in other creators, such as the product placement agent, brand company, cameraman, and so on. The director's dominant power has been dispersed by other symbolic creators in the collaborative process. Thus, this section suggests that practitioners in the Chinese film industry critically challenge the author-God theory by highlighting their expertise, and stress the power of collaborative creators. For example:

1. Product placement has destroyed film directors' artistic creations. My film productions do not involve the issue of product placement due to violence, because nobody wants to see Coca-Cola being shot by a gun. (Peng, 2010).
2. Film as an artistic production should have a personality, and product placement should respect film directors' styles. (Wu, 2010).
3. With regard to film producers and film directors, they must fully respect audiences' aesthetic demands when they create product placement, especially to recognise clearly about the attributes of advertising. As far as possible, it should be integrated into the artistic elements. (Zhang, 2011).
4. In order to maximise profit, the film director positively coordinates with film producers to do product placement unscrupulously³² in film production. (Dan, 2011).
5. Not only the film director, but also the scriptwriter, and even small accessories such like a piece of suit, is related to the success of the creativity of product placement in film production. (Song, 2012).
6. We have a professional team to participate in the creation of the film script with the director and scriptwriter, even customising the product for the requirements of the film. (Song, 2012).

In example 1, the famous film director Peng Haoxiang uses the terms 'destroy', 'creations', 'issue', 'violence' and 'nobody' as a rhetorical strategy to assert that film directors have the ultimate power to manage their creative works. Specifically, the terms 'destroy', 'artistic creations' and 'violence' demonstrate that this director's motivation for using violence in his films is to reject unacceptable product placement. In other words, the fact that Peng's films involve violence is a good excuse

³² *Si wu ji dan* in Chinese. This is an idiom used to describe a person or people who think or do something without any scruples. (Xin Hua Chinese Dictionary)

for Peng to avoid product placement deals. As Becker claimed, 'Works and makers stand in reciprocal relation to one another' (1982, 356). In addition, Peng's tone moves from being very serious to one of irony in order to highlight the ludicrousness of product placement. This is a clear strategy to assert and maintain his power as a director, implying that there is no doubt that his position on the issue is correct.

Additionally, the phrase 'film directors' artistic creations' suggests that a film is the sole creation of the author/director who gives birth to a completed artistic work. The idea that he is able to represent all audiences' opinions in his use of 'nobody wants to see' also asserts his absolute power as author-God (Becker, 1982).

Additionally, Wu Yusen (John Woo), another film director, shares a similar view of the author/director as sole creator in film production, as can be seen in example 2. Wu uses the term 'personality' and the phrase 'film directors' styles' to suggest how powerful film directors are in their film productions. Unlike Peng, Wu takes a very serious tone in his discourse, using 'should' twice in one sentence, which implies that some directors are qualified to tell other directors how to create films. This reinforces and extends Sarris's auteur theory. Sarris stated, 'Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurrent characteristics of style, which serve as his signature. The way a film looks and moves should have some relationship to the way of a director thinks and feels.' Sarris claimed that a director is the central point of the film as an artistic creation and possesses unquestionable power over the creativity of his or her work. However, Wu's discourse suggests that the director's level of power is related to the director's reputation. This may explain why only high-profile film directors have 'voices' on the subject of product placement in the Chinese film industry. High-profile film directors have a good reputation; as a consequence, they are able to assert their power and their 'voice'.

In contrast, in example 3, Zhang as a representative of SARFT indicates that the Chinese government perceives films as a process of collaborative creativity. SARFT's use of the word 'they' highlights the working relationship between film directors and producers. On the one hand, this collaborative relationship is implied as a compulsory requirement ('must' and 'completely') of the Chinese government. SARFT uses the terms 'must' and 'completely' to assert the state's overwhelming power in relation to the creativity of product placement; even though SARFT is not directly involved in this process, as a high-powered leader it has dominated the Chinese film industry. On the other hand, example 3 implies that SARFT perceives the working relationship between director and producer as being more or less harmonious ('they must completely respect audiences' aesthetic demands when they create product placement'). SARFT is suggesting that directors and producers share the same goal; that is, to meet audiences' needs. In an interview with Petrie, the British film producer Patrick Cassavetti summarised the working relationship between directors and producers as follows: 'the role of the producer is really to create a financial structure that allows the director as much as freedom as possible with as little interference as possible, provided they abide by the rules as well' (1991, 177). The quote suggests that the film producer allows the director as much as creativity as possible. It reflects the working relationship between directors and producers. And SARFT presents an agreement in its discourse by emphasising the collaborative working relationship between directors and producers, which differs from the idea of a restrictive relationship.

In the second half of the discourse, SARFT takes an official tone, using language such as 'With regard to', 'especially' and 'As far as possible' to assert its power and to highlight that the motivation for the creativity of product placement in films should be the desire to serve the audience ('audiences' aesthetic demands') rather than the freedom of artistic creation. This implies that SARFT plays the role of God, rather than

author-God, in the Chinese film industry: it appears to have absolute power to speak for all audiences. Additionally, example 3 reflects the attitude SARFT maintains toward the relationship between creative freedom ('resolve it into the artistic elements') and dominant commercialism ('recognise clearly the attributes of advertising').

Moreover, with regard to the power relation between film director and other collaborative creators, Dan, a representative of a brand company, shares her perception, concentrating on the particular relationship between director and producer. At the same time, Dan's discourse questions the powerful position of author-God in order to assert other creators' power in the collaborative process of product placement in films. Specifically, in example 4, Dan uses the phrase 'positively coordinate with' to highlight that producers are more powerful than directors in the creative process of product placement. This implies that the producer determines the final creative outcome of the product placement and contradicts the author-god theory, which suggests that the director is the sole creator of his/her artistic work. However, Dan presents a strongly critical attitude toward the harmonious working relationship between director and producer by using the term 'unscrupulously'. As a brand consultant, Dan seems to be extremely dissatisfied with the way in which directors collaborate with producers to create product placement. The Chinese idiom *si wu ji dan* refers to an unscrupulous attitude to work, the consequences of which go unpunished. Translated into English as 'unscrupulously', this implies that there are no rules to restrict the creativity of producers and directors in relation to product placement. This emphasises the power of these roles in the creative process and indirectly suggests that brand companies and other collaborative creators feel powerless.

However, Song, the manager of Hamilton China, provides a different perception of the power relation between the film director and the other collaborative creators of product placement, as illustrated by

examples 5 and 6. In example 5, using the phrases 'not only', 'small', 'a piece of', and 'is related to', Song argues that the power of other creators in the collaborative process of creating product placement cannot be ignored. She implies that the creativity of product placement in film production is far more collaborative, and that the director is merely one element of the process. The brand company is asserting its position and power by reducing the director's role to one that is no more powerful than a prop or costume shown in the film. This is a strong statement on the collaborative nature of creativity. As Petrie claims:

All filmmaking, beyond the most basic 'home movie' production, is essentially a highly collaborative process, regardless of period or cultural climate. The production of feature films involves the integration of various specialised skills: screenwriting, acting, design, cinematography, editing, direction, and so on. (1991, 169).

A collaborative relationship is crucial in above statement, and it reveals a necessary conflict between the individual characteristics of the film director and of the other key collaborators. Song contributes her insight into this complex conflict by emphasising the importance of other creative collaborators in the creative process of product placement in films.

In example 6, Song changes her rhetorical strategy by using the words 'professional' and 'customising' to assert the power of the brand company in the creative process. At the beginning of Song's discourse, she uses the word 'professional' to suggest that brand companies maintain a positive attitude toward cooperation ('professional team to participate') in the creativity of product placement in film production. She uses 'customising' to imply that her brand company had tried hard to do 'good product placement', even though they had to sacrifice some

of the financial benefits (by 'customising the product for the requirements of the film'). Song makes a strong statement about the idea of creative collaboration in the realm of product placement in films. In example 6, in order to assert her limited power (a brand company is merely one element of the creative collaboration of product placement in films), she gives a positive portrayal of the brand company as an important creative collaborator.

According to the industry commentaries, despite the fact that films are the artistic production of the director, in relation to the creativity of product placement, many practitioners in the Chinese film industry emphasise the power of the collaborative creators rather than that of the individual artists. In relation to the creative process of integrating product placement into films, the different groups of practitioners assert their potential power by stressing their own areas of expertise. This raises the question: how do artists come into conflict with specialists in relation to the creativity of product placement in films? The next section will argue that the specialists, such as the product placement agency, have the most powerful voice in this area.

Section 3. Artistry vs professionalism in the creativity of product placement in films

Within the creative practice of product placement in films, directors and product placement agencies, as the major creators in the Chinese film industry, are dominant. Directors control their artistic film productions, while product placement agencies take on the dominant position with regard to the creativity of the product placement. The selected discourses reveal the strong contention between directors and these agencies. They present different perceptions of who should take responsibility for the current problems with regard to product placement. For example:

1. The foremost reason why product placement is rough and simple is that the film director creates product placement in inappropriate ways. In order to satisfy the brand company's requirements, some film directors have modified the film script many times. (Liu, 2011).
2. The reason product placement in the Chinese film industry seems crude is that the brand company pays more attention to the effectiveness of the product placement, ignoring the importance of the rationality of the plot. (Jia, 2012).
3. The biggest issue for the product placement industry is that the understanding of product placement is only at the initial stage from brand company's perspective. (Yu, 2013).
4. Until now, practitioners of product placement operations have lacked professional knowledge, and the product placement agency rarely provides the scheme and planning that corresponds with the demands of marketing communication. Some product placement agents who have a marketing background are used to using the language of the advertising industry to create product placement from an advertiser's perspective. That is why the majority of film directors and scriptwriters refuse to cooperation with product placement agency for the second creation. (Yu, 2013).

In example 1, Liu takes a professional stance to claim that film directors should take responsibility for the negative effects of the creativity of product placement in film production. Liu's use of 'foremost' emphasises the importance of this responsibility. The discourse implies that, as a consultant for a brand company, Liu is using her professional role to question the power of the film director (artists' power) in order to assert her own professional power. She uses the terms of 'rough' and 'simple' to suggest that the way in which film directors integrate product placement into their creative work is not professional

(‘inappropriate’) and violates basic aesthetic principles. This can be seen as a battle between artists and professionals.

However, film directors have contradicting opinions on the cause of the ‘crude’, ‘rough’ and ‘simple’ product placement in film production, as illustrated by Jia Zhangke in example 2. Jia states that brand companies are the cause of thus ‘crudity’. This implies that the directors’ professional power in their creative works cannot be challenged by brand companies. In other words, Jia states that artists maintain more professional power than so-called brand-company professionals. This raises the question of how the notion of professionalism can be defined, judged and identified. It is clear that the different groups of product placement practitioners have different definitions. For example, brand companies advocate that film directors are not familiar with the brand’s expertise, while film directors state that brand companies do not understand the artistic creativity of films.

However, in examples 3 and 4 Yu Wenhao, a representative of a product placement agency, shares opinions on the assumption that product placement is likely to cause offence in film production. In example 3, Yu expresses a view similar to that of Jia: he claims that brand companies lack professional understanding of how product placement should be created in films. This implies that he believes that the product placement agency stands for professionalism in this process. The Chinese film industry has empowered its product placement agencies in this regard, as discussed in Chapter 2. Product placement agencies like He Run Media have specific departments and professional teams to create the content of the product placement; they are responsible for negotiating with the director on how to organise the script. Thus, Yu, on behalf of artists and creators, denies Liu’s statement (that is, that the film director is the cause of the crudity of product placement) asserting artists/creators’ power in the creative works and art worlds.

In example 4, Yu makes a completely different statement in order to seek more power; he uses the phrase 'lack of professional knowledge' and the word 'rarely' to illustrate that the failure of product placement is down to other less reputable product placement agencies. He feigns introspection to show that the product placement agency takes a positive attitude toward resolving the issues surrounding the creativity of product placement. This is a devious way to assert his power in the process. Yu takes an internal perspective to blame product placement agencies, stating that some 'practitioners' are unable to demonstrate their expertise in the creativity of product placement because they do not have the right professional knowledge and experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how practitioners in the Chinese film industry talk about the issue of artistic creativity vs commercial promotion in relation to product placement. The practitioners advocate that artistic creativity and commercial promotion are not in conflict in the creation of product placement; the central issue is finding the right balance between the two. Moreover, the practitioners stress the importance of professionalism and expertise in product placement operations, which are identified as the two most powerful factors in creating product placement.

Specifically, with regard to the issue of multiple conceptions of creativity of product placement, the various types of practitioners highlight different aspects in order to assert their power and provide the answer to the question of who or what can be creative. The practitioners present an understanding that the creative and commercial aspects of product placement are limited by each other. They suggest that so-called creative freedom is an illusion. Furthermore, directors and producers concentrate on the commercial aspects when talking about creativity of product placement in films,

while other practitioners, such as brand companies, believe that the creative aspect is more important. Additionally, some practitioners, such as consultants and journalists working for the trade press, use metaphors to explain the current situation of creativity of product placement in film production and suggest a variety of restrictions that apply.

Different practitioners maintain different opinions on the issue of the crudeness of product placement in films, which they relate to the relationship between artists and professionals. To be more specific, practitioners have stated that product placement is carried out in a 'rough' way, while its content is 'simple'. With regard to who is responsible for its crudity, there are three themes in the discourses. First, brand companies blame directors for destroying the creativity of product placement in order to meet their financial needs. Second, film directors and product placement agencies claim that brand companies' lack of professionalism is the main cause of the crudity. The third theme of perception is that the product placement agency, from an internal perspective, states that employees responsible for creativity in the agency are not professional enough, which leads to crude product placement in the film. These three themes on the perceptions of different types of practitioners in the Chinese film industry provide insight into the power relation between artists and professional practitioners. It suggests that the professional practitioners use their knowledge and experience to assert their power and, by questioning creative artists, assert their position in the creative process of product placement. Additionally, the idea of cultural value is addressed. Crude product placement is an obvious intrusion of low culture into high culture.

The creativity of product placement involves two positions: that essentially creativity lies with an author/director; and that creativity is a collaborative process in which the director is merely one element.

This highlights a conflict between auteur theory and the collaborative nature of creativity. Chinese practitioners in the film industry have contributed their perceptions and understandings to that issue. For instance, some film directors, such as Peng Haoxiang and Wu Yusen, support the author-God theory, asserting their power by stating that the film director is the sole creator of his or her creative work or production. However, brand companies share a different perception on the conditions and understandings of creativity. From the brand company's perspective, creativity of product placement is far more collaborative, involving other creators such as the cameraman, a piece of costuming, or even a prop. The power of film director is reduced by other symbol creators in the collaborative process of creativity of product placement in film production. Aside from that, Peng presented an interesting idea that the motivation for including violence in his film productions is to avoid the issue of product placement, which implies the idea of reciprocal theory between artists and artistic works.

When practitioners in the Chinese film industry talk about the issues surrounding the creativity of product placement in films, the controversial point is how to make product placement that is considered 'reasonable'. At the core of that point is how the creativity of product placement is connected with the film context. This suggests that the artistic creativity of product placement relates to diverse film elements, because by definition product placement is part of the film. Thus, it has a close relationship with the film narrative, character and genre. In particular, product placement can be integrated into the film narrative in the form of an important prop. In some cases, the product is used by a character in the film; thus, how the character does this and how they influence the product placement may represent a demonstrable relationship between product placement and film character. Furthermore, the identity of the film character is associated with the genre of the film; thus, product placement is related to genre. The next section will explore the demonstrable relationships between

product placement and these film elements and how these elements shape product placement.

Chapter 4. The Delicate Relationship Between Product Placement and Film Narrative in Modern Chinese Films: Integration and Disruption

Placement may be a logo, a brand name, a product or its packaging [...] In its least elaborate form, it merely allows for the appearance of a brand or product onscreen. In its most effective form, it is so integrated into the storyline that its presence seems logical, even indispensable.

— Jean-Marc Lehu (2007, 5)

In addition to analysing commentary from the Chinese film industry, this study approaches product placement from a textual perspective. As discussed in the previous chapter, the creativity of product placement is closely associated with the film elements. The next three chapters will investigate the demonstrable relationship between product placement and central film elements by examining the use of product placement in modern Chinese films.

In *Branded Entertainment* (2007), Lehu claimed that product placement is not simply carried out through visual on-screen methods, but that it also adopts a coherent approach in order to integrate with film narrative. In addition, in the quotation from Lehu at the start of this chapter, phrases and terms like ‘most effective’, ‘logical’ and ‘indispensable’ suggest that integrating product placement into the storyline is the best way to include it in a film. The Chinese film industry also believes that to integrate product placement into the film narrative makes it essential and indispensable (Cheng, 2010; Nuo, 2010). The industry uses a range of techniques to integrate product placement into the film narrative; however, this is not always the case in modern Chinese films, and at times an incoherent approach to

product placement disrupts the narrative in order to highlight the presence of a product on screen. Thus, the main focus of this chapter is to examine the delicate relationship between product placement and film narrative, which is manifested in two ways: (1) product placement is well integrated into film narrative; or (2) product placement is a disruptive intrusion on the film narrative.

Although Lehu suggested that it is best to integrate product placement into the film narrative, this is not the only format of product placement in modern Chinese films. In contrast with integration, the phenomenon of the film narrative being disrupted by the presence of product placement is also common. However, the disruption contributes to the prominence and visibility of the product. Therefore, this study considers both integration and disruption as important for the prominence and visibility of products placed in modern Chinese films. Specifically, this chapter looks at how product placement is *integrated* into film narrative in modern Chinese films by examining three different aspects: the purpose of the product placement, the depth of product placement, and the method of product placement. The chapter also examines how film narrative is *disrupted* by the presence of product placement by answering the following sub-questions: what makes product placement a disruptive intrusion on the film narrative in modern Chinese films? In what ways does product placement distract audiences' attention from the film narrative?

It is necessary to clarify the purpose of this chapter here, because this provides an answer to the question of why this study matters. This study does not aim to provide a judgement on what type of product placement is 'good' or 'bad'; it does not aim to offer an assertion as to whether integration or disruption is the best way to implement product placement in film production. Rather, it aims to provide an understanding of the specific relationship between product placement and film narrative, and demonstrate a perception of how elements of

the film narrative influence the prominence and visibility of product placement in modern Chinese films. The majority of previous studies have focused on examining how product placement influences film audiences' consumer behaviours, how product placement works for a brand as an effective promotional strategy, and what kind of product placement audiences remember. Most of these studies have been more concerned with the results of product placement than with the process of how it is used in film. However, this study pays more attention to the process of product placement in a diversity of film narrative elements, and how film narrative influences the prominence and visibility of products on the screen.

In order to explore the relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films, it is necessary to consider the theory on film narrative. The database of film narrative theory is complex and large; however, some theories are crucial for an investigation into how narrative influences product placement in modern Chinese films. For example, Bordwell and Thompson (2012) claimed that there is a connection between narrative theory and film theory and that the distinguishing feature of film narrative is that it differs from narrative theory in literary text. This provides an understanding of what film narrative is and how it works. In addition, Chatman (1978) set out the important components of film narrative, such as narrative time, narrative space, event, character, and so forth. Heath (1986) developed Chatman's concept of narrative space, and offered a further explanation, from a different perspective, of what narrative space is. Lothe (2000) provided a crucial understanding of the concept of narrative time, explaining that it contains several layers of meaning, such as order, duration and frequency. In relation to this study, these elements of film narrative, especially narrative time and narrative space, play an important role in the prominence and visibility of products on screen. Moreover, an understanding of film narrative theory can help us to explore the delicate relationship between product

placement and film narrative; it provides a theoretical foundation for integrating film narrative theory with the principles of product placement.

This study adopts a film analysis approach in order to explain how product placement is integrated into the film narrative or, indeed, how product placement disrupts the coherence of the film narrative in modern Chinese films. Therefore, 10 modern Chinese films have been selected for analysis. These include *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001), *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003), *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), *If You Are The One 2* (Feng, 2010), *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013), *Go LaLa Go* (Xu, 2010), *What Women Want* (Chen, 2011), *I Do* (Sun, 2012), *Love Is Not Blind* (Teng, 2011), and *Call For Love* (Zhang, 2007). These films have been selected for several reasons.

First, five films from the Chinese film director Feng Xiaogang have been included, because Feng is known as 'the father of product placement'. He was the first Chinese director to include product placement in his productions. Because of this product placement, these five films caused a great deal of controversy in the Chinese film industry. As Wang Yifei, the manager of He Run Media, mentioned in 2014, Feng is the best choice for advertisers, and his new film, *Personal Tailor*, has set a new record for product placement revenues (ifeng.com, 2014). However, some audiences say that there is so much product placement in Feng's films that it affects the pleasure of watching the film (Sohu.com, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to include Feng Xiaogang and his film productions in an investigation of product placement's integration into, or disruption of, the film narrative.

The remaining five films are from a variety of Chinese film directors, which enables us to consider how product placement is used in domestic films other than those of Feng Xiaogang. This provides more evidence in order to answer the core research question of this chapter,

and avoids being too selective in the film analysis. These five films are crucial cases for examining the use of product placement in modern Chinese film, because they have sparked numerous debates about product placement techniques. For example, *Go LaLa Go* was evaluated as a 'fashion product placement movie' by Sina.com in 2010, while Mtime.com reported that *What Women Want* made product placement the focus again in 2011. The film *I Do* was the first Chinese film to use a brand name as the film title, and the *I Do* wedding ring was a major thematic element of the film. *Love Is Not Blind* has been acclaimed by the Chinese media for its successful product placement. Another film, *Call For Love*, was frequently cited by Chinese academics, such as Li Si (2009) and Zhou Zhian (2011), to demonstrate how product placement is practised in Chinese films. To sum up, the 10 films selected provide strong examples that can be used to explain the relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films.

In addition, this study follows Gibb's mise-en-scène approach (2002) to demonstrate how products are highlighted on screen in modern Chinese films. By examining various scenes, we can see how the relationship between product placement and film narrative shifts between integration and disruption: how it is integrated into the narrative, or how it disrupts the storyline. In order to examine how narrative time contributes to the prominence and visibility of product placement in modern Chinese films, this chapter also uses a quantitative approach to measure the duration of the product placement on the screen and how many times the same branded product appears. Exact numbers are used in order to provide some evidence for how product placement is integrated into the narrative time.

Section 1. Terminology: integration and disruption

Before investigating how product placement is integrated into, or disrupts, the film narrative in modern Chinese films, two key terms need to be defined: integration and disruption. The concept of integration in product placement studies has been defined clearly by Lehu, who claimed, 'The most interesting case of a brand integrated into the screenplay occurs when the principal actor uses the brand or the product'. Lehu suggested that the integration of product placement into the film narrative occurs when the product plays a genuine role in the film storyline; for example, if a character in the film uses it as a prop. However, this study believes that the concept of integration is not as simple as Lehu has stated. This study suggests that the integration of product placement into film narrative has further meanings based on the following three aspects.

First, product placement can be integrated into the narrative visually; for example, as a screen placement or a prop placement. Screen placement was defined by Russell in 2002 as the appearance of a brand or branded product on screen. Prop placement is when the branded product appears on screen as a background prop (Zhang, 2008, 56). Second, product placement can be integrated into the film narrative verbally; for example, as a script placement or a sound placement. Script placement refers to the brand name being mentioned in characters' dialogue (Russell, 2002). Sound placement includes music (background music, etc.) and noise (a typical ringtone, etc.). Finally, product placement can be integrated into the film storyline; for example, as a plot placement or identity placement. This works in parallel with Lehu's assertion. The distinction between plot and identity placement is that they represent different degrees of integration into the story. Plot placement refers to the brand or branded product becoming a genuine part of the film story (Qian and Zhu, 2012, 109); for example, if the character uses the product. Identity placement aims for a more thorough integration, so that the brand or branded product

becomes a major thematic element of the film narrative and contributes to building the storyline (Qian and Zhu, 2012).

Another important term that needs to be defined in this study is 'disruption'. Unlike the concept of integration, it is rare to find an explicit definition of disruption in product placement studies. However, some perceptions of disruption in traditional film narrative theory can be considered and referred to. Although disruption in the context of product placement is not exactly the same as disruption in film narrative theory, it has a similar function. In traditional film narrative theory, King explained the concept of disruption in relation to the term 'spectacle'. He claimed, 'Spectacular elements [...] seem to exist purely for their own sake, rather than being integrated into the film as a whole' (King, 2000, 3). King explained that a spectacle can be a disruptive intrusion on the film narrative because it creates instability and uncomfortable expectation or suspense. In addition, Schneider used the example of the film *Memento* (Nolan, 2000) to demonstrate the disruption of narrative time. He stated, 'The central disruption of the movie, then, is not the reversal of time, but the absence of a narration space which would help the viewer organise the events shown into a coherent story' (Schneider, 2012, 51). Schneider illustrated that the disruption of narrative time in *Memento* was caused by changes to the temporal order, such as past and present, which disturbed the sense of time.

Furthermore, Knopf discussed the concept of disruption in film narrative from another perspective. He argued that cinematic technology, like special effects, may disrupt the film narrative. Knopf claimed, 'The graphic-match montage is a remarkable effect, not only for its time, but even today for contemporary audiences who have been spoiled by extravagant special effects. But the sequence is all the more remarkable for its disruption of narrative' (1999, 104). In relation to the study of product placement, the concept of disruption plays the

same role but in a slightly different way. The presence of a product on the screen can disrupt the coherence of the film narrative by introducing surprises or elements of suspense that it alters the audiences' expectations.

Section 2. How product placement is integrated into film narrative

Russell (2002) identified three categories of product placement: visual, auditory, and plot connection. He used these categories to demonstrate how product placement in American shows on commercial television channels influences audiences' memory and attitudes, and created a conceptual model to suggest that memory is influenced by the degree of the connection between a brand and the plot. This section of this study follows Russell's classification system in order to demonstrate the integration of product placement into film narrative. It provides a referential approach to examine how product placement is integrated into film narrative in modern Chinese films. However, in relation to the concrete practice of product placement in Chinese cinema, the categories of product placement are slightly different, although still in line with Russell's three-dimensional construct. In the practice of product placement in modern Chinese films, based on the degree of integration and the purpose of product placement, Russell's categories have been developed to include more detail: screen, prop, script, plot and identity placement (Cheng, 2010).

2.1 How is product placement integrated into the film narrative from a visual perspective?

The visual integration of product placement into film narrative encompasses two main types of product placement: screen and prop. For example, in Feng's *Personal Tailor*, there is a scene in which one of the heroines, Xiao Bai (played by Bai Baihe) talks to her client (played by Fan Wei) about his dream, as shown in Figure 4.1. The two

characters talk as they sit opposite each other at a table. On the table are three bottles of water with a green label. This is the packaging of Cestbon spring water. This scene appears 10 times in the film. The three bottles of Cestbon spring water, which are always on the table in this scene, are integrated into the visual dimension of the narrative structure.

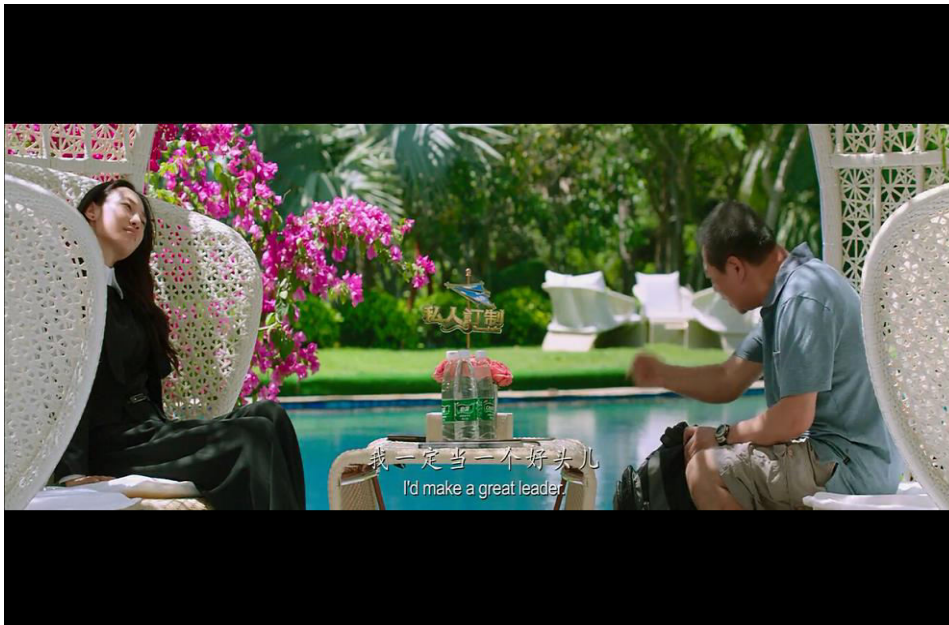


Figure 4.1 *Personal Tailor*

A crucial example of how product placement is visually integrated into the film narrative is that of Grey Goose vodka in *I Do* (Figure 4.2). The bottle of Grey Goose vodka sits on the table as a background prop (prop placement). Although several things are positioned in the frame, such as a woman's hand, a shot glass and a bottle of vodka, the image does not give equal weight to each. To be more specific, the lighting is important in this scene. Strong lighting from above sharply outlines the bottle of vodka, while a less powerful light illuminates the shot glass and the heroine's hand. The strong lighting on the bottle reveals the brand logo and its packaging. Additionally, the product is emphasised by the scale: the bottle of Grey Goose vodka is the largest item in this frame. Thus, the size of the Grey Goose vodka bottle helps draw the viewer's attention to it.



Figure 4.2 *I Do*

In Chen's film *What Women Want*, Apple products such as the Macbook pro, Macbook air, iPhone, iPad, and iMac appear 13 times. In Figure 4.3, everything on the screen is blurred except the iTouch music player. The ordinary music play mode is displayed on the iTouch, which helps to draw attention to the Apple product. The lighting is important in this frame, too. The iTouch screen is the lightest part of the frame. In addition, the position of the iTouch is important for suggesting where the focus rests. Although the iTouch is positioned to the left of the centre, it is nearest to the camera. All the arrangements described above suggest that the iTouch is the main focus in the frame.



Figure 4.3 *What Women Want*

A similar example appears in *Cell Phone*, as shown in Figure 4.4. A BMW is shown on the bottom left of the screen with the headlight on yellow, while other cars in the frame are blurred and further away. Thus, the BMW becomes the focus of this scene. In Figure 4.5, the example of Motorola and China Mobile makes a similar point. A mobile phone screen fills the right-hand side of the screen. Furthermore, the China Mobile and Motorola logos are located at the bottom of the mobile phone screen. At the same time, the background is blurred, highlighting the mobile phone in the frame.



Figure 4.4 Cell
Phone



Figure 4.5 Cell Phone

2.2 How is product placement integrated into the film narrative from an aural perspective?

Product placement is not only integrated into film narrative visually; it can also be done aurally. For example, in Sun's *I Do*, Mr Wang wants to pay what he owes to the heroine, so he takes the heroine and her

colleagues to a large warehouse (as shown in Figure 4.6). Then, a member of staff wearing a red waistcoat says to Mr Wang: 'Mr Wang, it's a total of 1201 cans of Red Bull.' At that moment, we can see a stack of red boxes next to the member of staff, each displaying a Red Bull logo. In this scene, the camera focuses on the space between Mr Wang and the employee with the red waistcoat; the red boxes are not in the centre of the frame, in close up or the focus of the camera lens. Thus, in this case, when the employee mentions Red Bull, the audible cue reminds the audience to pay attention. As a consequence, the prominence and visibility of the product has been promoted by the auditory channel of film narration.



Figure 4.6 *I Do*

Product placement in verbal dialogue between characters is the most common form of auditory expression about product placement in modern Chinese films. The classic method is for a character to mention the brand name in conversation. For example, in *If You Are The One 2* (Figure 4.7), when Qin Fen and Liang Xiaoxiao arrive at the Lemeridien Hotel and enter the lounge, the hotel doorman says: 'Welcome to the Lemeridien Hotel Sanya'. At the same moment, the hotel doorman helps Qin Fen to open the door, while a van with green Lemeridien logo passes by on the road. In this example, first the auditory product

placement of Lemeridien builds the prominence of the product placement, and then the inconspicuous visual placement of the Lemeridien logo on the van adds to it. When visual and audible methods of product placement work together, the visibility of the brand and its product placement increases.



Figure 4.7 *If You Are The One 2*

The integration of product placement into the characters' dialogue reinforces the prominence and visibility of the product placement on the screen. It highlights the presence of product placement in the film narrative. However, script placement is not the only way to integrate a product into the auditory dimension of the film narrative; other methods include the background music and typical or distinctive sounds. Music and sound are important elements of film narration, as Seymour Chatman claimed in 1990, especially when they are associated with product placement in the film plot.

A crucial example in *I Do* provides evidence for how background music enhances the visibility of product placement. At the end of the film (Figure 4.8), the hero holds two *I Do* wedding ring boxes in his hands, and prepares to make an unforgettable proposal to the heroine. The 'I Do' background music accompanies the proposal for the whole time it is

in progress. The lyric 'I Do' re-emphasises the *I Do* wedding ring. In this example, the background music fills a silence and gives the audience a more complete experience. As a result, the music increases the chances of the audience noticing the product placed in the scene. At the same time, as an auditory element of film narration, the background music contains information about the product. This provides some evidence of how product placement is integrated into the film narrative.



Figure 4.8 *I Do*

The typical and distinctive ringtone of the mobile phone in *Cell Phone* is an example of another way in which product placement is integrated into the auditory dimension of the film narrative. For instance, when the hero receives a call from his ex-wife, there is a close-up of the Motorola mobile in the hero's hand (see figure 4.9) while the typical Motorola ringtone sounds: 'you have an incoming call'. This recognisable sound reminds the audience that the mobile in the character's hand is a Motorola mobile. The phone ringing is part of the plot and the film narrative, but the ringtone highlights the product placement. Therefore, in this case Motorola's product placement is integrated into the auditory dimension of the film narrative.



Figure 4.9 *Cell Phone*

2.3 How is product placement integrated into the film story?

As Lehu stated, 'Integration into the storyline, or plot placement, has been confirmed on numerous occasions by academic research to offer a potential impact much greater than a simple appearance in the background of the set' (2007, 120). He suggested that integrating a product into the storyline of the film is a more skilful and effective method, which provides a higher degree of integration into film narrative. Product placement practice in modern Chinese films suggests that there are two ways in which product placement is integrated into the storyline: first, the branded product is used by a character in the film; second, the brand or branded product is a major thematic element.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Lehu defined the integration of product placement into the film story as being when 'the principal actor uses the brand or product'. The product placement of a Sharp mobile phone in *Love Is Not Blind* is an example of this. The white Sharp mobile is an important prop in *Love Is Not Blind*, appearing many times in the heroine's hand. Figure 4.10 shows the heroine using a

white Sharp mobile to call someone. The camera is zoomed in enough to show the brand name of the mobile. Additionally, movement is coordinated with other cues to draw attention to the phone. For example, in the same scene, the Sharp mobile phone appears at the front and centre of the shot, and the background is out of focus so nothing can distract the viewer from the actress's performance. Therefore, the focus in this scene is on the heroine using the white Sharp mobile phone; the scene is attempting to attract attention to the product.



Figure 4.10 *Love Is Not Blind*

However, having a character use a product is not the only way to integrate product placement into the storyline. As discussed previously, product placement can be integrated even further if the product becomes a major thematic element of the storyline. The film *I Do* is a crucial case of this in modern Chinese films: the 'I Do' wedding ring plays a genuine role in the film narrative, rather than simply being a product that appears in the film.

In Chinese cinema, *I Do* is a unique case in that the title and theme of the film are the same as the name of the branded product. The 'I Do'

diamond range is Hiersun's³³ core product range, and is integrated with the whole film. For example, from a visual perspective, the 'I Do' range makes plenty of appearances. For example, the camera plays an important role in highlighting the product in the frame, encouraging audiences to remember it. As Figure 4.11 shows, a huge I Do advertising poster hangs in a shop window, while the heroine is positioned in the right-hand corner of the frame. In this scene, the three camera techniques – distance, angle, and movement – shape the product placement and remind audiences to pay attention to it. Specifically, with regard to distance, the poster occupies most of the space in the scene, while the heroine is only just entering the frame on the right. Although there is only a short distance between the poster and the lens, the heroine is even closer. However, the camera angle recovers any weakening of the product placement caused by distance in this scene. The poster is in the centre of the frame, and the camera is directly opposite it, rather than being angled towards the heroine. In addition, from the perspective of movement, the camera moves with the heroine from right to the left, which provides a good opportunity to track the product placement during the scene's 12 seconds.

³³ Hiersun is a famous Chinese diamond company established in 1999. It created the luxury I Do wedding ring brand, and the wedding ring range has become one of the best-selling in the world. (Hiersun.com)



Figure 4.11 *I Do*

Another example of product placement being integrated with the film's storyline is that some of the narrative takes place in an I Do shop. The narrative context is that the hero, Yang Nianhua, wants to buy a wedding ring so he can propose to the heroine, Tang Weiwei. He goes to the shop to choose and buy a ring. Thus, the scene in Figure 4.12 appears in the film. Three I Do logos are located on the left and in the centre of the screen, with contrasting colours highlighting the product placement. The story is continued in the I Do shop, which suggests that the I Do product placement is integrated into the film's narrative space. At the same time, the product placement is integrated into the film storyline.



Figure 4.12 *I Do*

Another crucial case to illustrate how product placement is integrated into a storyline is the Motorola mobile phone in *Cell Phone*. The film *Cell Phone*, as its name demonstrates, talks about the mobile phone as a vital communication tool and an essential part of modern life. However, it can also cause people trouble, or even create a crisis. The hero of film is a famous TV host. His mobile phone brings him love and happiness, but it also creates a marriage crisis. The mobile phone is the major thematic storyline in the film. The narrative of this film is full of mobile phones, which are crucial to the development of the film story. As a consequence, the placement of a Motorola mobile as the most important prop used by the characters is one that is integrated into the film storyline.

2.4 How does narrative time influence the prominence of product placement in modern Chinese films?

Jakob Lothe understood narrative time as 'the chronological relation between story and text' (2000, 53). He explained that there are three important elements of the concept of narrative time: order, duration

and frequency. 'Order' can be explained as when the story and events happen. 'Duration' refers to 'how long', while 'frequency' means 'how often'. In relation to this study, narrative time influences the visibility of products placed in modern Chinese films in terms of order, duration and frequency. Additionally, product placement needs to be integrated into the narrative time in order to accord with logical and rational reality.

The order of the narrative time refers to when the narrative events happen, and this influences what product can logically and rationally be placed at a particular moment or within a period of time. For example, in Feng's *Personal Tailor*, the film's main story encompasses three different short stories that take place in different time periods. The first story takes place in China in the early 1990s, while the others occur in the twenty-first century. Thus, the placement of cars has a fine distinction in the different stories. In the first story, the actor's car is an old-fashioned Hong Qi, as shown in Figure 4.13. However, when the narrative moves forward to the new century, the car he drives is a modern BMW Mini Cooper, as illustrated in Figure 4.14.

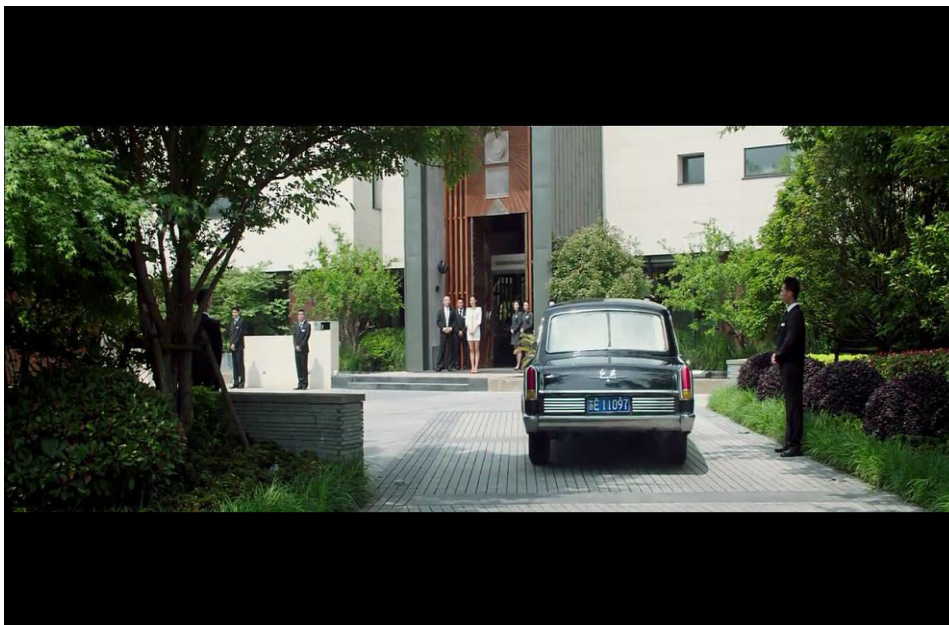


Figure 4.13 *Personal Tailor*



Figure 4.14 *Personal Tailor*

The duration and frequency of the product placement has to correspond with the narrative time. Specifically, the duration of the narrative time influences how long a product can be shown in the frame for if it is placed in the film as a background prop. The more times a product appears, the more likely the possibility that audiences will remember it. For example, numerous Chinese and other brands appear throughout the film *Go LaLa Go*; examples include, SK, Lenovo, Extra, Nokia, Zhaopin.com, Lipton, Industrial Bank Co. and LTD. For the purposes of this study, four of these brands (Lenovo, Extra, Lipton and Zhaopin.com) have been selected in order to demonstrate how narrative time influences the expression of product placement and identify which appear the largest number of times in the film. First, the brand Lenovo, as one of the most important props, appears 12 times. Figure 4.15 shows Lenovo's first appearance in the film, which takes place during the opening credits. The Lenovo logo is displayed on the laptop in front of the heroine for about two seconds. Twenty seconds later, as shown in Figure 4.16, the heroine uses a white laptop with a blurry icon in the right-hand corner that implies the brand is Lenovo, and this becomes clear in the rest of film. One minute and eight seconds into the film, as shown in Figure 4.17, a Lenovo billboard, as the main

background prop, appears in the centre of the scene for more than three seconds. Lenovo product placement occurs another ten times during the rest of film – at 1 minute, 15 minutes, 24 minutes, 28 minutes, 31 minutes, 51 minutes, 54 minutes, 74 minutes, 76 minutes, and 83 minutes. The total ‘duration’ of narrative time is 29 seconds. Another important brand that appears in *Go LaLa Go* is Extra chewing gum. According to the statistics in this study, Extra chewing gum appears nine times during the film, for a total duration of about 29 seconds. Additionally, Lipton tea appears four times for a total duration of 6 seconds, while Zhopin.com also occurs four times, but for a total of 4 seconds.



Figure 4.15 *Go LaLa*

Go

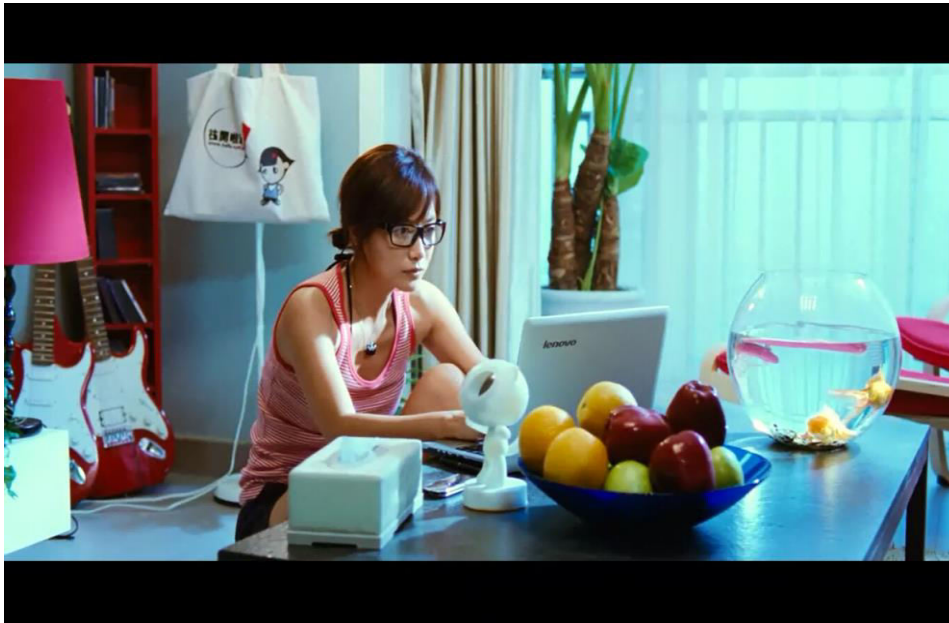


Figure 4.16 *Go LaLa Go*



Figure 4.17 *Go LaLa Go*

2.5 How is product placement integrated into film narrative space?

In film narrative theory, Heath (1986) provided an understanding of the concept of narrative space; he stated that this is where the event takes place. In relation to this study, integrating product placement into narrative space means two things. First, product placement should conform to the logical spatial dimension in order to integrate into the

film narrative. This means that product placement follows comfort expectation when it appears in different narrative space. Second, the brand identity should be in accordance with the spatial dimension of the film narrative.

For example, in *A World Without Thieves*, a BMW is placed in different narrative spaces. The BMW appears 15 times in the whole film, and the filmmakers have dedicated a lot of time and space to displaying it. As shown in the following three images, a BMW is inserted into three different narrative spaces, and the filmmakers have used similar techniques to display it. In Figure 4.18, the BMW is travelling on the motorway in the city, while in Figure 4.19 it is being driven at high speed in the sand. In Figure 4.20, the BMW is speeding in the hills. All these scenes show the BMW from different aspects, and have set it in different spaces. These scenes embody the integration of the BMW product placement into different narrative spaces in a logical way that attempts to encourage audiences to remember it.



Figure 4.18 *A World Without Thieves*



Figure 4.19 *A World Without Thieves*



Figure 4.20 *A World Without Thieves*

A scene featuring a BMW in *Cell Phone* (Figure 4.21) suggests that brand identity can be integrated into film narrative space, which, in turn, integrates product placement into film narrative. A car is parked at the side of the road; its logo is not shown, but the shape and colour imply it is a BMW. In this scene, the narrative space is a rural area of China; this time, an old motorcycle tractor occupies the centre of the

space instead of the BMW. This suggests that the BMW, a luxury brand, is not the most important element here, because the narrative space of the scene is a poor rural area. Moreover, the filmmakers' depiction of the two vehicles in this scene places a large distance between the old motorcycle tractor and the BMW. The old tractor is nearer to the front of the frame than the BMW. However, the camera angle is to the right of the frame, which gives prominence to the BMW.



Figure 4.21 *Cell Phone*

The position of dramatic space highlights the prominence of product placement on the screen. Heath (1986) believed that the concept of narrative space in film narrative text is very complex. Heath claimed that there are different aspects of narrative space, such as the space in which the action takes place, the space of the filmic narrator and the space of reality. For the purposes of this study, narrative space is created by the camera position, its angle, or other cinematic techniques, and contributes to the prominence and visibility of products placed on screen.

For example, as shown in Figure 4.22, the camera is focused on a hand holding a Motorola mobile phone. At the same time, the background space is a blur of warm colours and light. This emphasises how the

camera creates a narrative space to suggest that the hand holding the phone is the focus of this scene. However, even though the hand and the mobile are both in the centre of the screen, the Motorola mobile is the genuine focus. The existence of the Motorola phone is stronger than anything else. Therefore, the Motorola mobile phone is prominent on the screen.



Figure 4.22 *Cell Phone*

Section 3. How product placement disrupts the coherence of film narrative in modern Chinese films

The Chinese film industry has always aimed to integrate product placement into the film narrative. However, examining integration is not the only way in which to demonstrate the relationship between product placement and film narrative. In modern Chinese films, the disruption of the film narrative is also a common phenomenon in the practice of product placement. This section aims to answer the question of what makes product placement disrupt the temporal coherence of the film narrative. The previous theoretical framework of the disruption and distraction can be applied for the product placement studies, which are extensively ignored by product placement researchers. The majority of Chinese researchers in product placement did not realized the positive influence of the disruption and distraction possibly raised to the effects of persuasive communication.

3.1 How to define the term disruption and distraction?

Product placement as part of moving pictures intentionally implemented in the film productions, which can be identified as a sort of disruption for the film narrative. At the same time, product placement as a form of persuasive communication is the distraction for the audiences. However, before to explore how product placement disrupts the temporal coherence of film narrative and in what ways product placement can be identified as distraction for audiences, the definitions of disruption and distraction are necessary to be considered.

The notion of disruption was discussed by Edward Branigan in his book *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, and he cited Tzvetan Todorov's argument of that "film narrative is a causal transformation of a situation through five stages", including "a state of equilibrium at the outset; a disruption of the equilibrium by some action; a recognition that there

has been a disruption; an attempt to repair the disruption; and a reinstatement of the initial equilibrium” (Branigan, 2013, 4). It suggests that film narrative is a closed sequence of different events by characters and filmic settings. The narrative process is constructed by some actions, crisis or power, thereby a disequilibrium is created. It is equally important how to deal with the disruption and its effects. Whilst Ulrike Siehlohr claimed that the film’s characteristic disruption of temporal coherence is the adoption of recapitulation and repetition. It potentially suggested the way of deal with the disruption in film narrative. However, the state of recapitulation and repetition needs to be carefully distinguished, because the chain of events is motivated and directed by structured actions according to the film narrative theory.

In the Todorov’s ‘five stages’ theory, the middle stage of a recognition of the disruption is not solely realized by the characters and narrators, but audiences are caught up in various ways of perceiving and knowing. It mainly suggests when disruption happen in the film narrative, the audiences potentially perceive it as a distraction. Therefore, the notion of distraction is closely associated with the product placement studies.

SanMiguel, Corral, and Escera provided a definition of ‘distraction’ in their research as “the interference that a response conflict generated by the distractor produces on task performance” (SanMiguel, Corral, and Escera, 2008, 1141). It reflects the relationship between the distractor and the audiences. Some scholars highlighted the role of distraction in the process of persuasive communication (Henneman, Lewis and Matthews, 1953; Festinger and Maccoby, 1964; Voh and Garrett, 1968). This framework can be applied to the implement of product placement in films. Product placement plays the role as a distractor in some situations on screen, and it essentially can be identified as a process of persuasive communication between commercial message and the audiences.

By considering the complexity of the definition of disruption and distraction in different studies, this study prefers to following the concise criteria by adopting the common features. And the notion of disruption is defined as any action disrupts the equilibrium of the outset established and ruptures the coherence of the story-telling, while the concept of distraction is identified as any irrelevant action interferes to the audience's position and attitude.

3.2 In what ways product placement can be identified as disruption?

In Chinese film productions, product placement disrupts the coherence of film narrative in two different ways--- visual disruption and auditory disruption. In particular, from visual perspective, a deliberately long close-up shot of a product's logo or packaging leads to the disruption of the film narrative. It offsets the balance between comfortable expectation and surprise. For example, in *Personal Tailor*, the placement of Jian Nanchun rice wine is highlighted by an intentional close-up shot. The sequence begins with four people seated around the dinner table in an expensive restaurant. Xiao Bai asks Ling Dao what he wants to drink. Then, the camera moves to the scene shown in Figure 4.23 below and Ling Dao replies, 'Jian Nanchun'. However, the camera lingers on this shot for eight seconds: from the point when Xiao Bai asks the question to when Ling Dao responds 'Jian Nanchun'. Even though Jian Nanchun is not the only product shown (the other drinks include Guang Ming Chang You, Guang Ming milk and Chang Cheng red wine), the red bottles of Jian Nanchun occupy the centre of the frame and their symbolic packaging and logo make the scene look like an advert for Jian Nanchun. In this scene, the visual product placement is stressed by the long close-up shot, while the film narrative has to be stretched in order to maximise the visibility of the product. This overlaps with the second way in which the presence of product placement disrupts film narrative.



Figure 4.23 *Personal Tailor*

Additionally, disruption occurs when product placement breaks away from the story of the film for the purposes of advertising. Returning to the example of Jian Nan Chun in *Personal Tailor*, during the eight seconds for which this image is shown, the product placement is stronger than the film narrative. This suggests that in this case, the camera deliberately focuses on the image of the product, while the film narrative is weakened. In this study, the term 'weakened' means that the film narrative is disrupted by the product placement.

However, the disruption of product placement is not only happened in visual way, but equally common to see that product placement also disrupts the coherence of film narrative from auditory perspective. For example, in *Call For Love*, the placement of an Aigo watch in characters' dialogues may disrupt the film narrative to some extent. The story takes place in a nightclub. The hero is watching the heroine as she dances. The following dialogue takes place:

Woman: Watch me! Watch me!

Man: I am watching you!

Woman: No, that. Watch me.

Then, the camera moves to a table where another woman sits. She is wearing a pink watch (Figure 4.24). The camera moves back to the dance floor.

Woman: Yes, it is. Aigo Watchme!

This conversation suggests that the dialogue between the two characters creatively leads the audience to the product placement. During their dialogue, the Aigo Watchme is mentioned four times, even though the hero misunderstands some of these. This can be considered as a special approach to highlighting product placement: it uses linguistic ambiguity to create an opportunity to form audience expectations. However, in this scene, the Watchme product placement breaks away from the main story; the heroine's repeated verbal emphasis leads to the advertising purposes of product placement overpowering the film narrative.



Figure 4.24 *Call For Love*

It is also noticeable that product placement probably disrupts the film narrative, it also potentially distracts audience's attention in order to exerting its commercial essentiality in the meanwhile.

3.3 How product placement as a form of persuasive communication distracts audience's attention?

The notion of distraction has been investigated by various amount researchers for a long history, which can be traced back 1960s as before discussed. Product placement as a form of 'hybrid production' mainly attempts to transmit commercial information to the audience in order to achieve persuasive and promotional intents. According to previous researchers' statement, distraction may potentially contribute to change audiences' attitudes and recall their memories (Festinger and Maccoby, 1964; Haaland and Venkatesan, 1968; Voh and Garrett, 1968; Bither, 1972; Gunter, 1980).

Festinger and Maccoby organized a research to test their hypothesis that distraction curtails counter arguing on the part of those listening to the persuasive message and makes them more receptive to the influence attempt. The result of experiment shows, "subjects in the distraction conditions were persuaded significantly more than subjects in the control condition" (Voh and Garrett, 1968, 446). It can be applied for this study as that product placement potentially can be identified as visual and auditory distraction. As last sub-section indicated, the close-up shot and intentional dialogue in product placement on screen possesses consistent features with the factors of distraction in Festinger and Maccoby's experiments. To be more specific, the close-up shot of product placement sets up a visual distraction condition, while the intentional mention of product placement in the dialogue is auditory distraction.

Furthermore, Bither in 1972 developed Voh and Garrett's idea by demonstrated the effects of distraction in television advertising. He suggested that the application of distraction hypothesis to promotional campaigns in the media industry is obvious, and the most of these campaigns are designed to remind potential customers about the

advantaged of their products. And he organized an experiment to test his assumption, and the experiment's result showed two predictions. Firstly, persuasive messages could be success in changing audiences' attitudes by accompanied with the mild forms of distraction. Second, the distraction would be more effective when the message was appealing to audience's original attitude position. These mainly provided the premised framework of the assumption that the distraction increases the impact of persuasibility.

According to the consequences of Bither's experiment, there are two significant implications for product placement studies. On one side, the close-up shot of product placement highlights its persuasive intent, but the close-up shot is contrary to the mild form of distraction, which is the key successful factor of changing audiences' attitudes in the process of persuasive communication. On the other side, it is difficult to predict the audience's original attitude position about any branded products or services, thereby the prediction of audience's reaction to the product placement becomes very hard. It causes the challenge of how the distraction effectively achieves the persuasive intent in product placement operation.

However, some scholars still assert the positive influence of distraction in film studies. As Horkheimer and Adorno advocated, "The products of the culture industry are such that they can be alertly consumed even in a state of distraction" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2006, 45). It mainly suggests that the distraction does not influence the consuming behaviour. In relation to the product placement deals, the distraction can be recognized as a way of addressing audience's attention. The common sense shapes our understanding of the distraction. Voh and Garrett pointed out, the 'common sense' prediction implied that "under conditions of distraction, less of the message would get through, and, therefore, less persuasion would occur" (Voh and Garrett, 1968, 446). However, in product placement deals, the primary mission is to let

audience know the product or brand, and then the persuasive process can be started. Although the persuasive intent is one of the most important characteristics of product placement, the recognition of it potentially becomes much more vital than the subsequent purpose.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the delicate relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films by answering the following sub-questions: how is product placement integrated into the film narrative? How does product placement disrupt the film narrative?

To answer these questions, this chapter has referred to literature on narrative theory and film theory by Chatman (1978), Heath (1986), Lothe (2000), Bordwell and Thompson (2012), and Cutting, Iricinschi and Brunick (2013). As a consequence, product placement was found to be integrated into the film narrative through different cinematic techniques in various ways. The film narrative has been shown to play an important role in maximising the prominence and visibility of products placed in modern Chinese films.

Specifically, narrative time and narrative space are important factors in shaping product placement in modern Chinese films, as they make a significant contribution to maximising a product's prominence and visibility. On the one hand, film narrative time influences the visibility of the product through order, duration and frequency. The order of narrative time refers to when narrative events happen, and influences what product placement is suitable for a particular moment or period of time. On the other hand, narrative space is also an important component of the prominence of product placement. The potential information conveyed by the product placement differs according to the narrative space it occupies. The narrative space, through scale or size

on the screen and camera angle, influences how product placement is integrated into film narrative space in modern Chinese films.

This chapter has discussed the integration of product placement into the film narrative as well as how its presence can disrupt or intrude upon the narrative. Product placement is integrated into the visual, auditory, and plot dimensions of the narrative. From the film narration perspective, the visual and auditory elements fundamentally support the prominence of product placement in modern Chinese films. Product placement establishes a communication strategy between brand and audience through visual and auditory channels. The visual and auditory elements of film narration help to place more emphasis on the product than on other objects in the scene. Specifically, the visual channel of film narration, especially the cinematographic elements, plays an important role in giving prominence to product placement in a film. For example, the lighting, the position of the props and the position of the camera all contribute to shaping the expression of product placement in modern Chinese films, and highlight a product or brand's visibility and prominence in particular scenes. The auditory channel of film narration supplies verbal support to maximise product placement in film narrative texts, especially in the dialogue between characters. If audiences do not notice the visual presence of a product, the auditory channel of film narration will remind them it is there. With regard to the plot, product placement can be integrated into the storyline to give the existence of a product genuine meaning in the film narrative, rather than simply including it as a prop.

As well as considering the integration between product placement and film narrative, this chapter has discussed product placement's disruption of the film narrative. In modern Chinese films, this disruption is as common as integration. The Chinese film industry is constantly seeking effective strategies for integrating product placement into the film narrative; however, in practice, disruption still

exists. This chapter has claimed that deliberately long close-ups of products distract audiences' attention from the film narrative by directing them to an image of a product, which leads to the film narrative being weakened. When an image of a product in a film is too deliberate, the presence of product placement may disrupt the narrative.

Character, an important component of film narrative, has not been explored in this chapter due to the complexity of the subject. However, character is a significant factor that shapes product placement in film production and exerts a powerful and active influence on the prominence of products in scenes. Therefore, the next chapter will examine the relationship between film character and product placement, and how actor/actress embodies product placement through professional performance in modern Chinese films.

Chapter 5. The Relationship Between Product Placement and Character in Modern Chinese Films

In this situation, the product contributes to the character's identity and/or strongly reflects a character's values and the character-product association may be relatively strong.

— Cristel Antonia Russell and Barbara B Stern (2006, 9).

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the relationship between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films was discussed. The chapter concluded that the relationship between product placement and film narrative is demonstrated in two ways: product placement can be integrated into the film narrative, or its presence can disrupt the film narrative. In the former situation, product placement can be integrated into the narrative in visual and auditory ways. In both of these, the integration between product placement and film narrative cannot be separated from the character. Character is one of the most crucial elements of the film story, and is as important as narrative time and narrative space in the film narrative. Actors/actresses use their particular performances (which involve their personal experiences and emotions to connect with the characters' identities) to develop the film story. In relation to the study of product placement, in most instances, how the product placement is embodied is determined by how the film character uses or talks about the product.

As Karrh claimed, 'Brands that are paired with media characters as an inseparable part of an involving story may assume a particularly strong role for the audience member' (1998, 32). This suggests that a character plays multiple roles in the film when he or she is involved in

product placement. On the one hand, the character's primary role is to tell a story. On the other hand, the character's secondary role is to transmit commercial information when participating in a scene involving visual or verbal product placement. In other words, the characters have a powerful influence on the embodiment³⁴ of product placement in films through the actor's performance. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how character influences the embodiment of product placement in modern Chinese films.

The main focus of this chapter is to investigate the relationship between product placement and film character. It will suggest that the relationship between product placement and character is interactively influential. 'Interactively influential' does not mean that product placement alters a film character's identity or the actor's performance, or that a character can transform the type of product placement on the screen. Rather, it refers to a close relationship between the two, where different types of character match different types of product placement. This raises the question of how best to demonstrate this match relation. The most intuitive way is to investigate how a film character performs product placement in films. Different characters have particular traits, such as gestures, movements, inflections and intonations, which become part of the product placement. This chapter will examine this close relationship by analysing how it is exemplified in modern Chinese films.

It is the intention of this study to integrate film performance theory and product placement. The work of Naremore on acting in the cinema, the work of Drake on screen performance and the work of Klevan on film

³⁴ McDonald used the term 'embodiment' to describe that a star's performance is the embodiment of culture, while Sobchack used the same term to describe visual materials in films (McDonald, 1998, 180; Sobchack, 1992). However, the meaning of 'embodiment' in this chapter is how product placement is represented on the screen by the characters.

performance provide crucial theoretical support for this study. Naremore's work (1988) on screen acting provided an understanding of what film acting is. He argued that 'the experience of watching them involves not only a pleasure in storytelling but also a delight in bodies and expressive movement, an enjoyment of familiar performance skills, and an interest in players as real persons' (Naremore, 1988, 2). Naremore's statement reveals how important an actor's performance is to the film narrative; however, his work can also be applied to the study of product placement. In relation to this study, an actor/actress's performance skills have a powerful influence on the embodiment of product placement on the screen. In other words, how product placement is embodied depends on how the actor/actress acts. In 2006, Drake developed Naremore's idea of film acting and redefined the concept of screen performance with a wider consideration of what marks out the distinction between 'performed' and 'not performed'. Drake's work helps us to understand how to distinguish what product placement is performed and what is not, because the character's behaviour has a strong influence on how product placement is performed by the actor/actress in modern Chinese films. Additionally, Klevan demonstrated performance skill by analysing individual scenes or sequences from films. He claimed:

Movement of performers also enhances our understanding of film characterisation. It encourages us to attend to a character's physical and aural detail and reminds us, because we are prone to forget in our literary moods, of their ontological particularity in the medium of film. (Klevan, 2005, 7).

Klevan's perception also can be applied to the performance of product placement in modern Chinese films. The actor/actress's performance contributes to the prominence and visibility of product placement on the screen. Furthermore, particular performance skills enhance the

possibility of recognition by audiences, because the film industry assumes that the audience follows the character's behaviour.

It is necessary to highlight why the relationship between product placement and character needs to be examined. There are two reasons. First, when discussing the integration of product placement into the film storyline, character is essential to the embodiment of the product placement on the screen, whether the product placement is verbal or visual. The character's performance builds up a communication between product placement and audiences. As claimed by Russell, there is growing evidence to suggest that today's discerning consumers acknowledge that a smoothly embedded placement enriches the plot, heightens realism and adds enjoyment to their entertainment experience, but they regard a product that is intrusively inserted and lacking in consideration of the main plot and a disturbing and unwelcome distraction (2002). This suggests that product placement is good or bad depending on how it is embodied. Therefore, how a character transmits a product's message to audiences through performance becomes very important. It should be noted, however, that this chapter does not aim to make a judgement of what types of product placement are good or bad. Instead, it pays attention to how film characters influence the embodiment of product placement through their performances: it concentrates on the process, rather than the result.

The second reason it is necessary to examine the relationship between product placement and character is that the majority of previous studies have been less concerned about how product placement is performed through character, and have rarely integrated performance theory with product placement theory. Many Western and Chinese academic studies have stressed the effectiveness of product placement and how it influences audiences through a complex psychological process. It is difficult, however, to find works that combine film

performance theory with product placement research. This study provides a supplementary understanding of the embodiment of product placement by combining performance theory with the study of product placement in order to investigate practices in modern Chinese films. It also provides a theoretical criterion to examine how product placement is embodied by a character's performance. Furthermore, this combination allows this chapter to focus on the process, rather than the results, of product placement.

In order to investigate the relationship between product placement and film character, this chapter is divided into three sections. Each section develops the idea that character influences the prominence of product placement further and in more depth. The first section will define the concept of film character. It draws on the literature to provide strong support for investigating the relationship between product placement and character. Various definitions of character will be considered, from the wider narrative concept to the specific film narrative concept. The second section aims to examine how character types match types of product placed. When discussing character and product placement, James Bond cannot be ignored: this character symbolises product placement in Hollywood films. The appearance of James Bond must be accompanied by product placement. This raises the question of how different types of character are connected with product placement in films. Thus, this second section mainly focuses on the match between character type and product type. After examining this relationship, the third section will highlight the importance of how film character influences the visibility of product placement on the screen. In acting, a performer represents a character by using their body and their voice; thus, this section will discuss how this performance influences the embodiment of visual and aural product placement.

Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter will also use *mise-en-scène* and film analysis as its main methodology. It will follow Klevan's *mise-*

en-scène approach to demonstrate how product placement is implemented by characters in modern Chinese films. Eight of the modern Chinese films discussed in the previous chapter have been selected; they are *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008), *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003), *Go LaLa Go* (Xu, 2010), *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013), *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), *I Do* (Sun, 2012), *What Women Want* (Chen, 2011) and *Love Is Not Blind* (Teng, 2011). The same films discussed in the previous chapter have been chosen for this analysis because this chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter. In addition, compared with film narrative, character has a more direct function for the embodiment of product placement on the screen. The selected films are crucial cases for examining the relationship between product placement and character, because they all involve scenes where a character is performing product placement in visual or verbal way, and they are all well known examples of product placement in Chinese cinema. Furthermore, the films selected include a range of character types, which helps us to understand how different character types match different types of product placement. The films selected do not represent a list of personal favourites. It needs to be emphasised that the main aim of this chapter is to illustrate how a variety of acting styles portraying different types of characters influence the embodiment of product placement on the screen in modern Chinese films.

Section 1. The notion of character

Before investigating the relationship between product placement and character, the concept of character needs to be clarified. This study considers the conception of character in two types of narrative: literary and film. This study considers literary narrative because some perceptions of the conception of film character are based on the conception of character in literary narrative. Many Western academics demonstrate that the notion of character began with fiction, or the

novel, and have developed critical ideas about the delicate distinction between film character and literary character (Balazs, 1970; Seymour, 1978; Dyer, 1998; Cohen, 2001). Although the notion of character has a longer history in literary narrative theory and the concept of film character evolves from that, the conception of character in film studies is the main theoretical consideration in this study.

In the study of literary narrative, the notion of character can be defined as 'particular people in particular circumstances' (Watt, 2001). Watt claimed that the character's name offers the character particularisation in the form of the novel, and stressed that the proper name has a specific function in forming the character's identity. Additionally, Watt added that the representation of time and space in the novel is also related to the notion of character. The novelistic time and space contributes to the character's identity, giving him or her individuality and particularity. As Watt claimed, 'In the same way the characters of the novel can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place' (2001, 21).

Watt suggested that other narrative elements influence the individuality and particularity of character in literary narrative. Furthermore, McDonald shares a similar perception of individuality of character in film studies; he stated, 'Naming had the discursive function of individuating performers, and constructed a performer's identity across a series of film performances and published inter-texts' (2003, 29). McDonald's statement suggests that a character's name bridges the gap between film and novel. It builds a connection between the film narrative and the literary narrative. However, not every film is adapted from a novel or other form of published text. Numerous films are original creations; thus, the concept of character in film studies is specific. Although the notion of character in film studies has evolved from that of the novelistic character, the cinematic tradition distinguishes the two. Dyer claimed that the conception of character in

cinema has altered since the early period of cinema: 'This is a shift similar to that from characters as embodiments of moral or intellectual principles to characters as particular people in particular places' (Dyer, 1998, 91). Dyer suggested that film character is not simply an ideal product of fictional narrative, but is also a representation of everyday life and reality. Different from the notion of character in the study of literary narrative, a character in a film needs an actor, who realises the character through his or her performance in the scene.

Chatman provided another understanding of the conception of character in film narrative structure by illustrating the relationship between character and plot (1978). He claimed that the character is subordinate to, and is a derivative product of, the plot (Chatman, 1978, 111–113). The subordinated relation puts the film character in secondary position, which stresses that the character should be consistent with the plot. However, Dyer criticised this argument, asserting that character is a central element of film narrative in contemporary cinema. Dyer claimed, 'Thus from a cinema focused principally on heroic or emblematic characters, who represent, respectively, ideals or ideas, there has been a shift to a cinema that deals with individuated characters' (1998, 91–92). Dyer suggested that in contemporary cinema, film has increasingly concentrated on the study of character rather than the plot. The relationship of subordination between character and plot has changed, with plot being used to illuminate the characteristics of character.

In relation to this study, these Western scholars' works on the conception of character provide some strong theoretical support for an exploration of the relationship between product placement and character in modern Chinese films. For an explicit understanding of the notion of film character, it is useful to categorise types of character and analyse the associated relation between character types and product placement types. In addition, understanding the relationship of

subordination between film character and plot is a good starting point for exploring how film character performs product placement on the screen.

Section 2. How film character types are associated with product placement types in modern Chinese films

In Hollywood, James Bond plays a significant role in relation to product placement. Many previous studies have researched product placement embodied through the character of James Bond. When we talk about product placement, it is difficult to avoid thinking of James Bond: he is an icon of product placement in Hollywood film production. For example, Lehu claimed that 'Product placement in the cinema is still often only associated with the adventures of James Bond' (Lehu, 2007, 3). James Bond is a branded character who cannot exist without product placement.

This does not relate to who performs the role of James Bond; rather, it relates only to the character – James Bond. No matter who plays the character, from Sean Connolly to Daniel Craig, what is constant is that James Bond is connected with product placement in every film in the series. James Bond represents a category of film character who possesses heroic traits; for example, he can complete seemingly impossible missions and save innocent lives with his professional skills and knowledge. He can drive fast cars, fly planes and defuse missiles and bombs of all varieties. Even when he throws himself out of a plane without a parachute, he can keep calm and find a solution. The characteristics of James Bond (his film character) determine his identity in the story, and this identity offers him a particular image that allows him to carry different luxury brands' products when he appears on screen. For example, does Bond wear Church or Rolex? Which smartphone does he use, Sony or BlackBerry? What car does he drive – an Aston Martin Vanquish? What does he drink – Bollinger? This raises

the question of how different types of film character are matched with different types of product. This section will discuss this close relationship in the eight modern Chinese films selected and categorise the main character types and corresponding product placement types. The purpose of this section is not to cover every category of film character and product placement. Instead, it aims to identify a pattern that reveals the association between character types and product placement types in modern Chinese films.

In order to categorise types of character in modern Chinese films, this study will follow Dyer's approach. Dyer claimed:

For all their individuation, Hamlet, Elizabeth Bennett, the narrator of *Remembrance of Things Past* and Martha Quest are figures of identification, figures with whom are reader can, and is almost required to, empathise or at least feel some sense of familiarity (1998, 96).

Dyer suggested that no matter how different a character is, when we identify with them, they become familiar to us. In addition, his statement about 'identification' of character is an important standard that can be used to classify types of film characters. To some extent, how we identify with a character determines the categorisation of that character.

According to Dyer, 'A character is a construct from the very many different signs deployed by a film within the context of cinema' (1998, 106). He (1998) presented 10 different signs that construct a film character, including audience foreknowledge, name, appearance, speech of character, speech of others, objective correlatives, structure, gesture, action, and *mise-en-scène*. Audience foreknowledge includes the viewer's familiarity with the film story or the character, expectations relating to the actor or genre, and familiarity with

promotional materials or criticism (for example, posters, trailers or reviews may lead us to preconceptions about a film character). The character's name, appearance and speech, as well as the speech of others, indicate the character's personality traits. 'Objective correlatives' mean that the environment into which the film character is placed helps to establish the character's position and identity; the film narrative structure has a similar function of shaping the identification of the film character. These constructive elements of character help us to 'read' who the film character is in the story. However, the elements of gesture, action, and *mise-en-scène* are more related to the performance of the film character on screen. This section considers the constructive elements of the character's name and appearance, the character's speech, the speech of others, objective correlatives and narrative structure. This is because these signs are closely related to the character's personality traits and identity. Thus they are crucial determinants for the classification of film character types.

Specifically, in *Cell Phone*, the main character, Yan Shouyi, is a famous TV host whose personal life has become tortuous because of his mobile phone. Yan Shouyi says that his mobile phone is not just a communication tool in his television programme: it is a time bomb of secrets. Furthermore, his tragic emotional life stems from his mobile phone. The primary identity of this character is that of a celebrity. In the film he performs the product placement of a BMW and a Motorola mobile.

In *Go LaLa Go*, the heroine, La La, who works for a global enterprise, is performed by Jinglei Xu. La La is an ordinary girl, but her personality traits include assertiveness, dedication, passion, a love of challenge, and being quick to learn. Before La La goes to work for this global company, she is a commonplace, simple girl; but once she starts working there her style of dress has an obvious change. In La La's big company, each day is like a fashion show. Every female member of staff dresses in

designer clothes, and every male employee wears a luxury suit. Therefore, there are many opportunities for the product placement of clothing and jewellery; examples of brands shown in the film include Gucci, Dior, Chloe, Chanel, Zara, Valentino, Loewe, Tods, Marc Jacobs, Longines and Rado. Many high-end fashion brands are placed in this film, and the heroine, La La, is just one model in this high-end fashion show. She wears Gucci high heels and a Chloe handbag to work every day. There is an unwritten rule that if you work for a global company, you have to wear designer clothes. This originates from Chinese ideology in contemporary society. The company where La La works has been set up as one of the biggest companies in the world. How the staff dress reflect the company's high-end image and culture. Therefore, it is a logical and well-matched fit for La La to perform the product placement of high-end designer clothing.

In *If You Are The One* the main characters use Motorola mobile phones, particularly the heroine, Liang Xiaoxiao, who uses one of the most expensive models, the Aurarl. The many close-up shots of the Motorola phones and clips of their ringtones promote the brand to the audiences. Liang Xiaoxiao has an inner monologue during a 15-second close-up of the phone. It is worth mentioning that Liang Xiaoxiao is a flight attendant. From the perspective of traditional Chinese ideology, flight attendants should be beautiful, dignified, and generous, and must behave in a proper way; at the same time, they have a relatively high income. Therefore, in *If You Are The One*, it is rational for the heroine to use a luxury mobile phone made by Motorola. Her identity matches the image of the high-end Motorola Aurarl model. Motorola, as a well known brand, is also a good match for the portrait of Chinese stewardess, because Motorola is a mobile-phone tycoon. In this case, the position of the mobile phone to be placed matches the elevated position of the character, Liang Xiaoxiao. The hero, Qin Fen, is a millionaire looking for true love. In the film, Qin uses a China Merchants

Bank credit card several times and drinks Windsor Whisky when he travels to Japan with his friend.

At the beginning of *World Without Thieves*, the characters Wang Bo and Wang Li steal a luxury BMW from a rich man, and throughout the rest of the film they drive it everywhere. Although the character identities of Wang Bo and Wang Li do not match BMW's brand identity, the BMW originally belonged to a rich man. Additionally, as the story develops, Wang Bo and Wang Li decide to change their identities and become good men who protect innocent people from the 'bad guys'.

In *Personal Tailor*, Fan Wei plays the role of Si Ji (which means 'driver'). This character is employed by a leader, but he wants to experience what it feels like to be a leader himself. The other hero, Yang Zhong, with help from his colleagues, helps Si Ji to make his dream come true. Yang Zhong offers Si Ji a new identity as a leader; thus, Si Ji buys a Hong Qi car. In traditional Chinese ideology, a Hong Qi is associated with government leadership. At the same time, Yang Zhong drives a BMW Mini Cooper.

In *What Women Want*, the hero, Sun Zigang, is a creative director in an advertising agency, while the heroine, Li Yilong, is a new executive creative director at the same advertising agency. Their identities are representatives of social elites. Li Yilong is a mature, independent, brave and beautiful woman. Her name sounds like a man's³⁵, which gives her a powerful identity, similar to an 'iron lady'. Sun Zigang is also part of the elite, with a strong work ethic and a high standard of living. Luxury brands are seen frequently with these characters during the film, such as Apple products (iMac, Macbook, iPhone and so on), Acura cars, Lipton tea, 3D Gold Jewellery and Ballantine's Scotch Whisky.

³⁵ 'Long' in Chinese means dragon, and is usually part of masculine names.

In the film *I Do*, the heroine, Tang Weiwei, has made a small achievement in her career, but her personal life is not going very well. One of the heroes, Yang Nianhua, pretends to be a poor, middle-aged man. Eventually, we find out that he is a billionaire and owns a listed company. He hides his real identity while pursuing Tang Weiwei, because he had once been divorced because of his poverty. The other hero, Wang Yang, is Tang Weiwei's ex-boyfriend, and he reappears in Tang Weiwei's life with a new successful identity. In the film, Tang Weiwei and Wang Yang drive Audis, while Yang Nianhua drives a Chinese brand, Chang An³⁶. Tang Weiwei loves to drink Grey Goose vodka when she becomes a leader in her company. However, when she was a college student, she liked to drink Red Bull.

In *Love Is Not Blind*, Huang Xiaoxian is an ordinary girl who has a job as a wedding planner and a stable relationship, but one day she finds that her best friend has fallen in love with her boyfriend. She breaks up with her boyfriend and immerses herself in sadness. In the film, the heroine uses a Sharp mobile. As a wedding planner, she also promotes a matchmaking network, Zhenai.com.

To sum up, it is difficult to clarify explicitly which types of characters are an exact match for particular types of product placement in modern Chinese films. However, Table 5.1 sets out some perceptions of the close link between character type and product placement types. The table shows that, although it is difficult to provide exact categories that match film character type with a specific product type, character identity is closely connected with the brand identity. This suggests that product placement corresponds with the portrayal of character, while character's behaviour coincides with the culture and image of a branded product. Specifically, famous people and social elites are

³⁶ The brand Chang An is positioned as a young and fast-growing brand. However, in China it is perceived as a low-end brand compared with Audi.

matched with high-end brands, while poor or ordinary people are matched with corresponding types of product. However, in some instances, characters with negative traits are used for product placement on screen, such as the two thieves driving a BMW in *World Without Thieves*. Although the identities of the two characters changes from negative to positive, the product placement does not change. Therefore, this suggests that the relationship between character types and product placement types is not influenced by the nature of the film character. In other words, whether a character has negative or positive traits does not determine what product placement can be implemented through them. In addition, after examining these eight modern Chinese films, this study has found that the central characters have more responsibility for promoting products than the minor characters. As shown in the table below, when product placement is embodied by a film character, it is generally the main character in modern Chinese films.

Table 5.1 Character types and product placement in modern Chinese films

Film and Character	Character Type	Product Placement
<i>Cell Phone</i> : Yan Shouyi	Celebrity TV host	BMW car, Motorola mobile phone
<i>Go LaLa Go</i> : Du La La	Female office worker in a global enterprise	Gucci, Dior, Zara, Roda, Tod's, Loewe, Valentino, Marc Jacobs, Longines
<i>If You Are The One</i> : Liang Xiaoxiao and Qin Fen	Liang: Flight attendant Qin: Millionaire	Liang: Motorola mobile phone (Aurarl model) Qin: China Merchants Bank, Windsor Whisky
<i>World Without Thieves</i> : Wang Bo and Wang Li	Thieves, but good people at heart	BMW, Canon
<i>Personal Tailor</i> : Si Ji and	Si: Driver, but poses as a	Si: Hong Qi car

Yang Zhong	politician Yang: Dream planner	Yang: BMW Mini Cooper
<i>What Women Want</i> : Sun Zigang and Li Yilong	Creative director and executive creative director; both social elites	Apple Products, Acura cars, Lipton tea, 3D Gold Jewellery, Ballantine's Scotch Whisky, Greatwall Wine, Lotto, Aimer
<i>I Do</i> : Tang Weiwei, Yang Nianhua, and Wang Yang	Tang: Manager Yang: Posing as a poor, middle-aged man, but actually very rich Wang: CEO	Tang: Audi, Bvgari, Grey Goose vodka, Red Bull, Samsung Yang: Chang An, YHD Delivery, I Do Wang: Audi, Samsung, Red Bull
<i>Love Is Not Blind</i> : Huang Xiaoxian	Ordinary girl in real life	Sharp mobile phone, Zhenai.com

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Dyer's statement about the construction of film character also includes gesture, action, and mise-en-scène, which are closely related to the portrayal of a character on screen. In some instances, the prominence and visibility of a product is influenced by how the film character performs it.

Section 3. How actor/actress's performance influences the embodiment of product placement in modern Chinese films

In films, methods of product placement include screen, prop, script and plot (Russell, 2002). Apart from screen placement³⁷, the methods of product placement are closely related to the visual and auditory aspects

³⁷ This kind of product placement is identified as when the product appears in the background of the scene, and does not relate to the film character.

of the character's performance. To understand how product placement is embodied by performance in modern Chinese films, we need to understand what performance means and what marks out performance as being different from something 'not performed', as well as how we can recognise when product placement is being performed on screen. In order to answer these questions, certain performance theories need to be integrated into the study of product placement. This combination is an important theoretical support for exploring how film characters influence the embodiment of product placement on screen through their performances in modern Chinese films.

Drake cited the definition of performance as a 'mode of assessment of the textual, character, and actor interaction', which originally comes from Thompson's demonstration (2006, 84). Drake provided an understanding of Thompson's definition of screen performance, stressing that central to this interpretation is the function of the audience. The audience is a key factor in the process of performance. The relationship between film character and audience is that the actor becomes the character through his or her performance, and the character sends 'messages' to the audience via this performance. This raises the important issue of presence and intent of the performance.

Character is not an object, and must involve an actor's personality. No performance can exist on the screen without a human being (Thomson, 1967). The performance naturally contains the performer's attitude and situation. In order to understand the distinctiveness of performance, Thomson states, 'There is less impression of the character being presented to us than of a meeting with a stranger in which one notices the physical action of behaviour – we see not an intended meaning but an alert personality' (1967, 123). Thomson understands that in film, character and performer are completely intertwined. They cannot exist separately. This suggests that the film character carries with it the actor's identity; thus, the film character unintentionally uses the actor's

particular intonation and gestures during the implementation of product placement.

Naremore, in his book *Acting In The Cinema*, stated what identifies the moment of performance: 'All performing situations employ a physic of movement and gesture that makes signs readable' (1988, 34). The physical movement and gesture of film characters are visual symbols of when something is being performed. However, Naremore's statement ignores the auditory signs of the film character. When the character talks to someone, the inflection and intonation also mark out the performance. It follows that all these readable signs of actor/actresses' performance have a close connection with the embodiment of product placement on screen.

Additionally, Klevan indicated another key factor in the film performance when he claimed that it is shaped by the camera. This is in accordance with Dyer's statement about how mise-en-scène constructs film character. They emphasise that the function of the camera influences the performers' visibility and their ontological equality on screen. As Klevan stated, 'The effect of the construction depends on an acceptance that the film routinely and necessarily asserts a more expansive view than the one apprehended by the character' (2005, 20). Klevan suggested that the external environment constructs and shapes the character's performance on the screen. A 'more expansive view' provides a real space for the character to move his or her body in the performance. In relation to this study, the performers' visibility and ontology influences the prominence of product placement in some instances.

An explicit clarification is needed of the distinction between performance and acting on screen, because the understandings of performance and acting in film studies can cause confusion. Thus, it is necessary to define these two concepts in this study. Drake provides a

concise and precise explanation of how to distinguish performance from acting on the screen: performance draws more attention to the presence of the film character, while acting puts the focus upon the display of skills (2006). However, both of these are important to this study, because the concept of performance highlights the importance of the presence of the film character in the product placement, while the concept of acting stresses the performance skills of the actor/actress when he or she uses a product on screen.

The embodiment of product placement on screen is influenced by the actor/actress's performance in two ways: visual and aural. From the visual perspective, the character makes gestures and physical movements as readable signs when embodying product placement on the screen. From the auditory perspective, when product placement exists in the dialogue between characters, they use particular inflection and intonation, change the rhythm of their speech, or use specific rhetoric and expressive techniques to highlight the product on screen.

3.1 How does a character performance influence the embodiment of visual product placement?

The construction of film character, such as gesture, actions, and mise-en-scène, marks out how product placement is performed visually on the screen. The meaning of 'actions' needs to be explained clearly here, as it differs from gestures. The distinction between actions and gestures is that actions contain more layers of physical movement, such as eye movement, facial expression, and other expressions of emotion.

First, a film character may use particular gestures to highlight the product, such as finger-pointing. For instance, in the film *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008), the heroine, a flight attendant, uses a high-end Motorola mobile phone – the Aurarl. When she finishes her work, she picks her phone up, showing the attractive appearance of this luxury

phone to the camera. In another film directed by Feng, *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), the two thieves steal some tourists' mobile phones and put them into a bag. Later, one thief opens the bag and picks one out, using his finger to point to the brand name of mobile at the top of its screen. Additionally, in *What Women Want*, Sun Zigang also uses his finger, this time to point out 3D-Gold Jewellery. In the scene shown in Figure 5.4, Sun places his finger below the word Xing Fu ('happiness', in English) on the board. His finger is also pointing in the direction of the 3D-Gold Jewellery logo. This gesture stresses the presence of the product, while emphasising what it stands for: when Sun puts his finger around the word 'happiness', it implies that 3D-Gold Jewellery brings happiness.



Figure 5.1 *If You Are The One*



Figure 5.2 *A World Without Thieves*



Figure 5.3 *A World Without Thieves*



Figure 5.4 *What Women Want*

Acting the role of a film character involves other physical movements, such as eye movement, and emotional expression. Eye movement in particular, but also emotional expression, lead the viewer's attention to the central focus of the scene. For example, in the film *I Do*, as Figure 5.5 shows, one of the central characters, Yang Nianhua, looks towards the bags on the table. These bags clearly show the YHD Delivery logo. Yang's eye movement guides the audience to look at the two plastic bags, and it is difficult to ignore the huge logo. At the same time, Yang Nianhua's complicated facial expression reinforces his action. It potentially raises curiosity about what will happen next and what has made him change his facial expression. Yang's eyes on the bags highlight the presence of YHD Delivery in this scene.



Figure 5.5 *I Do*

Additionally, the camera has a strong influence on how product placement is embodied by a film character. For instance, in *If You Are The One*, a scene takes place when the two main characters, Qin Fen and Liang Xiaoxiao, pay for their drinks. Qin Fen uses a China Merchants Bank credit card, and the camera gives a close-up shot of the logo on the card (Figure 5.6). In *Go LaLa Go* (Figure 5.7) La La makes a cup of tea in the office tearoom. In this scene, the camera focuses on La La's left hand as it grasps the handle of a transparent teacup. This places the Lipton logo in central view, without it being obstructed by La La's hand.



Figure 5.6 *If You Are The One*



Figure 5.7 *Go LaLa Go*

3.2 How does a character performance influence the embodiment of auditory product placement?

In the auditory dimension, actors/actresses generally use three performance skills to emphasise the visibility of a product on the

screen: inflection and intonation, rhythm of speech, and rhetoric and expressive techniques. The character's inflection and intonation influences the focus of the dialogue. In film, characters use a rising tone or falling tone to place emphasis on something³⁸. For example, in *Personal Tailor*, as mentioned previously, in a scene in a restaurant Yang Zhong asks Ling Dao what he wants to drink. When Ling Dao replies, 'Jian Nan Chun, ba'³⁹. Here, Ling Dao uses an emotional word, *ba*, to express the falling tone in this sentence. This word contains the complex emotion that Ling Dao wants to express, and it places emphasis on what he says before this emotional word.

Pursuing this further, the film character carries the personality of the actor, which means the actor's particular intonation accompanies the film character's performance. In some instances, the particular intonation of an actor influences how a character highlights product placement in dialogue. For example, Ge You plays Yang Zhong in *Personal Tailor* and Qin Fen in *If You Are The One*, and his strong acting style has a powerful influence on his performance of the characters. This suggests that the way in which a character in a film verbally highlights product placement cannot be separated from the personality of the actor.

The second auditory performance skill for highlighting product placement on screen is the rhythm of the character's speech. When performers mention a product, the specific rhythm of their speech determines how this is done. The actor always places the stress on something such like words related to the product. For example, Yang Zhong in *Personal Tailor* mentions the dating site Zhenai.com. In this scene, as shown in Figure 5.8, Yang Zhong introduces a man wearing glasses to his daughter, saying, 'This is Professor Li, who is the founder

³⁸ The rising tone and falling tones both aim to highlight something, but they express different emotions.

³⁹ 'Ba' is a Chinese modal particle.

of Zhenai.com, the online dating site, and you can ask for some advice if you want to find a man to date'. When Yang Zhong is performing this dialogue, he puts the stress on 'Zhenai.com', deliberately emphasising the product.

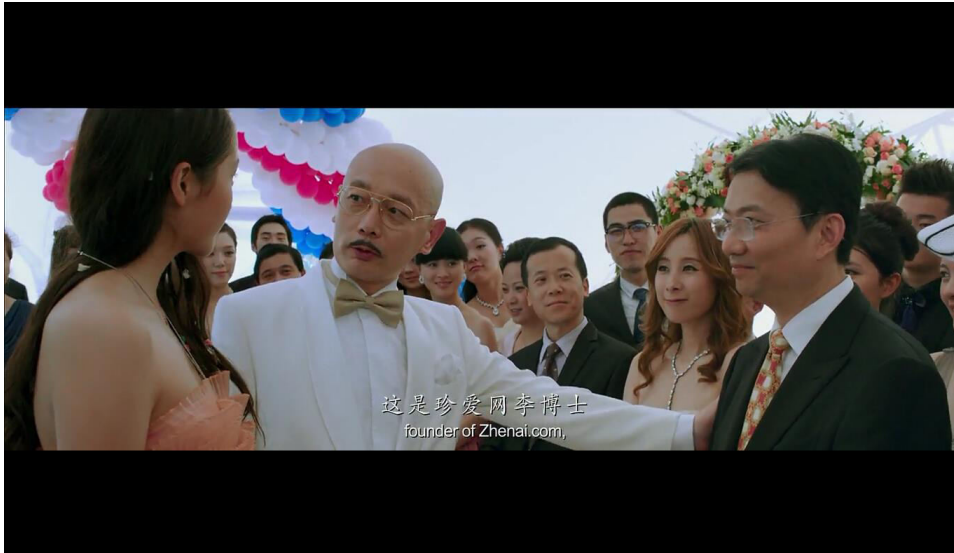


Figure 5.8 *Personal Tailor*

Third, the film character also uses particular rhetorical and expressive techniques in relation to product placement. This means that the performer does not simply speak the brand name of product placement, but adds information and uses rhetorical techniques to make it seem more attractive. An example is the placement of Windsor whisky in *If You Are The One*. In the scene where Qin Fen and Wu Sang are having a drink together in Hokkaido, Wu Sang says they are drinking Windsor whisky, and Qin Fen responds, 'only ice, but without green tea', which is its advertising slogan in China. Both characters mention the product through their performance in different ways: one of them emphasises the name of the drink, and the other reminds us of the advertising slogan. In 2008, Hong claimed that product placement is divided into demonstrative and non-demonstrative forms. He explained:

Given scarce literature, we use the term demonstrative product placement in describing the situation in which a product in

movies explicitly conveys the product's superiority in terms of its durability, performance, and specifications. On the contrary, non-demonstrative product placement does not show the superiority of the products. (Hong, 2008, 108).

In *If You Are The One*, the placement of Windsor whisky is embodied by two of the main characters, who use particular rhetoric and skills of expression to highlight the product in the scene. Through the characters' dialogue, a persuasive message about how best to drink Windsor whisky is imparted.

Another crucial example of how rhetoric and expressive technique works to highlight a product in films is that of China CITIC Bank in *If You Are The One*, which is a little bit complex. The main character does not mention the obvious name of the brand, but uses a metaphor accompanied by movement of the camera. In 2008 the global financial crisis had recently taken place; this is also reflected in the film. At the end of film, Fan Wei asks Qin Fen: 'What are you looking at?' Qin Fen answers: 'The future.' The camera extends its view from 'Staging Terminal'⁴⁰, which is in Qin Fen's hand, to focus on the advertising of China CITIC Bank. The metaphor implies that when the economy is floundering, you have to have more confidence; if you select China CITIC Bank, you will have a better future. This product placement creates a strong message about the brand image.

3.3 Evaluation and an avenue for future research

To sum up, this section has suggested that the central characters use signs that can be interpreted in different ways in order to mark out how product placement is carried out through character in modern Chinese films. In addition, particular performance skills highlight the

⁴⁰ It is Qin Fen's invention in *If You Are The One*.

prominence of a product on the screen in visual and auditory ways. However, another important issue arises when the character in question is not performed by an ordinary actor, but by a star.

Some Western scholars have claimed that the star's image distracts from the character's identity, because the performance of the star has strong personal traits. Thus, whichever character a star plays, they might be a variation of themselves (Ellis, 1991; Dyer, 1998; McDonald, 1998; Drake, 2006). Nevertheless, in relation to the study of product placement, the star image increases the prominence of products placed in modern Chinese films. Compared with lesser known actors, the identity, reputation and power of the star enhance the visibility of the product. For example, in *Go LaLa Go*, the actor who plays La La, Xu Jinglei, is a star in China. Audiences see her as pretty, intelligent and talented. She is idolised by the young generation. In this film, she plays La La, an ordinary girl who changes enormously when she gets a job in a global company – from her style of dress to the way she lives. In her job in human resources, La La has a task to do every day; that is, to browse the Zhaopin⁴¹ website. This is clearly product placement in the film. An interesting point that should be mentioned is that Xu Jinglei, as a star, endorses the Zhaopin website. This raises the question of what the difference is between a star endorsing advertising and a star carrying out product placement in a film. The biggest difference is that stars in films are not performing as themselves, whereas in advertising outside the context of the film they project their star image only. Specifically, when film stars give a performance in character, they are hidden endorsers. In this case, film stars have two jobs. First, they have to perform product placement through the characters they play. Stars have to take on the traits of the character when they perform product placement, whereas in advertising, stars only endorse a product. However, stardom in product placement is not the main consideration

⁴¹ It is the website for finding jobs. It helps companies find people, and it also connects people to job opportunities.

of this study. This relates to another set of theoretical issues and can be explored further in future studies.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between product placement and film characters. It has developed the idea of the relationship between product placement and narrative further, as discussed in the previous chapter, and has demonstrated that character is central to the film narrative and explored how it is associated with product placement in modern Chinese films. This chapter has suggested that different types of film characters are closely connected with different types of product, and that the specific attributes of a character influence how the product placement is executed.

Specifically, this chapter began by clarifying the concept of character in film study and literary narrative study. This clarification provided theoretical support for examining the relationship between character types and product placement types. It helped us to understand what character is and what film character is. The notion of film character is different from the notion of character in literary narrative theory, because film character involves the performance of an actor; therefore, film character is a continuation of the actor's personal identity. However, the presence of James Bond critics have stated that no matter who plays James Bond, every time he appears on the screen he is accompanied by product placement. This raises the issue of the relationship between product placement and film character. Thus, this chapter has provided an understanding of how types of film character are closely associated with types of product placement in modern Chinese films. After analysing which film characters use what products in eight modern Chinese films, this chapter suggested that there are three key points with regard to the relationship between character type and product placement type. First, the character's identity matches the

brand identity of the product he or she uses in the film. Second, the central characters have a stronger connection with product placement than other characters. The final key point, which works in conjunction with the first, is that the 'match' relationship does not change when a character with negative traits uses the product. This suggests that a match relation is concerned more with the identity of the film character than their nature.

Additionally, Dyer claimed that the construction of film character, and some signs of this construction, are closely related to how product placement is embodied on the screen through film characters. Thus, this chapter discussed how film character uses readable signs to mark out what is performed and how it is performed from visual and auditory perspectives. To be more specific, through gestures and other physical movements, characters visually draw attention to the presence of a product. In addition, the camera shapes the character's performance and highlights the prominence and visibility of the product. However, another important type of product placement is embodied from an auditory perspective; it is present in the character's dialogue. Thus, how the character talks about the product becomes central to how the product placement is carried out. This chapter suggests that film characters perform product placement verbally in three ways. First, the character's particular inflection and intonation highlight the product. Second, the rhythm of the character's speech emphasises its presence; the character uses pause and strong tones to achieve this. Finally, film characters use rhetoric and expressive techniques to reconstruct and extend the content of the product placement⁴². When product placement is carried out through a character, certain readable signs mark out what product placement is embodied on the screen.

⁴² Rather than simply mentioning the brand, the film character includes more information about the product and, through rhetoric and expressive techniques, emphasises its positive aspects.

However, film character types and product placement types are closely related to film genre. The genre influences the identity of the characters. At the same time, it may also influence what products are placed in that film. Thus, the next chapter will focus on the relationship between product placement and genre in modern Chinese films.

Chapter 6. The Demonstrable Relationship Between Product Placement and Film Genre in Modern Chinese Films

Results suggested that brand recognition scores are highest in drama films for both genders, and dramas may therefore provide better placement opportunities for some brands and products.

— Dong-Jin Park and Bruce K. Berge (2010, 438)

Introduction

The previous chapter explored the close association between product placement and character in modern Chinese films. The findings suggest that the type of product placed is matched with the identity of the film character, and that the type of character influences how the product placement is embodied on the screen through the actor's performance. However, the identity of the characters is closely related to the context of the film narrative, which determines their characteristics and who they are in the story. Furthermore, the central elements of the film narrative are dependent upon what genre the film belongs to.

Therefore, there is a close connection between character and genre. As Grant claimed, 'Genre movies are those commercial feature films which, though repetition and variation, tell familiar stories with familiar characters in familiar situations' (1986, ix).

Grant provided an understanding of what film genre is and suggested that the relationship between the two is that film character is an important element of the construction of film genre. The characters contribute to the 'look' of particular genres, populating the world of genre films and becoming part of their iconography. For example,

ethnic characters are often flat stereotypes in genre movies, such like the Italian mobster, the black drug dealer, the Arab terrorist, and so on (Grant, 2007). All this suggests that the relationship between character and genre is deliberate and closely connected. Additionally, as the quotation at the beginning of this chapter suggests, Park and Berge carried out research to investigate whether recognition of product placement is affected by film genre in 2010. This strongly suggests that there is a demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre, which ought to be investigated in this study. Thus, the focus of this chapter is to answer the question as to what extent there is a demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre in modern Chinese films.

Although few scholars of product placement have investigated whether film genre influences the performance of product placement, this chapter will suggest that film genre does not influence product placement, but that it does slightly affect the way in which a product is embodied in the narrative context. In other words, the majority of conventional film genres do not determine the presence of product placement. However, some specific genres, such as costume dramas, rarely include product placement, because the particular narrative time and space affects the rationality of product placement.

As well as conventional genres, it is valuable to explore the use of product placement in specifically Chinese genres. This provides a distinct understanding of the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre, and reinforces our understanding of how film genre theory is practised in different national cinema and cultural contexts. This chapter is primarily concerned with the particular genre of New Year films in Chinese cinema. It examines the definition and history of New Year films and investigates how product placement is embodied in those films. It is necessary to examine the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre

in modern Chinese films in order to extend the understanding about the connection the two, such as whether particular film genres attract particular types of product placed, and how product placement is shaped by genre and style.

It is the intention of this chapter to integrate film genre theory into the study of product placement. Film genre is a significant factor influencing how product placement is used on screen. In addition, integrating film genre theory into the study of product placement extends our understanding of the concept of product placement and provides a new perspective from which to study the subject. Many previous studies have focused on the effectiveness and impact of product placement in genre films, especially on consumer attitudes toward product placement in various Hollywood genres. However, this study prefers to concentrate on how different types of product placement are implemented in different genres of film, in particular Chinese films, and then to explore the relationship between product placement and film genre. Moreover, this study highlights the specific ways in which product placement is used in Chinese film genres. The New Year film is a particular genre in Chinese national cinema, which involves cultural practice and contains unique characteristics of the Chinese films. Therefore, this study provides a distinct understanding of the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre by investigating a particular Chinese film genre.

In order to investigate the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre, this chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the relevant theory on film genre will be considered, because this provides the necessary theoretical support for exploring the relationship between product placement and film genre. There is a huge database of film genre theory; however, this study will limit its focus to traditional genre theory and some of the new approaches for refiguring film genre theory, such as those of Altman (1999), Neale

(2000), Mittell (2004), and Grant (2007). To be more specific, Altman and Neale's works provide a method for categorising and identifying film genre, while Mittell's work helps us to understand how to identify Chinese film genre within cultural practices. Even though Mittell has challenged Altman's assertions, traditional film genre theory still has a strong impact on Chinese cinema.

After examining the relevant theory, the chapter will move on to section two, which explores the relationship between product placement and conventional genre in the practice of modern Chinese films. This will be done by examining ten modern Chinese films belonging to different genres, including disaster, comedy, action, romance, ancient costume drama, and horror. The final section will investigate how product placement is used in particular genres of Chinese film. In this section, New Year films will be indicated as a genre that is unique to Chinese cinema. Before investigating how product placement is used in the New Year films, a definition and history of this genre will be considered. Providing a historical overview of New Year films deepens our understanding of when and where New Year films originated and how they have developed since that time. This section also examines whether particular traits of New Year films influence the implementation of product placement. In addition, it will provide a comparison with conventional film genres to identify the differences that the distinct characteristics of New Year films bring to product placement.

Ten modern Chinese films have been selected to aid our understanding of how product placement is carried out in different genres of films. The ten films include *Aftershock* (Feng, 2010), *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001), *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004), *The Banquet* (Feng, 2006), *If You Are The One* (Feng, 2008), *If You Are The One 2* (Feng, 2010), *I Do* (Sun, 2012), *Lost In Thailand* (Xu, 2012), *Personal Tailor* (Feng, 2013), and *No Man's Land* (Ning, 2013). This list includes six films from Feng

Xiaogang, while the others are from different Chinese film directors. This list has not been created based on personal preference; rather, all these films are crucial for exploring the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre. Most importantly, these ten films cover a wide range of genres, although they do not represent every conventional film genre.

Feng Xiaogang is a representative film director within strong auteurism in the Chinese film industry. Feng's films combine different layers of cultural categories, and contain characters from different classes in society who have different occupations; such as the celebrity, the director, the businessman, the thief, the migrant worker, the housewife, and so on. His storylines reflect various aspects of society and a range of cultural realms. Thus, his films have strong generic features and cannot be avoided in an investigation of how product placement is used in different film genres. However, some productions by other film directors have also been selected as crucial cases for the purpose of this chapter. On the one hand, this has been done in order to avoid being too selective. On the other hand, these films fill the gaps in conventional film genres to some extent, because Feng's auteurism is too strong to cover the whole range of genres. However, it needs to be highlighted that this study aims to examine the relationship between product placement and film genre; thus, the emphasis should be on the number of genres selected rather than the number of directors or how many films have been selected from one director. Additionally, this study does not aim to investigate all film genres; instead, it stresses how product placement is used in certain genres.

Section 1. Theory on film genre

Before exploring the demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre in modern Chinese films, it is necessary to understand the basic and fundamental film genre theory, such as how

genre is defined and determined. Although the majority of film genre specialists focus on commercial films in general and Hollywood films in particular, their theoretical works have had a powerful influence on Chinese cinema. Chinese film scholar Rao Shuguang indicated that film genre in China has followed the theoretical principles developed by Western academia; however, it also needs to conform to the particular structure of the Chinese film industry and the state-controlled production system (2004). Rao's statement suggests that Western theory on film genre is applicable to Chinese cinema, and that Chinese film genres have evolved from Western film genres in a conventional way.

A huge and complex database of film genre theory exists; however, this study adapts five film genre theorists' works to establish the theoretical framework for exploring the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre in modern Chinese films. The theorists studied include Altman (1999), Neale (2000), Mittell (2004), Grant (2007) and Klinger (1994). The majority of works by Altman and Neale focus on how film genre is distinguished in general and how it is practised in Hollywood. It offers a theoretical criterion for identifying the genres that selected modern Chinese films belong to. In his book *Film/Genre*, Altman (1999) stated that genre is defined by the film industry and recognised by mass audiences. The film industry uses genre theory to produce films, to define brands and identities and to target audiences. Altman claimed, 'Genre are located in a particular topic, structure, and corpus [...] Genre films share certain fundamental characteristics' (1999, 22–26). He suggested that no matter how film genre is defined, films in the same genre must have certain elements in common, such as convention, iconography, setting, stories and themes, characters, actors, stars, views and audiences.

In any medium, convention is always manifested in stylistic techniques and narrative devices. Parts of dialogue, musical figures or styles and

patterns of *mise-en-scène* are all aspects of a film that, repeated from film to film within a genre, become established conventions (Devitt, 1993). In genre films, iconography prefer to particularly objects, such as the portrayal of character or even specific actors. As stated by Grant, 'Icons are second-order symbols, in that their symbolic meaning is not necessarily a connection established within the individual text, but is already symbolic because of their use across a number of similar previous texts' (2007, 12). For example, in westerns, the cowboy who dresses all in black and wears two guns, holster attached to each thigh, is invariably a villainous gunfighter. This is the iconographic wardrobe of a generic type, already infused with symbolic meaning; this is the iconography of genre films. Iconography also refers to the general *mise-en-scène* of a genre, as in the case of low-key lighting and Gothic design in horror films or the visual excess in melodrama. Like conventions, iconography provides genres with a visual shorthand for conveying information and meaning succinctly (Grant, 2007).

Neale (2000) categorised and summarised 12 major film genres based on Maltby's categorisation of eight genres⁴³. Neale added some uncontentious genres into Maltby's fundamental categories, such as the detective film, the epic, the social problem film, the biopic, the teenpic, and the action-adventure. However, this categorisation is based on the Hollywood narrative in particular, rather than categorising film genre from a comprehensive point of view. Additionally, it ignores the peculiarities of different national cinemas. Although Neale's and Altman's assertions of film genre are essential works for other genre scholars, these have been developed and challenged in the practice of contemporary cinema. However, their essential film genre works have had a fundamental theoretical influence on Chinese cinema.

⁴³ Maltby suggested that the western, the comedy, the musical, and the war film are four uncontested categories, while the thriller, the crime or gangster film, the horror film and science fiction film are additional genres. (1995, 116).

Mittell criticised Altman's traditional film genre theory, questioning whether film genre can be simply categorised in general, as it needs to consider various complex factors and should be identified in a cultural dimension. As Mittell indicated, 'Genre definitions are no more natural than the texts that they seem to categorise. Genres are cultural products, constituted by media practices and subject to ongoing change and redefinition' (2004, 1). This suggests that film genre cannot simply be defined within Hollywood's criteria or by audiences. To categorise film genre is a much more complex task. It involves various factors, especially cultural practice, rather than simply being defined by the film industry or film audiences. In relation to Chinese film genres, such as New Year films, it crucially reflects to the cultural practice, which are not included in Neale's categories of major film genres. Additionally, in terms of film genres classified under the same name, the definition and the characteristics of the genre differ slightly in Chinese cinema within cultural practice. For example, a 'comedy' is defined by its comic units, such as gags, jokes and humorous moments; however, those comic units are strongly influenced by cultural practice. The structure of a comic unit comic and humorous moment in a Chinese comedy differs from that of a Hollywood comedy, but the definition of comedy is based on Hollywood narrative.

To understand the notion of film genre, Klinger highlighted the importance of the 'auteur' in shaping film genre. A film director is the primary force behind an aesthetic creation. As Klinger argued, 'Films were valuable insofar as the *mise-en-scène* expressed the concerns and visions of the director, thereby discrediting films with a predominance of literary content' (1994, 3). This implies that auteurism has influenced what film is and how film is shown in front of audiences, because auteurism has already been integrated into the content and structure of film. Therefore, film genre has clear, stable identities and borders. In relation to this study, the assertion that auteurism shapes film genre is reflected in Feng Xiaogang's productions. As mentioned previously,

Feng is a very well known Chinese director, and has a very strong personal style. His films have been interpreted as black comedies, New Year films, reality films, and others. Feng's films are basically about real life, and relate to many aspects of people's lives. For example, *Jiafang Yifang* (Feng, 1997) deals with the emptiness and loneliness of city-dwellers, despite their wealth; *Be There or Be Square* (Feng, 1998) looks at ordinary Chinese people who have to look after each other while living in difficult circumstances in a Western country; *Sorry Baby* (Feng, 1999) explores the problems of business debt, which is common in modern society; and *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001) uses satire to reflect on the overuse of product placement by Chinese filmmakers in the pursuit of tangible profit. The majority of Feng's films are concerned with small social problems that plague ordinary people in modern life. The stories in his films are close to the lives of commonplace Chinese people.

According to Feng, there are at least two categories of film: one is that of a study, which can provide a valuable new understanding of human nature; the other is entertainment, which has a recreational value. (Feng, 2012). Therefore, his films have a unique auteurism, taking material from daily life, involving black humour, reflecting the attitudes of ordinary people, and combining the diverse aspects of Chinese culture. Moreover, his strong auteurism is what makes the majority of his films comedies – or films that involve comic elements. Feng's productions also contain a range of commercial elements in order to appeal to the industrial development of Chinese cinema. This widens the possibilities for the types of product that can rationally be placed in his films.

Another way to define film genre is according to filmic setting, which means the physical space and time (that is, where and when) in which the story takes place. For instance, science fiction films are usually set in the future or in an imaginary city. Furthermore, film stories and

themes also play an important role in distinguishing the genre of the film. The type of story being told, and how, are aspects that determine which genre a film belongs to. For example, romances inevitably talk about 'love' between a man and a woman, and gangster films cannot avoid conflict between different factions. Here, it is important to mention that the actors who play the characters are another necessary element of film genre, and that the relationship between film character and film genre is important. As Grant stated, 'In genre movies characters are more often recognisable types rather than psychologically complex characters, like black hats and white hats in the western, although they can be rounded as well' (2007, 17). The characters have the specific physical characteristics of the actors. At the same time, the actors become icons because of their outstanding performances in genre films: their faces and bodies are instantly recognisable in the cultural practices by audiences.

In relation to the study of product placement, film genre deliberately influences how product placement is embodied on screen. Films of the same genre share particular characteristics of structure and setting, such as *mise-en-scène*, character identity and structural features. This leads to products being placed in films in particular ways depending on the genre of the film. Therefore, the next section will illustrate how product placement is used in films of different genres and provide an understanding of how the features of particular genres influence product placement in modern Chinese films.

Section 2. Product placement in conventional film genres

As suggested in Section 1 of this chapter, Western theory on film genre is applicable to Chinese cinema, even though Chinese films have particular genres within cultural practice. However, Western film genres are also commonly observed in Chinese cinema. Thus, this section will focus on how product placement is used in conventional

film genres, and explore the traceable pattern between product placement and film genre through an analysis of the modern Chinese films. The films selected for analysis in this section fall into different genres: comedy, crime, romantic comedy, epic, horror and thriller.

According to Table 6.1, there are four significant findings. First, the same, or similar, sponsors place their products in films of different genres. For example, BMWs appear in *Big Shot's Funeral*, *A World Without Thieves* and *Aftershock*. Second, some products are placed in films of a specific genre; for example, China Life Insurance Company Limited in *Aftershock*, and Baihe.com and I Do in *I Do*. Specifically, *Aftershock* is about a disaster and contains elements of tragedy. Thus, the placement of particular types of products, such as an insurance company and its services, is appropriate in this film. The romantic comedy *I Do* also contains associated types of product placement, such as the matchmaking network (Baihe.com) and wedding-ring jeweller (I Do). The third point that can be made by looking at the analysis in the table is that there is no product placement at all in the horror, thriller or epic. Finally, from a quantitative perspective, tragedies contain less product placement than other film genres where product placement is present.

Table 6.1 Product placement in six modern Chinese films

Film	Genre(s)	Sponsor
<i>Big Shot's Funeral</i> (Feng, 2001)	Comedy, New Year	BMW, Zhong Nanhai Lights, Beijing Cigarette Factory, Sun Run, Sony, Outback Steak House.
<i>A World Without Thieves</i> (Feng, 2005)	Action and crime, New Year	Nokia, Canon, BMW, HP, Tao Bao, White

		Collar, QM Furniture, MTone Wireless, Lubricant Company and Sinopec Corp, Beijing Morning Post.
<i>Aftershock</i> (Feng, 2010)	Disaster/ Tragedy, Horror	Jian Nanchun, BMW, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, China Life Insurance Company Limited.
<i>I Do</i> (Sun, 2012)	Romantic comedy	Samsung, Audi, Red Bull, Baihe.com, Chang An (cars), YHD Delivery, Sina micro-blogging, I Do, Grey Goose vodka, Bvgari Watch, E.P., China Eastern Airlines.
<i>The Banquet</i> (Feng, 2006)	Costume drama/Epic	None
<i>No Man's Land</i> (Ning, 2013)	Horror, Thriller	None

To be more specific, the first point, which is that the same brands are placed in films of different genres, seems to suggest that product placement is not shaped by genre. However, this can only be explained by the suggestion that the identity of BMW is not limited by film genre, due to its role of providing transport; that is, there is a wide range of possibilities for placing cars in films of different genres. As shown in

Table 6.1, cars have been placed in four of the six films. A single brand of car (BMW) has been placed in different genres, while more than one brand of car has been placed in a single genre⁴⁴. This suggests that some types of product are not restricted by film genre. Complex factors determine these situations; for example, some brands are associated with certain directors. Feng Xiaogang has a good relationship with some brands, such as BMW, China Mobile and Jian Nanchun wine. When Feng directs a film, those brands will appear in it⁴⁵.

From a quantitative perspective, Table 6.1 shows that, disregarding the films with no product placement, fewer products are placed in *Big Shot's Funeral* and *Aftershock* than in *A World Without Thieves* and *I Do*. However, it cannot simply be asserted that the difference in the number of products placed in different genres is due to the film genre. Additional, more complicated factors are involved, such as the release period. For example, there were four years between the release of *Big Shot's Funeral* and the release of *A World Without Thieves*. The former was produced in 2001, when product placement was in a period of exploration; whereas the latter was released in 2005, when the practice of product placement had become more prevalent. Therefore, the date of release is a further influence on the amount of product placement in these two films.

Nevertheless, a pattern can still be identified in the relationship between product placement and film genre. Comedy, action and crime films are based on realism, which is closer to real life. However, other genres, such as horror and costume drama, have some limitations; thus, the situation for product placement in these genres is different. For

⁴⁴ *Big Shot's Funeral* and *I Do* belong to the same genre (comedy), despite the fact that they are different types of comedy (black humor and romantic, respectively). However, *Big Shot's Funeral* showed BMW, while *I Do* placed Audi and Chang An.

⁴⁵ The Chinese film producer Wang Fenglin made this statement in an interview (2013) with the researcher for this study.

example, the famous Chinese costume drama *The Banquet* (Feng, 2006) was directed by Feng at a time when product placement had become prevalent, but there is rarely any product placement in this film; even in the closing credits no sponsors' names or logos appear. On the official poster for *The Banquet* (Figure 6.1) the actors and actresses are dressed in traditional costume, which clearly informs viewers of the genre of this film. The knife that can be seen in the poster is a kind of iconography in action films, similar to a gun in a gangster film. By looking at the man with the knife in his hand and his serious facial expression, we recognise that this film will include action scenes. In addition, the poster for *The Banquet* does not display any sponsor names or logos. Equally, there is no product placement on the poster for *No Man's Land* (Figure 6.2). Chinese scholar Li Guangdou claimed that the reason there was no product placement in *No Man's Land*, a modern commercial film, can be attributed to the horror film narrative. Li suggests that the genre of *No Man's Land* restricts the use of product placement in the film. This asserts that product placement does have a subtle connection with film genre, which, to some extent, is based on story and theme.



Figure 6.1 *The Banquet*



Figure 6.2 *No Man's Land*

From the information displayed in Table 6.1, another interesting point can be made: not every selected film can be classified as belonging to a pure genre, as some films combine the characteristics of more than one genre. This implies that generic purity is rare in contemporary cinema. Mittell (2007) claimed that there is a new trend of 'mixed-genres' in Hollywood practice. In other words, a film can include elements of several genres, such as a suspense horror film, an action crime film, or a

romantic comedy. The Hollywood film industry makes use of multiple genres as a marketing tool to increase sales of films. This raises the question of whether mixed-genre films may extend the range of possibilities for product placement.

In order to explore whether the range of opportunities for product placement is enhanced by mixed-genre films, two films have been selected for this study: *I Do*, a mixed-genre film, and *Lost in Thailand*, a pure-genre film. Both films were released in 2012; thus, the influence of the release period can be ignored. Table 6.2 shows which products were placed in these two films, and which genre(s) the films belong to.

Table 6.2 Product placement in mixed-genre and pure-genre films

Film	Genre	Product Placement
<i>I Do</i> (Sun, 2012)	Romantic comedy	Samsung, Audi, Red Bull, Baihe.com, Chang An (cars), YHD Delivery, Sina micro-blogging, I Do, Grey Goose vodka, Bvgari Watch, E.P., China Eastern Airlines.
<i>Lost In Thailand</i> (Xu, 2012)	Comedy	Samsung, China Unicom Wo mobile service, Rimowa Luggage, Lenovo laptop, Avis Hiring, Nokair, Credit Suisse Founder Securities Limited, Thailand Tourism.

The table shows that, from the quantitative perspective, there are 12 kinds of product placement in *I Do*, while there are eight in *Lost In Thailand*. From the qualitative perspective, the types of product placement in *I Do* include mobile phones, cars, drinks, a matchmaking network, a wedding jeweller, a delivery service, a social network, a fashion brand, and an airline. In *Lost In Thailand*, the product placement types are made up of digital devices, airline, Thailand tourism, a luggage brand, and financial products. This suggests that multiple-genre films extend opportunities for product placement from a quantitative as well as qualitative perspective, to some extent. In the mixed-genre film *I Do*, the types of product placement span more areas of life. However, in the pure-genre film *Lost In Thailand*, all the products and services are related to travel, which is slightly more simplified than the types of products showcased in the mixed-genre film. The main reason is that mixed-genre films possess more than one generic trait; therefore, they provide opportunities for placing a wider range of products and services.

This section has investigated how product placement is used in conventional film genres. The next section will move on to explore product placement in a particular genre of Chinese film. It will extend the understanding of the demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre. At the same time, investigating the particular characteristics of a Chinese film genre strengthens the cultural approach to film genre theory.

Section 3. Product placement in Chinese film genres

According to Mittell, 'genres are cultural categories that surpass the boundaries of media texts and operate within industry, audience, and cultural practices as well' (2001). This suggests that film genres reflect various cultural realms. Therefore, people identify film genres by attaching certain meanings on a daily basis. When audiences and

industries define film genre, they generally do so in accordance with their own cultural experiences. For example, there is a particular genre of Chinese film known as the New Year film. This has become a specific genre in Chinese cinema and has unique cultural characteristics of 'Chinese' identification. Before investigating product placement in New Year films, some basic background knowledge should be provided, such as a definition of New Year films, an overview of how these films have developed, and the characteristics they share.

3.1 Definitions of New Year films and the history of their development

Mittell claimed that genres cannot be found within one isolated text, which have to combine multiple texts into a common category through cultural practices such as production and reception (2001). New Year films are defined by the time of year described in their name, as they are made especially for exhibition during the extended New Year period between Christmas and Chinese New Year. The purpose of producing the films is to celebrate New Year; hence, they are known as New Year films. In Mainland China, where the cinema season was previously scheduled for social convenience or political need, rather than for commercial reasons, the concept of New Year screenings was an innovative one. However, the notion of New Year films does not originate from Mainland China; it comes from Hong Kong. The concept was introduced to China in 1995 with the Jackie Chan film, *Rumble in the Bronx* (Tang, 1995), one of the 10 foreign blockbusters imported into China in that year (Pang, 2002). The idea of combining commercialised cultural consumption with the traditional New Year festivities immediately proved to be popular in the domestic film market. Afterwards, Chinese filmmakers emulated Hong Kong's concept and model of New Year film in the production of their own films.

In Mainland China, the first New Year film was directed by Feng Xiaogang in 1997: *The Dream Factory* (Feng, 1997). The film was a huge success, grossing over 30 million RMB (about 3 million GBP) in 1997. After that, New Year films became more and more popular in China. Many Chinese directors have made their own New Year films, but Feng's films still top the box office lists every year. Examples include *Be There Or Be Square* (Feng, 1998), *Sorry Baby* (Feng, 1999), *Big Shot's Funeral* (Feng, 2001), *Cell Phone* (Feng, 2003) and *A World Without Thieves* (Feng, 2004). Despite receiving cool treatment from film critics and very few Golden Roosters awards⁴⁶, Feng's New Year films have become a regular item of cultural consumption during the New Year period and are the only consistently profitable film productions in that genre, even though numerous followers and imitators compete for the New Year market in Chinese cinema (China Tendering, 2006).

New Year films have become one of the most popular genres in Chinese cinema for two reasons. From a financial perspective, due to their continued huge successes at the box office, New Year films attract major foreign investors, such as Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia, which distributed *Big Shot's Funeral* to the global market. Anticipating the huge Chinese domestic market for New Year comedy, Columbia continued its cooperation with Feng for his 2003 film *Cell Phone*. From the filmic perspective, New Year films have successfully developed many generic features to suit the domestic Chinese market. In their narrative mode, there is a clear generic consciousness. This raises the question of how we can identify New Year films by looking at their shared characteristics.

3.2 Identifying New Year films

⁴⁶The Golden Roosters is China's official film awards ceremony, which was established in 1981. It is run by the China Film Association.

In order to coincide with the theme of the New Year celebration, New Year films contain three main characteristics: comedy, commercialism and realism (Yang, 2011). Specifically, the majority of New Year films are comedies, regardless of the other elements they combine (such as realism, romance or fantasy), and they must have a happy ending. From the commercial perspective, New Year films are released during the New Year period to strengthen state propaganda in relation to domestic spending⁴⁷. From the thematic perspective, the stories told in New Year films should relate to ordinary people's lives and be based on realism.

Additionally, New Year films as a particular Chinese film genre share common characteristics, which help us to identify them. In general, posters advertising New Year films are feature strong colours, such as red and gold. Red and gold are symbols of the festive New Year atmosphere in Chinese culture. For instance, in the poster for *Big Shot's Funeral*, shown in Figure 6.3, there is a clear symbol in the top-right-hand corner: the text says '2002 New Year Film by Feng Xiaogang'. This is a direct way to communicate the genre of the film. In addition, the poster is dominated by the colour red, which symbolises happiness and luck in Chinese culture: Chinese people wear red clothing or carry something red when they celebrate New Year. On the poster, the title of the film is displayed in red, which conveys a festive message to the viewer. At the same time, a red door opens in the background, which can be understood as a message that New Year is coming. Historically, in China, red doors have been linked to status; for example, doors are painted red in royal palaces, such as the Forbidden City. In Chinese culture, the colour red has many particular meanings: loyalty, bravery, justice, happiness, luck and festivity. Therefore, *Big Shot's Funeral* is classed as a New Year film through its direct approach and from a cultural perspective.

⁴⁷ Kong claimed, 'The New Year Films coincide with the government's attempts to stimulate consumer spending by lengthening holiday periods in China: the so-called "holiday economy/holiday consumption" policy' (2007, 229).

The posters for *Personal Tailor* (Figure 6.4) and *If You Are The One* (Figure 6.5) share similar New Year elements. The poster for *Personal Tailor* uses large amounts of red and gold. There is a red stage curtain with a gold tassel, while the title of the film and its slogan are written in gold. This highlights the celebratory aspect of New Year. The poster for *If You Are The One* differs slightly; white has been selected as the main colour and only a little red and gold are used – in the title of the film. However, it is still clear that the poster of *If You Are The One* expresses the concept of New Year.



Figure 6.3 *Big Shot's Funeral*



Figure 6.4 *Personal Tailor*



Figure 6.5 *If You Are The One*

Additionally, the identities of the actors and the director play guiding roles in that they become particular icons in the film posters, communicating certain messages about genre. As Grant stated, ‘actors

contribute to the look of particular genres, populating the worlds of genre movies and becoming part of their iconography' (2007, 19). For example, the film director Feng Xiaogang and the famous actor Ge You are strongly associated with New Year films in Chinese cinema. As discussed above, the first New Year film in Mainland China was directed by Feng and the main character in that film was played by Ge. Since then, Feng and Ge have worked together in many New Year films, such as *Big Shot's Funeral*, *Cell Phone*, *A World Without Thieves*, *If You Are The One* and *Personal Tailor*. This creates a mindset that the generic iconography of Feng and Ge is representative of New Year films.

Another characteristic of New Year films comes from the perspective of film narrative. The narrative structure and the filmic setting reveal the celebratory style and joyful atmosphere in these films. The film narrative contains a variety of New Year elements, such as the themes that are always associated with New Year, the reunion of families, humorous moments, and so on. Therefore, the majority of New Year films are comedies, because this genre corresponds with the conventions of New Year films.

However, in recent years, a new phenomenon has emerged in Chinese cinema. Certain films use the strategy characteristic of New Year films to disseminate the film, without containing the authentic features of the New Year film genre. Chinese scholar Ni Xiangbao indicated that some Chinese film practitioners define New Year films by the period of release rather than by the generic characteristics of the narrative context (2010, 131). Ni's statement implied that more and more New Year films that are contrary to the celebratory style have been released in recent years. Some New Year films do not construct their storylines around the celebratory aspects of New Year or have happy endings. The reason they are still called New Year films is based on the period of release; if a film is released during the New Year period, it can be called a New Year film. This ignores the generic conventions when identifying

film genre. Nevertheless, this chapter will examine the relationship between product placement and New Year films by analysing Feng's films. Feng's New Year films do not relate to Ni's concerns, because Feng has always kept the commercial demands of the New Year market firmly in mind. Thus, with their celebratory style and happy endings, Feng's films set out to provide relief, empathy and entertainment for urban consumers.

3.3 How product placement is incorporated into New Year films

Almost every New Year film by Feng since 1999 has included obvious product placement, and in his most recent films, such as *Big Shot's Funeral*, *Cell Phone* and *A World Without Thieves*, the sponsors included major multinational companies, such as Motorola, China Mobile and BMW. All of their products were given 'starring roles'. This is the biggest motivation for the selection of Feng's New Year films as the crucial and sole cases in this study. Additionally, despite the fact that there are many filmmakers competing for a share of the New Year market, Feng's New Year films monopolise the market. Kong claimed that Feng's participation made a huge difference to the box office in the New Year film market⁴⁸ (2007). This is why it is so important to explore Feng's New Year films in this study.

This section will focus on examining two assumptions. The first assumption is that the content of product placement is shaped by the generic traits of New Year films. The second assumption is that the way in which product placement is embodied on screen is shaped by the generic elements of New Year films. In order to examine these two assumptions, this section will analyse five of Feng's New Year films.

⁴⁸ According to Kong, 'The film ultimately rewrote box office history with an unprecedented RMB40 million yuan in domestic receipts alone. By contrast, just one year earlier, when Feng did not participate in the New Year film market, the combined box office of the five New Year Comedies by other directors was only RMB480,000 yuan' (2007, 230).

This will demonstrate whether product placement is shaped by this particular genre of Chinese film, and how its generic conventions influence the embodiment of product placement in the filmic scene. The five New Year films include *If You Are The One*, *If You Are The One 2*, *Big Shot's Funeral*, *A World Without Thieves* and *Personal Tailor*.

Table 6.3 Product placements in Chinese New Year films

Films	Product Placement
<i>If You Are The One</i>	Tongfang PC, Paris Baguette Bakery, Wanguo Cemetery, Hainan Airline, Jian Nanchun, China Merchants Bank, Huiyuan Juice, Motorola, Windsor Whisky, Subaru, Xixi National Wetlands Park.
<i>If You Are The One 2</i>	Mercedes Benz, Hainan Airline, China Life Insurance, Taobao.com, Doov Mobile, LG, Ecco, China Minsheng Bank, Maysu Beauty, Starwood Hotel.
<i>Big Shot's Funeral</i>	BMW, Zhong Nanhai Lights, Beijing Cigarette Factory, Sun Run, Sony, Outback Steak House.
<i>A World Without Thieves</i>	Nokia, Canon, BMW, HP, Tao Bao, White Collar, QM Furniture, MTone Wireless, Lubricant Company and Sinopec Corp, Beijing Morning Post.
<i>Personal Tailor</i>	Yi Bao water, Ming Tea, Hong Qi cars, Jian Nanchun, Song Helou Restaurant, Bright Dairy and Food (Guangming), BMW, Zhenai.com,

	Red Bull, Eben tablet, Reignwood Group, Pingan Bank.
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As shown in Table 6.3, types of product placement vary in New Year films, spanning various areas of life, such as eating, drinking, lifestyle, leisure, and so on. This is consistent with the commercialism of New Year films. Yang claimed that for New Year films the theme, style, actors and set design are selected on the basis of maximising the return on investment and achieving success in the film market (2011). Meanwhile, product placement conforms to the commercial principle of New Year films. Therefore, there are numerous types of products or services placed in New Year films.

Additionally, the generic traits of New Year films have some influence on how product placement is embodied on the screen. In the dimensions of the film story and artistic creativity, New Year is about festivity, affection in families and romance. Thus, in the majority of classic New Year films, the story and setting embraces a celebratory style or portrays affection between families or lovers. This makes a positive contribution to brand image. For example, in *A World Without Thieves* there is a scene where the hero and heroine are being chased by the police in their stolen BMW. To outrun the police, they drive the car onto a ferry. On deck, the heroine tells the hero that she is too tired to carry on living a fugitive life, and that she is finding it difficult to suppress her feelings of exhaustion. Then she hugs the hero, who hugs her back. The scene attempts to increase the romantic affection between the two lovers through the actors' performances. At the same time, the BMW stands in front of the couple. The warm and harmonious atmosphere created by the couple in this scene reflects the essence of the convention of New Year films, which adds warmth and cosiness to the image of BMW in this scene. That is, the BMW takes on the romantic atmosphere between the couple. Therefore, this suggests that the

generic elements of New Year films influence the image of the products placed in these films.



Figure 6.6 *A World Without Thieves*

Although different from the romantic affection portrayed between the lovers in *A World Without Thieves*, another crucial example can be found in *Personal Tailor*. This example suggests that the celebratory style of New Year films influences the method of product placement in the film context. As shown in Figure 6.7, in order to associate itself with the festive atmosphere of New Year, the placement of Reignwood Group advertising in one of the scenes in the film makes use of large quantities of red and gold. This scene takes place at the Film Awards Ceremony; the character Wang Aqiang is there to collect the Pan-Pacific Prize for directing the most kitsch film. The setting portrays an atmosphere of celebration in the context of a ceremony. Thus, in the scene, the journalists and photographers are dressed formally in black suits and white shirts, while the red boards they are crowded behind on either side of the red carpet are full of gold brand logos and names.



Figure 6.7 *Personal Tailor*

In addition, the powerful presence of stars in New Year films maximises the prominence and visibility of products placed in these films.

Featuring a line-up of stars is a tradition of New Year films that stems from the Hong Kong model. In Hong Kong New Year films, numerous top stars play the characters. For example, in the first Hong Kong New Year film, *Eighth Happiness* (Du, 1988), eight of the most famous stars in China, such as Chow Yun Fat, Jacky Cheung, Raymond Wong, Carol Cheng, Cherie Chung, Petrina Fung, and Fennie Yuen, featured in the film. Since then, stardom has become an important symbol and characteristic of New Year films. The filmmakers in Mainland China have not only emulated the Hong Kong model of New Year films, but are also continuing and developing the classic characteristic of stardom. Feng's New Year films feature a powerful star line-up, including Ge You, Xu Fan, Shu Qi, Bai Baihe, Fan Wei, among others, and he develops the features of New Year films within his unique style in film story telling. In comparison with actors who are not as famous, the reputations of the stars enhance the prominence of product placement, which builds the brand image of the products and services featured in these films.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on investigating the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre, looking at Chinese film genre in particular. In addition, this chapter has analysed ten modern Chinese films to explore how product placement is used in films of different genres.

First, this chapter considered crucial theoretical works on film genre by Western scholars. Although traditional film genre theory has been criticised by Mittell, there are still some essential principles that can be applied to Chinese cinema. As some Chinese scholars have indicated, Chinese cinema has been strongly influenced by Hollywood, especially in terms of the structure of the film narrative and how the story is told. Conventional Chinese film genres have been developed based on the Hollywood model. The majority of genre specialists have developed film genre theory based on the commercial films in general, particularly in Hollywood films. Therefore, their theoretical principles can be applied to identifying and categorising the genres of Chinese films.

With regard to conventional film genres, there are four patterns in the relationship between product placement and film genre. First, the same product placement can appear in films of different genres. Second, particular product placement is matched with particular film genres, such as insurance products in a disaster film. Third, some genres do not contain any product placement, such as epics and horrors/thrillers. Finally, from the quantitative perspective, there is less product placement in tragedies than in other genres (apart from those with no product placement). These regular patterns suggest that some product types, such as cars, are not restricted by the genre of the film, and that types of product placement are related to the film director to a certain extent. In addition, compared with pure genre films, mixed-genres potentially extend the range of product placement opportunities, quantitatively and qualitatively.

From the perspective of cultural practice, a genre that is unique to Chinese cinema is known as New Year films. This genre differs from classic Hollywood narrative and generic conventions, forming its own distinctive generic characteristics. This chapter has provided an understanding of the notion of New Year films and how product placement is embodied in these films. Moreover, the assumption of whether product placement is shaped by the characteristics of New Year films has been examined. As a consequence, this study has suggested that product placement types are varied and numerous in New Year films, because the operation of product placement coincides with the essential characteristics of the genre. New Year films are created under the commercialisation of Chinese film industry; thus there are strong elements of commercialism in the generic conventions.

Furthermore, the particular generic elements of New Year films influence the embodiment of product placement. Their celebratory atmosphere and happy endings make positive contributions to building the reputation of a brand or product. Aside from this, the distinctive colours associated with New Year films influence how product placement is depicted on the screen. Some products shown in New Year films use red and gold as basic tones, rather than their original colour. Another distinctive element of the relationship between product placement and New Year Films is stardom, which plays an important role in how product placement is created on the screen. Star line-ups are another characteristic of New Year films, which began with the Hong Kong model. The images of the stars in New Year films enhance the prominence and visibility of product placement.

However, this study has some limitations. For instance, most of the films analysed in this chapter are those of Feng Xiaogan, even though Feng's films represent product placement in China, they cannot demonstrate all aspects of product placement and film genre in Chinese

film production. Additionally, this study does not include every category of film genre; rather, it selects (romantic) comedy, action, crime, epic and, in particular, New Year films as crucial objects to indicate the demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre in Chinese film industry. It is necessary to explain why these film genres were selected for this study. The most important reason is that these genres are involved in controversial issues relating to product placement in Chinese cinema. New Year films, as a unique Chinese film genre, play an important role in indicating a demonstrable relationship between product placement and genre within cultural practice.

Conclusion of this study

This thesis has critically investigated how product placement is adopted by the Chinese film industry in modern Chinese cinema. As the title of this PhD suggests, the current situation for product placement in the modern Chinese film industry is one that has been compared to 'dancing with handcuffs and shackles'. This metaphor strongly implies the issue of balance in the operation of product placement, which reflects the specificity of product placement in the Chinese film industry. As such, this thesis is concerned with product placement adopted by the Chinese film industry within specific Chinese cultural practices. In particular, the specificity of product placement in the Chinese film industry is reflected in its particular model of operation, which is completely different from the existing Hollywood model. This study has suggested that the Chinese film industry takes a dominant role in the operation of product placement, and that the product placement agency is offered more responsibility in the Chinese operational model. Thus, with its large share of the responsibilities, the product placement agency, as the dominant participant, maintains more actual and potential power in product placement deals.

This thesis was divided into three parts. The first part explored the history of the development of the Chinese film industry and the influence of its development on the specificity of product placement. The second part provided a discourse analysis of the commentary from the Chinese film industry on the balance between state intervention and industry expansion, and artistic creativity and commercial strategy. The third part presented a textual analysis of the association between product placement and film elements in modern Chinese films.

The first of these areas – the specificity of product placement in the Chinese film industry – required a historical perspective. Even though

the Chinese film industry takes a dominant role in relation to product placement in the modern era, the state continues to intervene. This feature distinguishes the Chinese film industry from Hollywood and other film industries, and is due to historical reasons. Therefore, this study provided a historical overview of the development of the Chinese film industry from the early cinema period to the twenty-first century, followed by an examination of the patterns of change and continuity in the modern Chinese film industry. These patterns of change and continuity are significant for the emergence and development of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry. At the same time, product placement plays a distinct role in the industry's structure in the modern era.

Specifically, the development of the Chinese film industry has been influenced by Hollywood all the time. However, the shifted relationship with Hollywood is a reflection of the industry's rapid growth in recent years. In the early cinema period, the Chinese film industry relied heavily on Hollywood in relation to aspects such as production methods and how to construct the industry. After the Economic Reform, the Chinese economic system moved from a planned economy to a market economy, and the Chinese film industry shifted toward marketisation. The Hollywood film industry still has a very strong influence on the development of the film industry in China; but today, Hollywood has more control over film storytelling and the narrative format than the process of making films. Hollywood has had a strong influence on what Chinese audiences want to watch. Because of the popularity of Hollywood blockbusters in Chinese cinema, Chinese filmmakers have become motivated to produce their own blockbusters, such as *Hero* (Zhang, 2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (Zhang, 2004), *Kung Fu Hustle* (Zhou, 2004), *The Promise* (Chen, 2005) and *The Banquet*. At the turn of the century, the Chinese film industry began to shift away from Hollywood's dominant influence.

The Chinese film industry has undergone a remarkable transformation in the twenty-first century, with a new structure and expansion strategy. The structure has changed in that private enterprises, rather than state-owned institutions, play the dominant roles. This suggests that the role of the state has shifted from controller to monitor, which potentially offers the dominant position to the film industry. At the same time, the industry has started to seek additional profit in order to become more industrial and commercial, similar to Hollywood. Therefore, product placement has been adopted by the Chinese film industry. With its specific experience, the Chinese film industry has created a unique operational model of product placement in film productions. In addition, product placement has developed rapidly in recent years to become the largest source of revenue after the film box office. Thus, product placement plays a significant role in the financial structure of the Chinese film industry. However, it has also led to many controversial discussions within the industry.

Therefore, the second part of this thesis investigated industry practitioners' commentary on product placement. According to this commentary, the biggest issues surrounding product placement deals in the modern Chinese film industry are related to the two main balance relationships: state intervention vs industry expansion, and artistic creativity vs. commercial strategy. This study examined how different groups of practitioners in the Chinese film industry talk about these two main issues. In particular, in relation to the first issue – state intervention vs industry expansion – this study suggests that the Chinese film industry takes a dominated position in product placement deals in films, while the state's power has gradually been weakened because of the huge gaps in regulations for product placement in films. At the time of writing, there are still no specific regulations for product placement in film production in Chinese cinema. This challenges the state's role in monitoring the development of the industry in the

contemporary era. Thus, the state's power has been weakened, while the industry has become the dominant power.

The dominant power of the Chinese film industry is reflected in three ways in the discourse. The first reflection is related to the important thematic term 'audience'. According to the industry discourses examined, audiences have been offered an illusion of participating in product placement deals by the Chinese film industry, and 'audiences' negative responses' have become an excuse for the unsatisfactory development of product placement. By positioning themselves as experts, the industry practitioners maintain that they understand what audiences want to watch in relation to product placement in films; thus, they use their expertise to create product placement in films and assert that audiences do not have enough professional knowledge to understand how product placement works in films. However, despite the fact that the Chinese film industry determines what product placement is carried out, audiences have the ability to affect what product placement becomes financially successful.

The second reflection is manifested in the fact that the product placement agency has been empowered in product placement operations. The product placement agency is a creation of industrial development: it emerged with the development of product placement. The dominant role of these agencies in the operational model of product placement in films reveals that the Chinese film industry, rather than the state, holds the dominant power in product placement deals. Additionally, the empowerment of the product placement agency demonstrates the specific nature of product placement in the modern Chinese film industry. In China, these agencies are not just intermediaries between brands and films; they have more power at every stage of the process of creating product placement in film production. These agencies are responsible for creating the product placement script and for monitoring and regulating the execution of

product placement during the making of the film. After the film is released, a specific department in the agency evaluates the effectiveness of the product placement and does related research to gather data on it. These diverse responsibilities have given Chinese product placement agencies more experience, which, in turn, has developed their competitive ability when collaborating with Hollywood's agencies.

The third reflection of the dominant role of the Chinese film industry in product placement deals is manifested in its collaboration with Hollywood regarding product placement from an external perspective. The Chinese film industry has taken a critical approach to collaborating with Hollywood. In contrast to Hollywood's dominance in the past, today the Chinese film industry is able to contend with Hollywood's product placement agencies in relation to the placement of Chinese products in Hollywood blockbusters. As the Chinese product placement agents indicated in their discourses, they understand Chinese brands better than Hollywood agencies do, which increases their competitive power. Chinese agencies understand the identity of Chinese brands, what these brands want to express, and what reputation they aim to build through placement in Hollywood blockbusters. Additionally, to cater for the huge Chinese cinema market, Hollywood is willing to place Chinese brands in the blockbusters it produces.

In relation to the second balance issue in product placement operations – artistic creativity vs commercial strategy – this study has examined how different types of practitioners highlight different aspects to assert their power and answer the question of who or what can be creative through their discourses. The practitioners of the Chinese film industry have put forward the idea that so-called creative freedom is an illusion. They dialectically state that the commercial nature of product placement is not conflict to the artistic creativity of product placement, although different industry practitioners emphasise different aspects.

For example, some film directors and producers highlight the importance of the commercial aspect of product placement, while others, such as brand companies, share an understanding that the creative aspect is more important in product placement.

However, in relation to the creativity of product placement in the Chinese film industry, many industry practitioners say that product placement methods are crude, while its content is unsophisticated. This study has examined how different groups of industry practitioners state who should take responsibility for the crude creativity of product placement in the Chinese film industry. This can be divided into three clusters: first, brand companies blame film directors for destroying the creativity of product placement in order to make more money; second, film directors and product placement agencies claim that brand companies are unprofessional and are only concerned with the promotional effect on sales; and third, product placement agencies, from an internal perspective, state that their own creative people are not professional enough, which leads to the issue of crude creativity of product placement in film production. This suggests that professional practitioners use their expertise and experience in order to assert their power and, by challenging creative artists, maintain their dominant position in relation to the creativity of product placement in films. Additionally, the concept of cultural value is addressed in relation to the creation of product placement. Crudely created product placement is a rude intrusion of low culture onto high culture.

With regard to the issue of 'professionalism' or 'expertise', the practitioners claimed that essentially creativity lies with the author/director and that creativity is a collaborative process in which the director is merely one element. This creates a conflict between auteur theory and the collaborative nature of creativity. This thesis has found that practitioners in the Chinese film industry have highlighted the collaborative process of the creativity of product placement in films

and challenge the author-God theory, even though some directors assert that the director is the sole creator of his creative work. In particular, the practitioners suggested that the power of the film director is reduced by other symbolic creators, such as the cameraman, a piece of costuming, or even a prop, in the collaborative process of creating product placement in film production.

Alongside the industry commentary, the third part of this thesis has examined from a textual perspective how product placement is done in modern Chinese films. Through an analysis of modern Chinese films, this thesis has investigated three important relationships between product placement and central film elements: first, how product placement is closely connected with film narrative; second, how types of product placement are matched with types of film characters; and third, how product placement is influenced by film genre. Specifically, this thesis suggests that there are two close connections between product placement and film narrative in modern Chinese films: first, product placement is integrated into film narrative through various cinematic techniques; and second, deliberately long close-up shots distract audiences' attention from the film narrative to focus on the product, which weakens the film narrative. In relation to the integration of product placement into film narrative, this thesis has suggested that film narrative time and space play important roles in shaping product placement in modern Chinese films, and make a significant contribution to maximising the prominence and visibility of products. Narrative time influences the visibility of products in modern Chinese films through order, duration, and frequency, while narrative space does so through the scale or size of the product on the screen and the camera angle used. However, this thesis has also investigated how product placement can disrupt the film narrative, which is also common in modern Chinese films.

In the context of the film narrative, character is important to the continuation of the story. Thus, character also plays an important role in the execution of product placement. This thesis has examined the delicate relationship between product placement and film character, and has suggested that film character types are closely associated with product placement types in modern Chinese films. Three observations were made. First, the identity of the character matches the identity of the brand used or mentioned by the character in the film. Second, there are more opportunities for the main character to use and mention the product than there are for the other characters. Third, the match between product type and character type is not affected by whether the character has positive or negative traits; in other words, negative traits do not influence whether a character performs product placement in the film; the match between the identities of product and character is more important.

Additionally, the study has found that the film character influences how product placement is embodied on screen through actor/actress's performance. This thesis has discussed how characters use the readable signs to mark out what is performed and how it is performed from visual dimension to auditory dimension. Specifically, gestures and other physical movements draw attention to the visual presence of a product, while inflection and intonation of voice, along with use of rhythm and rhetorical techniques, highlight aural product placement.

The establishment of a film character's identity is heavily reliant on the film genre; thus, this thesis has examined the demonstrable relationship between product placement and film genre within conventional and Chinese genres. In relation to conventional genres, four key points were made: first, the same product or service can appear in different genres of films; second, specific types of product placement appear in particular genres of film (for instance, an insurance product in a disaster film); third, some genres of film, such as

epics, are not as concerned with product placement as other film genres; and fourth, from the quantitative perspective, tragedies include less product placement than other film genres. With regard to the quantity of product placement in films, mixed-genre films potentially extend the range of product placement types considered appropriate for the film.

From the perspective of particular cultural practices, New Year films are a genre that is unique to Chinese cinema. This thesis has examined how product placement is executed in New Year films and has suggested that numerous different types of product placement appear in these films. This reveals that product placement is shaped by the specific characteristics of this genre. The particular generic elements of New Year films affect how product placement is carried out in these films, and the celebratory style and happy endings that are characteristic of this genre establish a positive brand image and build a product's reputation. Additionally, a star line-up is another traditional feature of New Year films and originated in the Hong Kong model. Because of their star status, the actors featured in New Year films have more power and are perceived as more attractive than other actors. Thus, star quality makes a powerful contribution to the prominence and visibility of products placed in a film. However, the concept of stardom is not the main research focus of this thesis; an investigation of how stardom influences the performance of product placement in films may be an avenue of research for future studies.

This study has revealed some valuable and interesting ideas for future studies researching product placement in China. For instance, this thesis has explored product placement in the Chinese film industry, focusing on contemporary Chinese film productions. However, in recent years, the growing microfilm⁴⁹ industry, and the diverse practices of

⁴⁹ Microfilm is defined as the Internet production. A microfilm is a video clip that is broadcast on new media platforms and shared online.

product placement within that industry, points to the importance of transmedia in relation to product placement use. Specifically, this thesis has approached product placement within the context of modern Chinese films. Based on industry discourse, this study has selected 14 of the most discussed modern Chinese films to demonstrate the use of product placement in the industry from a textual perspective. However, in recent years, the practice of product placement in Chinese microfilms has attracted increasing amounts of attention from the various participants in product placement deals (Gou and Yuan, 2012; Zhou, 2012). As a new form of film, microfilm differs from traditional film productions and, since 2010, more and more enterprises have begun to realise the strong business potential of placing products in microfilms. There have already been some successful cases, such as the placement of Chevrolet in *Old Boy* (Xiao 2010) and Samsung in the *Four Nights Kitan* (Peng, 2010) (Gou and Yuan, 2012). The rapid growth of microfilms reflects the social change and suggests that the new medium is changing people's way of life. With the huge amounts of information available in the modern world, microfilms are a way of communicating this information in a quick and easy way. Product placement in traditional films cannot be replaced, but the emergence of microfilms presents challenges to the product placement market in modern Chinese film productions. Future research could explore how product placement is being used in microfilms.

Additionally, it would be of value for future studies to examine the regulation of product placement in the Chinese film industry. Although there is currently a lack of specific regulating policies to standardise the use of product placement in films, with the rapid development of product placement in China, SARFT has gradually introduced guidance documents and policies to regulate product placement on television. Thus, the regulation of product placement in the Chinese film industry

Microfilms have an integral film story and can be between 30 and 300 seconds long (Zheng, 2011).

will make progress in the future in order to harmonise the development of product placement in the industry.

Furthermore, research on the concept of product placement in China is concerned with three significant aspects: industry, film text and audience. The operational process of product placement in films is that the film industry as a provider creates product placement in films, and film as a carrier embodies that product placement; finally, the audience as a receiver accepts product placement, and as a criterion judges the actual consequence of product placement⁵⁰. This study has examined product placement in the Chinese film industry from an industry and a textual perspective, but the aspect of the audience is also important. Although one existing study has considered the aspect of the Chinese audience by comparing Chinese and American consumers' attitudes to product placement in films⁵¹, there is still lack of qualitative studies of how the audience, as an important participant in product placement deals, talks and thinks about the concept of product placement in Chinese film productions. Practitioners in the Chinese film industry used the terms 'audiences' responses' and 'audiences' feelings' several times in their discourses. However, these responses or feelings have been assumed by the Chinese film industry; therefore, it is necessary for further studies to research product placement from an audience perspective in order to ascertain how audiences respond to product placement in China.

⁵⁰ The actual consequence of product placement here means how effectiveness of product placement is.

⁵¹ In 2003 a quantitative research study by McKechnie and Zhou from Nottingham University Business School reported that Chinese consumers are generally less accepting of product placement than American consumers. Additionally, McKechnie and Zhou examined differences in cultural values between the US and the People's Republic of China.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Discourse Resources

Discourse Resources from Entgroup.cn (Chinese Version)

1. Specialist: Product Placement in Chinese Films Is Shortness Rather Than Too Much. (18/11/2013). 专家：中国电影植入广告不是太多，而是太缺
2. The Secret of Product Placement in Films. (20/08/2013). 电影植入广告揭秘
3. The Growth of Product Placement Under the Criticism: Capital Occupied Art. (19/10/2011). 电影植入广告在诟病声中做大，资本占领艺术
4. The Explosion of Product Placement in Chinese Film Industry: How To Balance Art and Commerce. (18/10/2011). 中国电影植入广告爆发：如何平衡艺术与商业
5. Product Placement in Films Needs To Be Paid Attention: Avoiding “Rejection”. (21/07/2011). 电影植入广告需用心，避免“排异反应”
6. The History of Product Placement in Films. (20/04/2011). 中国电影植入广告小史
7. The New Production by Jia Zhangke First Released in Hong Kong: The First Attempt of Product Placement. (24/03/2011). 贾樟柯新作香港首映：首次尝鲜电影植入广告
8. The Review of Product Placement in Feng Xiaogang’s Films. (28/09/2010). 冯小刚电影植入广告盘点
9. The Good and Bad Effectiveness of Product Placement in Films. (02/09/2010). 电影植入广告效果有优劣

10. Product Placement in Films Is More Profitable. (23/08/2010). 电影广告植入性价比高
11. SARFT: Reducing Product Placement by Fighting Against Piracy. (27/07/2010). 广电总局：减少电影植入广告要靠打击盗版
12. Observing Industry: Product Placement in Films Enters in “Honeymoon”. (29/06/2010). 产业观察：电影植入广告定制已进入“蜜月期”

Discourse Resources from Beijing Business Today

1. Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞：一顿高风险的营销大餐
2. To Make a Good Product Placement Needs Screenwriter’s Thinking. (23/08/2013). 做好广告植入要善用编剧思维
3. Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入
4. Chinese Enterprises Explore the Further Placement in Films. (19/04/2013). 中国企业探求电影广告深层植入
5. Hollywood Films ‘Love’ Chinese Brands. (18/10/2013). 好莱坞电影“恋上”中国品牌
6. The Product Placement in Films Enters Into the Rapid Growth Period. (22/03/2013). 电影广告迎来快速发展期
7. Excavating the Capacity of Brand via Product Placement in Films. (25/10/2013). 借力广告植入挖掘电影品牌潜力

Discourse Resources from Mtime.com (news.mtime.com)

1. Product Placement in Chinese Films Earn A Billion in 2013. (28/11/2013). 2013 中国电影植入广告收 10 亿

2. Specialist: Product Placement in Chinese Films Is Shortness Rather Than Too Much. (18/11/2013). 专家：中国电影植入广告不是太多，而是太缺
3. Product Placement in Films Is More Profitable. (24/08/2010). 电影植入广告性价比高
4. Product Placement in Films Attracts Attention, SAIC Promises to Establish Regulation of Product Placement. (19/08/2010). 电影植入广告引关注，工商总局称将提立法建议
5. Hollywood Announced the Rank of Product Placement in Films. (01/12/2009). 好莱坞电影植入营销榜公布
6. Product Placement in Films: The Romantic Encounter Between Commercialising and Artistry. (01/09/2009). 电影中的植入广告：商业与艺术的邂逅浪漫史

Discourse Resources from China Entrepreneur

1. Product Placement Feeds *Personal Tailor*. (20/12/2013). 植入广告养活《私人定制》
2. SARFT's "TV Commercials Ban" May Cause the Abuse of Product Placement in Films. (29/11/2011). 广电总局“限广令”或引发植入广告泛滥
3. "TV Commercials Ban" Will Be Issued, Product Placement May Become the New Favourite For the Advertisers. (26/11/2011). 传“限广令”将出台，植入广告或成广告商新宠
4. Product Placement in the *Aftershock*. (26/07/2010). 《唐山大地震》植入广告知多少
5. China Entrepreneur: Product Placement Counter-attacks Films. (23/10/2013). 中国企业家：植入广告逆袭电影

Discourse Resources from ifeng.com

1. Blockbusters Have Not Coming, *Call For Love* Becomes the Conqueror. (10/10/2014). 大片未登场, 《爱情呼叫转移》称霸王
2. Retrofit of Film Marketing Strategy in Domestic Films, Tendency of Promotional Alliance With Famous Brands. (30/08/2014). 国产片电影营销花样翻新, 倾向与著名品牌联合推广
3. Reach Glory: The Secret Promoter for Chinese Brands Placed in Hollywood Blockbuster. (09/08/2014). 瑞格传播: 中国品牌植入美国大片的神秘推手
4. One Film Brings A Billion Dollar Output Value. (03/07/2014). 一部电影带来 10 亿美元产值
5. Entertainment Comment: Product Placement in Hollywood is Normality, Attractivity is the Most Important. (27/06/2014). 娱评: 广告植入是好莱坞电影常态, 好看最重要
6. The Competition Among Domestic Brands To Do Product Placement in Hollywood, Zhou Hei Ya Will Be Placed in the *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. (21/05/2014). 国产品牌争相傍洋片, 《变形金刚 4》将植入周黑鸭广告
7. The Crude Rise of Product Placement. (12/10/2013). 影视植入粗暴崛起
8. Not Satisfy With Placing Logo, Big Brand Crossover Cooperating With Film. (27/09/2013). 不满足于 LOGO 植入, 大牌跨界拍电影
9. Product Placement Revenue Will Achieve A Billion RMB This Year. (10/08/2013). 今年电影植入广告将达 10 亿元
10. Film Is Placed in Advertising, Product Placement Is Terrible Without Baseline. (11/06/2013). 广告中植入电影烂到毫无底线
11. Feng Xiaogang Doing Product Placement Because of Mercy on the Female Employee. (21/03/2013). 冯小刚电影植入广告是可怜女员工

12. Product Placement in the *Personal Tailor* Creates A New Record. (26/12/2013). 《私人定制》植入广告数额创纪录
13. Industrial Explosion: Integrated Marketing in Film Enters in Golden Age. (21/10/2013). 产业井喷“电影整合营销”迎来黄金时代
14. Exposure of the Financing Model in Chinese Film Industry, Product Placement: Quick Returns and Small Risks. (06/07/2012). 揭秘中国电影圈融资模式，广告植入回本快风险小
15. Hamilton: The Art of Product Placement. (21/06/2012). 汉米尔顿：广告植入艺术
16. The Aesthetic Marketing Strategy of Product Placement. (06/03/2012). 植入式广告的美学营销策略
17. EP Complete Support *I Do*. (20/01/2012). EP 雅莹倾力支持《我愿意 I Do》
18. The Importance of Content: The Baseline and Criterion of Product Placement in Films. (19/08/2011). 内容为王：电影植入广告的底线和标准
19. Chinese Brands Do Product Placement in Hollywood, Rough Tactics and Unpredictable Effectiveness. (27/07/2011). 中国广告集体植入好莱坞大片，手法粗糙效益难定
20. The Past and Present of Product Placement: Director Feng Xiaogang Starts Precedent. (15/07/2011). 植入式广告的前世今生：导演冯小刚开先河
21. Entgroup Cooperates With Shanghai Film Festival, the Nine Film Awards Will Be Announced. (13/06/2011). 艺恩携手上海电影节，电影产业九大奖项即将揭晓
22. Raymond Wong: Making Film Is Commercial Behaviour, Product Placement Is Normal. (16/01/2011). 黄百鸣：拍电影是商业行为，植入广告很正常

23. Xu Jinglei Stated: A Film Without Product Placement Is Shame. (11/03/2011). 老徐称电影没广告就没面子
24. Directors' Workshop: Analysing the Status Quo of Chinese Movie, Product Placement Hinders Film Story Telling. (13/01/2011). 导演研讨会剖析华影现状，植入广告莫妨碍电影说故事
25. The Strange Situation in Chinese Films: Filmmakers Are Busy With Product Placement, Whilst the Audiences Are Busy With Counting the Number of Product Placement. (29/12/2010). 2010 目睹华语电影怪现状之：片方忙植入，观众忙数数
26. Jiang Wen: I Make Film, Not Product Placement; Feng Xiaogang: Lying to Make Money Is the Easiest Way. (27/12/2010). 姜文：哥拍得是电影不是广告；冯小刚：躺着挣钱最容易
27. Product Placement in Visual Aesthetics. (23/11/2010). 美学视域下的影视植入式广告传播
28. Too Harsh and Crude of Product Placement in Domestic Films and Televisions. (12/11/2010). 国内电影电视植入广告太粗暴
29. *Aftershock* Is A Mediocre Commercial Film. (14/07/2010). 专稿：《唐山大地震》是一部平庸的商业电影
30. Peng Haoxiang Scolds Severely About Product Placement in Films. (18/06/2010). 彭浩翔痛骂电影植入广告
31. Gordon Chen: Product Placement Is Important For the Chinese Film Industry. (18/04/2010). 陈嘉上：植入广告对中国电影产业很重要
32. "Du LaLa" Creates the Best Product Placement in Domestic Films, The Personal Brand of Xu Jinglei Is Mighty. (12/04/2010). “杜拉拉”创国产片广告植入之最，老徐个人品牌强势
33. *Go LaLa Go* Gains Favorable Comment in Preview, Xu Jinglei Changes Garments Frequently, Audiences Counts Product Placement. (09/04/2010). 《杜拉拉》试映受好评，徐静蕾频换装观众数广告

34. Cui Yongyuan Shells the Failure of Product Placement, Chinese Films Are Lack of Sincere. (03/03/2010). 崔永元炮轰春晚广告植入失败，中国电影缺乏真诚

Discourse From the Interview (From 9min to 10min)

(The interview was taken placed on 10th May 2013, in Wang's office)

Question: In relation to the issue of “audience negative responds”, as the filmmaker, what do you think of this issue? Is there any solution for this issue? (针对目前观众对电影广告植入产生的反感情绪，作为电影制作方如何看待这一问题？有什么解决方案吗？)

Wang Fengling: Negative comments from audiences are normal, because the Chinese audiences do not have enough cognition of product placement, which is a modern object in the Chinese cinema. At the same time, the Chinese film industry is in the early phase of commercialization and industrialization, and we need product placement to help the film industry to develop. There is still not enough product placement in Chinese film industry. (Wang Fenglin, 2012). 观众反感情绪很正常，各国都这样，中国观众才刚开始接触。中国电影产业处于市场培育期，需要其膨胀的发展。植入广告这一块，我认为越多越好，目前还不够。你植入的越多说明你越有本事。

Appendix 2: Discourses Scripts in Chapter 2

The State vs the film industry

1. Product placement as a new form of marketing should be regulated, and some related legislative suggestions have been submitted to the state legislative institutions, such as product placement not being allowed to affect the media content. (SAIC, 2010). 国家工商总局表示，植入式广告作为一种新的广告营销形式，相关立法建议已向立法机关反映，如提出“知识广告不得影响节目内容”。 (From: Product Placement in Films Attracts Attention, SAIC Promises to Establish Regulation of Product Placement. (19/08/2010). 电影植入广告引关注，工商总局称将提立法建议)
2. Studying the issue of product placement needs to be strengthened, and the specific regulations on product placement will be issued as soon as possible. (SARFT, 2011). 国家广电总局表示，要加强对植入式广告等新问题的研究，将尽快对广播影视植入式广告做出规范。 (From: The Past and Present of Product Placement: Director Feng Xiaogang Starts Precedent. (15/07/2015). 植入式广告的前世今生：冯小刚开先河)
3. Currently, some film producers and some film investors fear that piracy has reduced profits, and choose to increase the amount of product placement to ensure profit. This is leading to product placement becoming an overused phenomenon. (Zhang, 2010). 最近，一些电影导演和制片人害怕盗版降低利润而选择大量植入广告而保证利润，这导致了广告植入泛滥。 (From: SARFT: Reducing Product Placement by Fighting Against Piracy. (27/07/2010). 广电总局：减少电影植入广告要靠打击盗版)

The film industry vs audiences

1. Product placement has an inevitable and embarrassing issue, which is that too much product placement or inappropriate product placement would lead to audiences' negative responses, while natural and invisible product placement would not achieve the promotional effectiveness expected of advertising by brand companies. (Wang, 2013). 植入广告也面临一个问题，做得太过会引起观众的反感，做得不明显又起不到宣传的效果。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)
2. Negative comments from audiences are normal, because Chinese audiences do not have enough cognition of product placement, which is a modern aspect of Chinese cinema. At the same time, the Chinese film industry is in the early phase of commercialisation and industrialisation, and we need product placement to help the film industry to develop. There is still not enough product placement in the Chinese film industry. (Wang Fenglin, 2012). 观众反感情绪很正常，各国都这样，中国观众才刚开始接触。中国电影产业处于市场培育期，需要其膨胀的发展。植入广告这一块，我认为越多越好，目前还不够。你植入的越多说明你越有本事。(From Interview, 10/05/2013)
3. Whatever the type of film advertising, advertisers do not want to generate a negative response from audiences or customers, while they do indeed want to affect consumer behaviours. (Zhang, 2013). 无论哪一种电影广告，广告主都希望既不引起反感，又能扎扎实实影响到消费者。(From: (Entgroup) Specialist: Product Placement in Chinese Films Is Shortness Rather Than Too Much. (18/11/2013). 专家：中国电影植入广告不是太多，而是太缺)
4. Data shows that brand advertisers favour only the films that releasing screenings reach over 20,000 viewers and attendance rate is more than 70 per cent this year. (Wang, 2013). 有数据显

示，在今年电影广告市场中，只有预计上映场次达到 2 万场，上座率达到 70% 的电影，才会受到广告商青睐。(From: Specialist: Product Placement in Chinese Films Is Shortness Rather Than Too Much. (18/11/2013). 专家：中国电影植入广告不是太多，而是太缺)

5. Nowadays, there is a wider and wider choice of media channels; thus, audiences are not concerned about the channel, but rather the content. The audiences can choose where they view advertising, such as at the cinema or on television, but the advertising content will not be changed. (Wang, 2013). 现在媒介渠道越来越广，大家关注的就不是渠道了，而是内容。播放的内容受众可以选择在电视上，或者在岱年影院看，不管在哪看，不变的是内容。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)

Product placement agency vs other participants

1. He Run Media does matchmaking. Actually, 'matchmaking' means platform. On one side are the clients; on the other side is content. We do not match them in a disorderly or irrational way. (Wang, 2013). 说是婚介所，其实就是一个平台。一边是客户，一边是内容，两边也不是胡乱匹配的。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)
2. He Run Media positions itself as a branded content integrated marketing platform... I think integrated marketing is the better way to advertise products and brands through films. (Wang, 2013). 与其叫植入广告公司，合润更愿意把自己称为“品牌内容整合营销平台”。我认为整合营销才是更好的广告方式。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)

3. Additionally, if film director includes your product placement as discussed, but finally the scene of product placement can be cut, because the film director suddenly feels the product placement and film narrative content do not match. Thus, it is necessary for us to make a very detailed agreement on whatever in the negotiation stage or contract execution stage. (Li, 2013). 另外, 如果导演按要求植入了产品, 但是有可能因为导演在剪辑时发现广告植入与电影内容不符而把植入广告剪掉。因此, 这就需要工作人员进行实时跟进, 并对电影制作过程中的每个环节, 都有十分深入的了解。(From: Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞: 一顿高风险的营销大餐)
4. The success or failure of a project will depend on the strength of executive ability of product placement agencies. (Li, 2013). 一个项目的成功与否还是要看第三方公司执行能力的强弱。(From: Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞: 一顿高风险的营销大餐)
5. There are many product placement agencies, but the ability of negotiating is completely different. Product placement agencies are the key and necessary part of product placement in film production, and they are the determinants of whether the transaction is successful in general. (Fan, 2013). 如今业内从事影视广告植入的第三方公司很多, 但无论公司资源, 还是谈判能力都良莠不齐。第三方公司作为电影植入过程中不可缺少的关键力量, 在很多时候往往决定了一个项目的成功与否。(From: Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞: 一顿高风险的营销大餐)

The growth of the power of the Chinese film industry in product placement deals

1. We had similar thoughts of doing product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, but finally we give it up, because when face with such a ‘triple-high’ transaction, not every company has the ability to accept to the high risk. (Fan, 2013). 此前我们也曾有过这样的想法，甚至都找过第三方公司金星洽谈，但最终还是放弃了。面对这样一种 ‘三高 ‘交易，并不是所有企业都有能力承受背后的风险。(From: Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞：一顿高风险的营销大餐)
2. Generally in Hollywood, if the box office takes 10 billion dollars, Hollywood will make over 90 billion dollars profit from copyright, advertising, and so on. However, the Chinese film industry has many limitations in this regard. (Ji, 2013). 美国票房 100 亿美元，但产业却能产出 900 亿美元，票房之外的版权收入及广告收入非常可观，中国在这方面有局限，这也是产业未来的突破点。(From: Specialist: Product Placement in Chinese Films Is Shortness Rather Than Too Much. (18/11/2013). 专家：中国电影植入广告不是太多，而是太缺)
3. We also have a process of selection with regard to Hollywood blockbusters. Specifically, we need to identify which Hollywood blockbusters are worth our product placement. We have some survey databases that show the box office takings of Hollywood films. The number of imported films is limited in the domestic film market. Therefore, we have to select Hollywood films carefully. (Wang, 2013). 我们对于好莱坞电影也有筛选。首先，我需要确定好莱坞大片适合做我们的广告植入。我们有好莱坞电影票房的数据库，因为国内对进口片有配额，所以我们必须小心选择。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)

The power of Chinese product placement agency in product placement in Hollywood blockbusters

1. Hollywood blockbusters are more suitable for commercial operation, and Hollywood blockbusters can help brand companies to achieve the best effectiveness. (Wang, 2013). 好莱坞电影特别适合做商业运营，并且好莱坞电影可以帮助品牌达到最好的宣传效果。(From: Big Production is More Suitable For Product Placement. (03/05/2013). 大制作更适合做电影品牌广告植入)
2. In the Hollywood film industry, there are many product placement agencies as well, which is the most serious challenge for domestic product placement agencies. With more and more domestic enterprises wanting to do product placement in Hollywood blockbusters, when we negotiate with Hollywood film producers, we will carry multiple brands; thus, our 'bargaining chip' is increasing. (Li, 2013). 在好莱坞，也有很多专门从事产品植入的第三方公司成天围着片场转，这本身就对国内第三方公司在海外开展代理业务构成了非常大的挑战。随着国内企业希望植入好莱坞数量的不断增多，我们在与好莱坞进行谈判时，会携多个品牌与其进行谈判，因此谈判‘筹码’也在不断增多。(From: Betting Hollywood: A High-risk Marketing Dinner Meal. (22/11/2013). 押宝好莱坞：一顿高风险的营销大餐)
3. The Chinese product placement market is not too bad in the world, but compared with the Hollywood film industry, we have numerous things to learn. In Hollywood films, the box office only occupies 20 per cent of all profit; but in the Chinese film industry, the box office occupies 80 per cent. Additionally, brand content integrated marketing in the Chinese film industry is particularly uneven. The good effectiveness of product placement focuses on a few films only, whose box office takings can be guaranteed.

(Wang, 2013). 中国广植市场发展不差，但相比好莱坞，我们还有很多东西要学习。好莱坞的电影收入是二八的，票房 20%，中国是倒过来的，票房 80%。另外品牌内容整合营销也特别不稳定，好的都集中在票房好的几部电影上。(From: China Entrepreneur: Product Placement Counter-attacks Films. (23/10/2013). 中国企业家：植入广告逆袭电影)

Appendix 3: Discourses Scripts in Chapter 3

Creativity vs commercialising

1. As content production, brand companies have started to consider the value and aesthetic trend of the film itself. The box office, ratings, and all statistical measures are not the sole frame of reference for brand companies. In order to control the range of risk, brand companies have to intervene in the creative process of film production. (Dan, 2011). 作为内容产品，电影本身所传递的价值观和审美趋向也逐渐进入赞助商的视野。票房，浏览量，收视率这些数据指标不再是赞助商简单的参考依据。(From: The Explosion of Product Placement in Chinese Film Industry: How To Balance Art and Commerce. (18/10/2011). 中国电影植入广告爆发：如何平衡艺术与商业)
2. Compared to pure artistic production, the artistic creation of product placement has various constraints, which is like dancing with handcuffs and shackles. It does not simply provide aesthetic pleasure. (Wang, 2010). 相对于纯粹的艺术作品来说，植入式广告的艺术创作要受到很多束缚，是“戴着镣铐跳舞”，并不完全是为了提供审美愉悦。(From: Product Placement in Visual Aesthetics. (23/11/2010). 美学视域下的影视植入式广告传播)
3. The artistic creation of product placement is full of emotion, which allows consumers to access spiritual pleasures while accepting the product information. (Wang, 2010). 在植入广告的创作是充满情感的，使受众获得精神愉悦的同时接受产品信息。(From: Product Placement in Visual Aesthetics. (23/11/2010). 美学视域下的影视植入式广告传播)
4. Crude product placement will lead to audiences' contradicting emotions; as a consequence, audiences cannot concentrate on the film content. (21cn.com, 2011). 硬生生的植入广告，会使观

众产生抵触情绪，无法将注意力集中到电影内容上。(From: The Importance of Content: The Baseline and Criterion of Product Placement in Films. (19/08/2011). 内容为王：电影植入广告的底线和标准)

5. Product placement falls into “innovation trap”. Many film directors and producers try hard to suck money, while giving the principles of marketing aesthetic up. As a result, the creativity of product placement is misguided. (Ma, 2012). 植入式广告陷入“创新陷阱”。不少影片的导演，节目的制片方在大力吸金的同时，放弃了美学营销的原则，将受众的接受能力弱智化，将植入广告的创新“跑偏”。(From: The Aesthetic Marketing Strategy of Product Placement. (06/03/2012). 植入式广告的美学营销策略)
6. Product placement has to coincide with reality. Although film production is an art form, product placement must conform to the requirements of the public in real life. (Entgroup, 2013). 广告植入必须符合现实。虽然电影是一种艺术形式，但是广告植入必须符合公众对于现实的认知。(From: The Secret of Product Placement in Films. (20/08/2013). 电影植入广告揭秘)
7. If there has a suitable brand to participate in the early phase, I am willing to use it, because product placement can significantly reduce the investment risk. I believe if the film director is able to appropriately control the balance between artistry and commercialism in product placement, audiences will accept product placement. (Lian, 2013). 如果有合适的品牌，在前期就加入进来，我当然非常欢迎，可以极大地降低风险。我相信导演在艺术性与商业性之间把握好的话，观众还是能接受的。(From: The Crude Rise of Product Placement. (12/10/2013). 影视植入粗暴崛起)

Artists vs collaborative creators

1. Product placement has destroyed film directors' artistic creations. My film productions do not involve the issue of product placement due to violence, because nobody wants to see Coca-Cola being shot by a gun. (Peng, 2010). 广告植入破坏了导演本身的艺术创作。我的电影里没有广告植入的问题，因为很暴力，没人愿意看到我用枪把可乐瓶打爆。(From: Peng Haoxiang Scolds Severely About Product Placement in Films. (18/06/2010). 彭浩翔痛骂电影植入广告)
2. Film as an artistic production should have a personality, and product placement should respect film directors' styles. (Wu, 2010). 电影作为艺术作品应该有个性，广告植入要尊重导演的风格。(From: Peng Haoxiang Scolds Severely About Product Placement in Films. (18/06/2010). 彭浩翔痛骂电影植入广告)
3. With regard to film producers and film directors, they must fully respect audiences' aesthetic demands when they create product placement, especially to recognise clearly about the attributes of advertising. As far as possible, it should be integrated into the artistic elements. (Zhang, 2011). 对于制片方和导演，必须充分尊重观众的审美需求，特别是认识到广告的附属性，要尽可能将其化解在艺术的元素中。(From: The History of Product Placement in Films. (20/04/2011). 中国电影植入广告小史)
4. In order to maximise profit, the film director positively coordinates with film producers to do product placement unscrupulously in film production. (Dan, 2011). 为谋求利益最大化，导演积极配合片方，肆无忌惮地在影片中穿插广告。(From: The Explosion of Product Placement in Chinese Film Industry: How To Balance Art and Commerce. (18/10/2011). 中国电影植入广告爆发：如何平衡艺术与商业)
5. Not only the film director, but also the scriptwriter, and even small accessories such like a piece of suit, is related to the success of the creativity of product placement in film

production. (Song, 2012). 不只是导演编剧，一款服装或者一件配饰都可以为角色增添分量，这些细节也关系到广告植入的技巧。(From: Hamilton: The Art of Product Placement.

(21/06/2012). 汉米尔顿：广告植入艺术)

6. We have a professional team to participate in the creation of the film script with the director and scriptwriter, even customising the product for the requirements of the film. (Song, 2012). 我们有专门的团队和导演编剧合作，参与剧本创作，甚至会为了剧本的需要，度身定制产品。(From: Hamilton: The Art of Product Placement. (21/06/2012). 汉米尔顿：广告植入艺术)

Artistry vs Professionalism

1. The foremost reason why product placement is rough and simple is that the film director creates product placement in inappropriate ways. In order to satisfy the brand company's requirements, some film directors have modified the film script many times. (Liu, 2011). 虽然带来可观的经济效益，植入式广告仍然被千夫所指，主要因为导演对被植入的广告使用不当。有些导演甚至为了植入广告的要求，不惜多次修改剧本。(From: The Past and Present of Product Placement: Director Feng Xiaogang Starts Precedent. (15/07/2011). 植入式广告的前世今生：导演冯小刚开先河)
2. The reason product placement in the Chinese film industry seems crude is that the brand company pays more attention to the effectiveness of the product placement, ignoring the importance of the rationality of the plot. (Jia, 2012). 为什么依然显得生硬，很大程度上在于商家更看重直接的广告效果，而忽视剧情的合理性。(From: Hamilton: The Art of Product Placement. (21/06/2012). 汉米尔顿：广告植入艺术)
3. The biggest issue for the product placement industry is that the understanding of product placement is only at the initial stage

from brand company's perspective. (Yu, 2013). 我认为目前行业最大的问题就是广告主对于这个行业的认知度不够普及。

(From: To Make a Good Product Placement Needs Screenwriter's Thinking. (23/08/2013).做好广告植入要善用编剧思维)

4. Until now, practitioners of product placement operations have lacked professional knowledge, and the product placement agency rarely provides the scheme and planning that corresponds with the demands of marketing communication. Some product placement agents who have a marketing background are used to using the language of the advertising industry to create product placement from an advertiser's perspective. That is why the majority of film directors and scriptwriters refuse to cooperation with product placement agency for the second creation. (Yu, 2013). 外界之所以对植入广告的认识不够，根本原因是因为从业者的专业素养不够、专业知识匮乏，操盘公司在向广告主推荐的时候，都只是基于表面化的表现方式，能给到广告主符合其市场传播需求的策划很少。绝大多数操盘公司的人员构成，都是以销售为主。而他们在与导演编剧进行沟通时，总是从广告人的角度出发，用广告行业的语言表达诉求，这样做肯定行不通。这就是为什么大部分导演编剧都拒绝操盘公司对影视作品进行二次创作。(From: To Make a Good Product Placement Needs Screenwriter's Thinking. (23/08/2013).做好广告植入要善用编剧思维)

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