The relationships between product placement in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption:

A case study of “If you are the one”

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Abstract

With increasing numbers of TV programme operators, advertisers have begun to place their product information in recreational TV programmes instead of in traditional TV channels. Meanwhile, the television stations have offset their production costs and gain higher audience ratings (Avery 2000, pp. 243-244).

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the relationships between product placement in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption. In order to explore the relationships, the researcher divided the research goal into four research questions. What kinds of products are the most influential product placement types in these TV programmes? With the increasing number of product placements, will their effectiveness remain unchanged? What are the dominant advantages of product placement in audiences’ minds? What is the future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption?

The researcher has chosen a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview as the methods. The research results are listed in data findings partly via diagrams, charts, figures and so on. Briefly, the researcher found that product placement has benefited both advertisers and television stations. Moreover, with the increasing popularity of recreational TV programmes, audiences are affected by product placement implanted in the programmes and begin to purchase products or services which are propagandizing in recreational TV programmes. However, some audiences also complain that over-popular product placement in these TV programmes has affected their entertainment needs to some extent. Hence, the suggestion for future development of product placement in recreational TV programmes is that the operators of recreational TV programmes need to implant advertisements adequately in order to maintain audiences and satisfy the needs of different advertisers.

Key words: recreational TV programme, product placement, mass consumption
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research questions’ background

Although product placement as a marketing method relying on media emerged a century ago, there has been little research on how product placement affects mass consumption. Literally, product placement is regarded as an incorporation of advertising and entertainment. As Falkow (2010, p.1) states, product placement is considered to be a modern marketing method in which the advertisers sponsor actual content for the media in order to sell them to the public.

Advertisers and commercial companies pay more attention to content and the brands of their products (Tylee 2005, p.19). Nowadays, product placement can be commonly seen in various recreational TV programmes, such as in motion pictures, in the apparel of actors, the mobile phones that the actors use in the programmes and so on. Sometimes, the lines that people uttered during the programmes can be considered to be a kind of product placement - that is to say, product placement has been inserted into various natural settings of mass media.

There is no official definition on a recreational TV programme. According to Media.people.com.cn, a recreational TV programme consists of narrative, entertainment and audio-visual elements, aiming to satisfy the entertainment needs of audiences (Baoguo 2009, p.1). While watching the programmes, some brands that are being used or consumed will be exposed to audiences during the natural process of the TV programme (Panda 2004, p.19). As a result, audiences will associate the brand or product with the character that was using it in certain programmes and so make a decision as to whether to purchase it in reality. For example, in the “If You Are the One” TV programme held by Jiangsu TV channel in China, at the beginning of the show there will be an announcement of the sponsor “The music phone”, which is the largest sponsor of this programme; hence, its brand will be repeated during every
interval of the programme. As a consequence, the brand has become well-known among audiences.

Compared with traditional advertising methods, product placement is not only implanted in recreational TV programmes, but also in a wider range of different media, including films, magazines, articles, books, music shows, radio and so on. However, product placement in recreational TV programmes is considered to be more effective and to cost less. (Nebenzah & Secunda 1993, p. 5) Product placement, as a modern marketing method, is not new. It emerged as early as in 1896, when brand/product placement was seen in European Lumiere films (Newell 2006, p. 588). The trend of connecting it with the entertainment industry was initially seen in entertainment films, which showed the products of the Edison factory and its industrial clients in America. After that, soap operas TV channels also began to include product placement while broadcasting soap operas. The earliest product placement advertisers were those tobacco companies which used TV programmes and films to present their glamorous image while warning audiences to avoid smoking too many cigarettes (The Economist 2005, pp. 69-70).

According to La Ferle (2006, p.74), the costs of product placement vary and depend upon the popularity of the TV programmes themselves. It can range from $10,000 to several hundred thousand dollars. Most product placements are initiated by companies, in trying to promote their products or services with less cost. Meanwhile, with the rapid development of media technologies, product placements can be inserted into TV programmes more easily than ever before. Moreover, these TV programmes can be reviewed by audiences via the Internet, which also increases the exposure of the product placement inserted within them. Therefore, audiences do not only see the product placements of actual products, but also those for services. It seems that service placement is more effective than product placement because of its simpler insertion into the natural settings of the TV programmes (La Ferle & Edwards 2006, pp. 69-80).
Furthermore, since product placement can reach consumers directly, some B2B (Business to Business) companies have also been attracted to this modern marketing method. Whatever business modes they are running, those advertisers who invest in product placement in recreational TV programmes aim to recall the purchase intentions of the audiences of their products by impressing upon them via the TV screen from time to time (Lord & Gupta 1997, pp. 47-59).

1.2 The case study background

According to Chinadaily, the recreational TV programme of this thesis is that programme which aims to entertain audiences through the platform of television. With the increasing popularity of product placement practices, people can find out various types of products placed in a wide range of public media, including TV programmes, talk shows, operas, reality shows and so on. For most Chinese people, one popular recreational TV programme is If You Are the One. It is a hit show that originated in Jiangsu Province in 2010. Held by Meng Fei, Le Jia and Huang Han, this TV programme broadcasts twice a week. In July 2011, it was extended to Australia and, in October 2011, it was extended to America and then to Britain, France, Canada and Korea in 2012. With the increasing popularity of this TV programme, increasing numbers of advertisers place their products on this TV programme, aiming at promoting their products to TV audiences (Chinadaily.com.cn 2012). There follows some examples of product placement from the programme.
This is a typical product placement set as a prop in the programme. BBK music phone believes that, by placing its products as a prop, audiences can have a deep impression of the product since it can be seen everywhere. Moreover, another scene involving the product placement of the BBK music phone is at the beginning of the programme, where audiences will see the following icon twinkling on the screen.

By doing so, audiences will naturally associate the “If You Are the One” with the BBK music phone when they discuss what happened in the programme. Besides the BBK music phone placement, there are also other products placed within this programme, such as the VIVO smart phone shown in images 1.3 and 1.4. In image 1.3, the VIVO logo was put as the stage background and in image 1.4 it was placed as a

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1 Data source: Screenshot of “If you are the one”
2 Data source: Screenshot of “If you are the one”
prop for the programme.

Image 1.3 VIVO smart phone 1 placed in the programme

Image 1.4 VIVO smart phone 2 placed in the programme

In addition, there are also other products placed in the programme as a prop. For example, in the following is a HTC mobile phone held by a female guest.

Image 1.5 HTC mobile phone placed in the programme

This kind of product placement in the stage background is considered to be an

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3 Data source: Screenshot of “If you are the one”
4 Data source: Screenshot of “If you are the one”
5 Data source: Screenshot of “If you are the one”
effective way to recall consumers’ brand awareness without advertising actual computers on the screen. The Green Energy Electric Car is placed by positioning the logo on the screen in the programme.

![Image 1.6 Green energy electric cars placed in the programme](image)

Examples of product placement are endless and, in general, there are more and more types of products placed within various hit shows on TV. In the following is a summary of popular product types placed in hit shows.

[Graphic 1.7 Product types placed in hit shows](graphic)

From the graphic, it can be seen that clothing is the most popular product type placed in hit shows, followed by household items and network communication. Meanwhile, other product types also seek placement opportunities in various hit shows, such as

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6 Data source: www.365724.com
7 Data source: http://www.cninfo360.com
food, appliances, electrical products and so on.

1.3 Aims of the study

Thus, in this thesis the researcher aims to discover how this form of product placement can affect consumers’ shopping behaviour and to examine the effectiveness of product placement in recreational TV programmes. In order to find out the relationships between product placement and mass consumption, I have divided the research aim into four research questions, namely:

I. What kinds of products are the most influential product placement type in these TV programmes?
II. With the increasing number of product placements, will their effectiveness remain unchanged?
III. What are the dominant advantages of product placement in audiences’ minds?
IV. What is the future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption?

In order to investigate the above research questions, the researcher conducted a combination of research methods, such as interviews and questionnaires. Hence, this thesis is arranged in the following structure in order to demonstrate the research questions.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is separated into six parts. First of all, a brief introduction of the research background and a demonstration of the research aims are illustrated in chapter 1. The relevant literature reviews are made in chapter 2 in order to reveal developments in the entertainment industry, the development of product placement, the practices of product placement, and advantages and disadvantages of product placement.
In chapter 3, a theoretical framework of the efficacy of product placement, the factors that affect product placement, the persuasive impact of product placement, its ethics and narcotizing dysfunction will be demonstrated in sub-chapter 3.1.

Afterwards, a theoretical framework of mass consumption will also be illustrated, including the development of mass consumption societies, the patterns of mass consumption, the role of individuals in a consumption society, the media and mass consumption, medial effect approaches and the gatekeeping theory in mass consumption societies will be illustrated in sub-chapter 3.2.

Chapter 4 is mainly concerned with the methodology adopted by this thesis. In order to investigate the research aim of the study, the researcher selected a popular Chinese recreational TV program - “If You Are the One” - and adopted the case study method in order to examine how product placement affects mass consumption. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative research methods are also demonstrated in this chapter in order to discover the relevant factors that affect the consumption behaviour of consumers.

In chapter 5, the main findings of the research will be presented and the results will be compared and analysed via diagrams, images or other means. Meanwhile, the main discussion of the findings will be offered along with the re-presenting of the research results of other scholars in the field. By comparing it with earlier research results, the researcher will then formulate a brief interpretation of the research findings and, finally, draw a conclusion from the findings.

In chapter 6, the main introduction of the research findings will be made, followed by a demonstration of the research’s contribution, its limitations and suggestions for future research. Finally, the thesis closes with a self-reflection.
2. Literature review

2.1 Entertainment industry overview

The entertainment industry contains diversified companies, including television networks, radios, magazines, newspapers and so on. Their main revenue is generated via broadcasting TV programmes or other entertainment programmes. Meanwhile, the trend of advertisement has played an important role in promoting the development of the entertainment industry. (Smith 1995, p.32) Among all entertainment companies, television is considered to be the most successful entertainment media, and it has reached a coverage rate of 78% of the population in the UK every day (Babin 1996, pp.148-150). Currently, countless information is transferred via televisions, including education, sports games, films, soap operas and so on.

Moreover, televisions are both funded by the public and private sectors. Such publicly-funded TV channels always broadcast information on education and other public interest issues. According to Burbury (2003, p.18), The aim of publicly invested TV channels is to maintain and promote the cultural values of the country and to propagandize its values and beliefs to people all over the world, especially with the rapid development of cable TV. On the other side, private funded TV channels mainly broadcast entertainment programmes in order to reach the largest portion of audience. Normally, Hollywood films, sitcoms, soaps, game shows, etc., can be commonly seen in these privately-funded TV channels.

In a word, television has become quite important for individuals and families, since they can now seek more interactive needs and enhance their interpersonal relationships by watching some recreational TV programmes. (Buss 1998, p.28) Audiences can now interact with TV programmes in a number of ways, including commenting on the programmes, learning new views of a career or some other aspects, adopting the information into other activities and so on (ibid.).
Interactive television been the most attractiveness to audiences. Moreover, with the rapid development of technological service networks, people do not only have to watch the screen, and they can also can interact with television programmes in many ways, such as by leaving comments on the programmes, confirming or developing views from TV programmes and so on (Ferraro 2000, p. 231).

Furthermore, some television programmes also engage viewers to communicate with programme-makers. For example, they will provide websites for audiences to write feedback on or make telephone call-ins and e-mails. These expanding services have enabled the rapid development of television programmes (Ferraro 2000, p. 231).

Television programmes have raised more social and political issues than other mass media. Moreover, with the application of multimedia technologies in TV programmes, television entertainment has attracted audiences of different age groups. Television programme makers not only enhance existing functions but also create new ones with the help of multimedia technologies - for example, with recreational TV programmes (Gupta 1998, pp. 47-59).

Besides television, cinema is also regarded as another important way to meet audiences’ entertainment needs. In order to make up for the huge production costs involved in making movies, manufacturers also welcome some product placement in their movies (Gupta 1998, pp. 47-59).

According to Krishnan (1996, p. 108), in comparison to television programmes, cinema has suffered from a huge decline since the 1950s, although there was a renaissance of cinema development in the 1980s. Cinema is regarded as quite an expensive way for satisfying entertainment needs. However, the cinema production industry is considered to be an important source of various entertainment programmes, which can bring about huge economic benefits for other mass media. For example, a
popular film can cultivate some hot stars and advertisers can invite them to be representatives of their products or services. Nowadays, cinemas have mainly attracted young couples because they prefer to watch movies in satisfying their entertainment needs. From this point of view, it can be seen that the cinema industry has attracted fewer audiences than TV programmes.

The third entertainment form is that of video games, which are highly popular among young males. Moreover, many young adults seem to show more interest in playing these video games than watching television “passively”. Video games have incorporated highly advanced multimedia technologies and have come to dominate the youth market worldwide (media.sohu.com).

To make a summary of the entertainment industry, the key to the development of entertainment industry lies in development of multimedia technologies. Confronting various forms of entertainment, advertisers can invest in product placement via different entertainment tools. However, according to their development prosperity, television programmes are the most suitable and beneficial platform for advertisers.

2.2 Brief introduction of product placement

2.2.1 Development of product placement practices

According to Ginosar and Levi-Faur, product placement is regarded as an advertisement practice that incorporates commercial content into non-commercial settings. This is to say that it inserts products or services information via the fusion of advertising and entertainment (Ginosar & Levi-Faur 2010, p. 467). Gupta and Gould also define product placement as incorporating product brands into TV programmes or movies in order to get profits via promotional activities (Gupta & Gould 1997, p.49).

According to Edery, and compared with conventional advertising, product placement
is considered to be riskier. However, more and more enterprises have begun to propagandize their products and services in mainstream media, such as in films, on the radio, and via the Internet, video games and TV programmes. In the past, and due to media fragmentation, commercial advertising across various media has become less effective since audiences will automatically turn down the sound during advertising time, and some may switch to another channel during that time (Edery 2006, pp. 19-22).

According to Kiley (2006, p.3), about two-thirds of audiences regard advertisements between TV programmes to be annoying and irrelevant. Hence, advertisers have begun to seek out other ways to present their advertisements to audiences without interrupting their entertainment needs. Moreover, they have begun to sponsor a certain TV programme via providing relevant products, such as the shirts of the actors, their cell phones and so on. Therefore, Neijens also suggests that product placement will be the future trend of television advertising (Neijens 2007, p. 403). Indeed, in recent years, an increasing number of enterprises have been engaged in various marketing campaigns and promotional activities in each industry.

Therefore, according to Panda (2004, pp.15-16), the common practice of product placement is to insert brand names, products, packages, symbols or other signs into motion pictures or other media vehicles such as TV programmes so that audiences can be exposed to relevant brands or products without breaking the natural process of the programme. That is to say, product placement practice can allow products or the brands of a certain service to reach the target consumers via their natural settings in TV programmes. Normally, products will be consumed by actors who are in the TV programme naturally (Stephen 2005, pp. 18-28).

By doing so, audiences will show more confidence in the quality of the products, since they will naturally associate this with the characters in the TV programme. As Gupta (1998, pp.47-59) states, the characters’ approval and consumption of these
products can be treated as a promotional action of the products.

Although product placement has become popular in recent years, it was initially named and identified as early as the 1980s (Balasubramanian 1994, pp. 35-46). At the very beginning, the practice of product placement has been to reduce the production costs of TV programmes or movies by releasing props for advertisement. European Lumiere filmmakers were the first to introduce product placement in their movies in 1896 (Newell 2006, p.584).

Moreover, the earliest advertisers of product placements are mostly tobacco companies, who advertised their products via a gesture of lending glamour and an adequate attitude towards smoking (The Economist 2005, pp.69-70). However, product placement practices developed slowly during the economic depression. Fortunately, during the 1960s and 1970s, product placement practices were re-analysed again and achieved a prosperous development during the 1980s and 1990s (Patwardhan 2006, p. 135).

According to La Ferle and Edwards, most product placements have been made in movies and TV programmes, since they could be viewed many times in earlier years. In this regard, product placements are not limited to the broadcasting time of the movies or TV programmes. Moreover, and nowadays, some other advertisers have skilfully placed their products on TV programmes or movies as consumer products. As a result, many consumers can see products used on TV programmes or movies, such as digital products. Moreover, service placements also take on a prominent trend, advertisers will usually adopt service placement practices by printing their logos into scripts or background props on the stage (La Ferle & Edwards 2006, pp.65-87).

With development of product placement practices, there have emerged some intermediaries or brokers who offer product placement opportunities to advertisers (Stringer 2006, p. 16). Normally, the costs of product placements vary from several
hundred dollars to up to several million dollars. However, there are some TV programme-makers and movie producers who will normally allow free product placements in their entertainment vehicles for promotional purposes (Czbrzynski, 2006, p.236).

According to Burbury, with the increasing popularity of the internet, more advertising companies have set up online communities so that consumers can communicate with them and get more information about the products that they are interested in. With the help of advanced IT technology, advertising companies are able to list their products and services via text descriptions, images, videos, and so on (Burbury, 2003, pp. 13-28).

Besides this, some public entertainment websites, such as YouTube, Youku and Yahoo, ensure that consumers can always watch an episode of a product story. Obviously, this is a modern product placement practice of the Toyota vehicle company (Falkow 2010, p.1). From this point of view, creative product placement via the Internet may be the most effective way to capture consumers’ minds.

According to Karrh, another sub-product of the Internet is the development of e-commerce businesses. Therefore, some e-business companies have also been considering applying Internet product placement practices so as to propagandize their products. For example, one of the largest e-commerce websites, Amazon.com, has also invested in product placement online. Consumers will watch an episode of an Amazon story prior to beginning of movies or TV programmes. The participants in the TV programmes may use a box marked with “Amazon” and which allows consumers to leave with an impression of the Amazon brand and form a favourable attitude towards Amazon.com and initiate a purchasing intention from the website, etc. (Karrh 1998, pp. 41-45).

From the above, it can be seen that product placement practices have been enhanced
with multi-media technologies and the presentation of new characters in modern worlds. According to Business Wire, although some scholars argue about the effectiveness of product placement practices, they have nonetheless been treated as a new way to generate considerable profits for advertisers while demanding lowers costs than traditional advertising methods. However, product placement practices differ by country and the relevant cultures and advertising regulations set up by governments. However, a common trend of product placement practice is that advertisers from the five areas of vehicles, fashion clothing and accessories, food, travel and entertainment have all invested increasing amounts (Business Wire 2006, p.1).

Even though product placement practices have been widely adopted by countless advertisers, there are both advantages and disadvantages to product placement practices that advertisers need to take into consideration. An inadequate product placement can even ruin the brand of a products. Hence, in the following, the researcher will demonstrate both the advantages and disadvantages of product placement practices.

2.2.2 Advantages of product placement

As a new way to advertise products or services, product placements are more attractive to advertisers due to multiple advantages. First of all, as Karrh (1998, pp.41-45) states, one main reason of advertisers to adopt product placement instead of traditional advertising methods lies in the fact that it can reduce costs. Moreover, and as Raphael states, product placement can allow the products or services to be implanted within the scenarios of a TV programme or movie in a natural setting, without interrupting audiences’ entertainment needs. By implanting product placement in TV, audiences are unable to bypass the advertisement as they have all been integrated into the media and audiences can only skip the whole programme in order to avoid the advertisement. Besides this, and for younger audiences, product
placements in movies and TV programmes are regarded as new ways of knowing about new and attractive product brands. Based on this, it seems that product placement is a more effective way of reaching young audience groups (Raphael 2001, p.1).

Secondly, as Raphael mentioned, even if a product placement has not been done well, audiences may not notice slight flaws and - hence – it will not affect their advertising result. Moreover, with the decline of exclusive commercial periods on televisions, product placement has become another way for advertisers to promote their goods (Raphael 2001, p.1).

Thirdly, and as mentioned previously, product placement was initially created with the aim of reducing the production costs of TV programmes and movies. Actually, according to Govani, the increasing application of product placement in movies or TV programmes also indicates the spiralling costs of the filmmaking industry. Product placement practices enable film-making companies and TV operators to offset various costs by giving props or the background of the stage to advertisers to implant an advertisement (Govani 1999, p. 11).

Fourthly, product placement practices can also work as an investment for advertisers. For example, in an exclusive commercial period, it will cost about $10,000 to $20,000 per 30-second advertisement for promoting a new phone. However, this amount can be reduced to a minimal amount with the adoption of product placement (Erma, 1998, pp.3-8). It has been said that the cost of product placement can save up to 22 episodes of normal commercial advertisement.

To take another example, in one of the most popular recreational TV programmes broadcast on the Jiangsu TV channel, China, “If You Are the One” announced that it had generated an average of 1.8 billion Yuan by introducing product placements (Chinadaily.com.cn 2011).
Besides TV programmes, product placement practices have been widely adopted in the movie production industry. For example, “Golden Eye” - which was one of the most popular movies in 1995 - also announced that it had earned about $1 million via product placements. The statistics only include computers and other electronic equipment (Marsh 1995, p. 11). According to Seguin, about 25% of the total production costs of making TV programmes can be offset by product placement (d’Astous & Seguin 1999, p. 896).

Fifthly, product placement practices enables filmmakers and TV operators to include some realistic and authentic portrayals in some scenes of TV programmes and movies. Hence, audiences will experience more realism while watching those cinematic stories on TV or in cinemas (Brennan et al., 1999, p. 185). Moreover, most product placements will allow the characters in TV programmes to use the products sponsored by advertisers, which will also enhance the realism of the relevant TV programmes and movies (Evenson 2000, pp. 119-120). This kind of enhancement of realism by product placement practices is considered to be more effective, since audiences will show more confidence in products and will immediately associate the products that they are planning to purchase with the characters that used these products in TV programmes and movies. According to d’Astous & Chertier, the brands or quality of the products can be accepted by audiences more easily than by posting labels that include the contents of products only. The reason for successful product placements lies in the fact that the brand/quality of a product has been skilfully merged into corresponding events and moments in the movies (d’Astous & Chertier 2000 pp. 33-40).

Last but not least, product placement in movies and TV programmes can enhance the messages to be accepted by audiences more easily. Highly advanced audio-visual technologies are superior to any other traditional advertising forms. Moreover, it can reach target audiences more effectively (d’Astous & Chertier 2000 pp. 35-39).
According to Chartier (2000, p.32), audiences paid for watching movies or TV programmes; hence, they will be more focused in watching movies, implying a high value of cinematic experience. Moreover, cinemas are the least susceptible to noise; hence, audiences are all in an attentive state and become highly involved in different kinds of messages (Smith 1998, p.42). Compared with home video and TV programmes, where audiences may be distracted by their surroundings, product placements in home videos or TV programmes may not reach the same level of audience involvement as is the case in cinemas. Besides, in cinemas the effect of product placements can increase with the size of audiences (Turcotte 1995, p.26).

In spite of the above advantages, product placements do have certain potential disadvantages which advertisers should avoid while implementing product placement strategies in movies and TV programmes. On the other hand, product placement practices are considered to be a problem-free issue, since TV programme operators and filmmakers are only concerned with whether product placements can assist in reducing production costs.

### 2.2.3 Disadvantages of product placement

First of all, product placement is a modern and inexpensive way of promoting products to the public. However, it does have some uncertainty and unpredictability that is related with the practices themselves (Buss 1998, p. 28). For example, if product placements are implanted at the beginning a movie, the advertisement may disappear as the scene passes (Cowlett 2000, p. 29). Those placements implanted at final cut may provide little consolation if the products were used in a non-flattering way (Shermach 1995, p. 1).
Secondly, according to Balasubramanian, product placements in movies and TV programmes may be considered to be less effective and immediate when compared with traditional advertising methods (Balasubramanian 1994, pp. 131-142).

Thirdly, according to Marsh, product placements exhibit a lack of measurement for their persuasiveness in relation to audiences. Besides, advertisers also seem to be unable to control the messages delivered to audiences. From this point of view, product placements also present potential risks because of their uncertainty (Marsh 1995, p.11).

Fourthly, although product placement is a modern means of promoting products and services, there are some audiences who are strongly opposed to product placement practices (Govani 1999, p.11). Audiences think that films and TV programmes are treated as conveying artistic value and that the implanting of product placements seems to interrupt their artistic values and integrity. With product placements, movies and TV programmes are infested with commercial messages (Nebenzahl 1993, pp. 3-11). As Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993, pp.9-10) have noted, product placement is a means of delivering commercial messages to audiences’ minds unconsciously. However, those audiences who are opposed to product placement might be more aware and may recognize product placement practices inserted into movies and TV programmes. As a result, some product placements are only allowed to be implanted either at the beginning of a movie or at the end in order to protect audiences’ entertainment needs.

It can be seen that product placement, as a new promotional method, still needs to improve a lot in order to become more acceptable by the public. Indeed, advertisers need to discover more ways of implanting their advertisements, such as by implanting product placements into movies, articles, TV programmes and so on.
2.3 Product placement media

According to Koberger, product placements can now commonly be seen as motion pictures or icons in films, TV programmes or even articles. Besides traditional TV programmes, product placement can also be inserted into recreational TV programmes, talk shows, computer games, comics, theatre plays and other media channels (Koberger 1990, pp.18-26).

2.3.1 Product placement in music videos and computer games

As mentioned previously, motion pictures applied as a tool of product placement can be traced back to several decades ago, while product placement as implanted into TV programmes, reality shows and comics has emerged only in recent years. For example, music videos contain a high volume of product placements while broadcasting to the public. It is said that 25% of a music videos entire contents are attributed to product placements, or rather that for every hour of broadcasting time, there will be 15 minutes of product placements (Englis & Solomon 1996, pp. 187-190).

As Englis mentioned, music videos as a new form of product placement media originated from the traditional advertising branded banners in motor racing in the 1980s. Nowadays, product placements as inserted into a music video are exhibiting a positive growth trend. Like product placements in other media, music video making companies include product placements in order to offset their product costs (Englis & Solomon 1996, pp. 187-190).

According to a recent report from PQ Media Company, spending on product placement in music videos grew by 8% in 2009 when compared with that in 2008 (Erik 2010, p.1). Furthermore, it is reported that the total revenue from product placement in 2010 was about $15 to $20 million, which is twice that in the year 2000.
According to Englis (1996, pp.187-190), as one of the new forms of product placement, music videos can reach various audiences from different age groups. People who watch music videos do not present a negative attitude towards product placements, since they believe that singers should have the freedom to create what they want in order to fulfil their musical aspirations. Therefore, many product placements can be seen in celebrities’ music videos. For example, the British girl group The Saturdays have included a visible product placement of ICE watches in the music video “Missing You”. The product placement is captured below in image 1.8.

Image 1.8 Product placements in the Saturday’s music video “Missing You”

However, this was not the first time ICE watches have been implanted into music videos; they are also included in David Guetta’s video.

Besides music videos, and according to Emery, video games represent another trend of implanting product placements in the modern world. The shift of product placement from commercial advertisement to motion pictures in videos and games is due to the increasing popularity of computers and games (Emery 2002, pp.38-52). As

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8 Data source: 2010, Polydor, screen capture
Goodale states, there are over 132 million gamers in America alone, half of whom own home computers for playing games at home. Hence, advertisers in America make every effort to engage in promoting their products in video games. A research company in Boston has also announced that the spending of American advertisers on product placements in video games reached $56 million and $370 million, respectively, in 2009 and 2010 (Goodale 2011, p. 13).

Moreover, according to Raphael there is an increasing trend towards implanting product placements into the gaming actions of the characters in the games. Video games take on more photorealism and, hence, it is possible to insert any brand of products, such as clothing, shoes, mobile phones, cars and so on (Raphael 2001, p.1). As with product placement in TV programmes, people can also find celebrities in video games, using the same products as they use in real life. Hence, game players will automatically associate the celebrities shown in games with the apparel, shoes or other accessories that have been used in the game, and which will also result in a deeper impression of the product placement implanted in the video games (Curtis 1990, p. 29).

As Curtis (1990, p. 29) states, another advantage of product placement in video games lies in that they can be played repeatedly until they are played through. In addition, game players will play some video games over and over again in order to discover more ways or challenges in getting through to higher levels. The repeated playing of games mean that product placement can be exposed more frequently. To this extent, product placement in video games can be more effective, since they can be inserted into different levels of video games. Furthermore, game players can reach different levels depending upon their skills; the involvement of product placement will also increase with the progress of game levels (ibid.).

Furthermore, and with rapid development of IT technologies, advertisers can implement more plans on how to embed product placements into a particular spot
scene and coordinate it more naturally with the scenes of video games (Friedman, 2001, p. 4).

However, according to Friedman video games are mostly played by youths, especially among males, resulting in a limitation of product placement. Hence, not all brands of products are suitable for implanting into video games. Cars, motor cycles, apparel and so on may be more suitable for insertion into video games. Moreover, not every video game is suitable for implanting product placements. According to research conducted by Friedman, players who play violent video games need to be more focused on controlling the movement of the characters in the game; however, for those who play non-violent video games, they will be happier in accepting and recognizing a product placement inserted in the games. For example, in the video game “Dungeons & Dragons”, people cannot see a Remington sword implanted in the game since gamers in the “D&D” game are more likely to react violently and they will think negatively on any kind of product placement implanted into it (Friedman 1988, pp. 37-40).

As Erika states, for game publishers, product placements are indeed an effective means of offsetting the research and development fee of video games. However, and according to digital-media research enterprises, for advertisers implanting product placement into video games is not an economical method, since advertisers need to pay $30 for reaching every 1,000 people (Erika 2006, p.1). Hence, advertisers need to pay more in order to promote their branded products to larger groups of people.

Given the above disadvantages, it can be seen that advertisers need to explore more ways of inserting product placements in order to enhance the popularity of their products to the public.

**2.3.2 Product placement in movies and soap operas**

Product placements in movies can commonly be seen in the modern world. Audiences
can both watch movies via the Internet or in cinemas. According to Nebenzahl, product placement in the movie industry can be traced back to 1896. Advertisers who implant their product placements into movies can receive a better opportunity to capture audiences’ attention, since all cinemagoers are captive audiences who go to cinemas and sit there in order to meet their entertainment needs (Nebenzahl 1993, p.8). Hence, movies have attracted a variety of consumer brands of goods to be implanted in a single scene or multiple scenes. Fashion clothing, watches, shoes and perfumes have been widely implanted into movies, especially luxury brands, such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel and so on (ibid.).

Briefly, and according to Vollmer, product placements can be implanted into movies via three forms - visual product placement, spoken placement and usage placement. With the adoption of a visual product placement, the images or logos of the promoted products can be exposed to audiences for a few moments in different episodes of a movie. Upon using product placement in a spoken manner, audiences can be attracted even if they are not focusing on the screen, as they can still hear voice of the product placement. The most effective method of product placement in movies is considered to be usage placement, which allows both the visual and spoken exposure of promoted products (Vollmer 1994, p.37).

With the rapid development of IT technology, audiences can review any movies via the Internet, which has greatly enhanced the exposure of the products promoted in movies. According to Vollmer, in spite of its continuous exposure, there are some limitations to product placement in movies too. For example, the product placement of cigarettes, tobacco, weapons and medicines is forbidden in movies (Vollmer 1994, p.37).

As Kiley (2006, p.3) states, successful product placement in movies can enhance the realism of the movies without distracting from audiences’ entertainment needs. For example, in most James Bond movies audiences can always find out about various
product placements. In these movies, even though the brands of the products may not be spoken out loud, the symbols or logos of the products will automatically tell audiences what products they are. For example, in the movie “Quantum of Solace” audiences will frequently see Daniel Craig wearing an Omega Sea Master Planet Ocean wrist watch. The screen capture can be seen in image 1.9 below.

![Image 1.9 Product placement of an Omega watch in James bond movies](image)

Besides watches, handbags, outfits, jewellery and other fashion apparels are widely implanted in Hollywood movies. It is said that the fashion in the movies today will be the fashion in our real life tomorrow. From this point of view, it can be seen that audiences can be easily attracted by product placements embedded in movies, especially in Hollywood movies.

Besides implanting into movies, product placement can also be inserted into soap operas. According to Law, and compared with those product placements inserted into movies, soap operas will be updated day by day; hence, product placements can be varied depending upon the choices of advertisers. For example, advertisers can choose to insert product placements via the sponsorship of soap operas, the background of the scenes or the usage of the products by actors in the shows. The advantage of implanting a product placement into a soap opera lies in the fact that it can impress

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9 Data source: Screenshot of “Quantum of Solace”. 

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audiences with the progress of the soap opera to a greater extent. If products are used by actors/actresses throughout the whole soap opera - for example, mobile phones - audiences will automatically associate the brands of the mobile phones with the relevant characters in the shows and exhibit more loyalty to the products. Meanwhile, product placements can be inserted into any episode of a soap opera. Hence, both virtual and real products can be implanted into soap operas (Law 2000, p. 1059).

According to research conducted by Pervan and Martin, product placement practices have been widely implanted in America and New Zealand. However, the significance of product placement in soap operas varies across different countries. For example, in America, audiences present a negative attitude towards product placements, whereas in New Zealand, audiences present a more positive attitude towards product placements implanted into soap operas (Pervan & Martin 2002, pp.137-139).

According to McKechine, and despite of its differing significance, soap operas have become a desirable media for implanting product placements since they can directly capture the attention of audiences, which will become more effective when audiences see their favourite celebrities using or mentioning a certain brand of product. Moreover, advertisers need not just put forward their products via virtual or spoken methods, but so too can they sponsor soap operas and - hence - require TV operators to list their brand names both at the beginning and at the end of each soap opera episode. In this way, audiences can also recognize the relevant brand information by reading text information (McKechine 2003, p. 350).

According to Zhou, audiences might not review the same movie many times; however, they will be attracted by some popular soap operas and will catch up with each update every night. Hence, inserting product placements into soap operas can have long-lasting effectiveness compared to those inserted in movies. It is easier for advertisers to measure the effectiveness of product placement implanted into movies since they can measure the sales revenue of the relevant products several months
before the product placements with sales revenue changes after the release of the movie. However, changes may be examined in a few months following the film exposure. The effectiveness of product placement in soap operas is more controllable and advertisers can negotiate with the producers of soap operas and skilfully insert their product/brand information into different episodes of soap operas (Zhou 2003, pp. 373-374). Normally, fashion apparel and other luxury goods will be commonly seen in soap operas. For example, in one soap opera “Gossip Girls”, audiences will always see young girls wearing different branded clothing, shoes or luxurious accessories at parties in different episodes. Below are two screen captures from “Gossip Girl” - image 1.10 and image 1.11.

![Image 1.10 Serena and Blair carrying Chanel shopping bags in “Gossip Girl”](image)

Image 1.10 Serena and Blair carrying Chanel shopping bags in “Gossip Girl”

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10 Data source: Screenshot of “Gossip Girl”
Examples of product placement in “Gossip Girl” are endless and related to many different kinds of products. From this point of view, it can be seen that TV will continue to dominate the marketing market and be favoured by many marketers for placing their products in soap operas or movies so as to attract more potential consumers. Advertisers will also use the sponsorship method in reality shows or other recreational TV programmes broadcast on TV. For example, in one popular recreational TV program “If You Are the One”, broadcast by the Jiangsu TV channel, during the break time of the recreational TV programme the host will announce “Thank you for the sponsorship of the BBK music phone manufacturing company”, after which, audiences can see a large image of a BBK music phone held by its brand spokesperson Song Hye Kyo, a pop star in Korea.
Nowadays, with the increasing popularity of this recreational TV programme in mainland China, the BBK music Phone Company - as a sponsor of the TV programme - has received huge sales profits via this kind of product placement.

2.3.3 Product placement on the Internet

Today, people can access to Internet more easily than a few decades ago. Hence, it has become another important media for implanting product placements. According to Mike Elgan, product placement on the web is increasing and will be more popular than product placements in TV programmes and movies. Advertisers expect writers, bloggers, the news media, video producers, etc., to give away contents that include their product information or banner ads over the top of their web pages (Mike 2006, p.1). However, these promising web contents - such as video, 3D social environments and social networks - are not so advertiser-oriented, since some advertisements are always put on the corner of the web pages where audiences can click to close them if they are not interest in them. Nonetheless, these forms of product placement are growing rapidly among social networks and virtual environments.

Furthermore, audiences can directly click to purchase the items they want via product placements inserted into various social networks and virtual environments. From this
point of view, online product placement is better for advertisers, since they do not just enhance brand recognition, but they also enhance sales revenues by placing product placement on the Internet.

Compared with traditional advertising, Internet product placement practices have not yet been fully utilized, while the traditional means of product placement have reached a stage of decline. For example, according to research conducted by Nielsen Company, in the year 2007, the total spending on advertisement decreased by 0.5% compared with that in 2006, while product placement on the Internet has increased by 23.2%, compared with that in 2006 (Jake 2008, p.1). It is estimated that product placement in the traditional media has entered a bottle neck in development, while product placements have not yet fully penetrated into the various web content, especially text links, html code insertion, blogs and so on. Take a brief look at graphic 1.13 below - it is estimated that in the year 2015, product placement investment will constitute 26% of total advertisement spending (although TV will remain dominant in the media market, taking up 39% of total advertisement spending).

**Graphic 1.13 US media advertisement spending distribution**

Moreover, according to a survey conducted by marketingland.com, total online advertisement spending is to increase from 2011 to 2016. According to image 1.14 below, it is estimated that in 2016 total product placement spending on the Internet will reach $62 billion, with a growth rate of 7.8% when compared with that in 2015.

11 Data source: [www.bizologie.com](http://www.bizologie.com)
12 Data source: [marketingland.com](http://marketingland.com)
The decreasing growth rate and increasing spending indicate that in the coming three years, online product placement will present stable growth and continue to maintain its market share among different product placement media.

Graphic 1.14 Change trend of US online product placement from 2011 to 2016

Online resources include blogs, video websites, communities, social networks and so on. As Meenaghan states, among all these resources, blogs are considered to be a promising form of product placement, since advertisements can be included as a part of the content which can reach all readers. By implanting product placement in blogs, there will be less space for traditional advertising and more useful content can be provided to readers. As a result, the blog contents will present themselves as more valuable to readers; more readers indicates greater demand for advertisements, which will finally generate more revenue for blog writers. Moreover, readers cannot skip product placements inserted into blogs unless they choose not to read the blog contents at all (Meenaghan 2001, pp. 99-110).

Besides blogs, video websites and instant messaging software, such as windows live messenger, Skype, Google Talk and so on, also convey great potential for implanting product placements. With the increasing accessibility of the Internet in different countries, increasing numbers of people will access the Internet every day, both for working and entertainment. According to Tomi (2011, p.1), personal computer
penetration in developed countries has reached over 71%, while developing countries have also seen a penetration rate of 23%. Moreover, worldwide there are 640 million personal computers used by 1.4 billion people.

Furthermore, with the rapid development of smart phones, product placements implanted on the Internet can also reach mobile phone users as they are surfing the Internet via their phones. In addition, mobile phone penetration in developing countries is also considerably high. For example, 59% of the population owns at least one mobile phone and the total amount of active mobile phones in developing countries is 2.9 billion. Worldwide, about 4.4 billion mobile phone are being used and connected to the Internet (Tomi 2011, p.1).

Moreover, from graphic 1.15 below, it can be seen that with adoption of highly advanced technology, increasing numbers of people use their mobile phones to access the Internet and search for information online. This indicates that those advertisers who implant product placements on the Internet should also explore new ways of promoting their products for mobile internet users as well.

![Internet Traffic by Type, Desktop vs. Mobile, 12/08 – 11/12](image)

**Graphic 1.15 Comparison of Internet traffic between desktops and mobile phones from 2008 to 2012**

13 Data source: [www.jana.com](http://www.jana.com)
2.3.4 Product placement in books

According to Tylee, product placement - familiar to films and TV, and also online - is still relatively rare in books. However, it is not unprecedented; some advertisers have been implanting their product placements into novels since the 19th century, especially in British novels. Moreover, in recent years, and with the soaring costs of product placements in movies and TV programmes, more and more advertisers seek means of inserting product placements into books. For example, in one novel “The Nanny Diaries”, readers can see many “Estee Lauder” product placements. By mentioning the brand, shape and even colour of a specific product worn or carried by the characters in the novel, the author can deliver different product information to readers. As with other types of product placement media, product placements can also be implanted into books in several different forms (Tylee 2005, p. 19).

An initial form of product placement was in a full-page display in certain pages of novels. For example, in the 1980s people could usually find cigarette advertisements on the back pages of a novel (Tylee 2005, p. 19).

A successful product placement in a novel can be perfectly woven into the text contents without interrupting how the novel is read. Hence, product placement can be inserted into books by describing what a characters uses or the jewellery he/she is wearing. For instance, both Cover Girl cosmetics and Bulgaria jewellery have frequently been described as product placements in novels (Thomas 2006, pp.1-2). The Bulgaria jewellery company did the first product placement in British writer Fay Weldon’s new novel “The Peaches and Cream Decor”, where there was one sentence written thus: “The story took place at a Bulgaria jewellery store on Sloane Street in London... The real estate mogul Barley Salt paid £18,000 and bought his second wife a necklace... thin worn bronze” (Gary 2001, p.1). From this, although readers may not have known of Bulgaria jewellery beforehand, they will be informed by this sentence that Bulgaria is a pricey jewellery brand. It is estimated that with the increasing sales
of the author’s books, Bulgaria’s brand reputation will be recognized by more readers. Besides this, readers may read the novels again and again, which can enhance value of the product placement implanted into the text contents.

It is reported that it is much easier to implant product placements into comic books since readers will not pay too much attention to commercial product placement inserted into the text contents. Hence, product placements in comic books appear to be less invasive than in other forms. As Chris suggests, comic books will be the next frontier for product placement (Chris 2006, p.1). Both Marvel and DC - which are two of the largest comic publishers - have signed deals embracing product placements in their comic titles. For example, in Marvel Comics’ Secret Warrior #3, there is a scene where Nick Fury opens a computer and yells “Open WebEx connection”. Afterwards there is a picture showing the computer screen where there is written the “Cisco WebEx” logo at the bottom left-hand side. Graphic 1.16 below is a photo taken from the comic book.

Graphic 1.16 Cisco WebEx logo in Marvel Comic book

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Upon seeing this logo, readers may not notice that it is actually a product placement advertisement paid for by advertisers, since they will all focus on the progress of the story.

However, not every product placement is paid for by a company; some unintentional product placement embedded into books can also help to promote relevant brands. However, this kind of involvement depends upon the writer's own preferences. For example, in “Fifty Shaded of Grey” - which is an erotic novel written by the British writer E.L. James - readers might notice that the writers have mentioned different styles of Audi cars in several chapters (Erik 2012, p.1). Graphic 1.17 below is a screen capture of the novel.

Graphic 1.17 Audis in Fifty Shades of Grey

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Data source: Fifty of Grey (2011, Vintage Books)
It is surprising that Audi did not make of deal with E.J. James for promoting their car brands in the novel. One can be sure that Audi’s marketing plans in other forms of media influenced E.J. James and that he will automatically think of Audi when he plans to describe a branded car in his novel.

To draw a brief conclusion concerning the abovementioned media, it can be seen that each has its own advantages and disadvantages in implanting product placements. Moreover, in the coming years the TV and the Internet will remain as the major forms of media for inserting product placements. However, different products a more suitable for different product placement media and modes. Hence, in what follows it will be necessary to introduce the varieties of product placement modes along with consideration of the extent to which product placement should be inserted into different media and what type of product placement method can be applied.

2.4 Product placement modes

Product placements can be inserted in various media in three different ways – through characters’ use of the products, through characters mentioning the brands of the products, and by the display of actual products or symbols in the background (Koberger 1990, p.20). These three main means of product placements are called “virtual product placement”, “spoken product placement” and “plot/usage product placement”. Moreover, the diversification of product placements and the degrees of product placement will also vary for different advertisers. Hence, the degree of product placement can be divided into three types as well, including one scene, multiple scenes and throughout the entire set of scene.

2.4.1 Diversification of product placement

Generally, there are three types of product placement, including virtual product placement, spoken product placement and plot/usage product placement. Virtual
placement refers to a few seconds of a camera shot of a product, service or logo, whereas spoken placement refers to the mentioning of the relevant product information by characters. Finally, usage/plot placement refers to the use of a product by characters. Usage/plot placement is considered to be a combination of virtual and spoken placements (www.pwc.com/it).

These three main types receive different labels from different scholars. For example, as Koberger states, product placements can also be classified into these alternative three types, namely “acoustic placement”, “on-set placement” and “creative placement”. Literally, acoustic product placement refers to the mentioning of the brand name of a product by characters in a scene, while on-set placement indicates that the product placement is included in the lines of the characters naturally, giving more realism to the story. Finally, creative placement refers to use of the relevant products by characters (Koberger 1990, pp.18-26).

Wilde (1990, p.42) also classified product placement into two types - “generic placement” and “image placement”. As with “usage/plot placement”, generic placement refers to the use of a certain products in several scenes. The characters do not need to speak out the brand of the product; instead, the symbol or logo of the product will automatically propagandize its brand name, for example, by the cars driven by characters, their cell phones, the coffee shops they frequent and so on. The aim of implanting such generic placement is to enhance the realism and authenticity of the story. On the other hand, image placement refers to the display of the brand logo/symbol throughout the overall theme of the story. For example, in the movie “Top Gun”, the US navy logo can be seen in most of the scenes of the story. The Federal Express symbol can also frequently be seen in the movie “Cast Away” (Wilder 1990, p.88).

Following Koberger, Bosselmann also classified product placements according to three types - “on-set”, “creative” and “verbal” placement. As distinct from
Koberger’s theory, Bosselmann renamed acoustic placement as verbal placement. Moreover, Bosselmann also included the use of a product by characters as a practice of on-set placement instead of as creative placement (Bosselmann 1994, p.96).

Different again, DeLorme & Reid (1999, pp.88-94) defined product placement types based on the context of what is presented to audiences. Hence, in their opinion, product placement is regarded more appropriately as “brand placement”. Based on this, brand placement is categorized into three main types – “image exposure”, “verbal mention” and “use/plot by characters” (DeLorme & Reid 1999, pp.78-95).

Furthermore, as d’Astous & Seguin (1999, p.22) suggest, some product placements are implanted via sponsorship into TV programmes. Hence, in such circumstances, product placement can be defined into three distinctive types - implicit product placement, integrated explicit placement and non-integrated explicit placement (d’Astous & Seguin 1999, p.22).

First of all, implicit placement refers to the insertion of a product into TV programmes without being mentioned by characters (Wasserman 2005, pp. 18-20). From this point of view, it can be seen that implicit placement plays a passive role in a scene. It may only be a background image set on the stage. Hence, implicit placement is similar to on-set placement. For example, in the recreational TV programme “If You Are the One”, audiences must be familiar with the following stage backgrounds.
Image 1.18 Screen captures of implicit product placement of the Vivo brand in “If You Are the One”\(^{16}\)

Throughout the course of the TV programme, neither the host nor the audience have ever mentioned “Vivo” or its benefits or relevance to the storyline. However, audiences will keep seeing its logo during the entire TV programme.

Secondly, and with the adoption of integrated explicit placement, the brands of the products are formally expressed within a TV programme or movie. For example, characters’ consumption of products can help to extend the brand to consumers (Reardon 2005, p. 740). The image below is a screen capture of a Dr Pepper being drunk by characters in the movie “Spider Man”.

\(^{16}\) Data source: Online
Compared with implicit placement, integrated explicit placement plays an active role in TV programmes and movies, since the brand name or company name of the product will be formally expressed.

Finally, according to Miller, non-integrated explicit product placement is commonly regarded as sponsorship for TV programmes. In a non-integrated explicit product placement, a brand or company name, or the benefits of the products, are excluded from the content of the TV programme; instead, it will be announced on the sponsors’ name lists (Miller 2005, p. 741). For example, at the beginning of “If You Are the One”, its host will normally say the sentence: “Welcome to our TV programme ‘If You Are the One’ sponsored by the BBK music phone.” Another example can be seen in the screen capture below.

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Image 1.19 Screen capture of integrated explicit product placement of a Dr Pepper can in the movie “Spider man”

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Data source: Online
Image 1.20 Screen capture of a non-integrated explicit product placement example¹⁸

In the image above, the character is not drinking or holding a can of Pepsi. However, her verbal sentence may also capture an audience’s attention even when they are not focusing on the screen.

Besides the above classifications, there are also other types of product placements as defined by different scholars. Hence, table 1.21 includes the classifications of product placements defined by different scholars.

¹⁸ Data source: screenshot
Table 1.21 Classifications of product placements as defined by different scholars

Based on the table, it can be seen that the three basic classifications of product placement as mentioned earlier are agreed upon by the majority of scholars, even though they made slight variations according to their investigation’s perspective. To be concise, this thesis follows the classification of product placement according to three basic types - virtual product placement, spoken product placement and usage/plot product placement. It is also necessary for advertisers to decide to what extent product placement should be implanted in movies or TV programmes.

### 2.4.2 Degree of product placement

With regard to advertising costs, advertisers should make strategic plans for implanting product placements and decide upon the exposure times of the relevant

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19 Data source: http://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/35143/nbnfi-fe20031411.pdf?sequence=1
product/brand information throughout movies or TV programmes. According to PWC (www.pwc.com/it), different types of products should adopt different degrees of involvement in movies and TV programmes (www.pwc.com/it). For example, fashion apparel is recommended in one scene or throughout the scene, while all fashion apparel should be exposed to audiences in less than 10 seconds. Distinct from fashion apparel, electronics should be implanted into one scene or multiple scenes and be exposed for over 10 seconds of it is exposed in only one scene. Moreover, if it is shown in multiple scenes, the exposure time should be less than 10 seconds in per scene. Automotive vehicles are regarded as pricey products and, therefore, they should be implanted into movies and TV programmes from the beginning until the end in order to leave a profound impression on audiences. The relationships between product types and exposure frequencies are shown in graphic 1.22 below.

![Graphic 1.22 Degree of product placement for different types of products](image)

Moreover, marketers - with regard to the target consumers and their product types - should decide upon the degree of product placements. A major reason for why fashion apparel should be implanted into movies and TV programmes in one scene lies in the fact that only one shot of screen exposure can catch the audience’s attention for recognizing the brand. Audiences can recall the relevant brand names or symbols of the relevant fashion apparels if exposed to them throughout the movies on several occasions.

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20 Data source: www.pwc.com/it "Product placement in movie industry--Strategic insights & Fashion apparel case studies"
Generally, product placements can be embedded into various media based upon the type of product and the marketing strategies of the relevant companies.

2.5 Conclusions

To draw a conclusion from this chapter, at the beginning an overview of the entertainment industry was demonstrated in order to give readers a basic understanding of the entertainment industry and the development of entertainment media. Secondly, a brief introduction of product placement was analysed in subchapter 2.1. In this subchapter, the development of product placement practices, the benefits of product placement and the disadvantages of product placements were demonstrated. Thirdly, a variety of product placement media was considered is subchapter 2.2. Based upon the relevant literature review, product placements can be implanted into movies, soap operas, the Internet, books and other traditional media. Among all these media, the Internet and TV are estimated to dominate the market in the coming three years (www.pwc.com/it). Finally, the product placement modes and the degree of product placement was analysed in subchapter 2.3.

Basically, there are three types of product placements, namely virtual placements, spoken placements and usage/plot product placements. The majority of scholars agree with these three basic forms, even though their detailed classification of them may vary slightly. Moreover, due to different marketing plans, the placement costs in different media and the types of the products being promoted, it is necessary to carry out different degrees of involvement of product placement across the various media.

It can be seen that scholars have contributed to analysing the types of product placement, the development of the circumstances of product placement and so on. However, little research have been done on exploring the relationships between consumers and product placements. That is to say that most scholars have failed to
take consumers into consideration and examine the mutual impact of product placement and consumers in the modern world. Hence, this thesis is regarded as an attempt to help marketers to formulate optional marketing strategies and to reach their target consumers with the lowest advertising costs. The following questions represent what this researcher aims to clarify: How effective can product placements be in various media? What factors might affect product placements? What ethical principles should marketers comply with while implanting a product placement? How does product placement affect mass consumption? In order to find out answers to these questions, it is necessary to bring in the relevant theoretical framework on product placement and mass consumption in the following chapter.
3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Product placement

The effectiveness of product placement is largely dependent upon the public’s attitude towards its practices. If audiences are irritated by a certain product placement in an entertainment media, then they will present a negative attitude towards those brands or products. However, there are also certain audiences who show an attitudes of understanding towards product placement in the entertainment industry. According to a study conducted by Nebenzahl & Secunda (1993, pp.1-11), 70.1% of interviewees regard product placement as effective and present a positive attitudes towards product placements in entertainment media, while the remaining participants viewed product placements as a negative and ineffective way to promote products or brands (Nebenzahl & Secunda 1993, pp.1-11). Moreover, 77.9% of the participants thought that product placements were bearable under the restrictions of governmental regulations and the relevant marketing laws, since they believe that adequate product placement can add more realism and authenticity of a broadcasting story. However, the remaining 22.1% of the participants thought that product placements should be banned in entertainment media since they would mislead or distract audiences and ultimately affect their entertainment satisfaction (Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993, pp.1-11).

In view of this, it can be seen that most audiences regard product placements as positive and effective. Imagine movies or TV programmes without product placements - audiences would have to pay higher fees to watch movies and TV programmes since filmmakers and TV operators need to offset their operational costs by selling tickets at higher prices. Hence, and taking this into consideration, Klassen (2000, p.42) suggests that if product placements can act as an element adding more realism to the story, they will be more acceptable by the public.
Hence, it is practical and beneficial to carry out product placement in the entertainment industry and it attracts more consumers. However, marketers should understand the efficacy of product placement, the factors that affect product placement, the persuasive impact of product placement and the ethics of product placement, which will be demonstrated in what follows.

### 3.1.1 Efficacy of product placement

Although product placement practices have been widely adopted by marketers in different industries, the efficacy of product placement is still unproven since it is hard to measure its effectiveness as applied in the entertainment industry (Russell 1998, p. 359). Besides this, when confronted by so many advertising methods in the entertainment media, it is also hard to isolate the efficacy of product placement from other marketing results (Shermach 1995, p.1).

Scholars have conducted various studies on the efficacy of product placement and have identified out three main effects of product placements, namely brand recall, brand recognition and attitudes (Babin & Carder, 1996, pp.140-151). Most scholars found that for those audiences who hold a positive and supportive attitude towards product placement, they present a higher recognition or recall of the relevant product information promoted in the entertainment media (DeLorme et al. 1994, pp.71-95). However, according to Ong & Meri, brand recall/recognition depends upon the product type and the degree of product placement (Ong & Meri 1994, pp. 169-173). For example, products like cigarettes, guns and alcohol are disliked by most audiences and will receive less brand recall/recognition effectiveness by their insertion into entertainment media, which is largely due to ethical concerns relating to such product placements.
Ong and Meri conducted research on product placement’s efficacy and found that the brand Coke was recalled by 77% of audiences in the movie “Falling Down”, while the effectiveness of Hamm’s beer was recalled by only 18% of participants. The difference in brand recall between these two brands lies in their different placement modes and the degree of placement (Gupta & Lord 1998, pp.47-59).

In addition, the efficacy of product placement is also affected by different placement types. For instance, explicit product placement in movies and TV programmes will obtain greater brand recall/recognition than implicit product placement during the show (Brennen 1999, p.298).

As mentioned earlier, there are three main types of product placements - implicit product placement, non-integrated explicit product placement and integrated explicit product placement. According to a research conducted by Tiwsakul (2005, pp.109-120), audiences present negative attitude towards implicit product placement and prefer explicit product placement.

Based on this, it can be seen that the integration level of a product placement can greatly affect brand recall/recognition and, hence, affect the efficacy of the product placement. The role that product placement plays in a movie or TV programme can greatly affect the efficacy of product placement, since audiences will automatically form associations of the product brand with their utilization in real life. Hence, audiences show a greater preference towards explicit product placement. As Bandura (1977, pp.288-299) suggests, integrated explicit product placement is more favoured by audiences, since they can learn how to use the product by observing characters’ consumption of the product in movies and TV programmes.

Moreover, with the consumption of relevant products in an integrated explicit placement, audiences will feel that the story’s progress is more natural. Furthermore, the consumed products can a leave deeper impression in audiences’ minds, since they
can naturally associate a brand/product with any desirable characters who have used the products in the movies or TV programme. From this point of view, by adopting integrated explicit product placement practices, marketers can promote both the brand recognition of the relevant products as well as having a better chance of generating sales. Upon seeing some branded products consumed by desirable characters, audiences will also purchase the same products in real life.

From this point of view, since audiences will associate the relevant products with those characters who consume them in movies or TV programmes, they will then perceive a greater linkage between the product placed and the content of the relevant movies or TV programmes (Reid 1994, pp.78-95). As a result, audiences will be more likely to adopt those products or services placed in movies or TV programmes as a result.

Based on the above considerations, audiences’ brand recall is considered to be the first element of the efficacy of product placement. The exposure of a relevant product/brand aims to enhance brand awareness and recall audiences’ memory of the relevant products/brands (Carder 1996, pp. 140-151). Moreover, by recalling audiences’ memories of a certain brands, competing brands will be evoked in the mind as well. Hence, audiences will then make a comparison of these brands and present a more favourable attitude towards the particular brand placed in a movie or TV programme (Immonen 1998, p.48). According to Law & Braun (2000, pp. 1060-1075), the recognition memory of a relevant brand/product can be enhanced via product placement (Law & Braun 2000, pp. 1060-1075). Hence, from this point of view, product placement can distinguish one brand from others, overwhelming competing brands with a prejudice memory evoked in audiences’ minds.

The second element of the efficacy of product placement lies in that it can promote brand recognition among audiences. According to Babin & Carder (1996, pp.140-151), brand recognition is easier than brand recall. Indeed, brand recognition
is considered to be a prerequisite of brand recall, since one must first recognize a brand which then leaves an impression in the memory; then he/she can recalled it by seeing the product/brand via the screen. Hence, it will be easier to propagandize a new brand than to change audiences’ attitudes towards a given existing brand via adopting product placement practices in various entertainment media (Babin & Carder, 1996, pp.140-151). Immonen (1998, p.82) also found that product placement can generate a recognition rate of 50% for a product that has never been sold in the market beforehand. This also indicates that product placement practices can be applied as an effective marketing strategy for market entry.

Compared with traditional TV advertising, product placement in the entertainment media presents higher inducement levels to audiences (Gould et al. 2000, p.1102). Meanwhile, Solomon & Englis also suggest that with regard to brand recall efficacy, product placement is 2.5 times better than traditional commercial advertising (Solomon & Englis 1994, pp.187-190).

Furthermore, scholars have conducted several studies and found out that product placement can bring about higher levels of brand recognition efficacy than brand recall efficacy. For instance, Chartier (2000, pp.31-40) conducted a study and found that with the adoption of the same product placement type, the brand recognition rate can reach as high as 74.6%, while the brand recall rate was only 21.3%. Moreover, Law & Braun also found that products that have been placed in movies or TV programmes were preferred more by consumers than those that were not placed at all (Law & Braun 2000, pp.1060-1075).

Finally, according to the standardized measurement of product placement practices, achieving an audience awareness rate of 20% is considered to be an effective placement strategy. Likewise, those placements reaching an awareness level of over 30% can be treated as a very successful placement (Babin & Carder 1996, pp.140-151). Given this, it can be seen that the efficacy of product placement largely
lies in its ability to generate high levels of brand recognition and brand recall.

### 3.1.2 Factors that affect product placement

The factors that affect product placement have been more or less discussed in the previous chapters. Nonetheless, some earlier studies show that the efficacy of product placements can be influenced by various elements, including the timing of the product placements, the types of product placements, the degree of product placement, audiences’ demographics and marketers’ placement strategies, and so on. In addition, as Babin & Carder suggest, the location of placements in movies or TV programmes will also affect the efficacy of product placements (Babin & Carder 1996, p.141).

Firstly, and relative to the type of product placement, scholars have noted that spoken placement and plot/usage placement are the more effectiveness forms of product placement. For example, it was found that plot/usage placement can generate a brand recall rate of 57% while spoken placement can generate only 51% and virtual placement only 8% (Immonen 1998, p.67). However, Barbin & Carder conducted a survey and found that spoken placement can reach a brand recognition rate of 87% (Barbin & Carder 1996, p.145).

Secondly, and concerning the exposure time, one might think that placements that are exposed more times will achieve better brand recognition/recall rates among audiences. However, according to Brennan, Dubas & Babin, although explicit product placements can achieve a higher level of brand recognition/recall rate, the length of the exposure time is irrelevant to the recognition/recall rate. They also found that 28% of implicit placements are considered to be successful and effective, while for those explicit placements, 87% of them can achieve a satisfactory awareness rate (Brennan, Dubas & Babin 1999, p.185).

Thirdly, in an explicit product placement the presence of characters consuming
products in movies/TV programmes can also affect efficacy of product placement (DeLorme & Reid 1999, pp.78-95). For example, when fans of Lady Gaga see her wearing her skyscraper heels in a music video, they will search for their brand name on the Internet and purchase a pair of heels in Gaga’s style. However, for those who dislike Lady Gaga, they may present a negative attitude towards the brand, resulting in a negative impact on brand recall rate. Moreover, it will be more effective if marketers can combine some episodes of the characters’ real lifestyles into the placement process.

Fourthly, the audience’s demographic is also another element that affects the efficacy of product placement. Based on Immonen’s research, the best recall rate (37%) of product placement can be obtained among the 24 to 29 years old age group, while for the 30 to 41 years old age group, the recall rate ranges from 28% to 36% (Immonen 1998, p.18). Besides age, gender should also be included when measuring the efficacy of product placements. Immonen also found that, compared with women, men are able to recognize more brands (Immonen 1998, p.46). However, again according to Immonen, educational background has been proven to be an irrelevant factor in relation to the efficacy of product placement.

Last but not least, audiences’ involvement is also a factor that is relevant to a product placement’s efficacy. As mentioned earlier, plot/usage product placements can generate high levels of both brand recall and recognition rates. Hence, with the viewers’ involvement in TV programmes, they can experience the quality of the product placed, as well as learning how to use the products themselves. Hence, they will have a profound impression on the products and generate more trust in the product’s quality. Balasubramanian also suggests that audiences can have a common understanding about a product placed in TV programmes during the involvement process. Moreover, the audience’s distrust and defence levels will be lowered when compared with simply reading commercial advertisements on screens (Balasubramanian 1994, pp.29-46).
Thus, nowadays in one of the most popular recreational TV programmes broadcast in China - “If You Are the One” - where all female guests are invited from all over the country, they can wear sponsored fashion apparel and the BBK music phone, which is also offered by a sponsored company. Hence, during these kinds of involvement, audiences can come to understand the basic functions of BBK music phones, and appreciate quality of the apparel and other products placed in the show. Upon the actual usage of the relevant products, audiences will show more trust and a higher brand recognition rate of certain products can be achieved.

Besides the abovementioned factors, there are other factors that are relevant to product placements. While implementing placement strategies, marketers should consider how to skilfully make full use of these factors and so reach target consumers at the lowest cost. Hence, in the following, the persuasive impact of product placement is considered.

3.1.3 Persuasive impact of product placement

The purpose of product placement is not only to generate brand recognition/recall among audiences but also aims to persuade audiences to purchase products/service from the market. Hence, the persuasive impact should be considered as the most important measurement of product placement.

First of all, product placement can help marketers in investigating audiences’ purchasing needs and to focus on clarifying purchasing intentions. According to an interview conducted by DeLorme & Reid, adequate product placement can enhance the purchasing intentions of audiences who have clear idea of their purchasing needs (DeLorme & Reid 1999, pp.78-95). This also indicates that, in order to generate a persuasive impact, marketers must be able to recognize consumers’ needs and the
sitting point of their products and services. Moreover, Immonen (1998, p.95) also states that audiences with a higher interest in a certain product can recognize relevant product placements more rapidly than those who already own the product or else show less interest in the products (Immonen 1998, p. 120). From this point of view, it is estimated that product placements will become more persuasive among audiences who convey categorized need than those who do not.

Secondly, besides persuading a purchasing intention, a product placement’s persuasive impact also lies in its influencing power generated from the popularity of the relevant TV programme or movie (Russell 1998, pp.357-362). Hence, from this perspective, the persuasive impact of product placement lies in how it can become influential in accordance with the popularity of the relevant TV programme or movie.

Furthermore, the persuasive impact of product placement also stems from the brand awareness of the public. As such, advertisers will normally name their products with distinctive brands, even though the brands are not known to the public at all.( DeLorme & Reid 1999, p.85) This kind of brand creation can help audiences to memorize names of the products and so distinguish them from other similar products. Moreover, as time goes by, brands will be firmly established and endorsed with social reputations by those who have consumed the products/services before. Moreover, with the increasing popularity of the trend towards integrated marketing, it can be more persuasive to transfer a brand concept during the placement process (DeLorme & Reid 1999, p.90). Imagine two different product placements, one without brands and only announcing that it is a high quality product made by an Italian designer, while the other only shows a sounding brand name that it has - which will be more persuasive? Obviously, the latter will attract the attention of a greater audience and become more persuasive to some extent. From this, it can be seen that the persuasive impact of product placement is that it requires audiences to believe/recognize the existence of the relevant product brands and induce them to purchase them.
Finally, the persuasive impact of product placements also stems from a certain celebrities’ involvement. According to Shimp (1997, p.268), the reason for this persuasive impact lies in that audiences display more trust in celebrities and admire their lifestyles. As a result, they will simulate their consumption of products, their preferred branded apparel, shoes, bags and so on. Hence, celebrities’ endorsements have become an attractive trimming for certain products when placed. Moreover, celebrities’ endorsements also imply the quality of the product placed. This kind of message will be delivered to audiences’ minds directly and, hence, they will also present a stronger purchasing intention even if they have never seen the product before (Shimp 1997, pp.238-297).

Thus, as Hackley and Kitchen state, celebrities’ presence in some product placements can be treated as a shortcut to convincing audiences of the product brand and ensuring its quality (Hackley & Kitchen 1998, pp. 29-33). It is the celebrities’ involvement that makes the product placement more reliable and the quality appears to be more certain, resulting in the persuasive impact of the relevant product placement.

Based on the above considerations, the persuasive impact of product placements includes enhancing recognizing audiences’ categorized purchasing needs, enhancing the influencing power of the relevant brands with the popularity of TV programmes or movies, generating brand awareness and presenting a sense of higher quality by celebrities’ endorsements.

3.1.4 Ethics of product placement

Product placement has become a popular TV advertising technique ever since the classic placement of Hershey’s Reese’s Pieces in 1982. Hershey’s Reese’s Pieces was a symbol of friendship between a young boy and an alien in the movie of “E.T.: Extra Terrestrial”. In the first month after the release of the movie, sales of Hershey Reese
increased by 70% (Segrave 2004, pp. 89-92). From this example, some psychologists, philosophers and mass media researchers announced that product placement is powerful enough to make audiences addicted to those products placed in various media. Some American congressmen even regarded product placement as a prostitution of the movie industry, since even movie scripts are sometimes driven by product placement (Galician 2004, p.89).

Although many scholars have doubted the ethics of product placement practices in recent years, there are no regulations forbidding this practice (Galician 2004, p.96). Most consumers do not regard product placement as annoying so long as it is not overdone (Segrave 2024, pp.89-93). Meanwhile, there is no empirical evidence showing the dominant effects of product placements across various media. Furthermore, as Galician (2004, p.110) states, product placements are so subtle that consumers will not even be aware that they are being subject to advertisements while watching TV programmes or movies. Nonetheless, some consumers and researchers view product placements as being too commercialized in their private lives since consumers do not intend to see product placements when heading to the cinema. Hence, TV programme-makers and movie-makers should formulate a good plan to incorporate a product’s placement into the natural development of the stories of TV programmes and movies (Panda 2004, pp.7-26).

Product placements in TV programmes and other media can reach the target consumers directly without irritating them. Moreover, product placements are often displayed in a dynamic and pleasant way, such that consumers will regard product placements as a way to enhance the realism of the TV programmes or movie. Continuous product placements in the same movie or TV programme can enhance brand familiarity among consumers. However, if overdone consumers will recognize the product placements and even argue as to the effectiveness of the placed product messages (Richard 1983, pp. 49-51). Furthermore, consumers hold different ethical standards towards different product types placed in TV programmes; for example, if
they see alcohol, cigarettes or guns placed in TV programmes, they will consider those TV programmes in a negative way. However, they hold a tolerant attitude towards other product types, such as mobile phones, household items, jewellery, etc. (Wilson 1983, pp.47-51).

Kay also suggests that product placements lack transparency. For instance, consumers may not be aware of a product placement until they see a list of product placements at the end of the TV programme. This is to say, that audiences have already viewed the product placements without any previous warning (Kay 2012, p.1).

Meanwhile, with the initial stages of product placement, they were only introduced as a marketing tool as applied in TV programme. However, with the increasing use of product placements, some advertisers required that their products should be consumed or utilized as props in the TV programmes so as to impress audiences (Pervan 2002, pp. 110-113). From this point of view, TV programmes must compromise with product placements in order to gain more financial support from advertisers.

Furthermore, some researchers also argue as to the ethics of product placements in relation to children. As mentioned before, the food industry also seeks product placement opportunities in TV programmes. Junk food is a main product which targets children, such as soft drinks and chips, etc. Hence, product placements of junk food in TV programmes are regarded as less ethical in the opinion of many scholars (Kay 2012, p.1).

Another ethical issue for product placement is concerned with the deceptive messages contained in product placements. While watching movies or TV programmes, audiences may not be aware of the labels of products consumed by characters in the show; they may not even pay too much attention to the brand of car that one actor is driving. However, by product placements, audiences are exposed to brands or logos excessively. This has violated the natural development of story lines and it seems that
audiences are experiencing a sales pitch show instead of a TV programme (Kay 2012, p.1).

Finally, trust is the most important ethical consideration in product placement. Most product placements are not declared in TV programmes or movies; they are simply consumed by characters in the show. Audiences do not even know how to test the quality of the placed products. Meanwhile, modern consumers may have obtained knowledge of a product placement either from the Internet or from books, marketing journals or articles. Hence, product placements are not so mysterious or unknown to them anymore. It is hard for audiences to trust one brand placed in TV programmes nowadays, since they have no idea whether they characters in the TV programme are paid to consume the products or not (Kay 2012, p.2).

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the ethical problems of product placements result from the overemphasis of product labels or brand logos, the excessive integrity of the products and the story lines, and the trust in the product placed in TV programmes or movies. Therefore, in order to avoid these ethical problems, advertisers should select adequate marketing strategies and ensure the relevancy of the products placed and the natural development of the story lines in TV programmes and movies.

3.1.5 Product placement and narcotizing dysfunction

In article mass communication, popular taste and organized social action, Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton first identified narcotizing dysfunction. In this article, Paul and Robert mentioned that mass media have three social functions of the mass media. The first function is the status conferral function, the second function is enforcement of social norms, and the third function is the narcotizing dysfunction. Paul and Robert defined the narcotizing dysfunction as “It has received little explicit comment and, apparently, has not been systematically put to use for furthering
planned objectives. (Paul & Robert 1948, p.22)’ The authors also states that the flood of information from the media serves to narcotize rather than energize the average reader or listener. In TV programs, reader or listener here can be regarded as the average audiences.

According to Paul Lazarsfeld (1948, pp.20-38), social roles of mass media lie in that it shapes social principles and generate reform movements to the society gradually. Nowadays, people have more leisure time and they can get access to various information with rapid development of mass media tools, such as televisions, radios, internet and so on. Those events raised or mentioned in mass media can rapidly cause widespread impacts among audiences.

According to Baran (2009, pp.179-180), narcotizing dysfunction, one of the first media effects, using in-depth functional analysis. “The idea that as news about an issue inundates people, they become apathetic to it...These findings were disturbing because they suggested that even when media are effective at surveying the environment and calling attention to societal problems (a manifest function), ...media coverage might ‘narcotize’ [the public] so that they become apathetic and decide that they are powerless to do anything (a latent dysfunction). (Baran et al. 2009, pp.179-180)”

Barcus and Jankowski describe the narcotizing dysfunction as “the drug culture”. According to Barcus and Jankowski (1975, p.87), “television has been considered a ‘passive’ medium, that is, leading to passivity in the population.” It means that television is the medium of product placement, which narcotize audiences gradually. Brodlie (1972, pp.489-533) also consider that excessive television viewing make a great contribution on the development of a lifestyle which seeks pleasure and passivity at the same time. When it comes to the advertisement on the television, Nicholas Johnson has the similar view. He regards the television as “the pusher”. He thinks that television helps a lot of indicators selling their products. (Barcus & Jankowski 1975, p.89)
According to Schaefer (2013, p.1), this narcotizing dysfunction influence younger ages a lot, because of young people cannot escape commercial messages. They often surface in the different form of product placement. Furthermore, advertisers are trying to develop brand loyalty at younger ages.

From this point of view, product placement inserted in mass media can reach consumers without interrupting their entertainment needs. As Paul mentioned, “this social consequence of the mass media has gone largely unnoticed. (Paul&Robert 1948, p.65)” On the other hands, Paul also states that mass media has narcotizing dysfunction which will push audiences to trust something through continuous information exposure. However, media information exposure may cause audiences to accept knowledge passively instead of active participation. This implies that product placements in mass medias should be applied appropriately so as to avoid narcotizing dysfunction. (ibid, p.23)

### 3.2 Mass consumption

#### 3.2.1 Definitions of mass consumption

Consumption refers to a process whereby all goods and services are ultimately used by consumers. However, economic activities do not end at the hands of individual consumers; instead, consumption is a continuous economic activity driven by consumers’ evaluations of the goods and sources provided by factories. Upon adopting the advice of consumers, factories improve manufacturing techniques and reproduce goods for consumers (Alfred 1955, pp.285-309).

Meanwhile, according to Adam Smith, consumption is the ultimate purpose of production and it is regarded as a form of welfare offered by producers and promoted to consumers (Jovanocis 1989, pp. 695-699).
A large number of scholars have investigated consumption as a social phenomenon in the 20th century, and different approaches have been adopted to analyse different aspects of consumptions in society. In the economic field, Abraham Maslow (1954, p.13) has put forward a demand pyramid of human beings. According to the pyramid, basic survival needs are set as a foundation, followed by safety wants, social wants and esteem wants - the top of the pyramid was called “self-actualization”. Maslow announced that needs are inspired by wants and that they represent increasing levels of consumers’ materiality and spirituality desires (Maslow 1954, p.5). From this point of view, mass consumption is a common need of human beings inspired by their wants.

In the opinion of social researchers, mass consumption is a social distinction created by a certain group of people through their consumption behaviour (Bourdieu 1998, pp.235-242). The consumer culture emerging at the beginning of 19th century regarded fashion as a dignity of a higher class of people, and consumption behaviours were then divided into richer and poorer classes. In the opinion of Bourdieu, mass consumption refers to some majority of people who enjoy the same consumption behaviour and pursue the same kind of fashion (Bourdieu 1998, p. 242).

Furthermore, and according to the urban dictionary21, mass consumption is defined as the use of goods by individual consumers or companies that manufacture goods or services. For the factories, this can lead to waste and a higher usage rate of natural resources. On the other hand, it can make consumers suffer from various stresses, such as having space less, more debt and higher obesity rates.

Originating in the 1920s, mass consumption contrasts with mass poverty. In a mass poverty society, most people consume small amounts of goods and they will only consume according to their purchasing power. However, in a mass consumption society, consumption demand is high and most consumers convey high purchasing

power. Meanwhile, mass consumption arises from consumers’ desires for mass production (Rostow 1960, p.389).

Meanwhile, mass consumption will only occur when a product price is reasonably low and when consumers have sufficient purchasing power and desire to purchase the goods. This is to say that consumers must be attracted by the goods advertised in the various media. Moreover, from this point of view, those advertisers who want to promote their products as a mass consumption trend must be familiar with consumers’ psychologies and the salient characters of their products (Stokey 1988, pp. 714-717).

3.2.2 Development of mass consumption societies

In general, a mass consumption society refers to a majority group of people who enjoy the benefits of increasing productivity and continuously expand the scope of their consumer goods. In the opinion of many scholars, the development of a mass consumption society is a relatively new social phenomenon. As Katona states, due to mass production and the higher levels of consumers’ purchasing power, luxury items like clothing, automobiles, and so on, are no longer symbols of the rich. The majority of people can also enjoy these things and thereby generate increasing demand for them (Katona 1964, p.898).

As mentioned earlier, mass consumption is a result of mass production. In the 1920s, new machines and technologies were introduced in factories and with better machinery workers were able to manufacture more products and employers could offer higher wages to employees in return. Furthermore, higher wages enabled employees to generate a higher demand for goods. It is recorded that the average employee income had risen from $1,250 to over $1,600 from 1920 to 1930 (Katona 1964, p.918).
Meanwhile, a new payment system was also set up in society - credit - which allows consumers to pay for goods in instalments. In other words, consumers can pre-consume what they want prior to making a full payment for it. From an economic perspective, overspending will cause economic depression. However, and in contrast, the social economy has experienced positive growth since the establishment of credit payment systems. This is due to the fact that consumers have more purchasing power and that factories are more motivated to manufacture more goods for consumers (Katona 1964, p. 988).

The mass consumption society was initially used to describe American society, where the majority of people enjoy the benefits of mass production and consume the largest amount of goods through instalments. Nowadays, not only America but also other countries such as Canada, Australia, Japan and most European countries, have reached their highest levels of mass consumption (Rostow 1960, pp.389-422).

For example, in America most products - such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, irons, heaters and refrigerators - have freed most American housewives from the bulk of housework. This is to say that the manufacture of these home appliances was driven by consumer demand rather than by military demand during World War II. Nowadays, it can be widely seen that most commercial advertisements of home appliances propagandize their products by showing the “dream” American kitchen in various media (Tarski 1955, pp. 289-301).

Besides home appliances, other products are widely consumed by American housewives, since they have more independence following the feminist movement. They have more spare time for leisure activities, such as music concerts, parties, sports games and so on. Moreover, American housewives also have more ways to satisfy their spiritual needs, e.g., by watching movies. Furthermore, growing wages have allowed American to move into modern cities and enjoy better the products for
consumption provided by factories. Finally, a modern mass consumption society has formed and most citizens live a middle-class lifestyle (Matsuyama 2000, pp. 321-334).

In addition, in developed countries where economies are driven by consumers, advertisers compete in promoting products to consumers in various ways. With the popularity of mass consumption, the idea of necessities and luxuries have been changed since many consumers can afford to buy many goods - such as washing machines, mobile phones, televisions, automobiles, air conditioners and so on – that were considered to be luxuries a century ago. These goods are now regarded as necessities in developed countries (Matsuyama 1991, pp. 320-334).

Meanwhile, citizens in developed countries are now facing a wider range of choices of goods and services. Furthermore, and with globalization, products originating in any part of the world can be made locally and provided in local supermarkets in a short time (Kiminori 1991, pp.317-334). Consumption patterns have also changed a lot, with a high waste-rate of materials. It is easy to purchase any substitutes for any goods nowadays. For instance, the most popular mobile phone is now the iPhone and, after the release of iPhone 5, other mobile phone brands also promoted a similar product to compete for a larger market share, such as the Samsung Galaxy S4, HTC One X, Butterfly, etc. These mobile phones will be rapidly substituted by newer versions in the future and consumers do not have to worry about how to dispose of them, since they will go out of fashion as time goes by. In fact, in a mass consumption society consumers will consume more than they need. It is not only the consumerist culture, but also the advanced technologies and rapid innovations that force consumers to consume more goods than ever before.

Mandese (2006, p.12) has suggested that a mass consumption society is indeed a society where all goods are thrown away by consumers and where the permanence of the goods has vanished. In the opinion of Alvin, it is the throw-away consumption
pattern that promotes the development of a mass consumption society. Most consumers consume a great deal beyond their limits and the effect of the trend towards mass consumption has resulted in various dangers to society, including global warming and resource shortages. It is also said that the development of a mass consumption society is more likely to affect the continuity of human beings, since consumers are demanding endless products and services. The just throw away products when they get tired of them instead of using them up. As a result, waste and pollution are everywhere (Mandese 2006, p. 12).

In general, development of a mass consumption society indicates that consumers’ demands have become a determinant factor and that the over-supply of goods has resulted in a greater proportion of waste. With globalization, a mass consumption society is more likely to be expanded into developing countries in the near future. As Aoyagi-Usui (2001, p.15) has mentioned, global consumption reached $24 trillion in 1998, which was twice that in 1975 and 6 times that in 1950. The benefit of a mass consumption society is also visible, since more consumers are enjoying better products and services than ever before. However, its development also results in certain problems beyond pollution and waste. For instance, in less developed countries poor people are suffering from unequal consumption. Meanwhile, globalization itself is posing new inequalities and challenges for the protection of consumer rights, since information flows are unbalanced among different countries. There remain over one billion people whose consumption levels must be raised (Aoyagi-Usui 2001, pp. 15-18). Hence, in the following, it will be necessary to analyse the patterns of mass consumption in mass consumption societies in order to find out how consumers have reacted to the development of mass consumption in recent years.

3.2.3 Patterns of mass consumption

The level of consumption determines different levels of demand for goods and
services. Hence, mass consumption patterns vary from one country to another. Moreover, with increasing globalization, patterns of mass consumption are also affected by international companies. For example, the consumption of goods produced by McDonald’s in different countries has greatly changed the mass consumption patterns of local consumers. Another factor that affects mass consumption patterns involves advanced technologies. More goods will go out of fashion and be abandoned by consumers – that is to say that the life cycle of goods will be shorter than before (Grahame 1989, pp.137-143).

Meanwhile, patterns of mass consumption also vary among different groups of people. For instance, elite consumers prefer branded luxuries while middle-class groups of consumers will buy what they can afford and purchase some luxurious goods in instalments. However, lower income groups of consumers can only afford to buy daily necessities (Grahame 1989, pp.137-143). From this point of view, it can be seen that mass consumption patterns are unequal among different social groups. There is no common consumption pattern in a given society. The larger the gap between rich and poor, the more diversified mass consumption patterns will be.

Meanwhile, according to David, there are five main social classes of consumers in society, namely the upper-class, the middle-class, the working-class and self-employed workers and farmers, and the unemployed. In society, the mass consumption pattern is different among these five groups (David 1989, pp. 140-143).

Firstly, the upper-class – i.e., those whose wealth and income takes up 5% to 10% of the total wealth in society - is highly influenced by the newest fashion culture; they lead a consumerist lifestyle and possess all kinds of luxurious goods, including expensive furniture, luxurious mansions, food, entertainment appliances and leisure facilities. Meanwhile, they are also enjoying the most advanced medical facilities (David 1989, p. 141).
On the other hand, middle-class consumers own or rent apartments to live in. Some of them have private cars, while some still have to travel by public transport. They are able to afford adequate food and medical facilities. They have middle-class fitted entertainment facilities and the appropriate fashion products. They can also buy some branded clothes and other accessories from time to time. However, luxuries are not the primary consumption items for middle-class consumers (David 1989, p. 142).

Meanwhile, working-class consumers, including farmers and self-employed workers, follow a mass consumption pattern in order to satisfy their basic survival needs. Most people in developing countries exhibit this kind of mass consumption pattern. They can only afford to buy enough food for their families and they can only support their children to go to public school. They form a mass consumption market filled with cheap goods, including clothes, food, shoes and so on. They can only consume products made by domestic enterprises or from local farmland. From this point of view, working-class consumers greatly support the development of the domestic economy (David 1989, p. 143).

However, such working-class consumers have been largely influenced by the middle-class market. For example, some working-class consumers will also choose to buy some branded goods during a sales promotion period. Beverages and soft drinks, which are made by international companies, are now also consumed by working-class consumers. Furthermore, influenced by advertisements, young consumers from the working-class also follow the fashion trends enjoyed by middle-class consumers. They frequently persuade their parents to purchase the luxury brands of clothes, shoes and various video game players (David 1989, p.142).

Finally, unemployed people have low or no income at all. Hence, they can only afford to buy inadequate amounts of food for their families. Meanwhile, they are hardly able to afford any fashionable clothing, footwear or other luxuries. All poor families are
unable to pay for adequate medical treatment when they are sick (David 1989, p.143).

In general, patterns of mass consumption largely depend upon wealth and income distributions. Different groups of consumers make different demands for manufactured products. In view of the various patterns of mass consumption, marketers have suggested that all consumers should go through five purchasing steps (Huberman 2007, pp. 107-119).

First of all, consumers need to recognize their needs and compare their situation with those whom they desire to reach. For example, consumers may feel dissatisfied with their athletic shoes when they see the newest versions in advertisements. This is called the “problem recognition step” (Huberman 2007, p. 110).

Secondly, upon knowing their needs and desires, consumers will search on the Internet or in stores in order to find out sufficient information about the products. Meanwhile, consumers may also make their purchasing decisions through their past experience or else through consulting with their friends, families or through advertisements, etc. This is called the “information search process” (Wu 2007, p.105).

In the third step, consumers will compare alternative choices based upon what they derive from the information gathered in the second step. For instance, some consumers will prefer to try new things, while some will prefer to try branded products. In the fourth step, consumers will make purchasing decisions based upon their focus of interest (Wu 2007, p.107).

Finally, and after the purchase, consumers will share their opinions with their families and friends about the product quality and decide whether to continuously purchase those items or not.

From the above considerations, it can be seen that whatever the patterns of mass
consumption, the key lies in consumers’ needs or wants in relation to a certain product (Wu 2007, p.110). Based on the above analysis, it can be understood that marketers should formulate different marketing strategies to different consumer groups and try to find out the consumption desires or demands of the target consumer group.

3.2.4 Impact of mass consumption

The rapid development of mass consumption in the world has had an impact in various ways, including the over-supply of commercial goods, environmental pollution and progressive consumer demand (Matsuyama 2002, pp. 1045-1059).

First of all, as Taylor mentioned, the cost of mass consumption for the world’s natural resources is huge, and with increasing demand for consumption, some natural resources will probably run out in the future. The energy required to drive consumerist lifestyles in developed countries is causing various forms of environmental damage to the earth, such as the global warming effect. The costs of the excessive consumption of the world’s resources is huge. Some resources are in finite supply and could simply run out. In developing countries, precious land is used to plant cash crops, such as coffee, tea, cotton and so on. These materials are then shipped to developed countries and processed to be sold in coffee shops and tea shops. The mass production of factories in developing countries is also exploiting the natural resources and labour force as well (Taylor 2010, pp. 131-139).

Meanwhile, according to Taylor, developed countries are generating greater amount of waste due to unnecessary packaging. Goods are abandoned simply because they are out of fashion rather than because they are useless. In a mass consumption world, everything is temporary and consumers continuously seek newer and better products. Meanwhile, producers are trying every means to promote their goods through various media, attracting consumers all over the world (Taylor 2010, p. 133).
Secondly, in order to satisfy their consumption demands and progressive purchasing patterns, consumers need to work for longer hours to earn more money. With increasing purchasing demands, consumers spend most of their money on buying things and have less time to enjoy life. All they do is to make more money and pay for commercial goods to satisfy their entertainment needs (Brock 2010, p. 130).

The consumption of goods and services has been popular in developed countries. According to Matsuyama, there are over 1.7 billion consumers in developing countries, which is nearly a quarter of the population. The consumerist lifestyle and culture has become prevalent in Europe, North America, Japan and other developing countries (Matsuyama 2002, pp. 1051-1070). According to Solow (2005, p.39), it is said that in 2000, the total expenditure on household goods and services reached $20 trillion, which was four time higher than that in 1960. Meanwhile, as income rises, consumers can gain access to various consumer items, such as televisions, refrigerators and so on. It is said that about 75% consumers owned at least one television in 2002. Meanwhile, in 2003, more than 11,000 cars emerged on Chinese roads and over 4 million new private cars were registered within China. China experienced an increase of auto sales of 60% in 2002 and in the first half of 2003 there was an increase of 80%. Experts estimate that if this growth trend continues, there will be over 150 million cars on China’s streets by the end of 2015, which is 18 million more than were driven on American streets in 1999 (Solow 2005, pp.39-43).

On the other hand, and according to Thompson, the United States – which has less than 5% of the global population - consumes about 25% of the world’s natural resources, including 25% of its coal, 26% of its oil and 27% of its natural gas. Meanwhile, it has been said that the number of private cars is greater than the number of public transport vehicles. Moreover, American citizens owned larger houses in 2002 than in 1975, in spite of there being fewer people per household (Thompson, 2010, pp.140-151).
Based on the above data, it can be estimated that if consumption levels continue to increase along with the growth of the total population, then water supplies, air quality, forests, global climate and human beings’ health will be in danger because of this trend.

Meanwhile, according to Jones, consumers who conduct progressive consumerist lifestyles confront a heavy burden of financial debts since they are attracted by various goods and make prepayment through their credit cards. It is reported that about 61% of American credit card holders had a monthly balance of $12,000, with an interest rate of 16%, indicating that credit card holders need to pay an average interest of $1,900 per year. This figure exceeds the average per capita income in most developing countries. Meanwhile, aggressive mass consumption lifestyles have resulted in declining health conditions in many countries. The American health organization announced that over 65% of American adults were overweight or suffered from obesity, resulting in $117 billion in expenditure on healthcare treatment in 1999 (Jones 2010, pp. 240-245).

Thirdly, in order to meet the demand of consumers, producers have to research and develop newer styles of product by making full use of the current economic system, resulting in various environmental problems, such as air pollution, water pollution and so on. Nowadays, almost the entire ecosystem is making way for factories’ manufacturing needs. Meanwhile, farm land is being replaced by shopping malls, commercial buildings and so on. The Living Planet Index shows that the earth’s ecological health condition has declined by 35% since 1970. Economists and marketers have been seeking creative ways to attract consumers while dampening the environmental balance (Folli 2006, pp. 947-950).

In general, the impact of mass consumption has affected consumers’ lifestyles, the modes of production of factories and various environmental problems. During the
mass consumption process, consumers play an important role; hence, in the following, it is necessary to examine the role of individuals in consumer society.

### 3.2.5 The role of individuals in consumer society

McKendrick et al., (1982, p.336) have stated that a consumer society emerged in England in the 19\(^{th}\) century when the acquisition of commodities became easier and people could purchase those items that had been inherited beforehand. The rapid pace of development can be examined due to the emerging network of stores and the shorter lifespan of commodities. In the past, a fashion could last for a lifetime, while nowadays it might only last for a year or less (McKendrick et al., 1982, p.336).

To most consumers, commodities are needed due to their various functions - for example, keeping warm, storing food, satisfying entertainment needs and so on (Prentice 1987, p.1). Meanwhile, Forty (1986, p.134) suggests that the design of commodities will change according to individuals’ needs. Hence, in modern society there are more DIY and custom-made goods. From this, it can be understood that individuals are actual decision-makers who can determine future fashion trends and the prevalence of a certain commodity, etc., within consumer society. Assuming that prices and the quality of the goods are mediated by the consumers’ perceptions, consumers will then make purchasing decisions of the goods. People make different decisions in purchasing a certain commodity since they have different needs to be satisfied and they hope that, by owning the goods, their needs can be satisfied. Upon recognizing the necessity of purchasing, individuals can then decide where to buy it, when to buy and how much to budget for it (Friedman & Zimmer 1988, pp.31-40).

The rational model suggests that there are certain determining factors involved in the purchase decision process, including the price, quality and time required to be spent on purchasing. It is said that consumers with a higher income spend less time in
shopping, while those with less income spend more time in bargaining and seeking for discounts (Goldman 1977, p. 67). Recognizing the relevant factors in the purchasing process, retailers can offer the appropriate price and quality of different products to consumers at different income levels. Meanwhile, retailers will focus on maintaining the uniqueness of their products by establishing self-brand names. In doing so, consumers can be attracted by brand exposure in various media and make purchasing decisions based upon examining the quality of the goods and through reviewing feedback on the Internet.

According to Goldman, there are also various cultural differences which can affect the purchasing decisions of individuals. Consumers in different regions hold different measurements of “good value” for some commodities. For instance, when purchasing furniture, consumers from different countries present different cultural judgments of taste in furniture beyond the quality and the price (Goldman 1977, p.70).

According to a consumer study conducted by Berger, consumers will buy more goods that are allocating at eye-level positions. For heavy goods, consumers will choose to buy those displayed at floor level. Hence, marketers or retailers can allocate the same category of goods in the same position in order to recall the purchasing intentions of consumers (Berger 1992, pp. 83-85).

Last but not least, consumers are more likely to buy commodities only if they see obvious benefits for themselves and their friends or families, or if people around them will approve of the purchasing value of the commodities (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975, p.1157).

Based upon consumers’ involvement, motivation and consumption styles, they can be classified according to several types, including economic consumers, personalizing consumers, ethical consumers and apathetic consumers (Lindquist 1974, pp. 29-38).
Economic consumers are those who make purchasing decisions based upon price, quality and the assortment of commodities instead of relying upon service. However, personalizing consumers are most concerned with interactions in shops and they enjoy the pleasure of bargaining. Ethical consumers are motivated by their duties and they will purchase commodities at local shops to help them out. Finally, apathetic consumers are those who make purchasing decisions based upon necessity and who mainly focus on convenience when making purchasing decisions (Lindquist 1974, pp. 29-38).

According to Mead, different consumers make different purchasing decisions according to different needs - some aim to find pleasure in shopping, some aim at utilizing economical strategies in shopping, and some use shopping to reward themselves or others, and so on. Based upon the differences between consumers’ shopping experiences, consumers can also be divided into five shopping groups – “alternative consumers”, “routine consumers”, “leisure consumers”, “careful consumers” and “thrifty consumers” (Mead 1956, pp.567-569).

As Miller has mentioned, alternative consumers do not wait for discounts or promotional activities in stores; instead, they will buy from alternative markets. For example, they will buy second-hand books, jewellery, clothes and so on, from time to time. They stay out of the reach of consumerist pressures; they do not need to do their shopping with the aim of rewarding themselves or others and they will not follow fashion trends either (Miller 1987, pp.135-140).

Routine consumers will make purchasing decisions once they need something. They do not wait for sales or promotions either and, similar to alternative consumers, they are not affected by modern consumerism either (Miller 1987, pp.135-140).

By way of contrast, and as Moscovici mentioned, leisure consumers will make purchasing decisions to reward themselves or others. Meanwhile, they hold a neutral
attitudes toward alternative markets and often make purchasing decisions on impulse. Leisure consumers are the stereotype of modern consumerism and they are pleased to spend time and money on shopping - they always want newer designs of products and do not consider economical purchases (Moscovici 1981, p.88).

According to Nava, careful consumers will make purchasing decisions largely on clothes, presents and furniture rather than on food. This kind of consumer will also avoid alternative markets but they do consider the economical benefits of their shopping decisions. They simply enjoy the activity of consumption more than the selection of products. Meanwhile, thrifty consumers like to do shopping with their families for food, clothes and presents instead of purchasing food. They will wait for sales of expensive commodities and consider any economical benefits while making purchasing decisions. They will use all kinds of alternative markets and are moderately engaged in modern consumerism. However, they are rational, not wanting newer products for the sake of it (Nava 1991, pp. 86-113).

3.2.6 Mass media and mass consumption

According to Malikhao, “media” refers to tools for propagandizing the facts and opinions of social groups; it includes newspapers, magazines, movies, radio, TV and the Internet. “Mass media” refers to those media which can reach a large audience. The concept of mass media was coined in the 1920s when national radio networks and international newspapers initially adopted it as a concept and viewed mass media audiences as forming a mass consumption society with unique characteristics. “Mass consumption” refers to those products or services consumed by a large percentage of the population (Malikhao 2011, pp.15-19).

As Malikhao states, in modern society TV, radio, movies, newspapers and magazines, etc., can be defined as mass media. With the help of mass media, marketers can affect the mode of mass consumption - for instance, they can affect how consumers will buy,
how they will dress and where they will purchase the best quality items (Malikhao 2011, pp.15-19).

According to George, in the modern consumerist society, mass distribution relies upon mass media and, on the other hand, mass media will have an impact on mass consumption. Individual choice theory suggests that marketers should explore the needs of consumers by utilizing the mass media. Mass consumption reflects the balance between individuals’ needs and their need to be similar to a certain social group (George 1934, p.152). Consumers’ needs are reflections of their internal psychological and cognitive condition and the mass media constitute a source of information which can be utilized by consumers in make purchasing decisions. A common goal of various marketing and advertising forms is to stimulate or recall the internal needs of consumers.

Nowadays, with increasing popularity of the mass media consumers are exposed to various products and tempted to purchase commodities and get to know various new brands through the mass media. According to Borgmann, the mass media are considered to be effective tools for commercial enterprises in reaching the greatest number of target consumers. Meanwhile, the availability of the mass media allows marketers to represent product characteristics to audiences, either by text messages or else by visual or audio messages. Moreover, with the rapid development of TV and the Internet, consumers can access as much product information as they wish (Borgmann 2000, pp. 310-326).

On the other hand, mass consumption modes are largely dependent upon the mass media. It is the mass media that disseminates information about mass consumption products and makes products more attractive to consumers (Cova 1997, p. 304).

According to Cova (1997, p.308), the mass media enables marketers to have more channels to promote their products and to reach their target consumers more
effectively and rapidly than ever before. The marketing strategies have changed with the development of the mass media. Wherever there is a new emerging form of mass media, there will huge potential for marketers to propagandize their products. On the other hand, mass consumption modes are reflected in the popularity of the various mass media. Meanwhile, a common goal in the selection of the mass media is to enhance the level of the effectiveness of marketing with the least cost.

3.2.7 The gatekeeping theory in mass consumption societies

According to Stacks and Salwen (2009, p.1), Kurt Lewin first coins the word “gatekeeping”. Stacks and Salwen defined gatekeeping as “the process by which countless occurrences and ideas are reduced to the few messages we are offered in our news media.” Pamela Shoemaker and Tim Vos (2009, p.1) defined gatekeeping as the “process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people everyday. […] This process determines not only which information is selected, but also what the content and nature of the messages.”

Since “gatekeeping models have become increasingly sophisticated as theorists consider wider ranges of the external pressures on gatekeepers and the internal characteristics of the individual gatekeepers and the system that employs them (Chris 2005, p.2)”, this conceptual model related to the gatekeeping theory simply and clearly in media field, not in other fields. The progress of gatekeeping is shown in the following figure. The gatekeepers pick up some news items N_{1,2,3,4} among the source of news items N. N_{2,3} was selected and pass the gate successfully. Meanwhile, the N_{1,4} returns back. Finally, N_{2,3} was received by audiences M. (White 1964, pp.160-172)
Graphic 1.23: conceptual model

The gatekeeping theory suggests that there are several components that affect consumers’ decision-making process. Hence, advertisers need to decide which messages to be presented to audiences so that they can grab consumers’ attentions and make full use of mass media (Chris 2005, pp.9-12). The gatekeeping theory indicates that individuals are willing to conduct active communication with their surroundings. Besides, each information channel is surrounded different gates. For example, in families, housewives are gatekeepers who control what can be delivered to their dining table. Similarly, in mass media, advertisers are gatekeepers who decide what messages to be delivered to audiences so that they can reach target consumers with minimal costs. On consumers’ side, consumers are also regarded as gatekeepers and decide to accept relevant product information that they are interested in (Lewin 1947, p.145).

Brown also suggests that in regard with gatekeeping theory, advertisers needs to comply with an approach of “source-message-receiver” while inserting product placement in mass medias. Advertisers need to select appropriate messages to be presented to audiences. Besides, audiences should be targeted previously so that advertisers know what messages to be selected in order to realize maximum effectiveness of their product placement in mass medias (Brown 1979, p.597).

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22 Data source: (White 1964)
4. Methodology

In this chapter, the main research method is elaborated upon. First of all, the research design of this thesis is illustrated, including the case study and the qualitative and quantitative research. Secondly, the data collection methods, including interviews and online questionnaires, are introduced. Finally, the importance of data analysis and the relevant ethical issues is considered.

4.1 Sampling

15 men and 15 women, aged 18 to 50, were interviewed between March and April 2013. In addition, 50 men and 50 women, aged 18 to 55, filled in the questionnaire between February and March 2013. All of the participants lived in China. Since China has a very large population and “If you are the one” is very famous, the number of samples requires as many as possible. However, my time and energy is limited, 100 people is the most I can do for now. In order to get better results, I also conducted 30 interviews besides the 100 questionnaires.

The selection of the participants was made in the following way. First, my friend who worked at Jiangsu TV station gives me a list of information about their audiences. This information can be obtained through their forum Baidu Tieba. Baidu Tieba is the largest Chinese forum provided by search engine Baidu. (Millward 2011, pp.1) Second, since this information was very basic - it included email addresses and gender - I began to send them questionnaires by email at the beginning of February, randomly. There are two standards how I picked the 100 people. On one hand, I need to make sure that they have completely watched at least one edition of “If you are the one”. So I can be make sure they have watched the product placements, which insert in the programme. On the other hand, the elements gender and age need to be considered when choosing candidates. So I go fifty-fifty on man and woman, and then equally divide them among different age groups. Next, and at the end of the questionnaire, I also asked them whether they would like to accept my interview.
Third, after they had answered my questionnaire, 32 of them stated that they would be willing to accept my conducting an interview with them. I eventually chose 15 men and 15 women. Since they lived in different cities, the research was conducted in Beijing. Thus, I conducted 8 face-to-face interviews in Beijing and 22 by telephone interview.

During the beginning of the questionnaire, very few people replied. I then gave each of the participants a prepaid telephone card worth 10 RMB. Finally, I successfully acquired the information needed.

### 4.2 Research design

Content analysis or discourse analysis cannot reach the goal of this thesis, because of I want to collect the results from general people instead of the discourse in TV programmes. In order to explore “the relationship between product placement in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption”, questionnaire and interview methods are both fit this research question. Questionnaire method can investigate a large amount of people, but not an in-depth way. Interview method can collect more details from interviewees, but the sample is too small. So I made a decision to use both questionnaire and interview methods. I adopted a scientific research strategy and divided it into two parts.

In the first part, I conducted a face-to-face interview with 8 selected participants and conducted telephone interviews with 22 selected participants who had watched the recreational TV program “If You Are the One”, and each of them was asked several questions (which are included in Appendix I).

Secondly, I also conducted online questionnaires in order to further explore the impact of product placement in recreational TV programmes upon mass consumption. A total of 100 participants who had watched the same TV programme as the
interviewees were selected and the researcher sent questionnaires to them by e-mail. In order to ensure effectiveness of questions designed for the interviews and the online survey, the researcher also conducted pilot interviews and pilot questionnaires among her friends. Based on the pilot survey results, the researcher revised some questions both in the interview and in the questionnaire.

4.2.1 Case study

The aim of conducting the case study research method is to focus on the main research problem and to discover the different variables that affect the research results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, p.29).

According to Yin, the forms of case studies vary from exploratory to descriptive. The degree of the various forms depends upon the in-deep insights of the research goal (Yin 2003, p.17). The case study method enables researchers to employ various forms of sampling in justification of their choices. Researchers can select as many cases as possible and analyse them with adequate sampling techniques.

Thus, this research focused on just one case, the recreational TV programme “If You Are the One”, and investigated how product placement embedded in the TV programme affected mass consumption.

4.2.2 Qualitative and quantitative research

While conducting studies, researchers have a wide range of research methods to select from, among which the two main research methods that are widely adopted by researchers are the quantitative research method and the qualitative research method (Myers 1997, pp. 241-242).
Forms of qualitative research method include observation, interviews, discussion groups, and so on. The advantage of the qualitative research method lies in that it allows researchers to understand the researched phenomenon in a natural context (Cresswell 1994, p. 179).

Distinct from quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods aim to explore or justify a new theory. Hence, most of the qualitative research results are demonstrated by quoting participants’ opinions, which cannot be quantified or counted (Leach 1990, pp. 16-18). By adopting qualitative research methods - for instance interviews - researchers are more able to ask open questions in order to get more information from interviewees. However, in quantitative studies, participants can only choose those answers that are pre-determined by the researcher. From this point of view, the aim of the qualitative research method is to illustrate the research topics from the perspective of the participants; the researchers only need to present different empirical evidence to support research hypothesis (Duffy 1987, pp. 130-133).

Furthermore, researchers are more able to obtain primary data from qualitative studies since participants’ opinions can be tape recorded during the research process (Podsakoff 1994, pp. 1-2). In general, qualitative research requires less time and is more cost-effective. All the researcher needs to do is select typical samples and carry out the investigation (ibid.).
4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Interviews

The researcher has chosen semi-structured interviews. Interviews in general can vary and include semi-structured, structured, unstructured and in-depth interviews. Among all these four forms, the semi-structured interview is most widely adopted by researchers. By adopting semi-structured interviews, they are able to explore detailed information from participants. In other words, more data can be collected in semi-structured interviews (Burman 1997, pp. 795-800).

Qualitative interviews are often conducted on a one-to-one basis whereby interviewers can ask interviewees questions in a personal setting. By initiating more questions based upon the interviewees’ responses, interviewers can explore the individualized attitudes, opinions and social values held by interviewees. However, due to the limited time available, researchers may suffer from an abundance information without exploring the essence of this information during the interviewing process (Ryan 2000, pp. 453-455).

Frederikson suggests that an interview is an effective way to collect primary data in absence of a theory (Frederikson et al. 1996, pp. 51-69). For instance, in this research there is little theoretical evidence as to the relationships between recreational TV programmes and mass consumption. Hence, it is necessary for researchers to carry out face-to-face interviews in order to find out how a product placed in recreational TV programmes affects mass consumption.

The aim of conducting the qualitative interviews in this research is to find out about the recognition of product placements in a recreational TV programme and their impact on consumers. Hence, the researcher designed 7 questions for the interview, which are shown in Appendix I.
Question 1 looks to investigate interviewees’ interests in relation to this recreational TV programme.

Question 2 aims at explore the efficacy of product placement embedded in this TV programme.

Question 3 targets exploring the most effective product placement in this TV programme among consumers.

Question 4 is designed to specify the efficacy of product placement in this TV programme.

Question 5 tries to find out the product placement’s impact on consumers’ purchasing behaviour.

Question 6 seeks to find out the varying impact of product placement upon mass consumption.

Finally, question 7 has as a goal to find out about consumers’ opinions as to the future trends of product placement.

It can be seen that questions 1 and 2 are basic questions. Their function is to warm up the atmosphere of the interview. Question 3 is designed to answer the research question I - “What kinds of products are the most influential product placement type?” Questions 4 and 5 aim to measure the efficacy of product placement, which is related to the research question II. Question 6 aims to find out the dominant impact of product placement, which relates to research question III. Finally, question 7 aims to answer research question IV - “What is the future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption?” Based on these interview questions, the researcher will be able ask some follow-up questions in more depth.

The researcher can obtain various elements of qualitative data from interviews, for example, differing impact of product placement on mass consumption, the different types of product placements, and so on. However, it was also necessary to conduct a questionnaire in order to collect quantitative data and to further analyse the relationships between product placement and mass consumption.
4.3.2 Online Questionnaires

Being a modern research method, online questionnaires have been widely applied by researchers in different research fields. Moreover, with the increasing popularity of the Internet, online questionnaires also dominate other traditional quantitative research methods because of their cost effectiveness (Kotler et al. 2008, p.357). All of the participants were Chinese and they lived in different cities. Hence, the sending of online questionnaires to collect the participants’ views represents a reasonable means to conduct this research.

Online questionnaires can also help researchers to collect important information from participants without meeting them in person. Hence - compared with face-to-face interviews - the online questionnaire process is simpler. All the researcher needs to do is design the research questions and answers in the questionnaire. Meanwhile, an opening letter will be detailed on the face of the questionnaire, stating the research purpose and issues relating to the participants’ privacy. Moreover, upon completing the questionnaire, all of the respondents would be rewarded with a prepaid mobile phone card as a gift.

One salient characteristic of an online questionnaire is that it can save time and money. As Kevin says, “internet-based survey research...allow a researcher to reach thousands of people with common characteristics in a short amount of time. It can also save money by moving to an electronic medium from a paper format. (Wright 2005, p.3)”

Prior to the formal interview and the online survey, the researcher also conducted pilot interviews and questionnaires to test the effectiveness of the designed questions. To do that, the researcher selected 10 friends and did pilot research. Upon analysing
the pilot result, the researcher revised some of the interview questions and those in the questionnaires.

The formal questionnaire participants were randomly selected from audiences who had watched the recreational TV programme “If You Are the One”. The researcher has some friends who work on the Jiangsu TV channel; therefore, it was easy for her to gain access to the audiences’ e-mail addresses. A total of 100 participants were selected to reply to the questions designed in the questionnaire.

The online questionnaire consists of 17 questions. Questions 1 and 2 seek to find out the basic demographic information of the participants. Questions 3 and 4 aim to find out about the participants’ interest in If You Are the One. Question 5 looks to find out about the impact of different product types placed in the programme and so are related to the research question I. Question 6 is intended to explore the efficacy of product placement among consumers, which is related to research question II. Question 7 investigates the actual effect of product placement on consumers; the answers from this question are related to research question III. Questions 8 to 17 all investigate consumers’ perceptions of the product placements and are related to research question IV. The questions are asked deeply.

The aim of interview is to explore different types of product placements and their concerned impacts and efficacy. Meanwhile, a main goal of online questionnaire is to further investigate consumers’ views and changes of their purchasing behaviour upon seeing product placement in the TV programme.

### 4.4 Data analysis

The aim of data analysis is to summarize the collected data and obtain a basic understanding as to how the variables affect the research questions (Reason 2001,
Another function of data analysis lies in how it can provide empirical evidence to support the research hypothesis and ensure validity of the data collected (ibid.).

As mentioned before, the researcher also conducted a pilot study, aiming to test the effectiveness of the research questions - this is called a “template analysis”. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2003, p.29), the aim of adopting a template analysis is to discover any potential issues that might significantly affect the research goal.

Although 100 questionnaires were sent and all of them were handed in by the participants in timely fashion, the researcher discovered some obvious perfunctory answers among the responses to the survey questions. Hence, the total number of effective questionnaires was 95 pieces while the remaining 5 pieces were regarded as being ineffective. The effective response rate for an online questionnaire is 95%.

The data collected from qualitative interviews and quantitative online questionnaires was drafted in Microsoft Excel 2007 and, with the adoption of SPSS software, the researcher represents the data via different forms, including pie charts, diagrams, graphics, tables, and so on.

4.5 Reliability, validity, bias and ethics

As Patton suggests, all researches have to be aware of reliability, validity, bias and ethics, since no research design is flawless. Hence, and from this point of view, all secondary data will contain biased opinions that may mislead readers (Patton 2002, p. 161). For example, when quoting theories from the literature, opinions or suggestions put forward may convey the more or less biased opinions of the writers.
On one hand, bearing ethical principles in mind, researchers need to select appropriate research strategies and make ethical announcements prior to any formal research process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, p. 29). The aim of this study is to grasp an understanding of product placements through the meanings which audiences ascribed to their practices. For instance, I was interested in exploring what product placements means for my interviewees. If the information which they told me was their real thoughts, then the study is valid. If what they told me was not their true feelings, then the study is invalid. Of course, the participants may have been lying, but I think they had no motivation to do that. I should mention that I am not a trained interviewer, even though I have studied some relevant courses. However, interview is an interactive process, I might discover something wrong if they lied.

On the other hand, validity refers to the extent of the research goal that the researcher strives for. Hence, both reliability and validity should be included in the research design process. Moreover, the interviewers can ask interviewees some random questions in order to test the reliability of the research (Huberman 2002, p.24). I used semi-structured interview in this study. The questions were asked randomly, so I have already tested the reliability of this study. In my point of view, no methods are absolutely valid and reliable. If the researcher knows the potential pitfalls and explains how they avoid these pitfalls, a research could be trustworthy.

In this research, both primary data and secondary data were collected, including the basic demographic information of the participants and any previous research results learned from relevant books or journal articles. All of the data collected is reliable and valid.

**Ethics**

With regard to ethics, all of the respondents were informed of the purpose of the interview and the research goal. The personal information of the participants will not
be released (Denzin 2000, p. 736). Hence, the opening letter contained in the online questionnaire is called “ethical practice”.

In complying with ethical principles, researchers are not allowed to cheat or lie about their research goal or else mislead participants. In this research, the interviewer announced the research purpose prior to the formal interviewing process and the opening letter in the questionnaire also sought to clarify the protection of the private information of the respondents.

**Bias**

As for bias, researcher also adhered to the bias principle during the interviews and the online survey processes. Interviewees may hold biased opinions when replying to different questions - they may be affected by others and tend to stand by their side (Selltiz et al. 1962, p.73). On the other hand, when summarizing data, researchers are also more likely to incorporate their own biased opinions. Under such circumstances, the research results may contain more or less biased information, either from interviewees or from researchers themselves. In order to minimize any biased result, it is necessary that researchers should have essential intelligence so as to avoid any biased analysis of the data collected. On the other hand, researchers also need to make sure that their biased opinions will not affect or distort the research results. From this point of view, one main function of the pilot research is to ensure that less biased opinions are included in the questions designed for interviews and online questionnaires (ibid.).

**4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter mainly explains main research methods adopted in this study, including
the case study, the interview and the online questionnaire. The construction of the interview questions and those questions for the online survey is also considered. Moreover, and finally, the reliability, validity, ethics and bias principles are also illustrated.
5. Results and analysis

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher mainly discusses the data collected from the interviews and online questionnaires. In order to examine the effect of product placement in recreational TV programmes upon mass consumption in China’s consumer society, the researcher selected 30 interviewees who had watched the recreational TV show “If You Are the One”. Meanwhile, the researcher had some friends who work on the Jiangsu TV programme; hence, it was easier to get contact information about the audiences as well as contact information about the hosts. Online questionnaires were dispatched since it is more convenient for audiences to complete questionnaires online and it can save time and money for the researcher. Finally, at the end of interview and online questionnaire processes, the researcher would reward each respondent with a mobile phone recharge card.

The following is a detailed discussion of both the qualitative and quantitative findings collected from the interviews and online questionnaires respectively.

5.2 Statistical analysis of the findings

The basic demographics of the interviewees and the respondents of the online questionnaires are listed below.
Graph 1.24 Basic demographics of the interviewees

From the table above, it can be seen that gender and age varies among the audiences. The aim of collecting this information is to examine whether gender plays a role affecting the effectiveness of product placement in recreational TV programmes in relation to mass consumption. According to the interview, the researcher found that young audiences show more interest in watching recreational TV programmes than middle-aged audiences. Middle-aged audiences may have less interest in watching recreational TV programmes.

The respondents’ circumstances to question 1 “How do you like the recreational TV programme If You Are the One?” are demonstrated in table 1.25. It shows that the age group of 18-25 years old generally like watching “If you are the one”. Moreover, and surprisingly, the researcher found that audiences in the 36 to 45 age group all enjoyed watching this recreational TV programme since they regard it as a good way of entertaining themselves.
Graph 1.25 Respondent’s circumstances to interview question 1

From the table, it can be seen that audiences in the 18 to 25 age group who are fond of watching “If You Are the One” comprised 87% of the total number of that group. Over 83.33% of the audience who were over 45 years old expressed that this recreational TV programme has neutral attractiveness to them. From this point of view, it can be seen that recreational TV programmes are more attractiveness to young consumers, mainly those in the 18-25 and 36-45 age groups. Moreover, the researchers also found that when compared with males, females have more interest in watching recreational TV programmes, which is demonstrated in table 1.26.

Graph 1.26 Respondents’ gender distribution to interview question 1
From table 1.26, it can be seen that over 66% of female respondents said that they like this programme very much, while only 53% of male respondents said that they only watch the programme routinely because of it just so so. 40% of male respondents expressed that this recreational TV programme is less attractive to them, since they recognized that more advertisers are penetrating into the market by inserting product placements, which had decreased the overall satisfaction of their entertainment need. On the other hand, based on data collected from online questionnaires, the basic demographic character of the respondents is listed in the following table 1.27.

![Graph 1.27 Basic demographics of respondents](image)

**Graph 1.27 Basic demographics of respondents**

From the above table, it can be seen that the researchers selected an even percentage of females and males as in order to ensure biased opinions held by either females or males would not affect the research results. Meanwhile, the respondents of the online questionnaires were selected from four age groups ranging from 18 to over 45 years old. Each age group has 25 respondents. The aim of this age distribution is to ensure that different age groups’ opinions on the effectiveness of product placements are examined and included in the research.

Furthermore, during the online questionnaire process, the researcher concluded the gender distribution and age distribution of the respondents to question 3 within the question “How often do you watch If You Are the One?” Based upon the analysis, the
A researcher found that females spent more time watching recreational TV programmes than male audiences. The research results are shown in graphs 1.28 and 1.29.

Graph 1.28 Gender distribution to the question "How often do you watch If You Are the One?"

From the graph, it can be seen that about 74% of female respondents will watch the programme twice a week, while 20% of female respondents will watch it once a week and the remaining 6% will watch it when they have time.

On the other hand, the male respondents exhibited a lower rate of preference for this programme, with only 48% of male respondents watching it twice a week, 44% watching it once a week, and the remaining 8% watching it whenever they have the time.

Meanwhile, age distribution of respondents to question 3 – “How often do you watch If You Are the One?” - is demonstrated in image 1.29. It can be seen that about 64% of respondents in the 18-25 age group expressed more interest in watching the programme. Meanwhile, 68% of respondents in the 36-45 age group showed more interest in it as well.
Graph 1.29 Age distribution to question "How often do you watch If You Are the One?"

According to the graph, this research result is consistent with the interview results, both of which indicating that the programme has attracted audiences in the 18-25 and 36-45 age groups.

5.2.1 The most influential product placement type

In order to find out the most influential product placement type, the researcher designed question 3 for the interview - “What are the most influential brands placed in this TV programme?” - and found out that the BBK music phone brand has become the most influential product placement type among all the other products placed in it. The media always has a narcotizing dysfunction upon audiences; in particular, product placement can narcotize audiences in an unnoticed way. The most influential brands also mean that there is a high degree of narcotism.

Based on the interview, some respondents said that they would be attracted by product placements that are consumed by hosts or else set in the background of the stage. It
can be seen that the BBK music phone impressed audiences to the greatest extent, with about 48% of respondents noting that the BBK music phone logo can be seen on the microphones used by hosts and at the beginning of every episode, where there will be an announcement that the BBK music phone is a sponsor of the programme. The response to this question is shown in graph 1.30.

Graph 1.30 "What are the most influential brands placed in this TV programme?"

Meanwhile, when interviewed as to the most influential product placement types, some of the respondents replied as follows.

“I can see the BBK music phone symbol on the microphones held by the guests. Meanwhile, the desks of the guests are also labelled with ‘BBK music phone’. I became interest in this mobile phone and have also bought one for myself now. To me, the product placement as consumed by the hosts or background decoration might attract my attention the most.” (Yang Zi, 22 years old, Female)

“I can see the Midea logo at the beginning of the TV programme, and it pops up on the screen and attracts my attention. Then, I realize that it is a product placement. I am now buying more Midea branded home appliances.” (Shao Yi Hui, 36 years old,
“I noticed that Tsinghua Tong Fang was a computer brand since it is set in the background stage where the three hosts sit and talk. I saw that the hosts were using this brand of computer, so I trust Tsinghua Tong fang and also bought one for myself.”

(Xu Ji Fen, 18 years old, Male).

From the interview, it seems that most of the audience are interested in the product placements of electric items, computers and so on. In order to further examine the audiences’ preferences as to the placed products, the researcher designed question 5 in the online questionnaire - “What kind of product placement most attracts your attention while watching the programme?” It aims to find out what kind of product is the most attractive. The researcher also divides the answer according to the two gender groups. In general, the three most influential product placement types are those products consumed by the guests, those products set in the background of the stage and those products placed as sponsorship. The results are shown in table 1.31.

Graph 1.31 "What kind of product placement most attracts your attention while watching the TV programme?"

From the table, it can be seen that about 36% of female respondents show more
interest in Fashion clothing and only 18% of male respondents expressed interest in these Fashion clothing. By way of contrast, about 40% of male respondents will pay more attention to household items, such as computers, cars and so on. Generally, in this recreational TV programme, mobile phone brands are inserted as props consumed by guests or else set in the background stages, while household items are contractual sponsorships with the TV programme.

In order to test this, the researcher designed question 6 in the online questionnaire - “What kind of product placement scenario is the most persuasive to you?” The respondent rate is demonstrated in graph 1.32 below. The results indicate that the products placed in the stage background and consumed by the hosts obtained the greatest persuasive effect for the audience.

![Graph 1.32 "What kind of product placement scenario is the most persuasive to you?"

From the above graph, it can be seen that around 51% of respondents displayed more trust in product placements consumed by the hosts or guests on the programme, since they believe that by examining the actual utilization of those products they can tell whether the products are of good value to them. For those products placed in the background of the stage, there is usually only one logo or symbol shown on the screen,
so it is more like a brand recall for audience. Hence, only 38% are affected by the product placement type which places the product in the background stage. These respondents told that these symbols or logos can be seen throughout the TV programme; hence, they have been greatly affected by continuous exposure to these product brands while watching the programme. About 11% of respondents said that they were mainly affected by products placed as TV programme sponsors. They trust in those brands and will have a go with those branded products since they think that they do not interrupt their entertainment needs, without propagandizing their products on the screen.

5.2.2 Efficacy of product placement on mass consumption

In order to examine the efficacy of product placement on mass consumption, the researcher designed question 5 in the interviewed questions and found that, compared with male audiences, female audiences were more likely to be affected by product placements and displayed stronger purchasing intentions towards products placed in the programme. The respondent rate is shown in graph 1.33.

Graph 1.33 "Have you ever bought products after seeing product placements in this TV programme?"
From the graph, it can be seen that over 66% of the interviewees bought products placed in the programme while only 33% of the interviewees indicated that they have never bought products placed in it. While being interviewed as to any further reasons for their purchasing decisions, the researcher found that most of the interviewees who admitted that they had bought products which were placed in the programme did so because they like to try new commodities and keep pace with trends. Some responses are quoted as below:

“I admire Meng Fei for his talent and eloquence and I want to copy and dress like him. Therefore, I will buy what he consumes in this TV programme.” (Zi Zhao, 18 years old, Male)

“I found out that the BBK music phones were particularly exquisite, so I bought myself one and I am happy to be a fan of this TV programme. The BBK music phone is reminiscent of this programme - whenever I take out my phone in the street, people will be attracted by my delicate BBK music phone.” (Zhong Wen Deng, 29 years old, Female)

In order to further analyse the effect of product placement on mass consumption, the researcher designed question 7 in the online questionnaire - “What will you do after you see a new brand on the TV programme?” The respondent rate is shown in table 1.34. The table shows that about 30% of female respondents will make purchasing decisions based upon seeing the product placements in the programme, while only 12% of male respondents indicate that they will purchase products upon seeing them placed in it. There are other different effects of product placements upon female and male respondents besides their purchasing intentions. For instance, about 30% of female respondents will consult their friends or families as to their brand preferences, while male respondents are more rational and more inclined to compare and contrast the brand placed with other current brands of products within the same product category. In general, and compared with male consumers, female consumers more
easily affected by product placements, while male consumers hold neutral attitudes toward product placement. The overall impact of product placement upon a purchasing decision is about 21%.

**Graph 1.34 "What will you do after you see a new brand in the TV programme?"

Meanwhile, the researcher also aimed to investigate the impact of age differences on the efficacy of product placement in relation to mass consumption. The age group distribution is further analysed and the results are shown in graph 1.35.
It is obvious that those respondents in the 18-25 and 26-35 age groups display higher levels of purchasing intentions upon being exposed to various product placements while watching the programme. On the other hand, those respondents over 35 years old prefer to compare the products placed the programme with other similar products prevalent in the market. They are not eager to purchase these products until they discover the higher value represented by the placed products.

Furthermore, there are other factors that affect the efficacy of product placements in the programme. With the aim of exploring other determinant factors, the researcher designed questions 8, 9 and 10 in the online questionnaire. According to the data collected, about 83% of respondents confirmed that some of the products placed in this TV programme are of high quality, such as mobile phones, computers and so on. However, 17% of them complained that some of the products placed in this TV programme were of poor quality, such as the placement of slimming tea and certain small branded electronic items, etc.
Among the 100 respondents, 27% of them have had problems while utilizing their products after purchasing. They claimed that the products placed in the programme are dysfunctional and that their life-span is quite short - for example, the Tsing Hua Tong Fang computer. However, 73% of the respondents never had quality problems while utilizing the products.

In order to find out how post-purchase feedback affects the efficacy of product
placement on mass consumption, the researcher designed question 10 in the online questionnaire - “Will you continue to trust other brands of products advertised in this TV programme?” The respondent rate is shown below in graph 1.38. According to the graph above and comparing it with 1.37, it can be seen that although consumers are not fully satisfied with the product quality after purchasing, there remain 89% of them who choose to follow the products placed in the programme, indicating that product placements implanted in recreational TV programmes convey a higher level of efficacy than traditional advertisements.

Graph 1.38 "Will you continue to trust other brands of products advertised in this TV programme?"

The response rate to question 16 in the online questionnaire - “Do you think that product placements affect your entertainment needs?” - also shows that product placement in recreational TV programmes is more acceptable than traditional advertisements, which is shown below in graph 1.39.
Graph 1.39 "Do you think product placements are affecting your entertainment needs?"

According to the graph, it can be seen that about 79% of the respondents view product placement as natural since they have been merged into the programme and the audience is not interrupted by having to take time to watch exclusive commercial advertisements. Meanwhile, the respondents also said that by being placed in recreational TV programmes, the placement of various commercial products can make them closer to reality. However, for those who chose the option “Yes” they stated that some products are over-placed in the programme. For those who chose “It depends” they expressed that certain product types placed in this programme will affect their entertainment needs. For example, while watching the programme, audiences can always see changing icons showing different product brands’ symbols at the bottom right-hand side of the screen. This kind of product placement will drive audiences away since they will become annoyed at these vivid icons, which are irrelevant to the programme content.

5.2.3 Dominant advantages of product placement

Compared with traditional advertisements, product placements convey certain
dominant advantages. In order to find out the various advantages, the researcher designed question 12 - “Do you think that product placements are more effective than traditional advertisements?” - and question 13 - “ Compared with traditional advertisements, what advantages do product placements have?” - in the online questionnaire. The research results show that a majority of the audience thought that product placements are more effective than conventional commercial advertisements. The response circumstances to these two questions is shown in graphs 1.40 and 1.41 respectively.

Graph 1.40 "Do you think product placements are more effective than traditional advertisements?"

According to the above graph, it can be seen that about 82% of the respondents confirmed that product placements are more effective than traditional advertisements. Moreover, below is a graph of the specific advantages offered by product placements in the opinions of the respondents.
Graph 1.41 "Compared with traditional advertisements, what advantages do product placements have?"

According to the graph above, it can be seen that about 56% of the respondents view product placements as being more convincing and, therefore, they consider that product placement can be more effective in affecting mass consumption. Meanwhile, 23% of the respondents hold that one salient advantage held by product placement lies in the fact that product placement can reach customers directly. In other words, it can reach the target consumers more rapidly, without forcing consumers to watch boring and bare advertisements broadcast during commercial advertising time. Moreover, 9% of the respondents considered that product placement - compared with traditional advertisement - is more flexible for different kinds of products. For instance, in this particular recreational TV programme, the Nokia brand name can be placed on the background stage while the BBK music phones can be used by hosts as the same time. This is to say that various products can be placed in one recreational TV programme simultaneously.

In general, the research results above shows that the dominant advantages of product placement include its persuasiveness, its ability to reach target consumers, and the fact that various products can be placed without interrupting consumers’ entertainment
5.2.4 Future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption

In order to anticipate the future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption, the researcher designed question 7 in the interviewed question - “How do you think product placement can affect mass consumption in the future?” The TV station is the gatekeeper to the process of product placement. The function of the gatekeeper is important since it can influence mass consumption in the future. According to the interview, the researcher found that there are several ways for product placements to affect mass consumption in a modern consumerist society. These means are summarized in table 1.42 below.

![Graph 1.42](image)

**Graph 1.42 “How do you think product placement can affect mass consumption in the future?”**

According to the table, it can be seen that about 30% of the interviewees considered that by improving placement skills, product placements can change mass consumption to a greater extent. Meanwhile, about 26.67% of the interviewees suggested that product placement should be closely related to the content of the recreational TV programme.
programme so that audiences will not recognize that it is an advertisement and so adopt a negative attitude towards the product placed. Meanwhile, 23.33% of the respondents expressed the view that the authenticity of the product placed should be ensured so that product placements would have a continuous and long-term positive impact on mass consumption.

On the other hand, in order to discover improvements of aspects of product placements, the researcher designed question 14 in the online questionnaire - “Compared with traditional advertisements, what disadvantages do product placements have?” The research results indicate that the biggest challenge for advertisers lies in placement skills and that more funds need to be invested in adopting product placement as a marketing tool. This has been proven below in graph 1.43.

**Graph 1.43 "Compared with traditional advertisements, what disadvantages do product placements have?"

Based on the graph above, it can be seen that about 49% of respondents consider placement skills to be one of the determinant factors in changing mass consumption. Meanwhile, 37% of respondents expressed the view that placement costs should be
reduced as much as possible. 12% of the respondents held that the disadvantage of product placement lies in the fact that it can reach only limited numbers of consumers at a given time. However, considering the boom of forms mass media form, product placements implanted in this recreational TV programme can be viewed again and again, since the Jiangsu TV channel has set up its own network. TV programmes have uploaded video records of each TV programme so that audiences can view past TV programmes if they do not have time to watch a live broadcast. Moreover, some Internet users may also search for the programme and have a look at it. Hence, from this point of view, the development of mass media has offered more exposure opportunities for various product placements inserted in the programme.

Furthermore, in order to find out the most appropriate product type to be placed in the programme, the researcher designed question 15 in the online questionnaire - “What kind of product do you think is most appropriate to place in this TV programme?” The research results imply that mobiles, clothing and jewellery are the most suitable items to be inserted as product placements.

Graph 1.44 "What kind of product do you think is most appropriate to place in this TV programme?"

From the above graph, it can be seen that, in the future, the most suitable product category to be placed in this TV programme is that of mobile phones, a view which is
supported by 38% of the respondents. Meanwhile, 27% of the respondents view clothing and jewellery to be the most appropriate product category to be placed in this TV programme and that 19% of respondents considered household items, such as computers, cookers and so on.

To draw a conclusion of the future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption, marketers should focus more on improving placement skills and ensuring the relevance of the product placed in relation to the content of the TV programme. Meanwhile, mobile phones and fashion items can generate the best effects for mass consumption.

5.3 Conclusions

This chapter mainly discusses the data collected from the interviews and the online questionnaires. Based on the research, the researcher found that the most influential product placement types implanted into recreational TV programmes are those products consumed by the hosts or guests and those products labelled in the background on the stage. Moreover, by examining the efficacy of product placement in recreational TV programmes upon mass consumption, the researcher found that female consumers are more easily affected by product placements. Moreover, consumers in the 18 to 25 age groups showed the highest level purchasing intention upon watching product placements implanted in this programme. Compared with traditional advertisements, product placements convey certain salient advantages in changing mass consumption, including its effectiveness in reaching target consumers more rapidly, its reliability and how various products can be placed at the same time without interrupting audiences’ entertainment needs. So the general people should be smarter to defend the narcotizing dysfunction of media. Finally, a future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption is estimated. In this progress, TV stations (gatekeepers) are important since they select the product in the future. According to the analysis, it can be seen that a main trend for product placement with changing mass consumption is in improving placement skills and selecting the most
appropriate products for different recreational TV programmes in order to ensure relevancy between the products placed and the contents of the TV programmes. The TV station needs to play a good role as gatekeeper in order to choose better products.
6. Conclusions

6.1 Discussion of the findings

The research aims to find out the relationships between product placements in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption. The research findings indicate that gender, age and products are all relevant factors that affect the effectiveness of product placements. On the other hand, placement skills, exposure times and other factors can result in the differing effectiveness of product placement upon mass consumptions. With regard to the fact that female audiences are more likely to be affected by product placements, advertisers need to choose appropriate products to be inserted in recreational TV programmes so as to reach the target consumers more effectively.

Besides this, the findings indicate that audiences may act differently upon watching product placements in a recreational TV programme; for example, they may search for product information online and purchase some to test the quality, while others will seek feedback on the product and make their own purchase decisions after that. In view of these varying reactions, it is necessary for advertisers to insert their products within an adequate time and in different ways, such as by inserting their products as a stage background, through sponsorship and so on. However, the selection of the marketing method depends upon the financial budget of one company and their expected profits through the marketing of the products as a form of product placement method.

Furthermore, product placement has a narcotizing dysfunction upon audiences. By inserting the advertisement in a smart manner, audiences’ entertainment needs will not be interrupted. However, audiences will gradually be influenced by the product placement. As such, the TV stations need to play a good role as a gatekeeper. Only those products of good quality should be inserted into TV programmes.
6.2 Contribution of the research

Previous scholars have predicted a linkage between mass media and mass consumption. Meanwhile, there are also some researchers who have done studies into exploring the impact of product placements implanted into movies upon mass consumption in foreign countries, such as America, the United Kingdom and so on. However, there are few studies that have investigated the relationships between product placement in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption in China’s consumerist society. Hence, the contribution of this research lies in that it addresses the different patterns of mass consumptions prevalent in Chinese society. Furthermore, this research also implies that the effect of product placement in recreational TV programmes is affected by the gender and age of consumers. This research puts forward the view that the efficacy of product placement upon changing mass consumption also relies on post-purchase feedback from consumers. Moreover, this research also implies a future trend of product placement with changing mass consumption.

6.3 Limitations of the research

However, there are some limitations in this research. For example, due to limited time the researcher only selected audiences who had watched recreational TV programmes, ignoring the impact of product placement upon guests who have attended those programmes.

Another limitation of the research lies in the fact that it excluded cultural differences which may cause differing efficacy in relation to product placement upon mass consumption, particularly in China’s consumerist society.

Thirdly, research methods should be expanded to include other types of research methods in order to explore other factors - besides product placement - that might affect mass consumption.
Finally, product placement and mass consumption are mutually-influenced. However, this research only discusses the impact of product placement upon mass consumption.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Based upon the above limitations, certain suggestions can be made for future research conducted within this field. First of all, researchers should increase the number of interviewees and include some foreigners, if possible, so as to explore how cultural differences affect the efficacy of product placement and further changes in modes of mass consumption. Secondly, researchers could also conduct research into other recreational TV programmes held in other countries and discover out whether these recreational TV programmes can generate the same or a similar degree of mass consumption changes in different social circumstances. Finally, a combination of research methods should be adopted to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.

6.5 Self-reflection

In order to complete this research, the researcher made every effort to contact Chinese audiences and ask them to be interviewees or respondents to online questionnaires. Meanwhile, mass consumption has a broad definition and the relationships between product placement and mass consumption varies from society to society. Therefore, the research chose a case - a Chinese recreational TV programme called “If You Are the One” – so as to narrow the research scope.

During the interviewing process, the researcher came to understand how to communicate with others more effectively. By considering the relationships between product placement in recreational TV programmes and mass consumption in China’s society, marketers can formulate and improve their product placement strategies in
order to promote their products and to target consumers with fewer costs.
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Appendix

Appendix I Interview questions

1. How do you like the recreational TV program--If You Are the One?
2. Have you recognized any product placement in this TV program?
3. What are the most influential brands placed in this TV program?
4. How do you come to various product brands?
5. Have you ever bought products after seeing product placements in this TV program?
6. Why do you buy the products placed in this TV program?
7. How do you think product placement can affect mass consumption in the future?

Then I can ask some follow-up questions based on the interviewees’ answer.

Appendix II Online questionnaire

Hello,
Thank you very much for your participating in my research. My name is Zhiwen Du and I am writing to ask for your assistance to complete my thesis on investigating the relationships between product placement in recreational TV programs and mass consumption. In order to explore consumers’ opinions, I need your cooperation and answer the following questions for me. Meanwhile, I will protect your privacy and all the personal information filled in this questionnaire will not be released; only survey result will be utilized in this thesis. If you agree with the above terms, you can feel free to answer the questions below.
1) How old are you?
A) 18-25  B) 26-35  C) 36-45  D) over 45

2) What’s your gender?
   A) Female    B) Male

3) How often do you watch If You Are the One TV program?
   A) Twice a week  B) Once a week  C) It depends

4) Will you pay attention to the props utilized in this TV program?
   A) Yes. Please specify:
   B) No. Please specify:

5) What kind of product placement most attracts your attention while watching the TV program?
   A) Mobile phones
   B) Fashion clothing and shoes
   C) Fashion jewelry
   D) Household items

6) What kind of product placement scenario is the most persuasive to you?
   A) Products consumed by hosts
   B) Products consumed by the guests
   C) Products placed in the stage background
   D) Products placed as sponsors to the TV program

7) What will you do after you see a new brand in the TV program?
   A) Search for product information on the internet.
   B) Seek for any stores to buy them.
C) Ask my friends or families whether they like the brand too.
D) Compare and contrast it with other brands of products in the same category.

8) What do you think quality of the products placed in this TV program? Please explain in details.

9) Have you had any problems after purchasing products placed in TV program?
   A) Yes. Please specify:
   B) No. Please specify:

**If your answer to question 9 is A, please skip to question 11.**

10) Will you continue to trust other brands of products advertised in this TV program?
   C) Yes. Please specify:
   D) No. Please specify:

11) Do you think product placement is a new trend for advertisers?
   A) Yes. Please specify:
   B) No. Please specify:

12) Do you think product placements to be more effective than traditional advertisements?
   A) Yes. Please specify:
   B) No. Please specify:

13) Compared with traditional advertisements, what advantages do product placements have?
   A) It is more eye-catching.
B) It is more convincible.
C) It can reach consumers directly.
D) Various products can be placed.

14) Compared with traditional advertisements, what disadvantages do product placements have?
A) It only reaches a limited amount of consumers.
B) It is more expensive.
C) It requires more placement skills and techniques.
D) Its effectiveness is affected by several external factors.

15) What kind of product do you think is most appropriate to place in this TV program?
A) Mobile phones
B) Household items
C) Clothing and jewelry
D) Others. Please specify:

16) Do you think product placements are affecting your entertainment needs?
A) Yes. Please explain:
B) No. Please explain:
C) It depends. Please explain:

17) What are your suggestions for product placement in this recreational TV program?

That’s all for the questions. Thank you for your time. Please e-mail it back to me including your answers. Thank you very much!