

# **An Explorative Study of Testing the Effectiveness of Product Placement Compared to 30-Second Commercials**

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## **Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to compare the effectiveness of subtle and prominent product placements with the effectiveness of 30-second commercials for the same brands. Two experimental groups were exposed to TV- drama series and 30-second TV commercials in the break of the TV-series. The brands of the prominent- and subtle product placements which were used in the TV soap series in the first experimental group were used as 30-second commercials in the second experimental group and vice versa. The variables to measure the effectiveness of communication were analysed in terms of brand recall and brand recognition. The most important research result is that product placements are found to be more effective than 30-second commercials.

## **Introduction**

The “re-invention” of product placement has gained new urgency because consumers increasingly have the technical power to avoid commercial messages on TV. Consumers are exponentially overwhelmed by commercials, consequently irritated by them (Fennis and Bakker, 2001; Aacker and Bruzzone 1985) and trying to avoid them (Woltman Elpers et al., 2003). Consumers were already using frequently the remote control in order to switch away (zapping) from TV commercials. With the introduction of PVRs such TiVo, Replay TV and so on, consumers can not only fast-forward through recorded programs but can now also easily skip with a PVR’s auto-skip button. So the blame of avoiding commercials (zapping, zipping, skipping) seems now to fall on digital video recorders and digital television. As the convergence of TV and the internet continues at an inevitable pace, consumers will only gain more control over what they see and when they see it (Zutter, 2005; Woltman Elpers et al. 2003).

### ***Decreasing Effectiveness of 30 second TV commercials***

A Forrester Research’s study of PVR usage by 588 users in the US found that 60% of their time, on average, was spent watching programmes that were pre-recorded or delayed, resulting in 92% of commercials being skipped. Thirty per cent of respondents said they watched no commercials at all (Zutter, 2005). Also in Europe the effectiveness of the 30

second TV commercial is declining dramatically. 78,2% of Germans are irritated by advertising, only 24% actually still watches it (Demin, 2006) In a recent study in Europe (the Netherlands) the actual viewing behaviour of consumers was measured (instead of measuring behavioural intentions). Research results indicated that only 19% of the TV-viewers could be measured as potential viewers of commercials, because TV-viewers not only switch to another channel (which is normally measured by audiometry-measurements) but also stop watching in order to do other things like going to the kitchen, bathroom etc (Stumple and Levi, 2005).

Since viewers' attention to TV advertising has declined the last years (Woltman Elpers et al., 2003; Rossiter and Bellman, 2005) major brand advertisers (top 130) responsible for \$20 billion in ad spending per year are losing confidence in the effectiveness of TV advertising (Mandese, 2006). According to a survey released by the Association of National Advertisers (USA) TV Ad Forum on March 22, 2006, more than three out of four advertisers (78%) say they have less confidence today in the effectiveness of TV advertising than they did two years ago. Instead, they are looking at alternatives such as branded entertainment within TV programmes (61%), TV programme sponsorships (55%), interactive advertising during TV programmes (48%), online video ads (45%) and product placement (44%) (Klaassen, 2006).

### ***The Rising Importance of Product Placement***

The overall value of the global product placement market, including the barter/exposure value of non-paid placements, grew 27.9% to \$5.99 billion in 2005, and is projected to expand another 24.3% to \$7.45 billion in 2006 (PQ Media, 2006). It is forecasted that global paid product placement spending will grow at a compound annual rate of 27.9% in the 2005-2010 period to \$7.55 billion, as product placement growth continues to significantly outpace that of traditional advertising and marketing. The overall value of the worldwide product placement market, including the barter/exposure value of non-paid placements, will increase 18.4% compounded annually to \$13.96 billion in 2010 (PQ Media, August 2006). It is therefore not surprising that the concept of product placement is daily discussed, applied, and reported in the world of professional marketers (Russell and Stern, 2006; O' Loughlin, 2006; Levin, 2006; Karrh et al. 2003;).

### ***The Rising Importance of Product Placement in Europe***

While brand or product placement is prevalent in the US because of vague or nonexistent regulations, the transition is moving slower in Europe due to stricter rules governing the use of product placement (PQ Media, 2006). In Europe, The European Commission is working on the legislation of using product placements for movies or TV-programmes and has set out its plans, in order to update 1989's Television Without Frontiers Directive, extending the rules to all TV-like services and relaxing the rules of advertising to allow product placements. The Commission has set out proposals on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2005, explicitly defining product placement for the first time, and setting the use of the ads in a clear legal framework. The rules will allow clearly identified product placement except in news, current affairs and children's programmes. Adverts for tobacco and prescription drugs will not be allowed (Out-Law News, 2005; European Voice, 2005; The Economist, 2005; Financial Times, 2006). The main purpose of the new directives is to reduce the regulatory burden on Europe's providers of TV and TV-like services and to allow them more flexibility in financing their productions. Once these directives will approved the phenomenon of product placement can be expected to grow even more.

### **Review of the Literature**

The review of the literature will focus on the comparison of the effectiveness of product placements with the effectiveness of 30-second commercials for the same brands, taking the likeability of the programme within which the brands are shown into account.

### ***Product Placement***

A general definition of product placement for movies or television programmes is: 'product placement is a paid product message aimed at influencing movie or television audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie or television programme (Balasubramanian, 1994). Karrh (1998) emphasized the link between product placement and payments from the adviser is, product placement is defined here as the 'inclusion of commercial products or services in any form in television or film productions in return for some sort of payment from the advertiser'.

In the literature most of the research focused on (1) categorization or characteristics of different placements and/or their impact on (2) consumers' brand memory and (3) consumers' evaluations of the phenomenon product placement itself.

Turcotte (1995) distinguished visual only (the appearance of the product, service, brand name or logo), audio only (the authors in the programme report the product, service, brand name or logo) and combined audio-visual (showing a brand and at the same time mentioning the name of the brand or conveying a brand-relevant message in audio form). For example, Tom Cruise discusses the quality of an Apple computer in a movie and starts working on it. Gupta and Lord (1998) propose that any of those three modes can be prominent or subtle. Prominent placements are placements where the product (or other brand identifier) is central to the action in the scene or where the product is made highly visible by size or virtue and/or position on the screen. Subtle placements are opposite cases, here the product is either a background prop outside the main field of visual focus or lost in an array of multiple products or objects, low time of exposure or just small of size.

Babin and Carder (1996) found evidence of brand recognition in films whereas the research of Gupta and Lord (1998) is more fine-tuned; they found a higher recall of the brand after prominent product placements than after subtle product placements. Brennan et al. (1999) found that brand recognition increases with 43.92% after being exposed to prominent product placement and with 13.84% after subtle product placement. According to d'Astous and Chartier (2000) brand recognition is significantly enhanced by the prominence of the placement but it has a negative effect on recall. Russell (2002) has investigated the role of modality (visual and auditory) and plot connection congruence in relation to the effectiveness of product placement (measured by brand memory and attitude). The research results show that brand recognition improves when modality and plot connection are incongruent. According to Percy (2006) the brand should be attended to consciously and positively link to appropriate associations in non-declarative emotional and explicit memory in order to have an effect on brand memory. The literature demonstrates that several researchers found evidence that brand recognition increases, although not under all circumstances. Brand awareness, is in most studies measured through brand recognition only and not through spontaneous brand recall, whereas the latter is a much stronger measurement of brand memory and brand recognition is much easier to obtain (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005).

The attitude consumers have towards the phenomenon of product placement, "audience attitudes", has been widely researched (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993; Karrh 1998; d'Astous and Seguin, 1999; d'Astous and Chartier, 2000; Karrh et al. 2001; Nelson, 2002; Tiswakul et

al. 2005; Friestad and Wright 1994) but not as a direct measure of the effectiveness of product placement.

The influence of persuasion on Brand Attitude has only been demonstrated by Russell. Russell (2002) finds that persuasion is enhanced by a congruency between plot connection and modality. Russell et al. (2004) developed a construct of “connectedness” characterizing the degree to which TV characters appear as referent others for TV viewers. In this study evidence is found of the effect of connectedness on memory for brand and products placed in the program, but additional research was needed to study these effects at the attitudinal and behavioural level. Russell and Stern (2006) found that consumers align their attitudes toward products with the characters’ attitudes to products and that this process is driven by the consumers’ attachment to the characters of television serial comedies (sitcoms).

### ***Comparing the Effectiveness of Product Placement with TV commercials***

Since the overall effectiveness of the 30 second TV commercial decreases considerably, it is important to compare it with the effectiveness of product placement, in order to evaluate if product placement can be a worthy alternative within the TV medium. Gupta and Lord (1998) compared, in an American context, the effectiveness in terms of brand awareness of commercials with the effectiveness of product placements, in movies but not in television. The results Gupta and Lord found were not fully supporting their hypothesis that Prominent Product Placement would in all cases outperform the TV commercial. The effect was only found in one of the two movies they showed.

### ***Likeability of the program***

There exists enough research that confirms the effect of the mood induced by television programme content on viewers’ responses to commercials (Kamins et al. 2001; Axelrod, 1963; Goldberg and Gorn, 1987; Srull 1983). Goldberg and Gorn (1987) found that a happy program induced (1) a happier mood as viewers watched both program and commercials and (2) more affectively positive cognitive responses. Although this study provides interesting insights into the effects of programs inducing mood states on the evaluation of commercials, the study could not measure an effect of the programme on brand recall.

The influence of television programs on viewers' perceptions of television commercials has been researched previously. Murry et al. (1992) found that viewers' liking of programs positively influenced the attitude toward the ad and the attitude toward the brand. Feelings elicited by the programs had no effect on these same attitudes. Another study resulted in "pleasantness of the program" and "arousal caused by the program" as determinants for the level of viewers' perception of commercial pleasantness. The direct effect on brand awareness was not researched in this study (Broach et al., 2001). Kamins et al. (1991) found that subjects viewing a happy commercial evaluated it more positively on various measures of advertising effectiveness in the context of program content designed and observed to induce a happy mood. However, those subjects who viewed a sad commercial evaluated it significantly more favourably in the context of sad relative to happy mood induced program content. Most of the research focuses on the carry-over effect of programmes on consumers' evaluation and perception of commercials.

The results of study's investigating the direct effect of the context of the program on brand recall are less clear. Although the literature investigating the effect of the mood on brand recall as a result of viewing TV commercials is mixed (Srull, 1983; Isen and Daubman, 1984) the findings of Lee and Sternthal (1999) seem to confirm the finding that a positive mood enhances the learning of brand names. Earlier Isen and Dauman (1984) suggested that in relation to a neutral mood, a positive mood enhances relational elaboration and thus brand recall. A positive mood may increase the efficiency of information processing. Positive affect results in an organization of cognitive material such that either more or broader integrated categories are primed and utilized. Broader or more integrated categories implies larger categories with more interconnected pathways in memory. Larger and more integrated categories are likely to facilitate better information processing because it is likely that there are more ways through which new pieces of information can be linked to those stored in memory. These increased linkages are likely to enhance memory. A prediction we intend to test in this research.

Based on research of Goldberg and Gorn (1987) we can assume that a positive appreciation of a program can be declared by a positive mood or emotions and more positive emotions enhance brand awareness. In this study we try to examine the influence of the likeability of the programme on the retrieval of the names of brands presented in a TV programme, under

the form of product placements, and of brands presented in TV commercials shown during the commercial break of the same programme.

## **Hypotheses**

Based on the above literature, the main research questions are concerned with the effectiveness of subtle and prominent product placements in television drama series in comparison to the effectiveness of the same brands in 30-second TV commercials, taking the likeability of the programme into account. The main variables to analyse the effectiveness of the communication are 'brand recall' and 'brand recognition' to measure brand awareness and 'brand attitude measurements'.

Gupta and Lord (1998) found a higher brand recall after prominent product placements than after subtle product placements and a higher brand recall after viewing TV commercials than after subtle placements. Although the present study researches the effect within TV programs instead of movies, the same effect can be expected:

*H 1: Prominent product placements will result in higher brand awareness scores than subtle product placements.*

*H 2: TV commercials will outperform subtle product placements in eliciting brand awareness.*

Television viewing is a social object within the household context and viewing is often part of a larger social process. Viewing can also be one of the activities going on in a context of a broader range of other activities, like sending SMS-messages, ironing, eating, and so on. Attention to programming and advertising is not an all or nothing phenomenon, but rather sequences of monitoring and more focused viewing (Cameron et al., 1991). Participating in competitive activities such as reading, eating and conversations not related to the program lowers visual attention to both the program and commercials. Krugman et al. (1995) found already in 1995 that attention falters when an ad appears. Gupta and Lord (1998) argue that a brand which appears as part of a movie therefore enjoys the advantage of a heightened attention and processing motivation on the part of the viewer (intentional exposure) and that in comparison, most consumers distinguish between the information which confronts them as part of the movie and the accompanying advertisements. However, the expected superior



effectiveness in terms of brand awareness as a result of prominent product placements compared to advertisements could not be demonstrated in all cases and the results of Gupta and Lord were not fully supporting their hypothesis that Prominent Product Placement would in all cases outperform the advertisements. The effect was only found in one of the two movies they showed.

Traditional advertising and product placement differ greatly in terms of their execution requirements. In her theoretical framework Russell (1998) argues that plot placements, which rely on both visual and audio information, will produce higher levels of brand recall than pure screen or script placement. Whereas in TV commercials, the advertising plot is built around the brand, product placement generally involves placing the brand inside an already existing plot. So it can be expected that a commercial with a plot built around the brand is more effective than an existing plot where the brand is playing a minor role, especially when the product placement is a script placement or a screen placement and not a plot placement (Russell, 1998). Consequently, it cannot be expected that prominent product (screen) placements will outperform TV commercials in terms of brand awareness effectiveness.

*H3 : There will be no significant difference between prominent product (screen) placements and TV commercials in eliciting brand awareness*

As we see that zapping, zipping, skipping is growing and since viewers' attention to TV advertising has declined the last years (Woltman Elpers et al., 2003; Rossiter and Bellman, 2005; Zutter, 2005; Stumple and Levi, 2005) it is important to take this switching or zapping behaviour into account in research.

*H4 : When taking the zapping behaviour into account, Prominent Product Placements will outperform TV commercials*

In the literature on product placement the effect on brand attitude is not often demonstrated. Russell (1998) argues that a show-product linkage is processed non-consciously by the viewers and she hypothesizes that it is not necessary for the viewer to recall a specific exposure to the product for transformation to occur. Percy (2006) on the other hand, reasons that product placements can be effective but only in a carefully understood and controlled environment. And that to be effective the brand must be attended to consciously and

positively linked to appropriate associations in non-declarative emotional memory and explicit memory, as with any other effective marketing communication. In case of screen placements, where there is no plot connection, one cannot be sure if the viewer notices consciously the brand. Following Percy it cannot be defended that any change in persuasion would occur. Solomon and Englis (1994) argue that since the audiences perceive the movie or TV programme as entertainment and not persuasion, they may not generate counterarguments and thus the persuasive impact of the communication may be enhanced. So it might be that its persuasive power is bigger than the persuasive power of TV-commercials, but there is not enough evidence to support this. Therefore we cannot predict an effect of difference between prominent product placements and TV commercials in their effectiveness of influence on brand attitude.

*H 5 : There is no significant difference in influence on 'attitude towards the brand' between a 30-second TV commercial and a prominent product placement*

The results of Lee and Sternthal (1999) seem to confirm the finding that a positive mood enhances the learning of brand names. Earlier, Isen and Dauman (1984) suggested that in relation to a neutral mood, a positive mood enhances relational elaboration and thus brand recall. Based on earlier described research (Goldberg and Gorn, 1987) we can assume that a positive appreciation of a program can be declared by a positive mood or emotions and more positive emotions enhance brand awareness. We try to examine in this study the influence of the attitude towards (or the likeability of) the program on the retrieval of the names of brands presented in a TV program, under the form of product placements and of brands presented in TV commercials shown during the commercial break of the same program.

*H 6 : The overall attitude towards a programme has a significant positive influence on brand awareness as a result of subtle and prominent product placements. The brand awareness will be significantly higher after viewing a programme that is more liked than a programme that is less liked.*

*H 7 : The overall attitude towards a programme is influenced by the emotions the participants feel during the programme. A programme resulting in a higher score on positive emotions has a significant higher influence on brand awareness of product placements in that programme than a programme resulting in a more negative score on emotions.*

*H 8 : The overall attitude towards a programme has a significant positive influence on brand awareness as a result of TV commercials shown during the commercial break of a program that is positively appreciated. The brand awareness will be significantly higher after viewing the TV commercial in a commercial break of a programme that is more liked than a programme that is less liked.*

*H 9 : The overall attitude towards a programme is influenced by the emotions of the participants felt during the programme. A programme resulting in a higher score on positive emotions has a significant higher influence on brand awareness of the brands shown in the TV commercial in a commercial break of a programme than a programme resulting in more negative scores on emotions felt during the programme.*

## **Research Design**

Two different experimental groups were exposed to TV- soap series. During the breaks of each TV programme different 30-second commercials were shown. Subtle and prominent product placements were used in both TV-soap series for the two groups. There were no script or plot placements, only screen placements, because the visual channel very often serves to create the context in which the story is set and branded products are used to make television sets more realistic (Solomon and Englis, 1994). In the experiment, the brands of the product placements - which were used in the first experimental group - were broadcasted as 30-second commercials in the other experimental group and vice versa. The aim of using the same brands in the two different conditions is to compare directly both marketing communication techniques on one hand and to control for brand preferences, knowledge of brand/product and

other possible distortions caused by experiences of the subjects with the exhibited brands on the other hand.

In Figure 1 the research design is given.

(Please, insert Figure 1 about here)

As is indicated in Figure 1, both experimental groups were exposed to 2 different subtle product placements and to 2 different prominent product placements and to 4 different 30-second commercials in the break of the TV-soap series. Existing TV-soap series were used to maximize external validity. The order of the product placements in the two experimental groups differs. Group I was first exposed to two subtle product placements (energy drink and soft drink) while group II was first exposed to two prominent product placements (newspaper and car brand). After the break group I have seen two different prominent product placements (beer-C and household tool) and group II two different subtle placements (two different brands of beer-A and beer-B).

Soap A and B are both transmitted by the same (non commercial public) broadcasting station. Both soap series are in the top three of the most famous soap series in Belgium (Dutch speaking part). Both fragments of the series are (only) showing the product placements indicated in Figure I whereby the different subtle and prominent product placements were comparable for the time of exposure, time period between the product placements and visual focus. The commercial spots which were used in the experiment have not been transmitted since January 2005. Our research was carried out in June 2005.

## **Sample**

The experimental subjects were 213 student volunteers from third bachelor at a large urban university. The average age of the participants was approximately 22,3 years (s.d. 0.99 years). The first group consists of 128 students and the second group of 85 students (in total 55.9% male). The subjects were not informed about the subject of the research. A questionnaire was used to collect the data.

## **Research Instrument**

Immediately after exposure to total transmission (about 23 minutes), the subjects were asked to turn the page of their questionnaire and to fill in the questionnaire (extra personnel was in the classroom to ensure confidentiality).

In the first part of the questionnaire, the subjects were asked about their knowledge of the shown TV-soap series (Is this the first time that you saw this TV-soap transmission? Have you seen this particular transmission before?). Then their appreciation of the programme was analysed on a 9-items seven-point semantic differential scale (e.g. enjoyable, good) by Russell (1992). The mean response served as an appreciation index (Cronbach alpha = 0.94).

Furthermore, the ten-item Positive Affect Scale of Watson et. al. (1988) was used to measure programme evaluation. The subjects indicated on a five-point scale (1= very slightly, 5= extremely) the extent to which the TV-soap series made them experience a variety of feelings or emotions (e.g. interested, enjoyable, excited). The mean response served as a program-affect index (Cronbach alpha = 0.94). Hereafter, the subjects were asked to list each product or company or brand name they could recall to have seen or heard during the TV programme itself or in the 30-second commercials. An aided recall (recognition) task followed on the next page of the questionnaire, in which the test products/brands appeared in a list of 44 brands. The subjects were asked whether it was shown or not shown. Also here the responses were coded as representing correct or incorrect recognition. On the following page of the questionnaire a seven-point semantic differential with five-items (e.g. good/bad, negative/positive, pleasant/unpleasant) was used to measure the attitude towards four different brands which were shown as product placements or in one of the 30-second commercials (Cronbach alpha newspaper = 0.95, Cronbach alpha energy-drink = 0.95, Cronbach alpha car = 0.92, Cronbach alpha household tool = 0.91). The subjects were also asked to fill in how many days on average they watch television during the week and how much time they spend watching TV. Finally the zapping behaviour of 30-second commercials was asked for on a five point scale (1=never 'I always watch commercials', 2= 'I normally switch 25% of the commercials', 3= 'I normally switch 50% of the commercials', 4= 'I normally switch 75% of the commercials', 5=always, 'I never watch commercials').

## **Research Results**

### *Description of the sample*

A description of the sample is mentioned below in Table 1.

(Please, insert Table 1 about here)

As is shown in Table 1 the two samples do not significantly differ from each other for gender, the amount of hours of regular watching television and zapping behaviour when confronted with 30-second commercials.

In analysing the research questions, it is essential to take into account the zapping behaviour since more than 70% of the respondents indicated that most of the time they switch to another channel when a commercial starts. This is consistent with the results reviewed above (Stumpel and Levi, 2005). Almost 60% of the respondents, in both groups, indicated that when they are watching television, they are watching for more than one hour. The results indicate that the two groups are sufficiently comparable for the purpose of our research.

### *Tests of hypotheses*

In order to investigate hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 we have first analysed the results of the variables TV commercial and product placement for each brand separately (Table 2) and second, we compared product placements (subtle and prominent) and TV commercials for their overall effect on awareness (Table 3).

Although it is not the main purpose of this study we can see as in H1 predicted that the first set of results show (Table 2) that in all cases the brand awareness scores of subtle product placements are lower than prominent product placements scores.

(Please, insert Table 2 about here)

Table 3 represents an overview of the different total awareness scores of the brands in the experimental groups. We have determined an estimation value for the effectiveness of the subtle and prominent product placements and the 30-second commercials (with and without

correction for stated zapping behaviour) by a combination of the recall and recognition score for the different product placements and 30-second commercials. If the participant recalls all the brands of the different subtle and prominent product placements and 30-second commercials the highest score for 'total' effectiveness (awareness) was given (max. 4). For recognition only, the effectiveness score was half the value. If the participant did not recall or recognise the brand after seeing the exposure, the awareness score did not increase (min. awareness score is 0). A total awareness score for the 30-second commercials corrected for the 'stated' zapping behaviour (see further) of the participants was measured. In Table 3, the prominent and subtle product placements and the 30-second commercials (with a correction for 'stated' zapping behaviour) are compared within the experimental groups separately.

(Please, insert Table 3)

Table 3 shows that the average effectiveness of subtle product placements is significantly lower than the effectiveness of prominent product placements. This is again in conformity with H1 and also with the results found by other researchers (e.g. Gupta and Lord, 1998).

In order to investigate hypotheses H2 and H3 we have compared the effectiveness - recall and recognition of the brand - of the prominent and subtle product placements with the 30-second commercials in the two experimental groups for the same individual brands. In Table 2 the research results are given. The first set of results in Table 2 does not take zapping behaviour into account.

Also in Table 3 the effectiveness of 30-second commercials is significant higher compared to subtle product placements if the commercials are effectively viewed. Herewith also H2 is confirmed. Comparing the results of subtle product placements and TV commercials, we can confirm H2: the commercials are in all cases significantly more effective.

In Table 2 the results show that 30-second commercials are for 50% of the cases significantly more effective than prominent product placements. However, for the brand 'newspaper' a significantly opposite result is found. In this case, the prominent product placement of the brand has for both recall and recognition a significantly higher score. 70.6% of the respondents still remembers spontaneously the name of the newspaper after seeing the prominent product placement in the TV-programme and for the 30-second commercial only

43.8% of the respondents could recall the brand name of the newspaper. Results in the same direction were found for recognition of the 'newspaper' brand (prominent product placement 83.5% and 30-second commercial 64.5%). For the prominent product placement of the 'car' brand in group II, the recall score does not significantly differ from the 30-second commercial score. The recall score of the 30-second commercial is 43.8% and for the prominent product placement is 42.4%. Also for recognition the score is not significantly different, 62.2% for the 30-second commercial and 56.5% for the prominent product placement.

For the 'household tool' brand and the 'beer-C' brand (prominent product placements in group I), the 30-second commercial has a significantly higher score for both recall and recognition. For the 'beer-C' brand the recall score is almost twice as high (39.8% versus 82.4%) and for the 'household tool' brand the difference is 20% (recall for prominent product placement is 43.8%, for 30-second commercial is 63.5%). Recognition of the 'beer-C' brand from a prominent product placement (51.2%) is significantly lower than the recognition score of the 30-second commercial (88.2%). For the 'household tool' brand recognition of the 30-second commercial is 75.3% and also here significantly higher than the score of the prominent product placement (55.9%). Since there is a difference in 50% of the cases between prominent product (screen) placements and TV commercials in eliciting brand awareness, because in 50% of the cases TV commercials are outperforming, H 3 cannot be rejected.

In order to test H4 zapping behaviour needs to be taken into account. As indicated above, the respondents declared that, in reality, they demonstrate substantially zapping behaviour. In our experiment they could not switch. This suggests that the results reported above underestimate the effectiveness of product placements in comparison to the effectiveness of 30-second commercials. If we take the 'general' zapping behaviour of commercials - the 'stated zapping behaviour' of the respondents - into account (which the participants individually have indicated in the questionnaire on a 5-point scale), the recall and recognition of the 30-second commercials is significantly lower. In the last two columns of Table 2 the prominent and subtle product placements are therefore compared for recall and recognition with the restricted form of the effectiveness of the 30-second commercials.

After correction for stated zapping behaviour the effectiveness of product placements is significantly better. For the prominent product placements, the effectiveness is significantly better; since recall and recognition of the brands are in almost all cases significantly better (only for beer-C no significant difference between the prominent product placement and the 30-second commercial could be found).



The same result is found when analysing the data by determination of an estimation value of total brand awareness score as has been demonstrated already in Table 4. By taking stated zapping behaviour of the participants into account the effectiveness of the prominent product placement is significantly higher than the effectiveness of the 30-second commercials for all brands in both experimental groups. This result is new in existing literature on product placements.

For researching H5 the influences of different marketing communication techniques of subtle and prominent product placements and 30-second commercials (with and without the ‘stated’ zapping behaviour) on the ‘attitude towards the brand’ is analysed (see Table 5 below). Because of the restrictions on the length of the questionnaire, the attitude towards the brand in both groups is measured for a limited amount of brands (newspaper, household tool, energy drink and car). It is found that the ‘attitude towards the brand’ is not influenced by the way in which the product is presented (prominent and subtle product placement and 30-second commercial). The average score of the attitude towards the brand after seeing a 30-second commercial of the car in group I is 5.52 and in group II, where the car was exposed as a prominent product placement, 5.48 (t-value 0.23; p-value 0.82). For newspaper the same classification was made (group I the 30-second commercial and group II prominent product placement), the average scores are also here not significantly different (group I: 4.99; group II: 5.09; t-value 0.62; p-value 0.54). For energy drink and household tool, group II has seen a 30-second commercial and group I has seen a subtle product placement and a prominent product placement. Also here no significant difference between the attitude towards the brand could be found (energy drink: group I 4.38, group II 4.48; t-value 0.34; p-value 0.71) (household tool: group I 5.51, group II 5.50; t-value 0.05; p-value 0.96). On the basis of this result we can conclude that the influence of subtle and prominent product placement and 30-second commercials on the attitude towards the brand is not significantly different and the H5 is confirmed.

(Please insert Table 5 about here)

### ***The influence of the likeability and emotions of the programme (H6, H7, H8 ,H9)***

As shown in Table 1 the likeability of the programme (the overall attitude towards the programme) and the emotions experienced while watching the programme are significantly higher in experimental group II than in experimental group I. Also the recall and recognition scores of subtle and prominent product placements and 30-second commercials are higher in group II than in group I (see Table 2).

This suggests that the likeability of the programme influences the effectiveness of the product placements (subtle and prominent) and the 30-second commercials which are broadcasted during the soap.

In Table 4 the awareness scores for the different experimental groups are given.

(Please, insert Table 4 about here)

The research results of Table 3, suggest that the influence of the likeability of the TV programme plays a significant role. The different awareness scores of the product placements and the 30-second commercials between the two experimental groups are significantly higher in group II than in group I (almost all different t-values of Table 3 have p-value < 0.001). Table 3 shows that the average awareness score of subtle product placements almost doubled for the more likeable TV programme (average score of group I is 0.55 and group II is 1.02). On the basis of the research results of Table 4 we can accept H6 and H8.

The average scores of Table 4 show that a prominent product placement in a likeable programme (average score is 2.54) has almost the same awareness score as a 30-second commercial in the break of a less likeable programme assuming that the 30-second commercial is viewed (the average score is 2.57).

To get a specific understanding of the influence of the likeability of the programme on the effectiveness of product placements and 30-second commercials, the model presented in Figure 2, has been estimated.

(Please, insert Figure 2 about here)

The influence of the likeability of the programme on the effectiveness of the product placements and 30-second commercials was estimated for four cases. The research results of model A (effectiveness of product placement subtle), model B (effectiveness of product placement prominent), model C (effectiveness of 30-second commercial) and model D (effectiveness of 30-second commercial when taking zapping behaviour into account) are given in Table 6.

(Please, insert Table 6 about here)

The research results of Table 6 indicate that the likeability of the programme significantly positively influences the effectiveness of a product placement (subtle or prominent) and a 30-second commercial. The fit of all the three models is good (Greenwald and Farnham, 2000; Browne and Cudeck, 1992). Results of Table 6 show that the likeability of the programme has a significant positive influence on the awareness of the subtle and prominent product placements which are shown in the programme. However, the likeability of the programme has the highest influence on the awareness of 30-second commercials, followed by awareness of prominent product placements and subtle product placements. For subtle product placements the effect is significant but compared to the other models relatively small.

Table 6 also shows that likeability is positively significantly influenced by the positive emotions felt by the participants during the programme. TV programmes with high scores on positive emotions have a significant higher influence on the awareness of product placements and 30-second commercials. It can be concluded that herewith support is found for H7 and H9.

These findings also suggest that, the intention of European policy makers to restrict the use of product placements in news and documentaries, but not in fiction programmes, would not decrease dramatically the effectiveness of the use of Product Placement.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether subtle and prominent product placements are an effective instrument compared to the 30-second commercials to increase the awareness of brands. In our research design the same brands are used for 30-second commercials and for subtle and prominent product placements in the different experimental groups in order to control for brand preferences, knowledge of brand and other possible distortions because of experiences with the

exhibited brand. In our research design we have also tried to take into account of the limitations of earlier research on the effectiveness of product placements. The participants did not know that they were participating in a research study on product placements and the likeability of the TV-programme as well as the 'stated' zapping behaviour of the participants when watching 30-second commercials were taken into account.

The research results indicated that prominent product placements are significantly more effective than subtle product placements. Also the 30-second TV commercials are significant more effective than subtle product placements. However, the 30-second TV commercials are not always more effective than the prominent product placements. By taking the zapping behaviour of the consumers into account the prominent product placements are in all cases significantly more effective than the 30 second TV commercials.

Also the differential effect of product placements and TV commercials on the 'attitude towards the brand' was investigated. In this research is found that the 'attitude towards the brand' is not influenced by the way in which the product is presented (prominent and subtle product placement and 30-second commercial).

The research results indicated that the likeability of the programme does significantly influence the effectiveness of product placements and 30-second commercials. This suggests that the selection of the appropriate programme can significantly enhance the effectiveness of product placements.

### **Further research**

More research on the influence of the likeability of programmes on the effectiveness of subtle and prominent product placement and 30-second commercials is necessary. It is suggested that researchers should take the sort of product placement (e.g. visual, audio, their total broadcasting time and the order effects of product placements) into account.

Also more research on the influence of individual differences on the effectiveness of product placement and 30-second commercials is necessary. As Fennis and Baker (2001) found a carryover effect of irritation that was previously elicited by the programme for individuals with a high need for evaluation and that they are negatively affected in their evaluations of ads, one can assume that this effect can play for product placement as well.

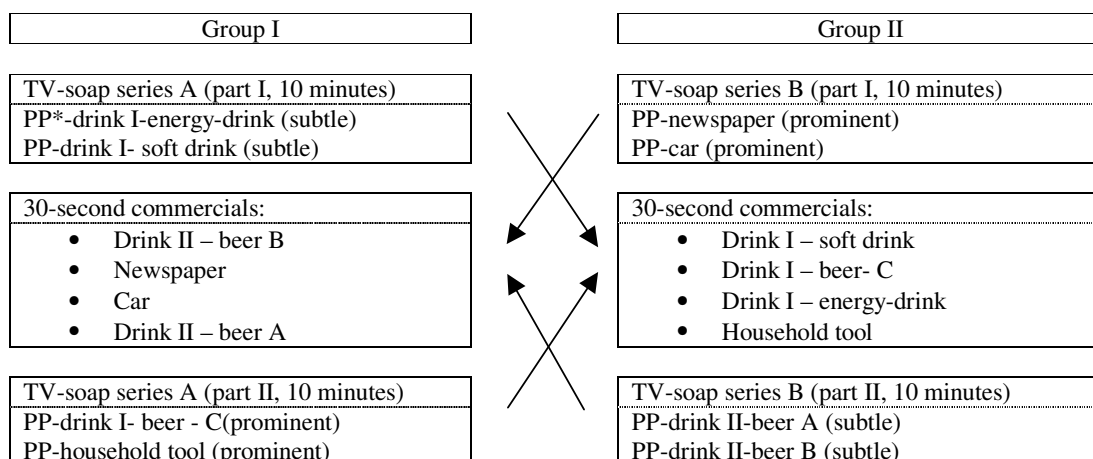
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**Figure 1 Research Design**



\* PP: Product placement

**Table 1. Description of the Sample**

	Group I (N=125)	Group II (N=83)	Test value (p-value)
<b>Gender Male (%)</b>	56.3%	55.3%	Chi-square 0.02 (0.891)
<b>Hours watching television:</b>			
<b>3+ hours</b>	20.3%	18.8%	Chi-square 0.195 (0.907)
<b>1-2 hours</b>	43.8%	42.4%	
<b>Less than 1 hour</b>	35.9%	38.8%	
<b>Zap when commercial starts:</b>			
Always (100% of the time)	38.5%	31.3%	Chi-square 1.96 (0.743)
Most of the time (75% of the time)	41.8%	45.8%	
50% of the time	11.5%	15.7%	
25% of the time	6.6%	4.8%	
Never	1.6%	2.4%	
	<b>Average score (sd)</b>	<b>Average score (sd)</b>	
<b>Attitude towards the program (likeability score)</b>	3.87 (1.42)	5.16 (0.96)	t-value 7.87 (<0.001)
<b>Emotions watching program (program affect score)</b>	2.00 (0.76)	2.80 (0.77)	t-value 7.35 (0.001)



**Table 2. Effectiveness of Prominent Product Placement versus 30-second Commercial**

Brand / product		Without taking zapping behaviour into account				Taking stated zapping behaviour into account			
		Recall (%)	t-value (abs) (p-value)	Recognition (%)	t-value (abs) (p-value)	Recall (%)	t-value (abs) (p-value)	Recognition (%)	t-value (abs) (p-value)
Newspaper	Com (group I)	43.8	4.04	64.6	3.23	14.8	11.31	23.0	12.12
	PP-p <sup>1)</sup> (group II)	70.6	(<0.001)	83.5	(0.001)	70.6	(<0.001)	83.5	(<0.001)
Car	Com (group I)	43.8	0.210	62.2	0.832	19.3	4.04	26.2	5.18
	PP-p (group II)	42.4	(0.841)	56.5	(0.406)	42.4	(<0.001)	56.5	(<0.001)
Beer-C	PP-p (group I)	39.8	6.73	51.2	6.53	39.8	0.13	51.2	1.78
	Com (group II)	82.4	(<0.001)	88.2	(<0.001)	38.6	(0.90)	40.4	(0.077)
Household Tool	PP-p (group I)	43.8	2.92	55.9	3.00	43.6	2.48	55.9	3.30
	Com (group II)	63.5	(0.004)	75.3	(0.00)	27.1	(0.01)	34.0	(0.001)
Energy drink	PP-s <sup>2)</sup> (group I)	3.3	18.9	8.2	18.8	3.3	8.79	8.2	7.36
	Com (group II)	80.7	(<0.001)	88.0	(<0.001)	36.1	(<0.001)	40.3	(<0.001)
Soft drink	PP-s (group I)	16.4	13.7	27.0	12.92	16.4	4.53	27.0	2.85
	Com (group II)	86.8	(<0.001)	95.2	(<0.001)	39.8	(<0.001)	43.7	(0.005)
Beer-A	Com (group I)	86.1	12.7	91.8	11.3	35.5	2.99	37.1	0.79
	PP-s (group II)	19.3	(<0.001)	32.5	(<0.001)	19.3	(0.003)	32.5	(0.429)
Beer-B	Com (group I)	45.1	3.7	73.8	6.8	20.7	0.04	31.4	0.22
	PP-s (group II)	20.5	(<0.001)	30.1	(<0.001)	20.5	(0.97)	30.1	(0.83)

- 1) PP-p: prominent product placement  
 2) PP-s: subtle product placement

**Table 3. Comparison of the different awareness scores in the experimental groups**

	Group I	Group II
Aware PP-subtle	0.55 <sup>1)</sup> (0.89) <sup>2)</sup>	1.02 (1.46)
Aware PP-prom	1.89 (1.41)	2.54 (1.33)
Aware Com.	2.57 (0.82)	3.31 (0.72)
Aware Com. with 'stated' zapping behaviour	1.04 (0.99)	1.50 (1.15)
	Paired sample t-test (p-value)	
Aware PP- prom ↔ PP- subtle	10.28 (<0.001)	8.14(<0.001)
Aware Com ↔ PP- subtle	19.59 (<0.001)	12.25 (<0.001)
Aware Com-zapping ↔ PP-subtle	5.74 (<0.001)	2.18 (0.032)
Aware Com ↔ PP-prom	5.02 (<0.001)	4.63 (<0.001)
Aware Com-zapping ↔ PP-prom	-5.74 (<0.001)	-5.68 (<0.001)

- 1) average score; 2) std.. deviation

**Table 4. Awareness scores for the different experimental groups (min. 0; max.4) - likeability**

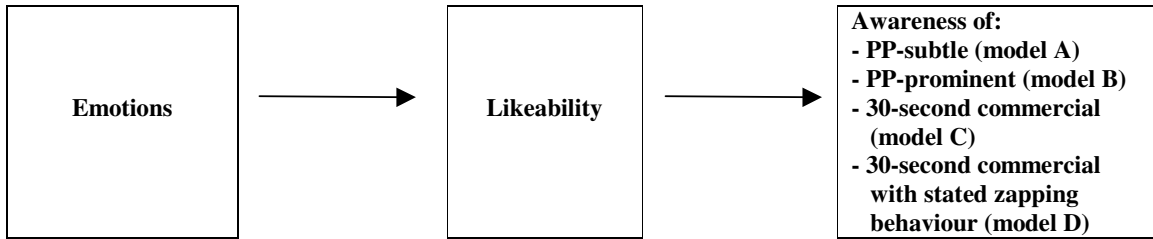
	Exp. group I = less liked	Exp. group II = more liked	T-value (abs)
Aware PP-subtle	0.55 <sup>1)</sup> (0.89) <sup>2)</sup>	1.02 (1.46)	6.73 (<0.001) <sup>3)</sup>
Aware PP-prom	1.89 (1.41)	2.54 (1.33)	3.35 (<0.001)
Aware Com.	2.57 (0.82)	3.31 (0.72)	2.89 (<0.001)
Aware Com. with 'stated' zapping behaviour	1.04 (0.99)	1.50 (1.15)	2.99 (0.003)

1) average score; <sup>2)</sup> std.. deviation <sup>3)</sup> p-value

**Table 5. Attitude towards the brand after viewing subtle and prominent product placement and 30-second TV commercials**

	Attitude towards the Brand		
	Group I	Group II	t-value (p-value)
<b>Newspaper (I:com; II:PP-p)</b>	4.99	5.09	0.62 (0.54)
<b>Household tool (I:PP-p; II:com)</b>	5.51	5.50	0.05 (0.96)
<b>Energy drink (I:PP-s;II:com)</b>	4.38	4.48	0.34 (0.71)
<b>Car (I:com;II:PP-p)</b>	5.52	5.48	0.23 (0.82)

**Figure 2. Influence of the Likeability of the Program on the Effectiveness of PP-subtle, PP-prominent, and 30-second commercial**



**Table 6. Research Results of Figure 2**

	<b>Model A PP-subtle</b>	<b>Model B PP-prominent</b>	<b>Model C 30-second commercial</b>	<b>Model D 30-second commercial zapping behaviour</b>
<b>Likeability % Effectiveness</b>	0.170 (3.470) <sup>1)</sup>	0.237 (4.056)	0.276 (3.867)	0.158 (1.728)
<b>Emotions % Likeability</b>	1.371 (12.818)	1.374 (11.946)	1.374 (11.951)	1.374 (11.959)
<b>Overall Fit:</b>				
<b>GFI</b>	0.961	0.957	0.965	0.960
<b>TLI</b>	0.986	0.982	0.989	0.983
<b>RMSEA</b>	0.052	0.060	0.045	0.057

1) C.R. value