



September 22, 2009

DailyNews
LOS ANGELES

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Product placement a big part of media

As the fall television season begins, we are not only finding new shows to add to our schedule but we are also getting to know more product placements. Recently, I asked my class to tell me a product or service which was "placed in" or paid to be in a movie or a TV show. We counted 30+ examples. The students cited the Coca-Cola glasses in "American Idol," the Mini Coopers in "Italian Job," and the Fords used in Jack Bauer's, oh I mean, Fox's "24." What about the beer, Budweiser, used in Wedding Crashers?

What is product placement? Product placement, or "embedded" marketing is a type of promotion in which an advertisement is placed by companies and advertising agencies using real products and services in media. The presence of a particular brand is the result of an economic exchange. It is also known as "product integration."

Product placement appears in television shows, plays, film, music videos, video games and books. This is usually done without disclosure, and under the premise that it is a natural part of the work. Money usually exchanges hands or services are rendered.

The earliest example of product placement found involved an 1896 film created by Lumière brothers for Lever Brothers' Sunlight brand of soap (now Unilever). A Sunlight soap cart was parked on a street. There are also "product placements that didn't happen." A letter found in Alfred Hitchcock's files from "The Birds" mentioned that a moving van company wanted to "brand" the trucks in a scene when the people were escaping the town.

Film historians remember a scene in "Double Indemnity" that takes place in a grocery store, Billy Wilder had Green Giant vegetables facing the screen while other products were faced backwards. Another scene in "All about Eve" included boxes of Sunshine Hi-Ho's and Sunshine Grahams visible on a shelf above Bette Davis. The 1946 film "It's a Wonderful Life" by Frank Capra shows a boy who wants to be an explorer, displaying a magazine copy of *National Geographic*.

For some time now, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been considering regulating this marketing and advertising identification, clarifying branded entertainment, product placement, and perhaps full sponsorship of television shows. I ask my CSUN classes does it really matter? There are too many shows where the sponsors are too visible. The viewers know, or now you know, that money and services were exchanged.