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Product placement practices in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong

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Product placement practices in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong

Product placement research tends to show how product placements impact consumer behavior but less research examines the nature of product placement execution. This is the first study to examine product placement execution in Asia focusing on Hong Kong prime-time television programs. Specifically it explores the prevalence of brand appearances, characteristics of programs linked to brand appearances, features of placed brands and products, modality of brand appearances, character interaction with placed products and the placement context. It was found that integrating brands in television programs in Hong Kong seems to be well supported by advertisers, with one brand appearing in every 11 minutes of programming. Less than half of brand appearances were disclosed at the end of the programs while none were disclosed prior to the program which raises questions about regulation of the practice. Results of the analysis provide useful insights into the practice of product placement in this fast growth context and its (dis)connection with existing product placement literature.

Keywords: product placement, content analysis, television programs, Hong Kong, prevalence, practices

Introduction

Product placement involves the planned integration of branded information into media content with the aim of influencing audiences. It has become increasingly popular with advertisement blocking and avoidance strategies used by consumers are commonly found in both traditional and digital media. PageFair and Adobe (2015) reported that worldwide advertising blocking increased 41% in 2015, which led to a loss of nearly HK\$22 billion in revenue. Spending on placements has recorded a fifth consecutive year of accelerated growth, increasing 13.6% compared to the year before (PQ Media 2015). Though product placements occur within films, television, video games, radio and music, expenditure remains highest within television, which continues to grow rapidly and is still the most consumed medium worldwide (PQ Media 2015).

Despite research into product placement growing rapidly, less is known about how product placements are executed (Eisend 2009a). Studying product placement execution may help to reflect on the congruence and/or disconnect between theory and practice. This could be useful to the academic field and could serve as crucial feedback to practitioners. A more systematic approach to the design of product placement might be necessary to integrate with existing theory. Some notable earlier work on product placement has led to insightful and useful findings about how brands appear on television (e.g., La Ferle and Edwards 2006; Pervan and Martin 2002; Smit, van Reijmersdal, and Neijens 2009) within regions such as the US, Europe and Australasia. Such research forms a useful conduit between product placement theory and practice. However, less research has looked at how product placements manifest within Asian countries, and there is a need to better understand the practice within these countries where there is a growing trend of promoting products in television programs and movies (PQ Media 2015; Statista 2016).

Karrh, Frith and Callison (2001) suggest future research on product placement to

extend to Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China in order to draw more conclusive findings (see also Nelson and Deshpande 2013) though very little research in these countries has taken place. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent and nature of product placement execution in television programs in Hong Kong. Hong Kong represents an appropriate lens through which to assess product placement execution in Asia for a number of reasons. First, the region is one of the fastest growing areas globally and no research has systematically studied product placement execution within Asia. Second, given Hong Kong's openness and diversity, free television services within Hong Kong includes program content from several other Asian countries, including mainland China, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia. Third, the culture in Hong Kong and the other Asian countries covered by this research tends to exhibit different characteristics (e.g., higher power distance, less individualistic and moderate masculine) to the cultures covered previously in more 'western' contexts (Hofstede 2001). Given the most recent comprehensive content analysis on television programs was conducted nearly 15 years ago (La Ferle and Edwards 2006), it seems pertinent to reassess its execution in a world where advertising avoidance has become more common place.

Studying this context also has some policy implications. Product placement has proliferated in Asian countries, especially Hong Kong and become quite controversial due to its overtness and prominence. Despite Hong Kong audiences having more positive attitudes towards product placements than traditional advertising (Chan, Lowe and Petrovici 2017), the excessive level of placements together with the lack of regulation has led to serious concerns from the government and the general public. There have been cases of broadcasters being fined for featuring products prominently in television programs which is believed to be intrusive to the viewing pleasure of audiences (e.g., Lau 2013; Lam 2016). Calls for reviewing and refining the policies governing product placement practices in Hong Kong are

frequently made. It is believed that revealing the actual practices of product placement objectively may guide policy makers and marketers in making decisions because such research approaches can highlight the level of product placements on television programs and their execution styles. The results may also serve as references for countries with similar situations.

Given rapid growth in product placement this research builds on earlier studies by performing a content analysis of product placement on three Hong Kong television channels that provide free television services. Five weeks of prime-time programming on the three channels were recorded and analyzed. Specifically, utilizing and extending La Ferle and Edwards' (2006) framework, this research investigates the prevalence of product placements in Hong Kong, the characteristics of programs with brand appearances, features of placed brands/products, modality of brand appearances, the extent and nature of character interaction with placed products, and characteristics of the placement context. Hypotheses were developed for testing based on existing knowledge drawn from studies in product placement and traditional advertising. The findings were contrasted with the relevant theories in the field.

Literature review

The practice of product placement has grown rapidly as advertisers have sought to find alternative ways to reach consumers in a changing media environment. The majority of research in the area has tended to focus on understanding consumer behavior in relation to product placement (Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan 2006; Chan 2012). Key themes in the recent literature have sought to show how causal factors such as brand congruence (Ferguson and Burkhalter 2015), plot/character connection (Dens et al. 2012; Kamleitner and Jyote 2013; Pantoja, Rossi, and Borges 2016), brand prominence (Chan, Petrovici and Lowe 2016; Lin 2014; Marchand, Hennig-Thurau, and Best 2015), placement modality (Hang 2012)

and culture (McKechnie and Zhou 2003; Sabour, et al. 2016) influence typical outcomes such as brand recall, recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intention. There is also evidence that product placement can be associated with improved firm performance metrics. For example, research found that product placement within successful films is positively associated with the stock prices of the placed brand (Wiles and Danielova 2009). The authors analyzed 126 placements in successful films released in 2002 and recorded an average increase in those firm's stock prices of 0.89% in the film's opening. However, these positive returns are confounded by several factors, including time, placement modality and prominence, and film type (Karniouchina, Uslay, and Erenberg 2011).

Comparatively less research has examined the prevalence and nature of product placement execution. A review of previous literature shows a total of seventeen studies which have analyzed the content of brand appearances. Seven of these studies have examined brand content in television programs (Fakkert, Voorveld, and van Reijmersdal 2015; Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006; McClung and Cleopha 2008; Pervan and Martin 2002; Smit, van Reijmersdal, and Neijens 2009; Wouters and De Pelsmacker 2011), another eight have examined films (Chan 2016; Devlin and Combs 2015; Kureshi and Sood 2011; Lehu and Bressoud 2009; Sapolsky and Kinney 1994; Sargent et al. 2001; Sung, Choi and de Gregorio 2008; Sutherland et al. 2010) while the remaining two have examined music (Burkhalter and Thornton 2014; Primack, et al. 2012).

Though consumer media consumption habits are changing, TV remains the most popular form of media for product placement (PQ Media 2015). Of the television content analysis studies, six of the seven cover product placement on American television channels (Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006; McClung and Cleopha 2008; Pervan and Martin 2002). Two of these studies also cover Australasia (Pervan and Martin 2002) and Belgium (Wouters and De Pelsmacker 2011) and the other study covers the Netherlands

(Smit, et al. 2009). Therefore, product placement content analyses have represented brand appearances in television across three continents but tend to be focused on the US. In addition, these studies were conducted with different sample sizes and at different time frames making direct comparisons difficult. Ferraro and Avery (2000) analyzed a total of 112 hours of programming on four major US networks recording an average of 14.8 brands placed per half-hour of programming. Pervan and Martin (2002) note a higher percentage of brand appearances in the New Zealand soap opera (70%) than in the US one (26%). However, the study did not specify the exact number of brand appearances recorded and it is difficult to generalize given the focus on only two soap operas. La Ferle and Edwards (2006) analyzed 195 hours of prime-time television programs and identified an average of 10.2 brands placed per half-hour of programming.

More recently, McClung and Cleophat (2008) identified 140 brand appearances over 12 hours of prime-time programming on one television channel in the US (UPN). In the first comprehensive study outside of the US, Smit et al. (2009) analyzed 319 hours of programming from three Dutch television channels, documenting about one brand appearance per hour. This comparatively low level of brand appearances may be explained by the fact that their study analyzed programs broadcast between 7am to 2am the next day (19 hours out of 24 hours) instead of just prime time programming. Therefore the total brand appearances were spread out across prime time and non-prime time, resulting in a substantially lower number of brand appearances. Wouters and De Pelsmacker (2011) analyzed Belgian prime time programs and identified 2.49 brand appearances per half hour of programming. Fakkert et al. (2015) analyzed 17 hours of television episodes and recorded 350 brand appearances but the analysis was restricted to fashion series only.

In 2005, the Hong Kong Broadcasting Authority (now the Communications Authority) relaxed the restrictions governing product placement in television programs. Hong Kong

viewers soon witnessed a series of programs loaded with branded products. The undue prominence of some brand appearances resulted in the television broadcaster being warned by the Communications Authority and even led to fines in some cases (Lau 2013; Lam 2016). In light of these contextual factors and the different cultural context of Hong Kong, studying product placement execution within Hong Kong will advance our understanding of the technique in an Asian context. Therefore, the first goal in the current study is to examine the prevalence of brand appearances in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong. Our first research question is:

RQ1: What is the relative prevalence of product placement in Hong Kong prime-time television programs?

In addition to assessing the prevalence of product placements, to have a comprehensive understanding of the practice, it is also important to analyze the nature and executional characteristics of these brand appearances, which include the five aspects discussed below: characteristics of programs with brand appearances, features of placed products, modality of brand appearances, character interaction with placed products and placement context.

Characteristics of programs with brand appearances

Program characteristics are captured by the type and tone of the program. Previous studies show that brand appearances were not uniform across various types of programming. Ferraro and Avery (2000) show that news programs and situation comedies recorded the most brand integrations (41% in total). La Ferle and Edwards (2006) also found that situation comedies and dramas were more likely to include product placements. Studies have examined the cognitive effect of brands placed in different genres. Park and Berger (2010) found that brands placed in drama-genre movies were better recognized than in action movies. Liang,

Hsiao and Cheng (2015) further distinguished drama types and found that placement of restaurants in an urban romantic drama, as compared to a mafia drama, aroused more favorable attitude toward the placed brand and higher purchase intention. However, van Reijmersdal, Smit and Neijens (2010) found that brands placed in TV drama series were less effectively recognized than those placed in variety shows (i.e. special interest programs such as singing contests, cooking shows, etc.). Comparing to variety shows, brands placed in drama series were not only poorly recognized but also led to less favorable brand attitudes and behavioral responses.

Therefore, it appears that situation comedies, dramas and variety shows are the main vehicle through which to implement placements as reflected in previous studies. These genres usually feature contemporary settings which are comparatively more suitable and natural for brand integration. This is believed to be a universal phenomenon and it is anticipated that a similar pattern may be found in Hong Kong TV programs. However, situation comedies are usually classified under drama series in the Hong Kong context. Therefore it is hypothesized that

H1a: A higher level of brand appearances will be recorded in drama series and variety shows than other genres broadcast on Hong Kong television.

Patterns of brand appearances also varied with programs of different tones. Ferraro and Avery (2000) and La Ferle and Edwards (2006) found that brands were more likely to be placed in programs with a humorous tone, which accounted for about one third of the total brand appearances. Smit et al. (2009) showed that branded products appeared more frequently in entertainment programs which again supports the idea that relaxing programs are more popular for brand placements. Consumers who are in a good or relaxing mood were more likely to be persuaded (Bless and Schwarz 1999). In line with the empirical results, our

second hypothesis proposes that brands are more likely to be placed in relaxing programs. Since most television channels in Hong Kong broadcast both locally produced programs (i.e. programs produced by the local television broadcasters) and syndicated programs (i.e. programs purchased from foreign countries), this study will also explore their differences in terms of brand appearances. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H1b: Brand appearances are more likely to occur in programs which are relaxing.

Features of placed products

Product features refer to the characteristics of products that are placed within a scene. In prior studies this has referred to product categories, product types or product origins represented. Some product categories may be more appropriate to be placed in television programs and may benefit more from it. Research has pointed out that it is important to investigate the types of products and brands that would benefit more from product placement (Kamleitner and Jyote 2013). In the earliest content analysis study, it was found that media/entertainment products and sports related goods were the most likely to be integrated in TV programs (Ferraro and Avery 2000). Similarly, La Ferle and Edwards (2006) analyzed the differences between traditional products and services when placed in television programs. It was found that media/entertainment products such as CDs were most likely to appear in television programs followed by services such as insurance and telecommunications brands.

Pervan and Martin (2002) noticed that telephones, food and non-alcoholic beverages were more likely to be shown in consumption in both US and New Zealand soap operas. However, their results should be interpreted with caution because only one soap opera from each country was analyzed. McClung and Cleophas (2008) found that apparel and accessories accounted for nearly half of brand appearances while food and beverage brands recorded

about 13% of appearances. Karniouchina et al. (2011) show that food and automobiles were the most frequently appearing brands in films. A recent qualitative study found that most young consumers regarded fashion and accessories, food and drinks and cars and technological products as the most suitable categories to be placed in films (Chan, Lowe and Petrovici 2017). It seems there is no clear consensus about which products are more commonly placed than others. Therefore, a research question instead of hypothesis was proposed here:

RQ2: What product categories are more likely to be placed in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong?

Recent research has raised an interesting issue about the geographical origin of brands appearing in media. For example, Nelson and Deshpande (2013) revealed an increasing trend to place foreign brands in Bollywood movies, and these even outnumbered local brands over the past two decades. Other content analysis studies did not specifically look at this issue so it is unclear if this is a universal trend (Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006; Smit et al. 2009). However, it is anticipated that this practice may be more prominent in the Asian context. Asian people especially Chinese have the perception that international brands are better and they associate success/status with consuming western brands (Dickson et al. 2004; O'Cass and Siahtiri 2013). Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city so it might be envisaged that a higher proportion of global brands will be placed in prime-time television programs.

In addition, the placed brands on the local TV channels may be more well-known because most HK people crave for luxury brands. Hong Kong is a tax- and duty-free city which makes it a shopping heaven and a £3.8 billion luxury market (Vedomosti 2012). It is regarded as the biggest luxury market in Asia (Chadha and Husband 2006). In fact, Hong Kong boasts more stores of big designer labels than other Western cities (Chadha and

Husband 2006). Hong Kong people were found to spend twice as much as Singaporeans on luxury items though per capita incomes between the two are quite similar (Synovate 2003). Belonging to a higher power distance culture (Hofstede 2001), Hong Kong people may make use of luxury consumption or possession to reflect and represent their status. Therefore, the second research hypothesis seeks to test:

H2: A higher proportion of brands appearing in Hong Kong prime time television programs tends to be a) foreign/global brands and b) more well-known.

Redondo and Holbrook (2008) analyzed secondary data of Spanish consumers' movie attendance and product consumption and revealed that some product categories may be more appropriate to be placed in certain genres of movies. For instance, alcoholic drinks are more appropriate to be placed in drama-genre movies but alcohol-free drinks are more appropriate to be placed in action movies, while personal care products are more appropriate to be placed in romance-genre movies (see also De Gregorio and Sung 2010 and Karniouchina et al. 2011). Liang, Hsiao and Cheng (2015) also revealed an interaction effect between genre and product type. Specifically, it was found that placement of an ice-cream restaurant in an urban romantic drama was better recalled, and led to more favorable attitudes and higher purchase intention than the placement of a scenic-view restaurant. On the contrary, respondents held more positive attitudes toward the scenic-view restaurant than ice-cream restaurants when placing in a mafia drama. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

H2c: There is an association between genre types and the placed product category in prime-time Hong Kong television programs.

Modality of brand appearances

In examining product placement execution, modality of presentation and level of prominence were identified as key factors (Gupta and Lord 1998). Modality of presentation includes

visual, verbal and combined audio-visual presentation of the brand. Level of prominence refers to ‘the extent to which the product placement possesses characteristics designed to make it a central focus of audience attention’ (Gupta and Lord 1998, 49). Brand recall is believed to be enhanced with dual mode processing (Unnava and Burnkrant 1991) and audio-visual placements (bimodal) have been found to be more effective than visual placements (unimodal) on children, both in terms of brand attitudes and brand choice (Charry 2014). Verbal references or audio-visual brand integrations are usually regarded as more prominent (Cowley and Barron 2008; Home 2009). A high proportion of verbal only and audio-visual brand appearances were recorded in previous studies (e.g., 53% in Ferraro and Avery 2000; 47% in La Ferle and Edwards 2006; and 42% in Smit et al. 2009).

Some studies have reached the conclusion that level of prominence has a positive effect on brand recognition and recall (Bressoud, Lehu, and Russell 2010; Law and Braun 2000; Nelson 2002). For this reason, level of prominence is usually associated with cost of a placement deal and brand owners have been found to favor higher visibility of their brands when placed (Russell and Belch 2005). It appears that brands may be more likely to be placed prominently given the perception of higher awareness and financial rewards. However, there is a good deal of literature supporting the assertion that prominent inclusion of products/brands in media content may not be effective in enhancing brand attitude (Dens et al. 2012; Marchand, Hennig-Thurau, and Best 2015). It seems that placement prominence shares an inverted U shape with placement effectiveness because placed products need to be noticed, but once they become too prominent viewers may see this as an infringement of their liberty to be entertained. Therefore, our third research question intends to explore:

RQ3: What is the relative prominence of brands appearing in Hong Kong television programs?

Character interaction with placed products

Von Feilitzen and Linné (1975) proposed that viewers may identify with television characters and associate them with making the correct product decisions. According to social identity theory an individual can enhance their self-esteem by associating with others that reflect their desired identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Individuals may enhance their identification with a social group through developing imaginative relationships with the characters, which may lead viewers to develop a good impression towards a placed brand, enhancing its persuasive influence (Russell and Stern 2006). However, a low level (23%) of character interaction with placed products was recorded in La Ferle and Edwards (2006). Similarly, Nelson and Deshpande (2013) surveyed 158 Indians about celebrity product placement and found that respondents generally did not feel they were influenced when celebrities were featured with a brand.

Therefore, in relation to character interaction with placed brands, the apparent discrepancy between product placement practice and theory ought to be explored further. However, as product placement strategy evolves, it is anticipated that frequent interaction between characters and placed products may increase. This leads to the fourth research question:

RQ4: What is the extent of character interaction with placed products in Hong Kong prime-time television programs?

Characteristics of placement context

Humor is frequently used in advertising to create surprise and attract attention (Alden, Mukherjee, and Hoyer 2000). Humor processing is comprised of two stages including a cognitive phase to resolve the schema-incongruity to comprehend the humor and an affective phase of feeling relaxed (Strick, Holland, van Baaren and van Knippenberg 2012). Humor

enhances persuasion by creating positive affect or distracting receivers from constructing counterarguments. Positive prior evaluation of advertised brands has been shown to trigger higher purchase intention when viewers are exposed to humorous advertisements (Chattopadhyay and Basu 1990; Eisend 2009b). Chan (2011) also found that the positive mood and feeling induced by humorous elements in advertisements lowers an individual's cognitive processing and the susceptibility of its commercial intent. A more recent study employed facial recognition technology to trace participants' facial expressions in responding to amusing video ads and recorded a positive association with advertising effectiveness (Lewinski, Fransen and Tan 2014). However, humor has been less widely studied within the domain of product placement.

Jin and Villegas (2007) found that consumers displayed higher recall and a more positive attitude towards brands placed in a positively-depicted humorous scene. Therefore, it is supposed that the context in which a brand is placed may contribute to its effectiveness and brands are more likely to be depicted positively in humorous situations. Nevertheless, previous studies indicate that brands often appeared in neutral settings (e.g., 75.7% in Ferraro and Avery 2000; 90.8% in La Ferle and Edwards 2006). Pervan and Martin (2002) found that products were more likely to be depicted positively in New Zealand television shows, while more negative emotional outcomes of brand appearances in the US were noted. However, the results were based on a small sample and also used forced coding into positive and negative contexts (i.e. 'neutral' was not included). Therefore, our last hypotheses envisage that:

H3: In Hong Kong prime-time television programs, branded products are more likely to appear in a) positive, b) happy and c) humorous contexts.

A directive regarding prior disclosure of placement deals that has been proposed some time ago (Eisend 2009a). Disclosing placed brands is a contemporary issue to be addressed in

the field. Recent empirical studies have examined the effect of disclosure and identified some determining variables such as timing, frequency and position of disclosure (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal and Neijens 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; Van Reijmersdal, Tutaj and Boerman 2013). Consequently this study represents the first to systematically examine whether brand appearances are acknowledged in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong. The timing and the way that the placed product was acknowledged were recorded to recognize the explicitness of the notification.

Method

A content analysis was conducted to identify brand appearances in Hong Kong television channels. Five weeks of prime-time programming (08:00-10:30pm) broadcasting on the three television channels (TVB Jade, J2, ATV) from January to February 2015 were recorded and analyzed. This covers more viewing hours than most previous content analysis studies. Domestic pay television program services (e.g., Cable TV, Star TV) were not included due to the comparatively low penetration rates. A brand appearance was coded when any branded product appeared visually, verbally, or audio-visually in a continuous scene for at least one second (Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006).

The study analyzed only existing commercial brands while non-commercial brands such as government offices and non-government organizations (NGOs) were excluded in view of the fact that these organizations are typically not placed for commercial purposes. Similar to the usual practices in the field, all brand appearances were coded per scene. If a brand appeared several times, these were counted as separate placements. However, brands appearing repeatedly in a quick succession of less than a second were not counted.

Development of coding protocol

A coding protocol was developed with items adapted from earlier studies (Ferraro and Avery

2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006; Smit et al. 2009). Specifically we have adopted LaFerle and Edwards's (2006) framework but extended their instrument by taking account of the placed brand features, extent and fit of character interactions, placement context, placement notifications and the distinction between locally produced and syndicated programs. The coding protocol includes 40 variables covering characteristics of the television programs (i.e., broadcast channel, program title, date/time of airing, duration, geographical origin, program type and tone) and the characteristics of the brand appearances (i.e., features of placed products, modality of brand appearances, character interaction with placed products, placement context and notification of brand appearances).

In examining features of placed products, servicing and retailing was included as a separate category in addition to the traditional consumer products as La Ferle and Edwards (2006) noticed significant differences in the portrayal of servicing brands and traditional consumer products in television shows, with servicing brands appearing more prominently. The level of awareness of the placed brand was judged in terms of the Hong Kong context. In examining the modality of brand appearances, "visual placement" was coded when a placed brand was shown visually while "verbal placement" was coded when a placed brand was mentioned in the dialogues. The duration of the appearance was also recorded in seconds. The size of visual placements was checked by the proportion of the screen that the placed product occupied (i.e., 1 was coded as occupying the full screen, 1/2 as occupying half of the screen, and so on). In analyzing character interaction with placed products, coders were asked to classify "the extent of interaction" between the characters and the placed brand by selecting among four categories, including: mentioning the product, holding it, actually consuming/using it and a combination of the above. "Fit between the character and the placed brand" was a subjective judgment about whether the character in the program appeared to be the type of person who would consume the placed brand. Three categories were used

including “low”, “high” and “cannot decide”.

In view of the fact that advertising clutter in traditional commercial breaks is frequently researched, placement context was first examined in terms of the presence of other products with the same brand or different brand in the same shot. The brand appearance was further coded as negatively/positively depicted, and could be described as happy/unhappy or boring/interesting. This study also examines whether brand appearances are acknowledged in television programs. The timing and the way that the placed product was acknowledged were also recorded to recognize the explicitness of the notification. The protocol was refined in the process of training and actual coding to enhance its precision (for details of the codes applied see Tables 1 to 6).

Training of coders and coding checking

A graduate student was recruited and trained to identify all the brand appearances from the recorded programs. All the programs were viewed multiple times to code details of the brand appearances. A further portion of the sample (25.8%) was randomly selected and re-examined by another five coders who were blinded to the results of the graduate student and they performed the coding independently. The five coders were final year students who were about to graduate and they were financially compensated for their work.

All the coders underwent extensive training before the actual coding to ensure that all the coding items were understood and interpreted correctly. The coders were not aware about the research questions and hypotheses to minimize biased judgments. Any disputes between the coders were reconciled by discussing with an expert who has performed several content analysis exercises before. The inter-coder reliability coefficients were calculated using Perreault and Leigh's (1989) formula which ruled out the probability of random agreement between coders. The coefficients of all items ranged from 0.751 to 1.00, consistent with the guidance offered by Neuendorf (2002).

Results

RQ1 seeks to examine the prevalence of product placement in Hong Kong prime-time television programs. A total of 225 hours of 62 prime-time television programs were content analyzed and 1225 brand appearances were identified. This is equivalent to about one brand appearance every 11 minutes and appears to be quite prevalent. Altogether there were a total of 1411 cases which included programs/episodes with and without brand appearances. There were 186 episodes that have analyzed did not have any brand appearances at all. We included all the placement scenes for analysis and no scenes were excluded. Among the three analyzed television channels, J2 had the most brand appearances (57.7%), followed by TVB (28.0%), and ATV (14.3%, $\chi^2(2, N = 1411) = 116.26, p < 0.001$, see Table 1). TVB carried more programs that were produced locally while J2 and ATV had many syndicated programs from other Asian countries.

[Place Table 1 about here]

Characteristics of programs with brand appearances

Locally-produced programs were found to have slightly more brand appearances (51.3%) than syndicated programs (48.7%, $\chi^2(1, N = 1411) = 39.22, p < 0.001$). H1a predicts that a higher level of brand appearances will be recorded in drama series and variety shows. A chi-square analysis shows that brands appeared more often in variety shows (68.6%) followed by dramas (21.6%; $\chi^2(4, N = 1411) = 163.48, p < 0.001$). News or documentaries (5.9%), and sports programs (4.0%) recorded very few brand appearances, as might be expected, while costume dramas did not have any brand appearances at all. Therefore H1a gains support in the current dataset. H1b predicts that brand appearances are more likely to occur in programs which could be described as relaxing. A one-sample t-test shows that brands were more likely

to appear in programs with more relaxing tone ($\bar{x} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.05$; $t(1224) = 29.96$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore H1b is also strongly supported.

Features of placed products

RQ2 intends to identify what product categories are more likely to be placed in prime-time television programs in Hong Kong. Among the six product categories, a chi-square analysis shows that non-durable products such as clothing and skin care products had the most brand appearances (48.8%, see Table 2), followed by durable products such as mobile phones and automobiles (24.2%), servicing or retailing (12.8%), food and beverages (10.3%), cigarettes, beers and liquor (2.0%), and pharmaceutical products (1.9%; $\chi^2(5, N = 1225) = 1162.48$, $p < 0.001$). Most of the placed products (72.9%) had a close fit with the scenario and nearly half of the placed brands had some connection with the plot (47.9%).

When comparing brands that had appeared in locally produced versus syndicated programs, it was found that both durable (36.1%) and non-durable (31.4%) products were equally likely to appear in locally produced programs while non-durable products (67.2%) were more likely to occur in syndicated programs ($\chi^2(5, N = 1225) = 246.86$, $p < 0.001$). Food and beverage products were more likely to appear in locally produced than syndicated programs (17.4% versus 2.8%). However, the pattern reversed for ethically charged products such as cigarettes, liquors and pharmaceuticals. These products were more likely to appear in syndicated than locally produced programs (6.7% versus 1.2%).

H2a and 2b proposes that a higher proportion of placed brands tends to be foreign/global brands and are more well-known. A chi-square analysis shows that most brands that appeared in HK television programs were global brands (86.4%), while there were only 13.6% local brands ($\chi^2(1, N = 1225) = 648.07$, $p < 0.001$). Local brands were more likely to appear in syndicated programs than locally produced programs (18.8% versus 8.8%, $\chi^2(1, N = 1225) = 26.01$, $p < 0.001$). These syndicated programs are mainly variety shows

about food and travelling such as *World's No. 1*, which usually features local brands from the countries where the program was produced. For example, 'Inlake Coffee Shop' appeared in a program from Hangzhou, China, and 'Zhu Bo Yuan' malt sugar was featured in a Taiwanese program. Therefore H2a is strongly supported.

A chi-square analysis shows that most products that appeared in television programs were well-known brands (56.7%), or brands known by some people (37.2%; $\chi^2(2, N = 1225) = 480.56, p < 0.001$). There were 74 placed brands (6%) that most Hong Kong people had not heard about before, and those brands appeared mostly in syndicated programs. The majority of brands that appeared in locally produced programs were well-known brands (78.5%) while most placed brands in syndicated programs were likely to be only known by some people (56.4%, $\chi^2(2, N = 1225) = 249.28, p < 0.001$). In other words, brands placed in programs produced outside Hong Kong seem to be less well known. The results in general support H2b.

[Place Table 2 about here]

Building on previous literature, H2c predicts an association between genre types and the placed product category in Hong Kong prime-time television programs. A chi-square analysis shows that some product categories were more likely to be placed in certain types of programs ($\chi^2(15, N = 1225) = 438.09, p < 0.001$). Specifically non-durable products (63.3%) were more likely to appear in variety shows. Durables (49.6%) and food and beverages (26.9%) were more likely to be found in drama series.

Modality of brand appearances

RQ3 seeks to explore the relative prominence of brands appearing in Hong Kong television programs. Most brand appearances in television programs were visual placements (88.7%). Only 1.6% of brands appeared verbally while the remaining 9.7% were in combined mode (see Table 1). When brands were placed visually, 35.2% showed both the logo and brand

name clearly on the screen (see Table 3). A few brands appeared in advertisements which were placed in the television programs (12.8%). Over half (73.9%) of the brands were placed at the center of the screen which indicates that most brands were shown in prominent positions. However, most of the visual placements tended to be prop displays which means that the placed products were being used in the scene (52.4%) and only 8.5% of the brand appearances were close-up shots. Since most brands were not shown in close up, the average size of products appearing on the screen (as a proportion of the screen) was 0.19 ($SD = 0.22$), or about one-fifth of the screen. Brands appeared on the screen for between 2 to 62 seconds and the average length of appearances was 7.15 seconds ($SD = 6.36$).

When brands were referred to in television programs, usually the brand names were mentioned explicitly together with pronouns (40.3%) or only pronouns were used (36.0%). Most brands were referenced once only (67.6%) while about 10% had been mentioned more than two times. Brands were referred to and discussed in television programs ranging from 2 to 210 seconds and on average brands were placed verbally for 11.36 seconds ($SD = 21.35$).

An analysis was conducted to examine the modality of brand appearances by program characteristics. It was found that verbal placements (75%) or audio-visual placements (59.7%) were more likely to happen in locally produced programs than syndicated programs ($\chi^2(2, N = 1225) = 8.67, p < 0.05$). Visual placements (68.6%) and audio-visual placements (74.8%) were more likely to occur in variety shows while news and documentary programs contained the most verbal placements (65.0%, $\chi^2(6, N = 1225) = 146.43, p < 0.001$). In sports shows only 49 visual placements (4.5%) were recorded and there were no verbal or combined audio-visual placements.

[Place Table 3 about here]

Character interaction with placed products

RQ4 intends to examine the extent of character interaction with placed products. Results indicate that the majority of brands (804 out of 1225) were not just displayed in programs but usually had some interaction with the characters ($\chi^2(1, N = 1225) = 119.75, p < 0.001$). More male characters were found to interact with placed brands than female characters (73.1% versus 22.1%; $\chi^2(2, N = 804) = 609.70, p < 0.001$; see Table 4). About two-thirds of the characters interacting with placed brands were leading characters in the television programs (67.9%; $\chi^2(2, N = 804) = 465.07, p < 0.001$). Regarding the extent of interaction, the majority of characters consumed products during the brand exposure (76.6%; $\chi^2(3, N = 804) = 1163.93, p < 0.001$). This included chatting over a *Samsung* smartphone, using *Columbia* trekking poles for hiking, and cycling on a *Giant* bicycle with a *Specialized* helmet. Other forms of character interaction included verbally mentioning the placed products or holding/touching the products which accounted for 12.6% and 9.5% respectively. Most of the placed brands were endorsed by characters who had a high degree of fit with the branded products (69%; $\chi^2(2, N = 804) = 518.16, p < 0.001$). In other words, a high level of character interaction and a high degree of fit with the placed brands were found in this study.

[Place Table 4 about here]

Characteristics of placement context

About one-half of brand appearances (544 out of 1225, 44.4%) contained more than one brand at a time. Usually two or three branded products appeared together, which could be from the same or different brands. For example, one of the placements featured *Coca-Cola*, *Coca-Cola Zero* and *Coca-Cola Light*. Sometimes a character might dress in products from the same brand (e.g., wearing a *North Face* hat and jacket). Products from different brands may sometimes appear on the screen together especially when the scene featured the store

environment. For instance, one episode featured different brands of bedding products including *Sinomax*, *Kauffmann* and *Casablanca*. Another travelling program showed the main actor in a Columbia jacket, carrying a Canon camera with him. Placement clutter seems to occur more frequently for products from different brands than for products of the same brand, with an average of two or three brands appearing together.

The last set of hypotheses proposes that branded products are more likely to appear in positive, happy and humorous contexts. Three one-sample t-tests were conducted and the results support the first two hypotheses (see Table 5). Specifically brands were more likely to be placed in positive ($\bar{x} = 3.38$, $SD = 0.54$; $t(1224) = 24.48$, $p < 0.001$) and happy contexts ($\bar{x} = 3.37$, $SD = 0.69$; $t(1224) = 18.97$, $p < 0.001$). About one-third (36.6%) of brands were positively depicted while only 0.8% were negatively depicted and about 40% of brands were found to be associated with happy scenes while only 6.3% of brands were shown in unhappy plots. Nevertheless, contrary to what we expected, brands were more likely to appear in boring scenes ($\bar{x} = 2.90$, $SD = 0.62$; $t(1224) = -5.76$, $p < 0.001$). About one fifth (20.3%) of brands appeared in a boring context compared to 11.5% in a humorous environment.

Notification of brand appearances was first explored in this content analysis. Both the timing and notification explicitness were recorded (see Table 5). Surprisingly, most of the brand appearances were not acknowledged through notification in television programs (60.1%). Only 39.9% of the placed brands were acknowledged at the end of the programs (see Table 6). Among the 489 brand appearances that were disclosed, mostly both the brand name and logo were acknowledged (70.6%).

[Place Table 5 about here]

Discussion and conclusion

Product placement is a dynamic and fast growing promotional tool and the practice seems to

be morphing constantly in a variety of ways. Expenditure of product placement in the east is on the rise as we have seen many international brands placed in movies and television programs produced in China (PQ Media, 2013). Likewise, an increasing trend of placing Chinese brands in Hollywood movies has been recorded (Lee 2016). Although the USA is still the world's largest market for product placement, Asian markets have recorded accelerated growth in product placement and remain relatively under researched. It is believed that understanding the patterns of product placement execution in both western and eastern markets are equally important and this research may act as a guide in planning more strategic product placements within this increasingly important context.

The fast growth of the practice may also lead to some controversial cases. Therefore, regular monitoring of it is important, along with identifying any disconnects between theory and practice that may exist. This research provides a snapshot of product placement execution within Asia for the first time, through the systematic observation of 225 hours of HK television programs (with content from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Japan and Malaysia). Specifically, we adopted LaFerle and Edwards's (2006) framework but have extended to a new context and have included new measures to gain a deeper insight into execution practices. The current research is done nearly fifteen years after La Ferle and Edwards (2006, data collection in 2002) and has also extended their instrument by taking account of the placed brand features, extent and fit of character interaction, placement context, placement notifications and the distinction between locally produced and syndicated programs. The results also provide a point of reference for future studies to measure changes in the practice within Asia as it continues to grow in the region.

Brands appeared in television programs in Hong Kong frequently with one brand appearing in every 11 minutes of programming. This appears to be quite prevalent compare to recent studies (Smit et al. 2009; Wouters and De Pelsmacker 2011). Brand appearances

were even more prevalent on syndicated programs. Although the current analysis recorded more locally produced programs than syndicated programs (almost double), brand appearances span equally over the two types of programs. It appears that fewer restrictions regarding product placement were enforced on syndicated programs. This is probably due to the fact that these programs were purchased after they were produced and broadcasted in the originated country and the governing body in Hong Kong may have little say over their placement practices.

Several new observations emerge from the content analysis. Brand appearances were also analyzed with regards to program length. Interestingly, a reverse U-shaped relationship between length of program and number of brand appearances was noted. This could be for two reasons. First, 60 minute programs were the more common type of programs that appeared on HK television as reflected by the number of programs recorded (which was the second most common length apart from 30 minute). Second, most 60 minute programs were either variety shows or part of a drama series which were more appropriate and easier for brands to be integrated in. As recorded, variety shows in Hong Kong such as game shows, cooking shows, food and travelling programs recorded the most brand appearances (about two-thirds). Similarly, drama series represented a popular genre for brand integration. These light entertainment programs usually feature contemporary settings so are suitable and comparatively easy for brands to be integrated into. Sports shows recorded a few brand appearances and all were visual placements (e.g., signage or outdoor billboards). News and documentary programs recorded 6% of brand appearances which were less prevalent than in previous studies. It is believed that brands appeared/mentioned in news programs were being accidentally integrated instead of being integrated for commercial purposes.

In some ways, the findings share similarities with those presented in earlier studies. Similar to previous findings (Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006), the

majority of brand appearances in Hong Kong tended to occur in 'relaxing' or 'very relaxing' television programs. Marketers try to avoid placing brands in tense programs because audiences may overlook them and may not notice and interpret the brand appearance. Alternatively, the placed brand may benefit by associating with relaxing programs. According to the affect transfer model (Lutz 1985), the positive relaxing feelings experienced during the program may then transfer to the placed brand. Therefore brand appearances were more likely to be found in programs which were relaxing.

Similar to previous findings (Karniouchina et al. 2011; McClung and Cleophat 2008), non-durables such as apparel and accessories were the most frequently appearing brands in prime-time Hong Kong television programs, followed by durables such as automobiles. Non-durable products were more likely to appear in variety shows while durables and food and beverages were more likely to be found in drama series. It is unclear if this relates to placement effectiveness in the Asian context. Some differences emerged among product categories that appeared in the two types of programs. Food and beverage products were more likely to be integrated in locally produced than syndicated programs whereas ethically charged products such as cigarettes, liquors and pharmaceuticals were more likely to appear in syndicated than locally produced programs. The appearance of ethically charged products, especially cigarettes and liquors, in broadcasting media are strictly regulated by the Communications Authority in Hong Kong. Cigarette products were banned from public media in the late 1990s while restrictions were also put on liquors. This probably explains the low incidence of these brand appearances.

Some other findings about product placement in Hong Kong are also of interest. Most of the brands appearing in prime-time television programs tended to be global brands and were well-known by the Hong Kong community. As a cosmopolitan city, many international/global brands have their business and branches in Hong Kong. It remains the

leading luxury shopping destination in Asia and many global brands treat it as a springboard for expanding to China (Jones Lang LaSalle 2016). In addition, Hong Kong actually does not manufacture many products so there are not many local brands. Some local brands or small-medium enterprises in Hong Kong may not have the budget for placing their brands in television programs. They may not be able to compete with global brands for integrating their brands. Therefore a higher proportion of global brands were recorded in the television programs. Hong Kong consumers enthusiastically crave for luxury brands explained the high level of well-known brands found to be placed in television programs. According to the Destination Retail 2016 report, Hong Kong is the second most appealing luxury retail destination worldwide (Jones Lang LaSalle 2016). As a high power distance culture (Hofstede 2001), luxury consumption or possession may serve as a way to reflect and represent one's status. There is a famous Chinese saying "*xian jing luo yi hou jing ren*" which means one will usually be judged first by the clothing he/she wore. Since studies conducted in western cultures did not specifically look at this issue we cannot compare with other research, but this could be a phenomenon unique to certain Asian contexts (Ferraro and Avery 2000; La Ferle and Edwards 2006; Smit et al. 2009).

However, this research also exhibited some stark differences which may be reflected by time and the cultural context. Like prior research a good deal of placements typically had some kind of interaction with the characters. However, the level of interaction with the leading character in this research (67.9%) was significantly higher than that found in La Ferle and Edwards' (2006) study (43.0%). This may reflect changing recognition that such implicit celebrity endorsements may enhance brand persuasiveness. Indeed, in prior research product placement was found to be more effective when characters in the program were using/mentioning the product (Pervan and Martin 2002). Consequently, one recommendation might be to enhance levels of interaction between leading characters and the placed brands.

Furthermore, extending La Ferle and Edwards' (2006) findings we also measured character fit with the brand. It seems practitioners in Hong Kong strive to make brands appear naturally in television programs. The majority of the placed brands had a high fit with the characters in programs. This might result in higher acceptance towards the practice than traditional advertising (Chan, Lowe and Petrovici 2017). Interestingly, the majority of characters interacting with placed brands were male characters, which is more than three times the number of female characters. Hong Kong is a somewhat masculine society (Hofstede 2001) and masculine roles may appear to be more authoritative in communication. However, more empirical evidence is needed to avoid overgeneralization of this cultural claim.

Verbal references or audio-visual brand integrations are usually regarded as more prominent (Cowley and Barron 2008; Homer 2009). The current study recorded very few verbal (only 1.6%) and audio-visual placements (9.7%) while about 47% of brand appearances recorded in La Ferle and Edwards' (2006) study were verbal and audio-visual placements. Even though a few placed products were referenced verbally, most were just mentioned once only (67.6%) and were more likely to be referred to by pronouns rather than mentioning the brand name explicitly. On average brands were placed verbally for 11.36 seconds which was longer than visual appearances hence verbal placement appears to be more prominent. Although brand recall is believed to be enhanced with dual mode processing (Unnava and Burnkrant 1991), in contrast to the literature, only one tenth of the sample integrated both verbal and visual appearances at the same time. This may again reflect that practitioners in Hong Kong try to preserve the implicit nature of product placement promotions. Perhaps it is difficult to integrate a brand both visually and verbally without appearing to be 'hard selling' and increasingly prominent.

For visual placements, about three quarters of brands in Hong Kong television programs tended to appear at the center of the screen compared to only 25.7% in La Ferle and

Edwards (2006). It appears that brands were placed in more prominent positions in the Hong Kong context. Nevertheless, their prominence was diluted by the fact that most brand appearances in the Hong Kong sample were not close-up shots. Only 8.5% of brand appearances were close-up shots compared to 20.7% in La Ferle and Edwards (2006). Brand appearances in the Hong Kong sample also occupied a small proportion of the screen on average. In light of these findings a question emerges about the nature of prominence and the impact of its various antecedents. It is still unclear from the literature how different factors impact prominence and how consumers react to this. Hong Kong placements seem prominent in relation to their centrality but prominence is reduced by their size on the screen and the modality. The results suggest that practitioners were cautiously struggling between the noticeability of the placed brand and the irritation that may create to audiences. It appears that more explicit forms of product placement should be carefully considered to avoid over prominence as this may offend the audience. Clearly prominence is a contemporary issue in product placement literature and merits more research attention.

Another interesting observation is that placement clutter appeared to be an increasingly prevalent trend in Hong Kong. About one half of product placements contained more than one brand in the same scene whereas La Ferle and Edwards (2006) recorded a much lower proportion with 36% visual and 13% verbal clutter. However, similar to La Ferle and Edwards (2006), placement clutter usually happens for products from different brands instead of the same brand. This suggests that advertisers from the same brand may intend to avoid creating clutter within the same scene. Perhaps they recognized that extra exposure of products from the same brand may not enhance brand persuasiveness. On the contrary, it may make the brand appear to be too prominent and ultimately may annoy the audience. In some European markets, co-appearances of products from the same brand are restricted by regulations, which can be deemed as illegal. In Hong Kong, the “Generic Code of Practice on

Television Advertising Standards” has been developed to guide the integration of branded content in television programs which suggests that placements should not cause any obtrusive feeling to the viewing experience (Communications Authority, 2015). In other words, there are no specific regulations and policies guiding such practices in Hong Kong. It appears to be more of the judgement of the broadcasters and program producers. It may also be the case that content producers in Hong Kong are concerned about the legal implications of being overtly prominent as stated in the code of practice.

Lastly, the current analysis examined the context of product placement in a more extensive form and found that brand appearances were more likely to be portrayed in slightly more positive and happy environments. Previous studies mainly explored whether the brand was portrayed positively, neutrally or negatively with the majority found to be neutral (75.7% in Ferraro and Avery 2000; 90.8% in La Ferle and Edwards 2006). In this study, we try to focus on the context/scene for the placed brand using three different scales (i.e. positive, happy and humorous). Although a high proportion of placed brands were still depicted neutrally nowadays, a drop in ‘neutral portrayal’ of placed brands was noted compared to earlier studies. More brands were placed in a positive and happy context in the current study. The results confirm with theoretical speculation that brands should appear in positively framed scenes to make them more effective (Bless and Schwarz 1999; Lutz 1985). However, the high proportion of placed brands found to appear in neutral settings suggests that brand owners may in fact have little control over the context of brand appearances or that program producers do not want the brand appearances to infringe on the artistic value of the program. Either way it suggests product placement may be somewhat constraining but there is a trend that advertisers are increasingly gaining control over it as indicated in the findings.

Alternatively, it may suggest that practitioners intended to preserve the implicit nature of placement promotion and either did not consider the setting when placing the brands or

chose not to associate the brands with particular settings. In the current regulations and policies guiding the practice of product placements in Hong Kong, product placements in television programs are acceptable as long as the product/service placed is editorially justified and does not cause any obtrusive feeling to the viewing experience. Research into advertising suggests that humor may evoke more positive responses by consumers when used in the right situations (Eisend 2009b; Lewinski, Fransen and Tan 2014). In contrast to the literature, the current study found that only 11.5% of brands were placed in a humorous setting and most of the brand appearances tended to associate with boring scenes. Further exploration of the role of humor in product placement is necessary to understand its effect upon consumer response to product placement.

The current study also revealed that less than half of brands placed in television programs were disclosed at the end of the programs and usually both the brand name and logo were acknowledged. Mandatory disclosure of brand appearances is not required in Hong Kong at the moment. Following Eisend (2009a) the implicit persuasive nature of product placement suggests that further regulation of product placements could be explored. A growing body of literature has tried to address this issue, in particular on the effect of disclosure (Boerman, Van Reijmersdal and Neijens 2012; 2014; 2015a; 2015b). The study provides a snapshot of product placement practices in the Asian context and reveals some disconnect between theory and practice. This opens up new avenues for future research as discussed in the next section.

Limitations and future research

Although the study provides an objective documentation of brand appearances in Hong Kong, it cannot indicate their relative effectiveness nor can it offer explanations for why brands were placed the way that they were. However, some interesting disconnects between theory

and practice were observed which indicate the need for further testing in this area. For example, the degree to which advertising executives are willing to pay for increased prominence of their products within programing content and how consumers interpret these different dimensions of prominence. Consequently, further research could clearly clarify the dimensions of prominence and their relative influence on consumer reactions to create more optimal placements. Specifically, *what is the level of prominence in product placement that is tolerable to audiences? How does it affect placement effectiveness?*

Although a comparatively large sample of television programs was analyzed in this study, it only covered one month of prime-time programs. While more data could be collected it is unclear if this would harness any more benefit, particularly given the pattern/schedule of program types often repeat weekly or monthly. Therefore, it is expected that the findings may not have differed substantially if any more programs were recorded and documented. However, any generalization of the results is imprecise without additional studies and samples, particularly in other Asian settings. Though several Asian countries were represented within the programing content the results are dominated by the presence of Hong Kong programs. Further research should look more comprehensively at other countries within the Asian region for further elaboration on the results here. Specifically, *what are the placement practices in cultures that have higher level of power distance?* It is also suggested that longitudinal studies are conducted to trace changes of the practice over time and give insights into the evolution of placement strategies. Specifically, *do placement practices become more prevalent and more sophisticated?*

Given that many of the placement scenes were coded as in a “neutral” setting, other research techniques could be sought to measure the placement context in a more objective manner. In particular, the possibility of applying facial recognition technologies to measure people’s facial expressions in placement scene as inspired in a recent study has been explored

(Lewinski, Fransen and Tan 2014). However, in order to employ this technique researchers are encouraged to record videos in a very high quality and resolution. It is also the case that such content must focus directly on the character's face (rather than as a side on view) and the displayed emotions cannot be too subtle to detect. Because of these limitations such facial recognition technology was not able to be used within this research. Therefore in this study, we tried to analyze the context/plot associated with the placed brand instead of the emotions of the characters. However, this represents an interesting avenue for further exploration and researchers are strongly encouraged to explore its feasibility. Lewinski, Fransen and Tan (2014) found that amusing video advertisements enhance advertising effectiveness but amusement only relates to the emotion of happiness and not the other basic emotions. Future studies may explore if *brands appearing in a positive context or being associated with a positive mood are more likely to lead to positive attitude and behavior change.*

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Table 1.Brand appearances by program characteristics

Program characteristics	Programs (<i>n</i> =62)		Brand appearances (<i>n</i> =1225)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Television channel</u>				
J2	25	40.3%	707	57.7%
ATV	23	37.1%	175	14.3%
TVB	14	22.6%	343	28.0%
<u>Length of program</u>				
5 minutes	2	3.2%	110	9.0%
30 minutes	31	50%	268	21.9%
60 minutes	18	29.0%	618	50.4%
90 minutes	5	8.1%	122	10.0%
120 minutes	4	6.5%	107	8.7%
150 minutes	2	3.2%	0	0.0%
<u>Origin of program</u>				
Locally produced	41	66.1%	628	51.3%
Syndicated	21	33.9%	597	48.7%
<u>Type of program</u>				
Variety shows	44	71.0%	840	68.6%
Drama series	11	17.7%	264	21.6%
News, commentary and documentary	5	8.1%	72	5.9%
Sports	1	1.6%	49	4.0%
Costume drama	1	1.6%	0	0.0%
<u>Modality of brand appearance</u>				
Visual only			1086	88.7%
Verbal only			20	1.6%
Both			119	9.7%
Tone of program	$\bar{x} = 3.83$ $SD = 1.09$		$\bar{x} = 3.90$ $SD = 1.05$	

Table 2. Brand appearances and program origin by product characteristics

Product characteristics	Brand appearance (n=1225)		Locally produced (n=628)		Syndicated (n=597)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Product category</u>						
Non-durable products	598	48.8%	197	31.4%	401	67.2%
Durable products	297	24.2%	227	36.1%	70	11.7%
Servicing/Retailing	157	12.8%	88	14.0%	69	11.6%
Food and beverages	126	10.3%	109	17.4%	17	2.8%
Cigarettes, beers and liquor	24	2.0%	1	0.2%	23	3.9%
Pharmaceuticals	23	1.9%	6	1.0%	17	2.8%
<u>Product source</u>						
Global brand/product	1058	86.4%	573	91.2%	485	81.2%
Local brand/product	167	13.6%	55	8.8%	112	18.8%
<u>Brand awareness</u> ¹						
Haven't heard before	74	6.0%	16	2.5%	58	9.7%
Known by some people	456	37.2%	119	19.0%	337	56.4%
Well-known	695	56.7%	493	78.5%	202	33.8%

¹ Originally a simple dichotomous scale was used to code a placed brand into either “well-known” or “less well-known”. After some pilot testing, it was found that a more precise scale with more points may be needed. Therefore a five-point scale which included the categories “Haven't heard before, Known by few people, Known by some people, Well-known and Very well-known” was developed. Coders were then instructed and trained to code the placed brands into one of the five options. However, coders found that “Known by few people” and “Known by some people” are hard to differentiate as were “well-known” and “very well-known”. Therefore those categories were combined and the scale was reduced to a 3-point scale for further analysis.

Table 3. Brand appearances by modality

Brand appearance modality	Number	Percent
Visual placement (n=1205)		
<u>Visibility</u>		
An ad is placed as a background prop	154	12.8%
Product itself can be clearly seen on the screen	105	8.7%
Brand logo can be clearly seen on the screen	136	11.3%
Brand name can be clearly seen on the screen	386	32.0%
Both logo and name can be clearly seen on the screen	424	35.2%
<u>Positioning</u>		
Peripheral of the screen	315	26.1%
Centre of the screen	890	73.9%
<u>Proximity²</u>		
Background display	198	16.4%
Background close-up	11	0.9%
Foreground display	274	22.7%
Foreground close-up	18	1.5%
Props display	631	52.4%
Props close-up	73	6.1%
Size (proportion to the screen)	$\bar{x} = 0.19$ $SD = 0.22$	
Length in seconds	$\bar{x} = 7.15$ $SD = 6.36$	
Verbal placement (n=139)		

² Background and foreground display or close ups refer to that the placed products appeared alone on the screen. Props display or close-ups refer to when the placed products were being used/consumed by the characters in the programs.

Way of reference

Use pronouns	50	36.0%
Mention explicitly	33	23.7%
Both	56	40.3%

Frequency of reference

One mention only	94	67.6%
Two mentions	31	22.3%
More than two mentions	14	10.1%

Length in seconds $\bar{x} = 11.36$ $SD = 21.35$

Table 4. Character interaction with placed brands

Character interaction (n=804)	Number	Percent
<u>Gender of characters</u>		
Male	588	73.1%
Female	178	22.1%
Both	38	4.7%
<u>Type of characters</u>		
Leading character	546	67.9%
Supporting character	195	24.3%
Extra	63	7.8%
<u>Extent of interaction</u>		
Mentioning it only	101	12.6%
Holding/touching it only	76	9.5%
Consuming it only	616	76.6%
A combination of the above	11	1.4%
<u>Fit between brand and character</u>		
Low	37	4.6%
High	555	69.0%
Cannot decide	212	26.4%

Table 5. Characteristics of placement context and placement notification

Placement context (<i>n</i>=1225)	Mean	SD
Positive context	3.38	0.54
Happy scenario	3.37	0.69
Humorous scene	2.90	0.62
<hr/>		
Placement notification (<i>n</i>=1225)	Number	Percent
<u>Timing of notification</u>		
No notification	736	60.1%
Before the program	0	0%
After the program	489	39.9%
<u>Way of notification</u>		
Showing brand logo	13	2.7%
Brand name acknowledged	131	26.8%
Showing both brand name and logo	345	70.6%