Product Placement in Television Drama: Effects of Information Overload and Character Attributes

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ABSTRACT

Including branded information within media contents is an emerging yet important area of marketing communication. Around the world, the barriers against product placement in television programs are gradually removed. For instance, Television Without Frontiers Directive, a special taskforce of the European Commission, reached mutual agreement to allow product placement in television programs in 2007. In Hong Kong, product placement in television program was permitted since 2005. This study examines two common placement practices used currently in local television dramas. Based on the persuasion knowledge model, entertainment persuasion and balance theory, the current study investigates the effects of information-overload and character genre (leading and supporting character) on placement recall and viewers’ attitudes towards placement and the placed product. The moderation effect of character involvement is explored as well. Two quasi-experiments with sample size of 100 and 60 respectively were conducted. Experimental subjects were university students recruited by convenience sampling. Results reflect that though information-overloaded placement enhances placement recall, it generates more negative attitudes towards placement and the placed product. However, high involvement with the television drama character can dampen such negative effects. In contrast, viewers in non-information-overloaded placement condition report lower recall rate but more positive placement attitudes. In addition, results reveal that placement associated with more favorable leading character is more effective in generating placement recall and positive placement attitudes than placement associated with less favorable supporting character. Managerial implications to industry professionals and theoretical implications to consumer researchers are provided.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration i
Abstract ii
Acknowledgments iii
Table of contents iv-v
List of tables vi
List of figures vii
List of Appendices viii

CHAPTER I : BACKGROUND 1

CHAPTER II : LITERATURE REVIEW 5
2.1 Conceptualization of information overload 5
   2.1.1 Information overload and consumer information processing 5
   2.1.2 Information overload and product placement 6
2.2 Amount of product information in placement and effects on placement recall 6
2.3 Amount of product information in placement and effects on placement attitudes 7
2.4 Involvement with television drama character 9
   2.4.1 Involvement as moderator 10
2.5 Placement associated character genre and effects of placement 12

CHAPTER III : METHODOLOGY & RESULTS 15
3.1 Experiment one 16
   3.1.1 Study design 16
   3.1.2 Experimental instrument 16
   3.1.3 Pretest 26
   3.1.4 Subjects 27
   3.1.5 Procedure 28
   3.1.6 Measures 28
   3.1.7 Results 30
3.2 Experiment two 34
   3.2.1 Objectives 34
   3.2.2 Study design 34
   3.2.3 Experimental instrument 35
   3.2.4 Pretest 37
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5 Subjects</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.6 Procedure</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.7 Measures</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.8 Results</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

4.1 General discussion
   - 4.1.1 Amount of product information in placement and effects of placement | 41 |
   - 4.1.2 Placement associated character genre and effects of placement | 45 |

4.2 Implications | 47 |
4.3 Limitations and further research | 50 |
4.4 Concluding remarks | 54 |

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** | 56 |

**APPENDICES** | 64 |

**CURRICULUM VITAE** | 78 |