

College Students' Recall Of And Attitudes Toward Brand Placement In Reality Television Programming

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**COLLEGE STUDENTS' RECALL OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD BRAND
PLACEMENT IN REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAMMING**

by

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B.S. Florida State University, 2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This thesis measures college students' attitudes toward, and the effectiveness of, brand placement in the genre of reality television. Surveys were used to discover the level of brand recall for the products and brands displayed in reality television programming and to discover viewers' reported reasons for paying attention to these brands. The study found that viewers tended to have positive attitudes toward brand placement in reality television and that focus on a brand was a major reason for recall. Furthermore, the study found no significant difference in the recall scores of reality television viewers versus non-viewers and no significant difference based on the perceived level of the reality of the programming.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Survivor contestants are rewarded with Doritos-brand chips. Contestants on *The Apprentice* devise advertising for a new Dove soap product. *Amazing Race* contestants fly on United Airlines. *American Idol* contestants croon about Coke in a cleverly crafted commercial interlude. All of these are modern-day examples of the recent merger of reality television and brand placement.

Reality television is a rapidly spreading television genre in which real people live out selected portions of their lives while being videotaped for broadcast. Brand placement is the practice of negotiating to place a specific brand in a mass media message, most commonly in movies or television shows.

The merger of reality television and brand placement is not an entirely new phenomenon. It was suggested in the 1998 feature film *The Truman Show*, about a man whose life was broadcast 24 hours a day without commercial interruption and without his knowledge. Without a break for advertisements, the actors in the show advertised different strategically placed products by using them in everyday life and presenting mini-advertisements for these products.

Background

The genre of reality television first gained attention in the early 1970s with the PBS show *An American Family* that followed the turbulent relationship of the Loud family (*History of Reality TV*, 2000). Reality television has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity. According to Paulsen (2005), in the week of April 10, 2005, six reality television shows placed in the top twenty most popular shows. Paulsen also states that many reality television shows have

placed in the top twenty throughout their run. Additionally, the fall 2004 network TV schedule included 20.5 hours of reality programming per week, an increase of 128 percent over 2003 (Shaughnessy, 2004). The increase in the number of reality shows is logical. In 2003, “unscripted shows cost from \$500,000 to \$700,000 for a new series compared to \$1.2 million for a typical drama or sitcom or an estimated \$2.3 million for a hit like *West Wing* on NBC” (Weaver, 2005). The decreased cost of production allows networks to produce new reality shows continually. An online source noted that “according to the Nielsen Media Research, reality shows account for about 56% of all of American TV shows (both in cable and broadcast), and also accounts to about 69% of all of the world TV shows (in cable and in broadcast)” (*Reality television*, 2005).

Brand placement in the mass media has been in use in some form since the early 20th century, when vendors would lend their name to sponsor radio programs such as the Maxwell House Hour (Kretchmer, 2004). One widely cited example of brand placement occurred in the 1982 feature film *ET: The Extraterrestrial*, in which Reese’s Pieces candies were used as an incentive to lure the lovable alien out of hiding. Afterward, sales of the candies skyrocketed (Berman, 2005; Galician & Bourdeau, 2004; Kinney and Sapolsky, 2003). Julie Weinhouse, principal owner of HERO Product Placement, stated that

If you think about it, a 30-second commercial is really very brief...When the commercial comes on, you go to the fridge and get a soda, or you go to the bathroom, or whatever you do. By the time you come back, someone’s spent about a million bucks [on an ad placement you missed]... Let’s say an exposure on *Friends* is on screen for 15 seconds. A 30-second spot on *Friends* might cost \$500,000. If you break that down, 15-seconds worth of exposure would be worth

\$250,000. As a placement, that exposure might cost less than \$10,000, depending on the particular agency-client agreement. (Vista Group, 2005)

According to PQ Media, a media research firm, “the value of the product placement market grew 30.5% to an all-time high of \$3.46 billion in 2004, as marketers wary of ad-skipping technologies targeted more of their marketing budgets at reality television programs and media that attract the elusive 18- to 34-year-old demographic” (*Exclusive Research from PQ Media 2005*). Additionally, PQ Media projects that brand placement spending will increase to \$6.94 billion by the year 2009.

It is easy to see why these two concepts go hand-in-hand. Low productions costs associated with both provide incentive for ad executives and production companies to continue this practice. With the continuation of reality television’s popularity, a significant percentage of an estimated advertising spending budget will go into placing products and brands into these reality shows.

Many studies deal with each of these subjects separately. Many have mentioned brand placement in reality television only in passing. Few have focused solely on the two, and little research has attempted to find the effects of the combination of the two. This exploratory study has two purposes. The first purpose is to explore the recall of brands placed in reality television programming and to explore why viewers recall these brands. The second purpose is to measure the attitudes toward brand placement in reality television.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Reality Television

Reality television has been defined in a variety of ways. For this study, the definition “programs that film real people as they live out events (contrived or otherwise) in their lives as these events occur” (Nabi, Biely, Morgan, and Stitt, 2003, p.2). Those researchers also specified the following characteristics as part of the definition: 1) real people, not actors, 2) filmed in real environments, 3) without a script, 4) events placed in narrative context, and 5) for viewer entertainment. It is important to note that reality television deals with “real people,” that is, the focal characters on reality television shows are not paid actors.

Viewers have expressed varying reasons for watching reality television, such as because of its perceived reality or for vicarious experience (Wei and Tootle, 2002; Weiss, 2004). Reality television has been linked with voyeurism because it involves strangers watching the “private” moments of others (Deery, 2004); however, this concept has been challenged because voyeurism implies that the watched party does not know that they are being watched (Deery, 2004; Nabi, et al., 2003). The argument that voyeurism does not exist in the viewing of reality television comes from the fact that reality show participants are fully aware that they are being filmed or videotaped and that millions of viewers are likely to observe their actions. Perhaps this is why viewers have also expressed opinions stating that reality television portrays only a moderate version of reality (Nabi, et al., 2003).

Brand Placement

Karrh (1998) defined brand placement as the “paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming.”

Brand placement has emerged as a tool for advertisers to gain back the attention of viewers. Many viewers are disenchanted by the saturation of advertisements in today’s television and many find ways to avoid paying attention to these ads by either flipping the channel during the commercials or by skipping the commercials using PVRs, or personal video recorders (Avery and Ferraro, 2000; Ferraro and Avery, 2000). The technique of brand placement is a potential “solution” to the problem of commercial clutter and to the ad-skipping capabilities of these PVRs (Lowery, Shrum & McCarthy, 2005).

A reason for the advent of brand placement in movies was so the advertiser could receive the benefits of continued advertising throughout the years due to video sales (Karrh, 1998). The increasing popularity of television shows sold on DVD is another potential benefit of brand placement in reality television.

In a study on consumer acceptability of brand placement, Gupta and Gould (1997) found that viewers “who valued perceived realism and less restrictions [in brand placement] and had more positive general attitudes toward brand placements tended to be more favorable toward the acceptability of brand placements in general than others”(p. 43).

Viewers’ responses and attitudes about brand placement have been studied in different genres and media, but they have not explicitly been studied in the genre of reality television. This notion leads to the first research question:

RQ1: How do viewers respond to or feel about the practice of brand placement specifically in the genre of reality television?

Recall Effects

A definition for brand recall is “the ability of consumers to retrieve the brand from memory when given the product category... or some other type of probe as a cue” (Chandon, 2003, p. 1-2). Du Plessis (1994) found that recall is associated with brand linkage and that viewers look for cues to store in memory so that they can recall the brand. This is reminiscent of the Elaboration Likelihood Model, or ELM. Created in 1980 by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, the ELM states in part that a message is processed through one of two routes: the central and the peripheral. The central route is used when the message is important and the person is motivated and able to think more thoroughly about the message. Those using the central route are persuaded by stronger arguments in the message. The peripheral route is used when the message is not as important and the person is not motivated or able to think about the message. Those using the peripheral route are persuaded by weaker arguments.

ELM, often used to explain persuasion, can be applied while looking at the effects of brand placement on recall and the reasons given for recall. Brand placement often uses peripheral cues to entice viewers. There is often little time to present a strong and convincing message for their brand. Additionally, the involvement of the audience, their motivation and ability to process any message, may be lower. Nabi, et al. (2003) stated that viewers watch for entertainment and informative reasons. Since advertisers have a limited amount of time versus a fifteen second or thirty second commercial to catch the viewer’s attention, they often attach the

brand placement to peripheral cues such as having a brightly colored product or brand placed at the forefront of the scene or having a main character mentioning it either briefly or at length. This usually does not give the audience a convincing argument of the merits of the product or brand, but lets the audience know that others use the brand, so therefore the brand is worth using.

Steinberg (2005) stated that the goal of advertisers is to reach those viewers who pay attention to a program and are engaged and aware of the commercials and brand placements that occur within them. Recall will be measured in this thesis because it has been found to be more objective and more trustworthy than recognition (Wells, 2000).

Studies have found that the effectiveness of the brand placement depends on several factors such as the location and/or the size of the placement and that the effectiveness has most often been tested through memory and recall tests. Gupta and Lord (1998) found that prominent placements received more recall than did subtle placements. A study by d'Astous and Chartier (2000) focusing on consumers' memories of brand placement found that the more prominent the placement, the greater the recognition, but the less the recall. Moreover, when a placement stands out, it will be remembered more often, but it will be evaluated more negatively. Vice versa, the more a placement is integrated into a scene, the less it will be remembered and the more it will be liked.

In a study designed to explain recall, Walker and von Gonten (1989) explained that there are two dimensions of memory: 1) attention at the time of exposure and 2) ease of retrieval. They also claimed that "attention literally describes the extent to which viewers attend to the commercial when it is aired, and the importance of this dimension is self evident: the more people pay attention to a commercial, the greater the opportunity for recall" (p. 12). Additionally, they claimed that "attention is the means by which a commercial creates an impression i.e.

memory; and recall can be understood as the retrieval of that memory” (p.13). Walker and von Gonten asserted that respondents were considered to have given related recall if they indicated that they saw the test commercial. Walker and von Gonten also claimed that recall could not be achieved if the brand is not remembered. They claimed that the brand name is the key in measuring recall and that “related recall is achieved when the viewer gives a correct description of the commercial in response to product and brand prompts” (p.13).

This previous research, in addition to the application of ELM, leads to the next research question.:

RQ2: What influences viewer recall of the brands or products placed in reality television?

Stone, Besser, and Lewis (2000) found that liked advertisements were recalled more often than those that were disliked. They also found, however, that regardless of likeability, people accurately associate the brand with a memorable commercial; additional findings were that people are more likely to name the brand in a liked commercial and that people remember the commercial and the product regardless of the feelings toward the brand. Mehta (2000) found that respondents who liked advertising recall more advertisements than those who do not feel this way. Based on the assumption that most viewers of reality television watch because they like it (or because they are not averse to it), the next research question is proposed:

RQ3: Are people who watch reality television more likely to recall brands than people who do not watch reality TV and have a negative view about it are less likely to recall brands?

Nelson (2002) spun the focus of brand placement by focusing on the recall of placements within computerized games. The study found that video game players were unaffected by the

brand placement within video games and even felt that the placements could help enhance the realism of the game. Delorme and Reid (1999) also found that movie viewers claimed that seeing a “real-life” product or brand added realism to the movie situation. They also found that moviegoers expressed that brand placement is generally acceptable depending on the situation/context in which the product is placed and the type of product. For example, brand placement for a popular type of gun at a funeral setting would not be appropriate. Additionally, they found that younger moviegoers reported that they are more accustomed to brand placement in movies because the practice has become so commonplace and often times they overlook that a specific brand was shown. What effect could the perceived realism of reality television programming have on recall? Based on the previous research, the last research question is proposed:

RQ4: Are people who feel that reality shows portray a moderate to high level of reality more likely recall brands than people who feel that reality shows portray a low level of reality?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Participants

In Fall 2005, 109 undergraduate students from two introductory mass media classes at a large southeastern university participated in this study during their regular class meetings. The participants were made aware that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that their grades in the class would be neither positively nor negatively affected. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 40, with the mean age near 21. The sample was 72.5% White/Caucasian, 11.9% Hispanic/Latino, 6.4% Black/African Heritage, 0.9% Asian, 1.8% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3.7% Mixed Race and 2.8% Other. The rationale for the sample comes from Karrh (1998), who claimed that the popularity of focusing on college-aged students in the bulk of previous brand placement research is reasonable because these students are within the coveted target demographic (18-49 years old) for marketers.

Description of Selected Media

Video segments from two different reality shows were used for this study. These two shows were chosen because they fit the definition given by Nabi, et al (2003). In each show, the contestants lived out their lives as they occurred, even though they were placed in uncommon situations. Both shows involved real people, not actors. The environments were real, that is, contestants were not filmed in a fantasyland. There was no script, contestants narrated as the shows progressed, and the shows were meant for viewer entertainment.

The first video segment came from the November 2, 2005, episode of *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart*, a show in which groups of people compete with each other to become the next apprentice with entrepreneur Martha Stewart. The video segment was approximately eight minutes long. In it, two teams competed to create a better promotional strategy for a specific product, namely Tide to Go stain-removing pens. This product and brand was the main focus of the video segment. Additional branded products visible in the video segments were Mercedes M-Class SUVs, U-Haul moving trucks, Apple laptop computers, Everlast boxing ring and boxing gloves, and the North Shore Neon Sign Company. Because the Tide-brand product was the main focus of the show, it received prominent and repeated mention. The Mercedes SUVs and U-Haul trucks received medium prominence because the cameras focused on their logos for approximately two to three seconds each. The Apple laptops also received medium prominence because the logo was visible in the corner of the screen for approximately two seconds. The remaining brands received low prominence.

The second video segment came from the November 8, 2005, episode of *The Biggest Loser*, a show in which participants learn how to lose weight in a healthy way while competing with each other. The video segment was approximately four minutes long. In it, six people performed in a challenge that consisted of jumping rope with a mechanical jump rope. The two brands mentioned in the show were for Diet Rite and Nexfit exercise bicycles. The Nexfit exercise bike received high prominence because it was featured as the prize for the winner of the competition but the actual brand name “Nexfit” was only mentioned once by the show’s host. Diet Rite received low prominence because the brand name was only mentioned in passing by the show’s host as a sponsor of the challenge.

Procedures

The participants were asked to view the two video segments from the two reality shows. Before viewing the video segments, participants were informed that the study was designed to measure what they would remember from and react to in reality television shows. In total, the video segments lasted approximately twelve minutes. Afterward, the participants were asked to fill in a survey designed to measure their responses to the video segments. The responses were entered into a statistical software package to be analyzed. The answers to the open-ended questions were coded and analyzed as well. Frequency analyses and t-tests were the statistical methods used to analyze the data from the surveys.

Measures

The first portion of the survey contained questions designed to measure the participants' media use in order to gauge their familiarity with reality television. The questions asked the number of hours of television and of reality television programming that they watched in a week as well as if they watched either one of the experiment's shows either previously or regularly. The participants were also asked to report the level of realism that they felt that reality television portrayed on a 5-point Likert scale; they were also asked whether they watched reality television and their reasons for doing so or not doing so.

In the second portion of the survey, participants were asked open-ended unaided recall questions designed to measure which brands they remembered from the video segments and their reasons for remembering.

In the third portion of the survey, participants were asked open-ended aided recall questions designed to measure which brands that they remembered from the video segments. At the beginning of the section, instructions told the participants that they were not to go back to the previous unaided recall section to add any responses triggered in the aided recall section. Participants were prompted with a product category and asked if they recalled seeing it in the video segments and which specific brands they remembered seeing.

In the fourth portion of the survey, participants were asked six 5-point Likert scale questions designed to measure their attitudes toward brand placement in reality television. The scale answers ranged from 1 (Disagree Completely) to 5 (Agree Completely). The questions used in this portion of the survey were taken from Gupta and Gould's study and Nelson's study and adapted to suit the current study.

In the final portion of the survey, participants were asked to name any other reality shows in which they had seen other brand placements. The participants were asked demographic questions in order to gain more insight about the sample. Additionally, there was an open-ended question in order for the participants to add anything they felt might be of value to the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The first research question intended to find how viewers responded to or felt about the practice of brand placement in reality television. There were six Likert items included in the survey that were designed to measure the participants' attitudes toward brand placement in reality television.

As shown in Table 1, participants generally did not indicate that brand placement added realism to reality shows ($M=2.61$, $SD=1.31$) with 49.5% of the participants giving ratings of 1 or 2. Participants also generally did not agree that they would buy the brands used in reality shows ($M=2.62$, $SD=1.07$), with 44% of the participants rating this item with a score of 3. However, participants indicated that they would prefer to see actual brands being used in reality shows rather than generic or fictional brands ($M=3.68$, $SD= 1.08$) with 58.7% of participants rating this item with a score of 4 or 5.

Participants generally did not agree that brand placement in reality shows was deceptive ($M=2.82$, $SD=1.19$) with 45% of participants rating the item with a score of 1 or 2. Participants did not agree that brand placements distract from the reality shows ($M=2.74$, $SD=1.09$) with 44% rating the item with a score of 1 or 2. Participants did not agree that brand placements in reality shows should be banned ($M=2.00$, $SD= 1.00$) with 68.8% of the participants rating this item with a score of 1 or 2.

Table 1: Range of Attitudes Toward Brand Placement

	Disagree Somewhat (1-2)	Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3)	Agree Somewhat (4-5)
Adds Reality	49.5%	18.3%	32.1%
Prefer Real Brands	9.2%	32.1%	58.7%
Would Buy Brands	36.7%	44%	19.2%
Is Deceptive	45%	26.6%	28.4%
Distracts from Show	44%	30.3%	25.7%
Should Be Banned	68.8%	24.8%	6.4%

(N=109)

The second research question was intended to determine what influenced viewer recall of the brands or products placed in reality television. Viewer recall was measured using the answers from the open-ended, unaided recall questions. The answers from the aided recall questions were not measured because participants were not asked to give a reason for their recall during those questions. 91.7% of the participants recalled seeing one or more brands in the *Apprentice* video segment, while only 5.5% reported recognizing a brand in the *Biggest Loser* video segment. As shown in Table 2, the most commonly given reason for recalling a product or brand was that the product or brand served as the main focus of the show; 56.88% of the participants cited this as a reason. The least commonly given reasons for recalling a product were because of liking the product or brand or because of a familiarity with the product or brand with only 0.92% of the participants citing this as a reason for their recall.

Table 2: Reported Reasons for Recall

Reason		Reason	
Main Focus	56.88%	Prod/Brand Mentioned	3.67%
Prize	17.43%	Visual Appeal	3.67%
Repetition	14.68%	Noticed In Scene/On Screen	3.67%
Product/Brand Used or Demonstrated	9.17%	Interest In Brand	2.75%
Skit/Presentation	7.34%	Familiarity	0.92%
Promo Materials	6.42%	Like Prod/Brand	0.92%

(N=109)

Additionally, some participants gave reasons for the lack of recall. As shown in Table 3, the most common reason survey participants gave for not being able to recall a product or brand was that the video segment did not mention or refer to the product or brand enough.

Table 3: Reported Reasons for No Recall

Reason	
Name Not Mentioned Enough	4.59%
No Interest In Prod/Brand	0.92%
Not Familiar W/ Prod/Brand	0.92%

(N=109)

Table 4 shows the list of products and brands that survey participants said they recalled. Of the brands explicitly placed in the video segments, the most recalled brand was Tide with 97.25% of participants reporting seeing the brand; Tide was the focus of the *Apprentice* video segment. The next two most recalled brands were Mercedes and Apple, with 25.69% and 23.85% of participants recalling these brands respectively. The U-Haul brand, one of medium prominence, was only recalled by 3.67% of participants. Nexfit and Everlast were referenced, but never correctly recalled by brand name.

As Table 4 shows, participants recalled brands that were not explicitly placed; a number of participants also misidentified the explicit brand placements. No participant misidentified the Tide brand. However, for every other product category, a number of incidental products were

recalled or misidentified; for example, 6.42% of participants reported seeing a Dell computer when the Dell brand was not shown. The highest number of participants, 20.18%, recalled automobile brands that were incidental or misidentified. Additionally, the Nexfit brand was misidentified as “Nextstep” or “Bowflex.”

Table 4: Brand Names Recalled by Product Category

Cleaning Products		Automobiles		Computers	
Tide*	97.25%	Mercedes*	25.69%	Apple*	23.85%
		U-Haul*	3.67%	Dell	6.42%
		Toyota	4.59%	Sony (Vaio)	0.92%
		Lexus	3.67%		
		Infiniti	2.75%		
		BMW	1.83%		
		Ford	1.83%		
		Pontiac	0.92%		
		Honda	0.92%		
		GMC	0.92%		
		Volvo	0.92%		
		Nissan (Altima)	0.92%		
		Chrysler	0.92%		
Exercise Equipment		Other		Incidental/Misidentified	
Nexfit*	0.00%	Diet Rite*	1.83%	Coke	1.83%
Everlast*		North Shore Neon Sign		Sprite	0.92%
(Gloves)	0.00%	Company*	0.92%		
Everlast*				Nextel	0.92%
(Boxing Ring)	0.00%			Inner Zone Diet	0.92%
Bowflex	0.92%			Asics	0.92%
Nextstep	0.92%			Adidas	0.92%
				Starbucks	0.92%
				Ann Taylor	0.92%
				Milwaukee (Saws)	0.92%
				MS Excel	0.92%
				NBC	0.92%
				Will And Grace	0.92%
				Martha Stewart	0.92%

These percentages were based on a total of 109 participants’ responses. Names marked with an asterisk (*) are those brands that were explicitly placed in the shows.

The third research question sought to determine whether there was a difference in recall levels between viewers and non-viewers of reality television. Of the 109 participants, 66 (60.55%) claimed that they currently watched reality television shows while 43 (39.45%) claimed that they did not currently watch reality television shows.

Unaided Recall

When it came to the *Apprentice* video segment, there was no significant difference between the levels of product recall between viewers (M=1.15, SD=.561) and non-viewers (M=1.09, SD=.426) of reality television. There was also no significant difference in the levels of brand recall between viewers (M=1.06, SD=.605) and non-viewers (M=1.05, SD=.375).

When it came to the *Biggest Loser* video segment, there was a significant difference ($t=2.07$, $p < .05$) between the levels of product recall between viewers (M=.47, SD=.561) and non-viewers (M=.26, SD=.441) of reality television. There was also a significant difference ($t=2.07$, $p < .05$) in the levels of brand recall between viewers (M=.09, SD=.290) and non-viewers (M=.00, SD=.000).

Aided Recall

Four categories of aided recall were given: computers, cleaning products, automobiles and exercise equipment.

Computers

One brand of computer (Apple) was displayed in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall for the computer product between reality television viewers (M=.77, SD=.422) and non-viewers (M=.74, SD=.441). There was also no significant

difference in the level of recall for the computer brand between reality television viewers (M=.24, SD=.432) and non-viewers (M=.26, SD=.441).

Cleaning products

One brand (Tide) of cleaning products was displayed in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall for the cleaning product between reality television viewers (M=.95, SD=.210) and non-viewers (M=.98, SD=.152). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall for the cleaning product brand between reality television viewers (M=.95, SD=.210) and non-viewers (M=.91, SD=.294).

Automobiles

Two brands that were displayed were categorized as automobiles (Mercedes, U-Haul) in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall for the automobile products between reality television viewers (M=.95, SD=.478) and non-viewers (M=.86, SD=.413). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall for the automobile brands between reality television viewers (M=.41, SD=.554) and non-viewers (M=.19, SD=.394).

Exercise equipment

Two brands (Nexfit, Everlast) and three product categories (exercise bicycles, boxing gloves, boxing rings) of exercise equipment were shown one or the other of the video segments.

There was no significant difference in the level of recall for the exercise equipment products between reality television viewers (M=.91, SD=.290) and non-viewers (M=.91,

SD=.294). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall for the exercise equipment brands between reality television viewers (M=.03 SD=.173) and non-viewers (M=.02, SD=.152).

The fourth and final research question sought to determine whether there was a difference in recall levels between those viewers who perceived a low level of reality and those viewers who perceived a high level of reality. For the purposes of this study, a low level of reality was equal to an answer of 1 or 2 on a five point Likert scale. A moderate to high level of reality was equal to an answer of 3, 4 or 5 on the scale. In general, participants felt that reality television portrays a relatively equal amount of reality and unreality (M=2.61, SD=0.94). Table 5 shows the range of the perceptions of reality from the participants. 45.9% of the participants claimed that they felt that reality TV portrayed a low level of reality and 55.1% of the participants claimed that they felt that reality TV portrayed a moderate to high level of reality.

Table 5: Perceptions of Reality of Reality Television Shows

Perceptions of Reality	
Completely Fake	11.0%
Moderately Fake	34.9%
Moderately Fake and Real	38.5%
Moderately Real	12.8%
Completely Real	2.8%
(N=109)	

Unaided Recall

When it came to the *Apprentice* video segment, there was no significant difference between the levels of product recall between those who believed in a low level of reality (M=1.12, SD=.480) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality (M=1.14, SD=.540). There was also no significance between the levels of brand recall between those who

believed in a low level of reality ($M=1.02$, $SD=.473$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=1.08$, $SD=.566$).

When it came to the *Biggest Loser* video segment, there was no significant difference between the levels of product recall between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.36$, $SD=.563$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.41$, $SD=.495$). There was also no significance between the levels of brand recall between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.06$, $SD=.240$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.05$, $SD=.222$).

Aided Recall

Four categories of aided recall were given: computers, cleaning products, automobiles and exercise equipment.

Computers

One brand of computer (Apple) was displayed in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall of the computer product between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.78$, $SD=.418$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.75$, $SD=.439$). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall of the computer brand between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.28$, $SD=.454$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.22$, $SD=.418$).

Cleaning products

One brand (Tide) of cleaning products was displayed in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall of the cleaning product between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.98$, $SD=.141$) and those who believed in a moderate

to high level of reality ($M=.95$, $SD=.152$). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall of the cleaning product brand between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.94$, $SD=.240$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.93$, $SD=.254$).

Automobiles

Two brands were displayed that were categorized as automobiles (Mercedes, U-Haul) in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall of the automobile products between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.86$, $SD=.452$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.97$, $SD=.454$). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall of the automobile brands between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.28$, $SD=.497$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.36$, $SD=.517$).

Exercise equipment

Two brands (Nexfit, Everlast) and three product categories (exercise bicycles, boxing gloves, boxing rings) of exercise equipment were shown in either of the video segments. There was no significant difference in the level of recall of the exercise equipment products between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.86$, $SD=.351$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.95$, $SD=.222$). There was also no significant difference in the level of recall of the exercise equipment brands between those who believed in a low level of reality ($M=.04$, $SD=.198$) and those who believed in a moderate to high level of reality ($M=.02$, $SD=.130$).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This exploratory study found that viewers generally have positive attitudes toward brand placement in reality television programming. The highest-rated scale item indicated that more often than not, viewers would prefer the use of actual brands in reality television programming. This is understandable because it may disrupt the flow of the perception of reality or detract from the show's authenticity to see a participant drinking a "soda" instead of, say, a Pepsi. The study also found that a major reason for recall of a placement was prominence – as the main focus of the show or episode. Similarly, using a product or brand as a prize or through consistent repetition of the brand name appeared to boost brand recall. This also maintained the reason given most frequently for forgetting: lack of brand name mention or repetition. Additionally, according to the application of ELM, all of the participants gave reasons that were tied to peripheral cues. Although some participants mentioned that they saw the product or brand used in the video segments, none gave a reason that could be tied to a peripheral cue (such as seeing the benefits of using the product or brand).

This study also found that no significant difference in the recall scores between those who report that they currently viewed reality television and those who reported that they currently did not. This may seem counterintuitive because it would seem that those who currently watched reality television and were exposed to name-brand product placements within the genre would demonstrate a difference in recall levels because they were accustomed to such placements. A discrepancy in these findings was for the unaided overall recall scores for *the*

Biggest Loser. Both groups had a mean score that was less than 1.0 for both the product category recall and brand name recall. Perhaps this discrepancy indicated the lack of repetition of brand mention. It is also interesting to note the significant difference between viewers versus non-viewers in the recall scores of automobile brands. This difference suggests the possibility of different effects by different product types on recall levels.

The study found no significant difference in the recall scores between those who report that reality television portrays a low level of reality and those who report that it portrays a moderate to high level of reality.

Limitations and Future Research Implications

This exploratory study is limited in its scope and could be expanded for future research. First, the sample population, while relevant to and sufficient for this study, may need to be expanded to include more people from the general viewing population. To determine what effects that brand placement in reality television has over the wider viewing population. Additionally, more video segments with varying formats, lengths and topics should be used to measure effects across the entire genre of reality television. The study could explore the acceptability and effects of placements by the specific product category of the placement, for example, measuring the recall and/or effects of placing food products. There is also a possibility of bias in the answers given in the open-ended, questions. Even though the survey instructed participants not to go back and alter their answers for the unaided recall section after completing the aided recall section, some participants may have done so. This may have had an effect on the

answers given and therefore future research may choose to include measures to control this factor.

Future research could also expand this study to research the long-term effects such as day-after recall of these placements in order to find the possible deterioration effects over time. Additionally, the study should be expanded to study persuasion effects and buyer intentions based on these placements.

Another possible avenue of research would be to study the effects of celebrity-based reality television programming; that is, reality shows that chronicle the real lives of celebrities, for example, *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica* or *Being Bobby Brown*. What are the possible effects of brand placements on these shows? This could be coupled with finding the endorser effects of brand placement.

The study determined that liking a brand was not reported frequently as a reason for paying attention to the placed brand. Therefore, yet another avenue would be to measure the possible effects of liking the placed brand on brand recall. Additionally, the recall of the placement could be measured based upon the context that the placement is shown or used.

This study begins to explore the effects of brand placement in reality television. It is important to note these results as they may give insight to marketers as to how to target their brand placement efforts to suit their needs and how to optimize the effectiveness of their placements.

APPENDIX: SAMPLE SURVEY

Information about the Study

The effects of and attitudes toward brand placement has been studied in many genres and media. This study aids to explore brand placement in the context of reality television programming.

Instructions

Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. There are no wrong answers.

The following questions are designed to measure your media usage and your perception of reality television.

How many hours a week do you watch television? _____

How many hours a week do you watch television shows which could be qualified as reality TV?

Which of the shows shown today have you watched before?

Which of the shows shown today do you watch on a regular basis?

Please rate the level of realism that reality television as a whole portrays on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 equals “Reality television is completely fake” and 5 equals “Reality television is completely real”)

1 2 3 4 5

Do you watch reality television shows? Why or why not?

You have just watched clips from different reality televisions shows. Please answer, in the order in which they are asked, the following questions about those clips.

What products or brands do you remember seeing in the clips?

- Sort by show name (if you cannot remember show name, still list the product/brand).
 - For each product or brand, please state why you remember this product/brand.
- _____

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