

**The impact on and responses of viewers to
product placement: a study of mainstream films.**

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Declaration.

This work has not been submitted for a degree or diploma at any other university.

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As befitting a thesis investigating mainstream films there are, as with any film award ceremony, many people the researcher wishes to thank for their support and assistance. Firstly, my employer, Canterbury Christ Church University, for allowing and encouraging research to be accessible and available. The Business School too has been equally supportive of this time consuming undertaking and the backing from Professor Heather McLaughlin, and other colleagues, has been enormously appreciated. Assistance has also been given from colleagues across the university community and this too has been invaluable, not least the support and encouragement given by members of the Graduate School.

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Penultimately I would like to thank my research participants who made this process both possible and furthermore an enjoyable experience. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends who not only supported this overly long preoccupation but also entertained and endured the researcher's obsession and repetition on a subject that he found endlessly interesting.

Dedication.

This PhD is dedicated to two extraordinary individuals, my daughter and my wife. My daughter Caitlin at around the start of this research undertaking, and aged only seven, was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer. The long, arduous and at times brutal treatment that she endured failed to dampen her natural cheerful and out-going nature. Later during this research, Caitlin was struck again with the same bone cancer, and was this time to undergo even more intense treatment. Once more her fortitude and indomitable spirit, while at times diminished, was never overwhelmed. Caitlin has remained an inspiration to many people she has met. Second to Caitlin's cheerful determination was that of her mother, Alison. Alison's unrelenting and meticulous care of Caitlin, her understanding and questioning of complicated and extended treatment protocols, while being able to retain her own positive and optimistic nature, was both remarkable and again inspirational.

Abstract.

Product placement is a promotional tool within the discipline of marketing whereby branded items feature in entertainment vehicles such as video games, television programmes, stage plays, music videos, books and films. This thesis investigates this practice in relation to mainstream, commercial films. The nature of this research gives it a multidisciplinary approach across two key themes, namely Celebrity Status and Product Placement - with Marketing Communications being the element that links them. Determining which product placements in films make the most impact upon consumers for the commercial benefit of the stakeholders is, primarily, this focus of this thesis.

In total eighty-six individuals were interviewed, and the researcher used a qualitative approach, informed with a grounded theory methodology. This yielded an abundance of responses with participants providing a wealth of mixed and, at times, contradictory feedback relating to the acceptance, rejection and ethical concerns regarding product placements. As part of the research process, close attention was paid to the attraction and fascination that actors hold for research participants and how this celebrity-focus, combined with having an audience in a relaxed and receptive frame of mind, informs outcomes in terms of brand recall, enhanced brand values and eventual sales.

The study concludes that film placements remain an elusive practice to assess despite it being a long-established marketing technique that has a growing, multi-billion dollar annual spend. This thesis provides insights into the practice and suggests that key variables such as the placement presentation styles and the diversity of consumers, make the commercial assessment of placements hard to determine. Thus, any measures of the success of product placement in mainstream films appear to be limited and difficult to predict.

Keywords: Product placement, celebrity, brands, parasocial relationships, marketing communication, perception, attitudes.

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Preface.

One of the most commonly asked questions of the researcher was, 'what gave you the idea study product placement?' The answer lies with an observation made while watching the James Bond film *GoldenEye* (Campbell, 1995). Highlighted for comment while discussing the film with a marketing colleague, was the tank chase sequence through the streets of St Petersburg. At one stage of the sequence, Bond drives his tank through the middle of a large truck marked in the Perrier Mineral Water livery, in the process sending a huge quantity of Perrier products cascading across the scene. The comment was made, "Didn't it look spectacular when Bond demolished the Perrier truck?"; to which came the response "What Perrier truck?". This exchange then led to a discussion of a car chase scene in *'Tomorrow Never Dies'* (Spottiswoode, 1997) in which Bond not only escapes his opponents while driving a BMW 750iL, but also controls it from the back seat of the car via his Ericsson mobile phone. Moreover the 'bad guys' are driving, to little effect, rival marques Mercedes Benz and Ford vehicles. The scene ends with a car plummeting from the top floor of a multi-story car park into an Avis car rental shop. All five of these product placements had evaded the attention of the marketing colleague. His defence was that he was busy watching a film and anyway, 'only a geek like you would notice'.

From this starting point on the effectiveness of product placement as a form of marketing communication flowed. From there the idea for this thesis began to take shape with the intention of investigating if product placement is a good use of marketing budgets. This is based in part on the 'marketing legend' of John Wanamaker who claimed to know half his marketing budget was wasted, but had no idea which half¹ (Dykes, 2012; 12). It appeared that there was a gap in the literature in terms of looking specifically at different types of placement and mainstream movies; this resulted in the question of whether one form of placement was more effective, and how consumers regarded this marketing technique.

¹ The quote is also attributed to Lord Leverhulme; it is widely used as a warning for and by marketers.

I.1 Introduction.

This PhD thesis focuses on product placement within mainstream films and takes an interdisciplinary approach using theories from Marketing Communications and combining them with related elements from Film Studies and Cultural Studies. The rationale for using mainstream films is to concentrate on commercially driven films that are made for mass audiences² and, importantly, for profit. These mainstream films routinely attract product placements. Due to this, they are considered a marketing communication option by those charged with promoting products and brands (Donaton, 2005). Product placements in mainstream films can enjoy exposure to many millions of viewers, thereby potentially boosting brand/product familiarity and enhancing brand values, raising profiles and, ultimately, increasing sales. Enhancing brand values will also enhance a firm's market value thereby delivering further incentive to achieve successful placement/s (Srinivasan and Hanssens, 2009). Significantly, product placements deals provide pre-release income stream for filmmakers thereby providing essential cash flow for them (Galician, 2004). For audiences placed products are also useful to define characters, establish or define scenes and add realism in films (Lehu, 2009) and would therefore, the researcher contends, be regarded as 'normal' and 'expected' in the landscape, narrative and grammar of filmmaking (Arijon, 1991).

Gupta and Gould (1997: 37) define product placement as a marketing communication strategy that;

Involves incorporating brands in movies in return for money or for some promotional or other consideration.

While this serves as a useable definition, it should be noted that placement can also include the co-incidental incorporation of brands and it can be argued that it includes locations, cities and even countries as tourist destinations. This research has particularly engaged with the methods of product placement used within film, the actors and their appeal as

² The term audience is often interchangeable with the term consumer. Film audiences being consumers of both films and other products.

marketing tools in conjunction with the use of what the researcher here terms as the celebrity brand association. Celebrity brand associations are where well-known individuals, in this case actors, are used in brand marketing often as role models or figures of desire. Brands, brand image and brand values are central to this research for both the marketing of products and the marketing of films, all to be regarded as products depending upon consumers for commercial success. This idea of celebrity brand associations also connects the disciplines of cultural studies, film studies and marketing, illustrating how actors and brands feature strongly in all areas. Additionally, it also demonstrates not only how celebrity brand association interacts across the three disciplines but also how the three disciplines interact and influence each other. This thesis investigates whether the level of actor appeal or the placement method employed make any discernible difference to the degree in which the placement is noticed and accepted by the viewer. The thesis then investigates the attitudes of viewers to these placements.

This research will challenge the claim that all product placement is beneficial to the sponsoring organisation (Russell, 2002). The outline findings are that many viewers appear oblivious to placements; some evidence suggests viewer resistance to placements while other viewers simply find placements distracting (Karniouchina, Uslay and Erenburg, 2011). Other research participants claimed to like them and even expect or demand them for realism. The key finding was the reaction by viewers to different forms of placement with verbal placements having the most noticeable impact on those questioned.

1.2 The Research Questions.

The aim of this research is to provide evidence on the degree of effectiveness of product placement in mainstream films and will investigate why marketers should select, or avoid, product placement as a marketing communications tool.

The research questions are:

- 1) Does the popularity of celebrity actors influence product placement associations for the viewer?
- 2) How do consumers regard the practice of product placements in film as a marketing communications tool?
- 3) Which method of product placement is most effective at creating positive brand associations and awareness?

This Ph.D. also aims to scrutinise the claim that all forms of product placement such as using brands in set dressing, *misé-en-scène*, as narrative devices, or whether having products 'name checked' in a film's dialogue, makes any difference to the noticeability levels and impact for the viewers/consumers (Russell, 2002; Galician, 2004, Lehu, 2009). This study also aims to investigate if film consumers prefer seeing branded products rather than fake, or genericised products, for adding realism to films (Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Kräuter, 2000; DeLorme and Reid, 2002). As part of this possible acceptance process, the research also aims to investigate the degree of the importance of the parasocial relationship³ between the viewer and the actors and the screen characters they play (Rubin and McHugh, 1987; Colliander, 2012; Kavallieratou, 2013).

In order to address the research questions, it is necessary to satisfy the research objectives. The first of these objectives is to investigate the impact that different actors, and in particular 'celebrity-actors', have on the viewer and their opinions on product placement and celebrity-brand associations. The second is to investigate viewer/consumer attitudes towards placements, including any impact on brand awareness or preference. The third research objective is to identify which of the different methods used for placing products in film consumers regard most positively, and what impact these placements have on attitudes towards the placed brand. The study seeks to ascertain film consumers' opinions towards product placement as a marketing tool and, secondly, to determine

³ One-sided relationships by which individuals will invest energy and emotion in a person or character, who in turn is unaware of the other.

if one method of placement has a more positive impact on consumers than other methods. It will also provide evidence to challenge the claims already made about the degree of product placement effectiveness as a marketing communication tool in the medium of film (Galician, 2005; Bressoud, Lehu and Russell, 2010; Karniouchina, Uslay and Erenburg, 2011). In an earlier study, Vollmers and Mizerski (1994) made a claim for 93% placement recall from their respondents, this is despite that unlike reading a book for example, watching a film is often considered a more passive process (Bardsley, 1998; Dhoest and Simons, 2016) with greater opportunity for consumers to miss details such as product placements. Recall rates are an aspect of this marketing technique that this research investigates, Brenna, Dubas and Babin (2015) refer to not only the issue of false product recall but also that placement practitioners judge a placement to be effective if 20% plus of an audience are aware of the identity of the brand in question. These issues assist in informing and framing the research here.

Mainstream film production and product placement are both commercial activities, and both driven by financial imperatives. This factor forms a key feature of this research. Marketing communications is the central driver and unifying tool in this research, pushing goals of brand equity, awareness and image, and sales (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008; Keller, 2010). Those placing products will be under pressure to maximise the impact of the placement and create a successful marketing outcome (Donaton, 2005). This research will critically assess the evidence made by some, see Russell (2002), that all product placement is beneficial to the sponsoring organisation. This research uses three categories of product placement to analyse whether the placement context has an impact on the viewer. The three placement types that the researcher here is terming as High Placement, Low Placement and Passive Placement; these are explained and developed in Chapter 4 (see Table 4.1, page 154). Tiwsakul, Hackley and Szmigin (2015: 95) state that:

There is a marked shortage of studies that address particular product placement techniques in specified situational contexts.

This research will also investigate whether having a link between a 'celebrity-actor' (as distinct from less recognised actors) and a brand gives

added marketing value and impact. This is what the researcher here describes as celebrity brand association, useful to make a positive impact on viewers and be noticed over the many other competing calls on viewers/consumers' attention (Davies, 1997; Lehu, 2009).

The type of viewer and their feelings of connectedness with the actors, outlined by Dyer (1998) with his 'fan categories' of emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and projection, will also be used to review viewer types and the associations they make with celebrity-actors, and by association the products they promote. These possible links are used as an indicator of product placement effectiveness.

1.3 The Thesis Outline.

Chapter One, the Literature Review, profiles the literature relating to the themes of the thesis, celebrity status, marketing communications and product placement. Attention is given to celebrities and reviews why actors, and especially celebrity-actors, may hold a key for successful product placement. With the terms 'actor', 'star' and 'celebrity' distinctions are made between them, although consumers often use the terms interchangeably (Lawrence, 2009). Consumers also refer to all celebrities as substitutes for one another referring to film characters, such as James Bond or Indiana Jones, as if they were actual people (Lawrence, 2009). Central to these consumer views is the concept of parasocial relationships (Horton and Wohl, 1956) in which viewers believe that they personally know the celebrity-actor; this includes the actor's consumption behaviour. This impression that many film consumers have, is that they personally know an actor. This is a part of the social identity theory (Kjærgaard, Morsing and Ravasi, 2011) that can result in 'illusory relationships', that appear real to the individual (Baudrillard, 1998). Importantly for the research here, this factor is key to many film and actor related marketing promotions. Dyer (1998) researched this phenomenon and developed categories of 'actor-audience relationship', with consumers/viewers'

feelings that they personally know an actor as a major factor here. This form of parasocial relationship, is explored in this research.

The Literature Review has two main sections. The first provides an overview of the literature to furnish the reader with an appreciation and understanding of the context for this research. The second explores the literature that relates to the research themes giving a greater level of detail, including a brief element of historical and developmental background, of both the film and product placement industry.

Chapter Two, *Research Methodology*, details the approaches and methods taken, with a justification for the choices made. There is also a review of what the research was striving to achieve, how the research was undertaken and, an assessment of the qualitative approach employed. Why a qualitative approach was used, the adoption of grounded theory and why questionnaires were replaced with interviews following the first stage of the study. The usefulness of semiology to marketers, filmmakers and consumers is also reviewed here.

Chapter Three, *Celebrity status: data analysis*, starts with an outline of the overall approach taken with the data collection and analysis undertaken with this thesis. This guides the reader as to the contents and direction of this part of this research process. The chapter proceeds with an investigation of the fascination and influence that actors can have on the consumers of films, products and services. The consumers' stated attitudes towards actors and in particular, those regarded as being celebrity-actors then follows. Addressed here too is the impact that celebrity actors can have with any perceived celebrity-brand associations. It also considers the overt role of actors in the marketing of films, products and brands.

Chapter Four, *Product placement: data analysis*, investigates film placements appraising the impact that they have upon audiences. Chapter Five has a reflective approach with the design of the interviews and takes the reader on the same pathway the stage two interviewees were taken.

This chapter investigates the types of placement techniques used and explores the consumer's perceived differences between them.

Chapter Five, *The role of marketing communications: data analysis*. This chapter reviews the important role of Marketing Communications as the tool that unifies the topics of celebrity status and product placement with filmmaking. It will examine the different marketing approaches and techniques used by filmmakers and marketers. Assessment of these options is undertaken so that the most effective methods in the placement process is identified for the impact it has on consumers.

The Data Analysis chapters reflect the respondents' voice with the use of their comments and observations about films, actors and product placements. Used directly in this research, respondent comments are prominent and illustrate their sometime contradictory positions. For example, interviewees would often state they had no interest in celebrities, only to later admit to wanting to know about them.

Chapter Six, *Towards an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films*, is a critical discussion of the issues, possibilities and pitfalls of product placement in film. This chapter is of particular importance as it allows the interviewees' voice to be heard in relation to the themes central to this study as the research findings are discussed. This chapter highlights the points from the research and outlines the conflicting consumer messages showing with this form of 'stealth marketing' (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004), how difficult it is for marketers to confidently measure the impact of their promotions with their intended target audience. Points to emerge here relate to whether consumers notice or miss placements; the impact of celebrity-brand associations; and how placements can be important for promoting brand familiarity. Also regarded as central to the potential success of product placements is the issue of having the brand name checked in dialogue, and having the product used as a narrative device.

Chapter Seven, *The Conclusion*, outlines the outcomes and findings from the research with the limitations found. This chapter acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of this research and recognises that consumers of film, and products, are not passive with decoding messages and meaning. The chapter also acknowledges that product placement can be welcomed by some viewers and that a lack of placements can distract from the authenticity of the film as a product in its own right. This includes which product placement method maximizes the impact on consumers. This chapter additionally offers suggestions for future possible research.

Throughout this thesis, there are several images that provide pertinent examples that support and inform this research. The terms 'product placement' and 'brand placement' are terms used interchangeably in the wider literature and within this study (see Nelson and Deshpande, 2013).

Chapter One:

The Literature Review.

1.1 Introduction and the research context.

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct the literature review critically evaluating product placement as a marketing tool in mainstream films while also exploring the key issues that affect upon this process. The central inter-disciplinary themes identified are 'celebrity status', 'product placement' with marketing communications as the unifying element. These areas relate directly to the research questions and form the framework upon which the research is based upon. The challenge here for the author is to encompass elements of the three central disciplinary areas that are covered in this investigation, those of marketing, film studies and cultural studies, while keeping the central focus on the first of these as the mainstay and driving force behind this research. This chapter is divided into two themes, the first critically appraises the rise of film as an entertainment format and how shared codes are used in both marketing and film (Bignell, 2002). With a marketing communication focus, a review of celebrity status and product placement follows.

The focus of this PhD is the appeal of mainstream, Hollywood films produced for a mass audience with film studios engaged in an industrial process as profit driven enterprises (Scott, 2014). The name 'Hollywood' is used as shorthand for all American film production (Sigismondi, 2012), using Hollywood as the benchmark for the importance of filmmaking as an

economic activity is essential. In 2016, the reported value of film production from Hollywood alone, was placed at \$28.8billion from box office receipts, and a further \$18.07billion from domestic consumption (Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation Report, February 2017). Film, in short, is popular and 'big business'. A key issue for this chapter is investigating why film is so popular, and what makes film influential as a guide for consumption for so many consumers. From what can be seen next, and returned to in following chapters, is the importance of the actors who appear in these productions, not least with the higher profile 'celebrity-actors' and their celebrated 'movie star' colleagues.

From here the first key theme of this research is what Pringle (2008) describes as celebrity status. This illustrates the important relationship of the celebrity-actor with the audience, and with the concept of the parasocial relationship (McCutcheon, Ashe, Houran and Maltby (2010); and Dyer (1998)). Redmond and Holmes (2007: 4) emphasize the importance of this status and the many influences it has, stating:

Stars and celebrities are consumed and appropriated by fans in ways which have a profound effect on their identity, self-image and sense of belonging.

Pringle (2004) acknowledges the influence of celebrity on consumers, in the context of films and consumer products. There is also an evaluation of marketing communication, firstly as a subject in its own right but then in relation to how it affects consumers in relation to celebrity-actors and product placement. Finally, the chapter reviews the importance and commercial value of product placement in film to filmmakers and to marketers.

King (2002) takes a dismissive approach to commercial film pejoratively describing this output as a vulgar product of lower quality designed for the masses. Maltby (2003) counters this stance and suggests that audiences are in fact knowing and more engaged than King proposes; he also writes that 'some films are trash, albeit great trash' describing Hollywood as a 'single business industry' producing standardised 'mass

culture' organised solely 'in the interests of profit'. Maltby (2003: 45) states:

...for the vulgar Romantic in us all, Hollywood is not art because it is commercial, you don't have to take it seriously... it was never meant to be any more than frivolous and trifling and entertaining.

This is an important issue of this research, matching the inherent commercial imperative of those placing products for exposure and impact on a mainstream audience, an audience with a desire to consume 'trifling entertainment' (see also Lombardi (2013)). Negus (2006: 198) describes the standardised mainstream approach of production thusly:

...the pressure to adhere to formulas was induced by the need to compete for attention in a commercial market where standard patterns are more easily distributed, promoted and recognised.

The 'mass appeal' of 'popular culture' while sometimes derided is, as Littau (2005) asserts, essential in order to maintain the film industry. This mass appeal is also the reason why films attract so many marketers to this form of popular culture. Kellner (2002: 32) observes that the Frankfurt School:

...coined the term "culture industries" to signify the process of the industrialisation of mass-produced culture and the commercial imperative that drove the system.

Kellner states that music and films had become commodities 'within the context of industrial production' (2002: 32); it is of no surprise that they have attracted marketers to spend on them. Adorno and Horkheimer (2007: 34) identified that viewers, as consumers of films, are conditioned to 'easily digest' what they see and are influenced by the relentless industrial output, they write:

All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically. The might of industrial society is lodged in men's minds. The entertainments manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the consumer is distraught, for each of them is a model of huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses.

The focus on the financial considerations, combined with the question of whether product placement in films is an effective marketing

communications method, is the main theme running throughout this thesis. The issue of mass production and mass consumption of these film products and their apparently undemanding consumers (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2007) are integral to this research. This thesis is not an analysis of film as a form of culture, but an exploration of film as a commercially driven industry. This industry is one in which success measured by sales, sales that ensure the survival of the industry. Makers of popular films strive to satisfy a demanding and, despite what some observers might assume, a discerning audience who regularly spend their time and money-making informed consumption choices (Austin, 2002). In the context of this research, it is important to acknowledge a key point made by Redmond and Holmes (2007: 4), they state:

Celebrity matters to the culture industries that produce or manufacture the famous for surplus profit.

The celebrity industry and their 'stars' are important to the consumers as icons and role models, just as the consumers are key to some culture industries for selling products. To this extent fame has a monetary currency as well as what Redmond and Holmes (2007) term cultural currency, this explains the focus of this thesis being on understanding the consumers of popular films, their attitudes towards to celebrity-actors, and their opinions concerning product placements. This research considers the complexity of the consumers' relationship with commercial products and the celebrities that represent, embody and promote them.

1.2 Section One: early product placements and the role of film as a marketing communications tool.

This section focuses on how and why cinema and film became popular, and how from almost the beginning of filmmaking marketers used the medium as a vehicle to communicate to their own target audiences. Gunning (2004) called the development of the film industry the 'cinema of attractions', a new way of storytelling that would excite and engage an audience. Later Ryu (2008) used the term 'Cinema of Special Effects Attractions' as a variant way of attracting an audience; later again Rose

(2018) wrote of the 4DX cinemas as another variation on this theme. In the early years of cinema, there was considerable work to do to attract people away from live theatre and then to maintain them past the draw of showing a moving picture novelty (Thompson and Bordwell, 2009). Early screenings were popular, powerful spectacles. Perhaps the most famous of these being the allegedly panicked viewers watching Louis and Auguste Lumière's *L'Arrivé d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat* (1895), thinking the train was about to burst through the screen into the audience (Phillips, 2004).

Picture Illustration 1.1. **The Lumière Brothers.**



Top left, the Lumière Brothers (circa 1905).
Top right, a still of the Lumières' 'terrifying train' (1895).
Bottom, the World's 'first movie poster' (1895).

When the Lumières made their first screenings there was the possibility that film may have been no more than a sideshow attraction (Grieverson and Kramer, 2004). Cinema though, showed people their own daily lives, leaving a factory was an early, popular theme, but also images of fantasy and dreams, see for example Popple and Kember's (2003) "*Early Cinema: From Factory Gate to Dream Factory*". Studios distributed multiple copies of films to multiple destinations, thereby reaching a wider audience (Popple and Kember, 2003) and making it commercially attractive. Importantly, film entertained audiences in ways that live theatre was unable. A prime example of this ability of film being Méliès' '*La Voyage dans la Lune*' (1902) (Wyver, 1989) shown here in Picture Illustration 1.2.

Picture Illustration 1.2.
Méliès et *La Voyage dans la Lune* (1902).



Stills from Méliès' innovative masterpiece, with Georges Méliès right.

While contemporary audiences are used to the immersive flights of imagination, early audiences had limited experiences of 'fairground attractions', circuses and theatre (see Assael, 2005). Méliès and other early filmmakers were able to transport their audiences to all manner of destinations from under the sea to the Moon (Kessler and Verhoeff, 2008). To add further attraction and expansion to the film format, Méliès was also the first to use cartoon segments to engage and entertain his viewers. The number of possibilities with this range of cinematic tools and techniques, while crude compared to contemporary standards, showed audiences the possibilities of cinema to entertain and enchant. This novelty, combined with the low price

of cinema admission (compared to theatre or music halls) (Grieverson and Kramer, 2004), helped to establish film as an influential and popular medium.

While Gorky and Lenin talked of the potential of film as a medium for communicating a political message (consider Eisenstein's '*Battleship Potemkin*' (1925)), it is only a short step from this to the application of communicating commercial messages. With early films, Koppes and Black (1987: 57) comment that concerns were expressed that:

too much propaganda could wreck the movies' entertainment appeal.

This would detract from the narrative and pleasure value; a concern that is still relevant with blatant product placement (Lasn, 2001; Donaton, 2005). Karniouchina et al, 2011, also state that too much product placement can result in viewer resentment, and thereby diminish this form of promotion.

A cursory review of product placement might give the impression that product placement 'suddenly appeared' in 1982 with the release of *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* featuring Reese's Pieces (Kennedy and Spielberg, 1982; Sengrave, 2004). Newell, Salmon and Chang (2006: 575) outline how product placement was a:

sophisticated sub-business long before E.T. that was fully integrated into the making and marketing of mass media content as early as the 1920s and that product placement in mass media began with the birth of motion picture projection in the mid-1890s.

That is not to say product placement did not have critics or obstacles to overcome. Film producer Carl Laemmle warned in 1931 against 'the prostitution of the screen with brands' and possible resentment from the audience if 'you jam advertising down their throats' (Lehu, 2009: 17). Placements for Sunlight Soap were though present in some of the early 1890s films (Weintraub, 2005; Newell, Salmon and Chang, 2006) this highlights that product placement in film was an early innovation, and early source of income for filmmakers. Other early films also included product placements. The winner of the first 'Best Picture' Oscar (Kinn and Piazza, 2014), the World War One drama *Wings* (Wellman, 1927), includes a lingering shot of actors with Hersey chocolate and a close-up on the product.

Picture Illustration 1.3. **The First Film Product Placement?**



The Lumières' *Défilé du 8ème Bataillon* (1896). This screenshot shows a prominent Sunlight Soap handcart as an early product placement.

Picture Illustration 1.4. **Early Product Placement, Hersey's Chocolate.**



Hersey's chocolate placed in the *Wings* (1927) (screenshot).

One reason for the appeal and success of 'glamorous' Hollywood films Maltby (2003: 42) claims, lies in the idea that they "provide Utopian solutions to everyday desires" and a "reservoir of ready-made daydreams" that are 'pre-digested and easy to consume'. Put simply they present excitement and escapism. Fictional film producer Claude Dibbler (Pratchett, 1990:70) expresses audience thirst for films thus:

*They want spectacles! They want dancing girls! They want thrills!
They want people falling off roofs! They want dreams! The world is
full of little people with big dreams!*

Similarly, film producer Samuel Goldwyn is reported to have once told a writers' conference "What we want is a story that begins with an earthquake and works its way up to a climax" (in Berg, 1989: 24). Cinemas were to become the venues for such spectacles and dreams with the rise of film and the celebrity-actor set to rise far beyond its uncertain origins. Film studios and cinemas were also aware of the need to connect the cinemagoers with the products seen on the 'silver screen'. An example from the 1950s of such promotions include locally run examples, in this instance with the Canterbury ODEON cinema for *Blue Murder at St Trinian's* (Launder, 1957)).

Picture Illustration 1.5.
Placed Products and the Retail Connection.



Promoting the 'St Trinian's swimsuit' at the Canterbury ODEON (1958).

1.3 The use of language and codes in marketing communications and film.

This section reviews the shared, culturally interconnected language of communication, film and marketing. Spiedel (2007: 64) makes the valuable observation with the use of film as a marketing tool, he argues:

Part of the sophistication of Hollywood narratives and techniques lies in their invisibility, in the effort involved in appearing effortless.

Audiences can be unaware that they are possibly being manipulated, and reasonably so when they seek some escapist film entertainment. Simultaneously, many audience members are cognizant of the manipulation and regard this as a part of the attraction, or perhaps 'distraction', of film consumption (Monaco, 2009). Hitchcock stated that he manipulated audiences and 'play them like a great organ', knowing when to 'pull out all the stops' and get the reaction he wanted from them (Monaco, 2000). This research will seek to show, being able to elicit emotional responses is a key requirement filmmakers and marketers share (Solomon, Marshall and Stuart, 2009).

How an audience reads film, is essential for filmmakers to know so that they can understand how a film may affect an audience. With reference to reading films, Monaco (2000: 157) writes:

semioticians justify the study of film as language by redefining the concept of language. Film is not a language, but is like a language.

Stam and Miller (2000: 33) add that film has developed 'a narrative and thus producing a body of signifying procedures'. Consumers soon learn to understand and interpret meanings, which are reinforced in cinema by television. The process of decoding signs and meaning is not fixed with the filmmaker's intended codes being interpreted differently by consumers, as Hall (1980) highlights. Determining the meaning or message within a film or the making sense of a marketing communication can mean different things to individuals (Monaco, 2009). How a product is placed within a film is a key consideration for marketers. Effective communication is a challenge for both filmmakers and marketers alike and Hall (1980: 169) argues that:

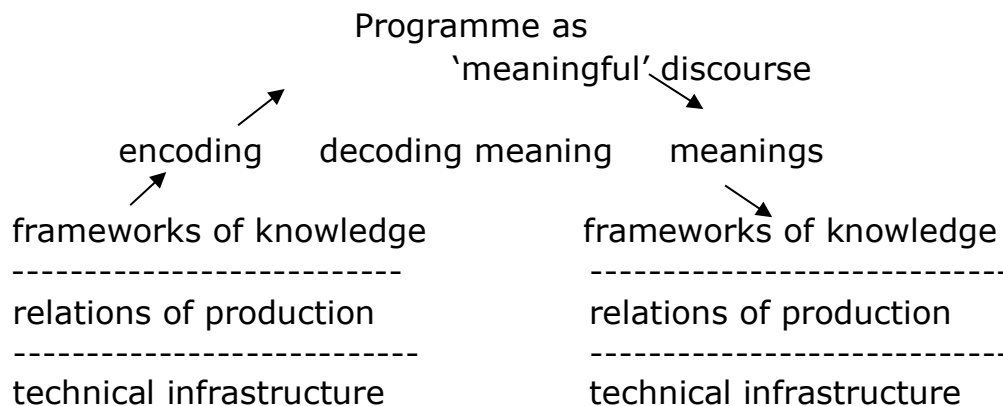
It depends on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry established between the positions of 'personifications', encoder-producer and decoder-receiver.

Hall (1980: 169) continues that these are subject to 'distortions' and "misunderstandings in the communication exchange". Hall (1980: 168) also comments that before the message can have an effect it must first:

be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded.

By 'meaningfully' he refers to it being able to 'influence, entertain, inform or persuade', this provides links with filmmakers and marketers' desire to 'communicate' with an audience. Hall's Model of Coding and De-coding illustrates this.

Diagram 1.1. **Hall's Model of Encoding and Decoding.**
Adapted from Hall (1980).



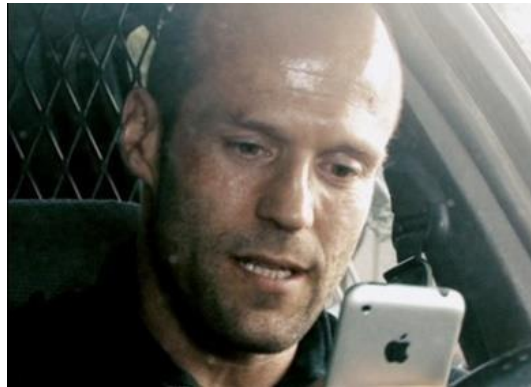
Hall's model is of relevance here as film, actors, characters and marketing communications all rely on how the consumer/viewer interpret what is presented. The consumption of constructed images by participants with a particular intended, or desired impact, is an important factor within this research. With questions over the coding, de-coding and the representation of reality, Barthes (2000) suggests that individuals should look at the cultural context to obtain a fuller meaning of cultural artefacts. This is a process illustrated here with the following images in relation to variations around the letter 'A' and related to the use of logos in marketing and as product placement tools (Picture Illustration 1.6).

Picture Illustration 1.6. **Symbols and Interpretation.**



From left to right: A for American Scouts Association; The Automobile Association; American Airlines, and the Apple logo.

Picture Illustration 1.7. **Jason Statham is *The Mechanic*.**



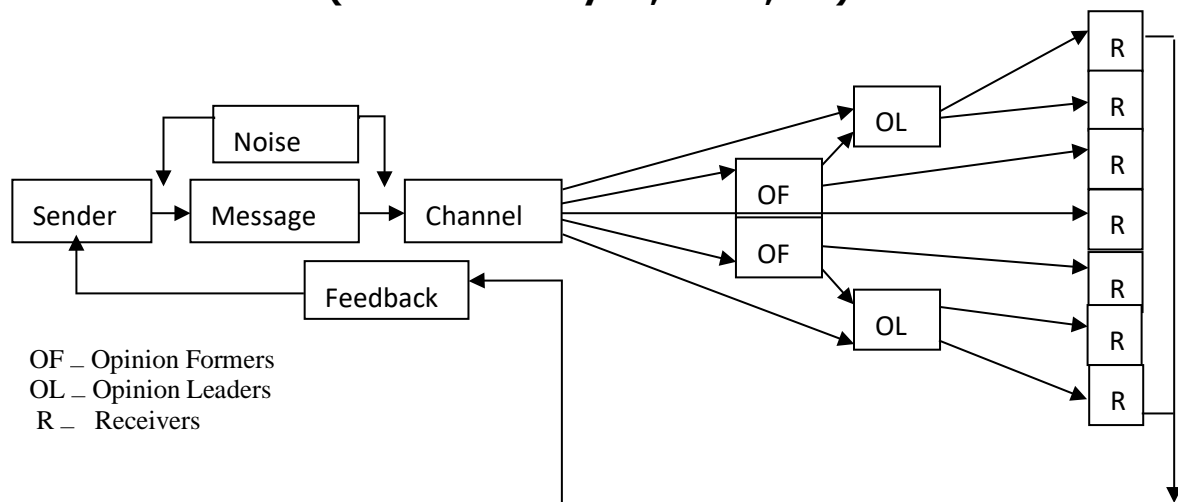
'A is for Apple', Jason Statham in *The Mechanic* (2011) with his clearly identifiable Apple iPhone (screenshot).

Taking the Apple example and using it as a clearly identifiable product placement logo is Jason Statham in *The Mechanic* (West, 2011). With the letter 'A' example, many of the above would be open to interpretation/misinterpretation depending on the individual's previous knowledge. Arguably, and central to this thesis, symbols used in film would be interpreted differently in relation to the context. Statham's mobile phone though avoids the potential barriers of a culturally bound alphabet system by employing an icon (logo) which represents the brand and products; this in turn aids recognition with consumers around the world. The Apple logo will be familiar to many people, and as Gernsheimer (2008: 37) writes logos are a quick and useful "in breaking down the barriers of communication and understanding".

Hall (1980) underlines the dilemma of language and codes as forms of communication; not least with the issue of being understood by the intended recipient/s. For this PhD, Hall's analysis offers the chance to address the research actors in giving agency to their interpretation. With the question of image management, it also affects the perception of actors as 'vehicles of desire', 'opinion formers' and 'opinion leaders' (Smith and Taylor, 2002). The following marketing communication model shows communication as a process, see Diagram 1.2 (page 21), with the problem of the message being corrupted in the process with various forms of noise; this would include anything from physical distractions or a poorly constructed image. The so-called 'opinion-formers' would include

individuals used in the marketing communication, such as a popular actor. The opinion leaders refer to other key people who are considered influential, these include celebrity figures, but it would also encompass any other figure regarded as dominant (see also The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model, Diagram 1.2).

Diagram 1.2. Multi-step Communication Model (Smith and Taylor, 2002; 77).



Actors form part of the message and serve as opinion formers and leaders in the language and interpretation of film, and with aspects of marketing communication. If actors are effective in this role, then this will enhance their value to marketers. Next is the network of influences and relations of which actors are a part, in the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model. Consumers can be unaware of what and who influences them (Wiseman, 2007). The Model (Diagram 1.3, next) shows a network of influences while Wiseman (2007: 125) highlights the issues concerning influence stating:

The ways in which we think and feel are frequently influenced by factors outside our awareness.

The diagram illustrates the Attitude-Value-Experience (AVE) model, a comprehensive framework for understanding consumer behavior. It is structured into five main stages, each with specific components and interconnections:

- Information Input:** This stage begins with **Stimuli** (Mass, Personal, General) and **Search**. These lead into the **Information Processing** stage.
- Information Processing:** This stage involves **Exposure**, **Attention**, and **Reception**. A dashed box labeled **A T T I T U D E** is positioned above **Reception**. The output of this stage is **Information and experience**.
- Decision Process:** This stage includes **Problem Recognition**, **Search**, **Alternative Evaluation**, **Choice**, and **Outcomes**. **Problem Recognition** leads to **Search**, which then leads to **Alternative Evaluation** and **Choice**. **Choice** leads to **Outcomes**.
- Product Brand:** This stage includes **Evaluation Criteria**, **Beliefs**, **Attitudes**, and **Intention**. **Evaluation Criteria** leads to **Beliefs**, which leads to **Attitudes** and **Intention**. **Attitudes** leads to **Intention**.
- Internalized Environmental Influences:** This stage includes **Motives**, **Personality Lifestyle**, **Normative Compliance**, **Anticipated circumstances**, and **Unanticipated circumstances**. **Motives** leads to **Personality Lifestyle** and **Normative Compliance**. **Personality Lifestyle** leads to **Beliefs** and **Attitudes**. **Normative Compliance** leads to **Attitudes**. **Anticipated circumstances** leads to **Intention**. **Unanticipated circumstances** leads to **Intention**.

Feedback loops are shown from **Satisfaction** and **Dissonance** back to **Search** and **Stimuli**, indicating a dynamic and iterative process.

While actors, especially those with a strong consumer appeal (see Dyer, 1998), are influential, Diagram 1.3 shows that influences come from many sources. Davies (1997) also estimates that American commuters can be exposed to up 13,000 advertising messages per day, most of which are subconsciously screened out by consumers as 'noise'. This of particular relevance for those attempting to analyse these influences to ascertain which sources are the most powerful and influential.

1.4 Celebrity Status: actors as marketing tools and consumption role models.

This section further explores the phenomena of celebrity, particularly when celebrities are associated with brands. This method of association has been a long-established pairing to benefit the celebrity-actor, the product promoters and filmmakers (Galician, 2005). Lawrence (2009: 108) outlines marketers have the 'celebrity endorsement' as a 'key weapon in their arsenal' for selling films and other products. Lawrence (2009: 5) contends that "Celebrity has soaked into every part of our culture" and that knowingly or unknowingly they influence individuals to a greater not lesser extent than most would care to admit or acknowledge. There will be an assessment of the extent and sources of influence. The E-K-B Model (above) highlights the many ways in which individuals are influenced, it also draws on subjective factors such as previous experiences and wider, social factors such as culture and reference groups (Bandura, 2002; Cameron, 2004). This model also acknowledges other factors such as the role of exposure, attention and reception of brands and actors alike. An investigation of celebrity-actors is in terms of their usefulness as communication tools. A key theme here is the term celebrity and how it is used. Not all actors are celebrities, many remain unknown to the consumers. Consumers make this distinction, the influences that elevate a person from actor to celebrity-actor do not follow one determined path and often rely upon a 'trade in gossip'. McDonnell (2014: 43) writing on the 'celebrity industry' states that the 'gossip' supplied by the magazines and websites is influential due to:

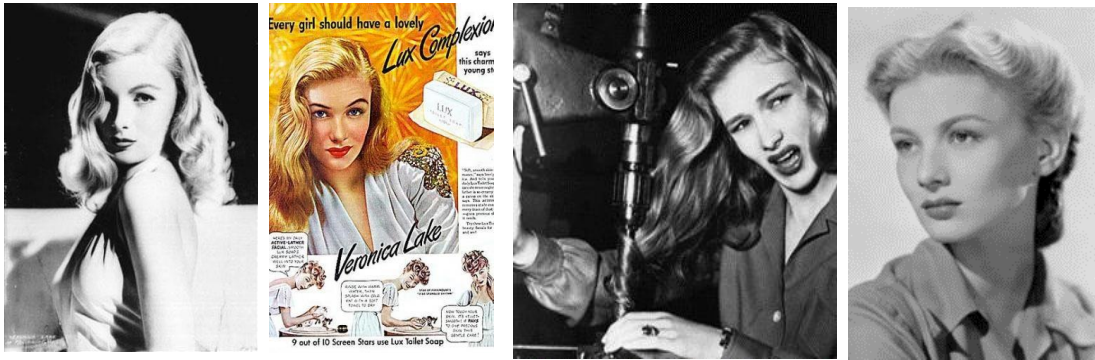
The pleasure that audiences associate with celebrity gossip magazines, much like that of the soap opera or romance.

She continues that the appeal and pleasure are a guilty one and 'highly feminized' with the description of celebrity gossip as being an addictive 'Venus fly trap' of pop culture (McDonnell, 2014: 43). Osgerby (2001) also charts this theme with the influence on middle class American men with the 1933 release of *Esquire* magazine and the 1953 launch of *Playboy* magazine. While McDonnell follows the line of feminine influencers, Osgerby reflects on masculine consumption and the role of popular culture upon said consumption. (See also Antony Slide and his history of the role of fans and gossip consumption in *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine: A History of Star Makers, Fabricators & Gossip Mongers*, 2010). To illustrate this point Redmond and Holmes (2007: 8) state that "*Some celebrities are primarily defined by their circulation in celebrity magazines*". This key theme of celebrity status and visibility is resumed below.

An early example of the impact of celebrity influence and imitation is that of former film star Veronica Lake (1922-1973). Lake's trademark hairstyle, with her fringe covering one eye, was widely copied including by many factory machine operators, which resulted in many industrial accidents (Lenburg, 2001). A 1943 Paramount newsreel 'Safety Styles' shows Lake with upswept hair in a bid to improve factory safety after requests from the War Womanpower Commission (Lenburg, 2001). The examples with Veronica Lake not only highlight the influence that celebrities can have on viewers/consumers but also that this type of celebrity-actor influence is not a new phenomenon. This familiarity, and indeed copying/mimicry, serves to highlight the parasocial interaction that exists between consumers and celebrities whereby the former know (or believe they know) a great deal about the actor and his/her consumption preferences, while the actor is oblivious to the individual fan (Horton and Wohl, 1956; Ashe and McCutcheon, 2001). Hollywood films exerted influence at an everyday level, these films have established actors as role models in the USA and beyond. In the UK, audiences were, according to Hollows and Jancovich (1995: 181):

rejecting British films as boring, these audiences found Hollywood offered sexy and strong heroes and heroines in contrast to the puritanism of the British cinema.

Picture Illustration 1.8. **Veronica Lake (1922–1973).**



Top left, Veronica Lake, Studio promotional shot with her 'trademark look' and right, in a 'celebrity-centred' Lux soap campaign⁴. Bottom left, Life magazine (1943) featured Lake showing the dangers of loose hair and machinery. Bottom right, Lake sporting the safer 'Victory Roll' style.

Maltby cites Hollywood's impact on British audiences as to why so many of their children "were named Shirley, Marlene, Norma or Gary during the 1930s" (2003: 127). Maltby continues stating that Hollywood also shaped "manners, customs and fashions" (2003: 127). From a marketing communications standpoint this illustrates the huge degree of influence that Hollywood can and does exert on consumption decisions. Hollows and Jancovich (1995) write that in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s Hollywood presented a 'vision of a vibrant, classless, exciting society'; actors by default became attractive icons for consumers to imitate, not only their hairstyles and how they speak, but also on what people buy. Denzin (2012: 339) expands on this stating that:

We inhabit a second-hand world, one already mediated by cinema, television and the other apparatus of the postmodern society. I thicken this argument by demonstrating how popular media representations shape and define situated cultural identities.

Hollywood offered films providing cultural identity representations portraying adventure, glamour and escapism; films to appeal a wide consumer audience. This highlights the importance of understanding the market for both films and celebrities. In Hollywood, this developed into a business model that for a long time worked well for the studios system who

⁴ To reinforce the marketing connections with the 'glamorous' world of actors Lux also sponsored the popular 'Lux Video Theatre' which ran throughout the 1950s on NBC and CBS channels (Becker, 2008).

produced hundreds of movies in their 'film factories' (Wasko, 2003). This also demonstrates how from the 1890s, the money paid for product placements helped to off-set the film production costs. Couldry (2000: 70) states that there is a long history "...of cross-marketed merchandise-saturated Hollywood blockbuster films". In the table below are examples of this long history.

Table 1.1. Examples of Earlier Film Product Placements.

Film.	Year.	Product.
<i>Defile du 8th Battalion.</i>	1896	Sunlight Soap.
<i>The Family Jar.</i>	1913	Beech Nut Bacon.
<i>Wings.</i>	1927	Hersey's Chocolate.
<i>Mr Smith Goes to Washington.</i>	1939	Wrigley's Chewing Gum.
<i>It's a Wonderful Life.</i>	1946	National Geographic. Coke Cola.
<i>Roman Holiday.</i>	1953	Vespa Scooters.
<i>Dr No.</i>	1962	Smirnoff vodka.
<i>Mean Streets</i>	1976	Pepsi Cola.
<i>E.T.</i>	1982	Reese's Pieces.
<i>Jurassic Park.</i>	1993	Nikon Cameras.
<i>Hot Fuzz</i>	2007	Cornetto ice creams.

This section investigates the importance of the celebrity-actor with a focus on how their film, media and marketing exposure contrasts with non-acting celebrities and non-celebrity actors. Celebrities fascinate many people (Cashmore, 2006). For some this fascination can lead to the description of being "obsessed and/or hysterical fanatics" (Jenson, 1992: 9). These fans and their 'less obsessed' counterparts are attractive targets for film studios and marketers alike, making film consumption and product placement potentially more effective. The level of interest in actors is supported, encouraged and manipulated off screen with an industry devoted to documenting, photographing and publishing every detail of 'celebrity life' (Fairclough, 2012). This coverage can take the form of what film, play, song, book et cetera, celebrities have been involved with, and with no less degree of interest details of seemingly mundane matters concerning their diets, clothing, hair and

personal lives. For marketers wishing to promote products these seemingly 'mundane' matters can be of importance and assistance in the production and consumption of news/gossip and the celebrity (Osgerby, 2001; McDonnell, 2014). Illustrating this Reisz (2008: 42) writes:

The world is awash with information about celebrities' tableware and underwear, cellulite, tattoos, soft furnishings and fashion faux pas.

A typical front page, from one of many magazines dedicated to chronicling the lives of the 'rich and famous', runs "*Angelina finds mystery text messages on Brad's phone*" (Closer, 2014). The internet is a major conduit for celebrity 'news', these same publications also attract advertisers and supply a segment of the film watching audience with 'news' about the 'stars', their films and the brands they are associated with. Intermingled with this stream of news/gossip are references to products the celebrities are wearing/using, raising brand awareness, brand values and celebrity brand associations (Pringle, 2004). Film star Brad Pitt (below) is no exception to this. Following a public separation in 2016 both Pitt and Jolie were keen to preserve their public personas, with the former stated as saving his public image with one interview with GQ magazine/website (Youngs, 2017).

Picture Illustration 1.9. **Brad Pitt featured in GQ magazine** (May 2017).



In addition to discussing 'openly' his divorce, his drinking habits and film star life, Pitt poses in over 30 portraits promoting branded products. Pitt and the brand producers will hope that these Celebrity Brand Associations will benefit both parties. This article lists over ninety brands and films.

This coverage shapes the profiles, the brand values and associations of actors/celebrities, although according to Clifford and Levine (2006) not always for the better. Former Fleet Street editor Morgan observes, "We are living in a celebrity obsessed age" (2008: 254) where there is a 'huge self-perpetuating market for celebrity news and gossip'. Redmond and Holmes (2007: 5: *their italics*) add the salient point on the importance of celebrity profiles stating "The 'value of visibility' has become a commodity *in its own right*". The higher the celebrity's visibility then, potentially the more commercially valuable the celebrity becomes (Turner, 2004). This also illustrates the nature of the relationship and interdependency of actors, the media, studios and marketers, as outlined by Stock (2004). Dyer (1998) discusses the key factors and explores categories of the actor-audience relationship. Some fans belong to a group who, as Jensen (1992: 9) writes, are "seen to have psychological symptoms of a presumed social dysfunction". These fans who take their act of 'celebrity worship', as Ashe and McCutcheon (2001) term it, as an extreme form of parasocial interaction. McCutcheon, Ashe, Houran and Maltby in '*A Cognitive Profile of Individuals Who Tend to Worship Celebrities*' (2003) outline in detail the psychology behind such inclination for individuals to become obsessive about actors. To illustrate this type of obsession and its potential outcomes Clout claims that some individuals have incurred debts, a "worrying trend called the 'Lohan effect'":

Young women are accumulating debts of up to £25,000 trying to look like celebrities such as the actress Lindsey Lohan (Clout, 2007: 3).

These seemingly malleable individuals are potentially an easy target for makers of films and products alike, some of them risk bankruptcy with unsustainable spending behaviour in order to imitate their screen icons. An interviewee from the stage three of this research commented on this issue, saying:

I think it bad for the youngsters. They look up to celebrities and then they want to buy all this expensive stuff.

See also Pinkowitz in her paper titled "*The rabid fans that take Twilight much too seriously*" (2011)). This type of imitation behaviour highlights the occurrence of status anxiety (de Botton, 2005a; Gill, 2015) among

consumers who regard the possession of specific goods as a means to define themselves.

Such behaviour can appear unusual and Vermorel and Vermorel (1992) study some extreme cases. The Vermorels' work shows a depth of 'fandom' that is taken to an excessive degree; although they also state that, much fandom is passive. While being aware of the extreme forms of fandom, it is the less intense relationships that are the focus here. It is useful therefore to consider the audience types and their motivations. Dyer's categories (1998: 18) of emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and projection help to frame these consumer-actor connections and the different degrees of the parasocial relationship (Horton and Wohl, 1956). From Dyer's (1998: 18) categories, emotional affinity is "the weakest category and 'probably' the most common". This often takes the form of a feeling of loose attachment to a particular individual whereas *self-identification* will see the audience member place themselves in the actors' role to the extent that they 'feel as if it were themselves on the screen in that situation feeling those emotions' (Dyer, 1998: 18). This could be considered as viewer conditioning who can be regarded as 'passive voyeurism' (Denzin, 1995: 43). This strength of emotion is a key feature in this research as it demonstrates how influential film and actors can be on viewers consumption behaviour and, furthermore, how marketers can use these parasocial relationships to promote and sell products. Jensen (1992) terms these bonds as consumers attempting to live vicariously via the lives of the famous.

The *imitation* of celebrity-actors takes the involvement beyond the film consumption whereby the actor becomes a 'some sort of model for the audience' (Dyer, 1998): see also Storey (2006) on social emulation and copying. Crompton (2008: 2) observes that with imitation:

...we admire the best-dressed celebs because we subconsciously think that they might enrich us by association.

This alone would trigger some purchase decisions (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2016). Maltby (2003: 52) adds that:

...audiences want stars who, with a little luck they could become. They want an ideal that they could emulate.

Copying their consumption and styles is a feature in this marketing process.

Dyers' category of 'projection' (1998) is most common among younger viewers. This can motivate marketers to target younger audience segments with films containing products for these consumers who may be susceptible to having their lives supposedly enriched by celebrity-associated brands. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007: 322) propose that "stars give brands identity and sell more product". Tehrani (June 2013) adds:

Celebrity endorsements not only make products more visible; they make them more desirable.

This shortens the time needed to build brand values with the actor/celebrity bringing their own brand values projected on to the product (Solomon et al, 2016). Consumer's celebrity interest/fascination/obsession is a major cornerstone of both the filmmaking and marketing industries, centred on the all-important audience-actor relationship. This consumer fascination with celebrities also combines perfectly with people's desire for narrative stories, in this context films that "...feed our insatiable appetite for story and sensation" (Phillips, 2007: 3). Speidel (2007: 61) reinforces this point stating:

The principal experience of cinema is the experience of narrative film.

Film actors are the focus of attention, they function as the vehicles of the story telling and as the vessels for the audience's hopes, aspirations and dreams (Smith, 1995; Maltby 2003). Indeed, Redmond and Holmes (2007: 11) state that stars and celebrities "'house' our dreams and fuel our fantasies" such is their influence. Film audience members will look to stars for not only escapism but also for cues about what to wear, how to behave and how to emulate them (Stock, 2004); a process that Smith (1995: 88) terms 'effective mimicry'. Pringle (2004: 6) writes that the influence of films and actors is not to be underrated, he states that they:

...to a large degree orientates a significant section of global society, who take their social, behaviour and presentational lead from these Hollywood stars.

This reinforces celebrity-actors' selling/promotional role (see de Botton (2001) below).

Audience relationships are often complex (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). Film sales rely on the celebrity-actors for attracting an audience. King terms this their "star power" (2002: 147). Kamis (1989: 277) states that marketers are attracted to star power as:

...star power works because celebrities embody cultural meanings, they symbolize important categories such as status and social class.

Kamis reinforces the idea that selecting the right actor for a role can save both time and money when it comes to selling films and products. It is this same 'star power' that appeals to marketers who look to spend money on placements; rather than one of the many alternatives available to them (Donaton, 2005). For example, and in direct relation to this research, so great was the marketing appeal of *Quantum of Solace* (2008) (the film used for the first stage study in this research) that it attracted £50m in placement deals (*Campaign*, October 2008). This sum would pay for many alternative marketing campaigns if product placement did not look like an attractive promotional tool. This is valuable pre-release income for the studio and helps finance production costs. Galician (2004) states that the more valued the actors in a film, the more likely, that the placement will proceed. Film studios have a simple business model, with a reliance on sales and selling, these mainstream films therefore always have a financial focus (Galician, 2004; Lehu, 2009).

1.5 Actors and their role as brand ambassadors.

Actors have long been in demand by marketers as brands endorsers; indeed, pre-cinema as the Pears soap promotion featuring actor Lillie Langtry (1853–1929) shows below. This section illustrates how the pairing of celebrity-actors to brands is a well-established marketing tool, which relies on the celebrity-brand associations to promote products and increase sales, and is used in films with product placement. With Langtry, the Pears tagline reads 'For hands and complexion I prefer it to any other', signed 'Lillie Langtry' (re-printed in *Advertising Age*, July 1999: 24). A typical

contemporary example of promotional practice follows a similar approach. A TAGHeuer campaign shows actors Uma Thurman and Brad Pitt with the tagline 'What are you made of?'

Picture Illustration 1.10. **Celebrity Brand Associations: Langtry, Thurman and Pitt.**



The 1880s celebrity-associated Pears Soap campaign, left. Right, TAGHeuer following Langtry's example, less wordy but sharing a similar aspirational marketing communications message.

The perception of an actor's image and values is what this type of marketing campaign trades on: this is then associated as the brand values to the products helping to establish the products' own brand personality. The perception of the actor by the audience is the key issue. Stam and Miller make a crucial point that for brand values "personality is the product" (2000: 51). Marketers know that brands can be enhanced with careful management, Till (1998: 405) states:

...increased value can be derived from a celebrity endorser from utilizing the celebrity across the marketing mix.

This gives the brand and the actor more appeal to the parties involved. Hollows and Jancovich (1995: 81) underline the reason for this actor/celebrity/star influence, they state their appeal is "a product of the particular meaning which that star signifies". King (2002: 145) writes that actors "bring particular associations of their own to a part". Tellis (1998: 197) echoes this point for films and marketing, writing:

A critical issue in choosing celebrity endorsers is matching them to the target audience. Advertisers need to consider the unique meaning encoded in a celebrity's image.

Hollows and Jancovich (1995: 21) comment that:

Stars are mass produced like Yale locks whose differences can be measured in fractions of millimetres.

This reinforces the challenge when casting for films and choosing the most suitable brand/product representative. An earlier Hollywood example is that of celebrity-actor Mary Pickford, she was adept at promoting herself and her own products (Whitfield, 1997). Hutchinson (2016) describes Pickford as 'America's first screen megastar'. The sales of her products relied on the celebrity-brand associations (Scherer, (2015), using the reflected glory, or values associated with an individual projected onto a product, and then onto the consumer by association (Atkins, 2009). Veblen (1994) articulates the concept of reflected glory and associations with the concept that 'what you have is what you are'. Lehu (2009) refers to this as 'status transfer', a process that works both ways with actors and brands; using a car to project personality is a common device.

Picture Illustration 1.12. Products to define the character.



Uncle Buck's dilapidated Mercury Grand Marquis (left), John Candy as the eponymous *Uncle Buck* (1989) (screen shots).

For example, John Candy's eponymous role in *Uncle Buck* (Hughes, 1989), sees character drives a 'wreck' of a car to highlight Buck's disreputable personality; Buck's character flaws are a key theme of the film. Conversely the same status transfer, and associations are used positively to help define a successful character, for example Owen Wilson's character in *Little Fockers* (RF5) (Weitz, 2010) driving a Tesla, or Bond driving an Aston Martin.

Film producers require the 'right' products/brands to give their actors the 'right look and appeal' (Stock, 2004). In *Casino Royale* (2006), criticism was made that Bond was driving 'an ordinary Ford' (Wallop, 2006), being regarded by some as not suitable for Bond. As the film develops Bond leaves the Ford, a product placed in the script as a hire car, and is soon driving an Aston Martin. The character's image ostensibly restored with the placed product used as a narrative point within the film; this met with audience expectations of what Bond 'should be' driving. Defending the 'lavish list of luxury goods', in *Casino Royale* against claims of 'overt commercialism', Daniel Craig (BBCi, April 2006) stated:

I don't think the plethora of placed products detracts from the action.
I don't think it really infringes. After all, it's what Bond is all about.

Shown with both Buck and Bond are character defining products used in order to make them appear distinctive, Pringle (2004: 117) states:

The celebrity is using the iconography of the brand to build his or her own distinctive identity.

Picture Illustration 1.13. **Bond Associated Products.**



Casino Royale (2006), featuring Sony Vaio laptop and Land Rovers. 'Back-end' marketing images for Omega (left), a £2,000 Ocean Master complete with *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) watch face logo (left) and a £4,320 Spectre model 'Seamaster/007' watch on the right.

Before Bond, Bruzzi, in *Undressing Cinema* (1997), discusses the collision of placement interests for Studio income and placement profile in the 1950s.

Bruzzi catalogues the connections between actors and designers, and how enthusiastic filmmakers are for brand involvement. Bruzzi (1997: i) states:

Clothes are not mere accessories, but are key elements in the construction of cinematic identities.

This correlates with the comments on image above and supported by how the actor appeared on screen and how the products, in this case clothes, defined them. Audrey Hepburn too had garments made for her screen appearances by fashion house de Givenchy (Stock, 2004). Photographs from the film and set used for marketing for Hepburn, the film and the de Givenchy brand. Shown below is Hepburn's 'Sabrina' (Wilder, 1954).

Picture Illustration 1.14. *Sabrina* (1954).



Hepburn and Hubert de Givenchy (left) enjoyed a long association. A screenshot from *Sabrina* with co-star Humphrey Bogart and the de Givenchy dress promoting Hepburn's image of glamour and sophistication.

If the actor's 'meaning' though is polysemic, this can in turn can result in unwelcome confusion about their own brand values (Nelmes, 2004). The vast number of actors means a huge potential pool for filmmakers to choose from (King, 2002). The 'fractions of difference' Tellis (1998) references illustrate the highly competitive nature of the film industry and the difficulties in getting the 'right actor' (Nelmes, 2004). Clooney may be the right person to promote Martini or Nespresso, but he would not be suitable for some other brands. Solomon et al, refer to this as "source attractiveness" (2006: 176). Sanders and Shari (1995: 32) write:

...while celebrities must be recognizable and likable, it is imperative that their personality match the intended audience.

The key, as Clifford and Levine (2005) note, is keeping the celebrity noticed *and* appealing.

The critical point that encompasses an actor's appeal is their persona as perceived by the public (Austin and Barker, 2003), this being more important than their 'true real self'. As the volume of coverage for celebrity news/gossip is huge, this gives almost countless opportunities for stories and pictures to 'be fed to news hungry' outlets (Morgan, 2008: 38). In the USA 'Q Scores' track the popularity of celebrities (Pringle, 2004: 6). The level of influence these stars have on the consumer's consumption is of importance for studios and for marketers, not least on how they can act as role models, opinion leaders and as opinion formers (Dyer, 1989; King, 2002). For example, the credibility trait, one often used in marketing communications (Solomon, Marshall and Stuart 2009), are those summarized as "statements made by a credible source" which "can be trusted" (O'Keefe, 2002: 150). Tom Hanks' in *The Simpson's Movie* (Silverman, 2007) highlights this with 'a message from the Environmental Protection Agency' saying:

The US government doesn't have much credibility, so they thought they'd borrow some of mine.

Listed by a *Forbes* magazine poll, Hanks was rated as the most trusted person in America (*Forbes*, September 2012). The list for actors is in part at least based on characters they have played; in Hanks' case this includes his Oscar winning roles in both *Forrest Gump* (Zemeckis, 1994) and *Philadelphia* (Demme, 1993). These polls can appear trivial but, critically, they give an indication to filmmakers and brand managers which celebrities have 'high stock' and those with waning appeal.

Picture illustration 1.15. ***The Simpson's Movie (2007).***



The animated Tom Hanks, America's most trusted public figure.

The notion of liking or being able to affiliate, empathise or identify with an actor or character is central to both films and marketing promotions (Brierley, 2002). Liking can positively influence as audience members:

Will often believe that they know that person even though they have never met (Stock, Radio 4, 2004).

This familiarity is often combined with an intense film watching experience which can be enough to bring out feelings of happiness, despair or joy (Lewis, 1992). Most film consumers can recall films that have affected them emotionally (Stock, 2004). Stock (2004, no page) calls this the 'fantasy of escape'; audience escapism with actor identification being a key draw for consuming films (Lewis, 1992). Solomon et al, (2006: 146), write that this process of identification occurs:

...when attitudes are formed in order for the consumer to be similar to another person or group. Advertising that depicts the social consequences of choosing some products over others is relying on the tendency of consumers to imitate the behaviour of desirable models.

If presented in this manner, the theory suggests that the use of celebrity-actors and placed products, sales will follow (Galician, 2004; Donaton, 2005). This is not a guarantee of marketing success, anyone believing it is a 'magic formula' would be disappointed (Lehu, 2009; Kotler et al, 2016). Pringle (2004: 5) states:

...in an inexorable process the public votes with its wallet for the actors and actresses whom they favour as they [the actors] climb over each other in the popularity stakes.

Dyer (1998: 6) makes the assertion that stars are “vessels of men’s and women’s fantasies and barometers of changing fashions” fuelled by the public’s interest. The growth of celebrity influence is not of course confined to film. Osgerby also notes its influence elsewhere including in the market for magazines aimed at young female readers where the shift from a focus on ‘romance’ to celebrity with a theme of hard selling of ‘fashion and beauty features’ (2004). This illustrates the spread and influence of celebrity, and its commercial use to engage and entertain a market audience. Celebrity is also a key point with relation to both film and the film marketing communication processes. Sharon Stone is a good illustrative example of a celebrity-actor, their public image, and how its use to attract an audience:

Stone appears to be renegotiating her image: one minute she’s a dangerous blonde, the next she’s a politically concerned vision in tweed. Stone basks in the praise for her Oscar-caliber Casino performance and buffs up her credentials as a serious artiste (Sanders and Shari 1996: 156).

Austin and Barker (2003: 57) add that:

...these observations set the real Sharon Stone at an existential distance from her persona [they continue] for the reader, of course, Stone’s ‘real self’ is only what is available in the media.

Many audience members will assume that the actor and characters they portray are, if not actually the same person, then they share personality traits; “...readers may wonder how different is she from Tramell” (Stone’s character in *Basic Instinct* (Verhoeven, 1992)) Austin and Barker (2003: 57). The actor’s persona and image are interwoven, and actors can benefit from this, Maltby (1995: 391) writes:

...the commercial aesthetic places a higher priority on the star’s recognisable performance as himself or herself.

Which actors play a role is important to filmmakers, marketers and to audiences alike, although a celebrity-actor is not always required for film or marketing success as reviewed below. With many films, the audience will have expectations

of which actors play which roles, what a character will be like depending on which actor plays him or her.

1.6 The public image of actors, audience perceptions and managing audience expectations.

Director Stephen Frears provides an example of audience perceptions and expectations of actors (Stock 2004). Frears directed *Dirty Pretty Things* (2002) which starred, among others, Audrey Tautou. Frears' film, which follows the lives of immigrant workers in London, is a bleak tale; Frears intended the movie to have a desolate ending in keeping with the film's tone. In the meantime, Tautou had played the lead role of Amélie in the upbeat, optimistic film *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001). On seeing *Amélie*, and gauging the positive public reaction to Tautou's character, Frears changed the ending of his film to leave it with a glimmer of hope (Stock, 2004). Frears' decision was informed influenced by his experience with his earlier film *Mary Reilly* (1996). Frears' leading actor in this was Julia Roberts, made famous with her role in *Pretty Woman* (Marshall, 1990). In *Mary Reilly* Frears had Roberts play a downbeat character in this dark Victorian era set film. Although *Mary Reilly* drew critical acclaim it was not well received by audiences who regarded Roberts as being miscast (Stock, 2004). Frears' reaction to accommodating audience expectations was to observe:

Who's to say they're not right? (Stock, Radio 4, 2004).

The example shows how directors regard the audience, his customers, and their most important critics. This insight not only illustrates the views of a major director but also underlines in commercial terms the importance of the film's consumers.

Picture Illustration 1.16.
Audrey Tautou with a Chanel No.5 brand association.



Portrayed alternatively as radiant and bleak, and right with Chanel No.5.

Filmmakers and marketers are always concerned, and occasionally frustrated, by a star's reputation and behaviour (Dyer and MacDonald, 1998; Jobber, 2008). An older example of this is seen Robert Mitchum and his 'bad boy' image in Blackman (2004). More commonly is the issue of an actor's behaviour and the impact it can have on their brand/image (Austin and Barker, 2003). Stars are often shown in an unflattering light, regularly 'splashed' in a manner that can either enhance or diminish the actor's image; which the latter would by default damage their appeal and commercial value (Solomon et al, 2016).

Picture Illustration 1.17. **Media coverage of 'Stars at play'.**



Acting heavyweight Jack Nicholson goes for a swim. Photographed in the South of France, syndicated worldwide (*The Mirror*, 12 July 2009).

Negative or adverse publicity can help some individuals attract more attention, or even become 'celebrities' as a result of such exposure (Pringle, 2004). With the problems of image consider the conviction for possessing drugs of Robert Downey Jr (BBC 15 March 2001); with more convictions Downey is still though landing lead roles. Many of Downey's films, especially with the *Iron Man* character, are heavily populated with placed products, this makes his image, 'redemption and rehabilitation' as a mainstream celebrity-actor all the more relevant for this thesis. It could be considered that Downey, like Mitchum before him, has benefitted and his persona given an 'edge' by his publicized personal life. This again illustrates how marketing communications and celebrity status is changeable, and at the heart of selling films and products.

Pairing actors, films and products is not straightforward. The combination of Tom Cruise and Ray-Ban sunglasses in *Top Gun* (Scott, 1986) resulted in high-flying sales. Used earlier, this pairing had appeared in *Risky Business* (Brickman, 1983) which, according to Belch and Belch (2003), saw annual Ray-Ban sales rise from 18,000 to 360,000 units. The poster campaign for *Risky Business* also promoted the product as it featured a picture of Cruise wearing the soon-to-be-coveted product.

Picture Illustration 1.18.

Celebrity Brand Associations: Ray-Ban at the Movies.



Risky Business (Brinkman, 1983), and *Men in Black* (Sonnenfeld, 1997). A still from *Top Gun* (1986), right. The font used for the *Risky Business* mimics the Ray-Ban font, reinforcing the brand connection.

An often-cited example of placement success, this was an effective promotion that others endeavour to emulate (Storey, 2006). Taking actor endorsements and film placements as a guarantee of success would be a mistake, unlike with the Cruise/Ray-Ban pairing many placements pass the audience unnoticed (Lehu, 2009; Kavallieratou, 2013). Presenting products in the 'right way' is essential for success for the pairings of stars and products (Solomon et al, 2016). While placements can appear coincidental, marketers know that celebrity brand associations can yield excellent results, as the Ray-Ban example shows.

Watchmaker Raymond Weil highlights the seriousness with which these marketing promotions are taken when they sued actor Charlize Theron for breach of contract after she was photographed wearing a Dior brand watch; Theron was contracted at the time to wear Dior jewellery, but to wear Weil watches. Weil claimed she was in breach of contract (*USA Today*, June 2007). The distribution of images of Theron wearing the 'wrong watch' was global. Weil argued that these images undermined their marketing communications, confused customers and diluted their expensively crafted brand values. This highlights the significance placed upon celebrity marketing ambassadors, such as Theron.

Picture Illustration 1.19.
Confused Celebrity Brand Associations: Weil vs. Theron.



Theron's Weil promotion (left), and in court with the correct watch.

Marchant highlights the image, celebrity and branding issue, noting that traditionally magazine pictures:

Seem to build a bond with their viewers while at the same time retain a gulf of unattainability (in Reisz, 2008: 42).

This illustrates why product producers take this media seriously as conduits for projecting a message to an audience. Having a living brand personification, undermine promotional efforts will be unwelcome. This relationship brokered by the media is more than a mere trade in gossip. The audience crave the diversion provided by watching films and reading about the lives of celebrities, completing Stock's 'relationship of interdependency' (2004). A highly paid celebrity-actor receives more attention from an audience *because* they have been paid so much; this is regarded as an indication of their 'star' status (Pringle, 2004; Solomon et al, 2016). On occasion 'stars' have an additional function for producers, King (2002: 147) states:

A star's participation in a project can induce ambivalent executives to green-light it. With a superstar in tow they are willing to tackle risky projects.

Conversely Lehu (2009: 38) writes:

A film's budget has never been a guarantee of success, but paradoxically, its breadth reassures potential investors. Hence the fundamental (sometimes indispensable) role of placement contracts, which can thus contribute to the financing of the project.

This in turns makes an involvement with a film more attractive to product managers, the flawed rationale being that the more expensive the film the less likely it is to fail (Lehu, 2009). As 'sales staff', celebrity-actors are powerful drivers and can give consumers an impression of individuality. Mass copying of this 'individuality', as with the consumers of Ray-Ban sunglasses and TAGHeuer watches, is the promoters' hope. There are, however, exceptions to this. Films with a cast of 'unknowns', such as *American Pie* (Weitz and Weitz, 1999) or *High School Musical* (Ortega, 2006), have enjoyed great commercial success (Kochberg, 2007). The advantage that these films have is cheaper actors with lower costs; therefore, lower sales at the box office can still result in profit. To this effect Dyer (1998: 11) maintains "...stars are neither necessary nor sufficient for success". These factors make studios and marketers wary when taking commercial decisions, with the actor's appeal and brand

associations as a central issue to this process and to this research (Jobber, 2008). Fame, image and persona are volatile commodities, and subject to a contrary audience (Pringle, 2004).

1.7 Product Placement and Competitive Advantage: James Bond, film product placement promotor since 1962.

What follows here is a critical assessment of the practice of product placement with reference to the Bond franchise and its long association with brands and products. For achievement by filmmakers and marketers with product placements for successful marketing communication, the Bond films are a point of reference. Bond is described by Higson (Radio 4, 2008) as:

The ultimate fantasy character and a strong brand in his own right.

Product placements heavily populate Bond films, and were the examples most often cited by research interviewees; a typical comment being: 'You mean like James Bond and Aston Martin?' The inclusion of such placements often attracts negative comments; the suggestion is that they are detrimental to the film in which they appear. With *Casino Royale* (2006), Daniel Craig (BBC, April 2006) defended the use of placements:

The fact is we couldn't afford to make the movie unless we had that product placement. It's there and we're very grateful that it's there because otherwise the film couldn't be what it is.

This highlights the dependency relationship between involved parties, and why product placement can be seen as a positive factor in filmmaking.

Bond is a benchmark as a long running and continuing placement-rich franchise. To illustrate this point the first Bond film, *Doctor No* (Young, 1962) carried placements notably for Rolex watches, Smirnoff vodka and Red Stripe beer (Galician, 2004). Writer Ian Fleming (1958) used brands in his novels to define Bond's character, with the references to Rolex and Aston Martin. This again demonstrates that the actor/brand relationship with one defining the other. This pairing of characters and brands relates to what Spigel and Mann (1992: 128) call the "panic for status". The felt

need for status is a key driver for marketers who will promote such conspicuous consumption as a way for consumers to demonstrate that they have status via their possessions (Solomon et al, 2016). Eco (1984), discussing Bond, highlights his cultural symbolism, also mentions how Bond stories follow a well-marked path with predictable plots and outcomes.

This also echoes Maltby's (2003) earlier point concerning 'easily consumed/pre-digested' film fare making consumption easier for audiences. The audiences, according to Eco and Maltby, clearly have expectations when it comes to plots and characters which can be a useful for filmmakers and marketers, but also potentially problematic. If Craig's character had failed, the franchise may have failed with it. Craig (BBC, Radio 4, November 2006) said of the character:

There have been a lot of incarnations of Bond, and the role has changed a lot. I just wanted to make sure that we were seeing a character go through some change within the movie.

The decisive test from a commercial point of view with these changes and character reincarnations is with the sales. Discussion over who plays the lead role should not appear trivial as it is an important part of the Bond brand and marketing appeal; if the audience is not receptive to the actor in the role they are playing then they are unlikely to be receptive to the film or any placed products. Consumers prefer the purchasing process made as easy as possible while at times appearing to be complicit in their own manipulation (Dawson, Findlay and Sparks, 2008; Varley and Rafiq, 2013). Examples of how Bond is used in retail marketing settings are shown below (Picture Illustration 1.20, p47). It is clear from how Bond is presented that the projected images associated with him are focused firmly on the character portrayed being read as a man-of-action, even with diet cola promotions. Previous research from Srinivasan and Hanssens (2009), suggests that placements supported with coordinated advertising have more impact with consumers; results are greater if they involve a celebrity-actor.

The reach and influence of Bond goes well beyond promoting cars or vodka, usually Aston Martin and Smirnoff but on occasion BMW and

Finlandia. The range of products that the Bond name is lent to, is highlighted by the examples of retail promotions given above. Heineken maintained the Bond link with the following Bond films, *Skyfall* (Mendes, 2012) and *Spectre* (Mendes, 2015). Malhotra, Jain and Lagakos (1982) claim that having too many placements in one film can create information overload for viewers and decrease the effect of their efficacy on consumers while conversely Karniouchina et al (2011) claim that placements in a film can actively attract other brands to the project have a greater impact on viewers. Some observers (BBC, 22 April 2006) have criticised Bond for being too commercial, in this case the commercial aspect was also satirized by cartoonist Pugh in the Daily Mail (November 2012).

Picture Illustration 1.20. **Bond related merchandise.**



Top, Swatch with a back catalogue of watches based around 'Bond Villains'. A trolley panel for *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) and Coke Zero. Bottom, Heineken highlighting the product's Bond/*Spectre* link.



Left, Pugh's take on *Skyfall* (2012, Mendes) which drew detractors from both press and public for what some regarded as blatant product placement commercialisation in the film (Pugh, 2012). Donald Pleasance as Blofeld, *You Only Live Twice* (Gilbert, 1967).

Film audiences often prefer predictability when it comes to what they spend their time and money on (Galician, 2004). This predictability relates to not just seeing Bond with fast cars or expensive watches, but more widely to what Kellner (2002: 32) observes about films as part of contemporary culture; namely that:

...the commodities of the culture industries exhibited the same features as other products of mass production: commodification, standardisation and massification.

This results in predictable 'happy endings' in many films, thereby fulfilling audience expectations. Film conventions are also understood, and cases demanded by audiences (Arijon, 1991). Filmmakers who depart from audience expectations do so at their own risk. Maltby (2003: 79) comments:

The audience demand for predictability meshes harmoniously with the economic advantages to the industry that come with the standardization of production.

Maltby (2003: 81) contends that many like films that are formulaic, predictable and ritualised and that 'sequels are remakes as audiences like to see the same movies over again'. While this appears condescending towards the audience, Monaco (2000: 358) concurs commenting:

sequel-mania remains the watchword, at least of the American film industry, and every producer's dream is a 'franchise' film, one whose storyline, and characters lend themselves to a series.

The commercial attractiveness to studios and marketers of these predictable films, termed as 'Midas formula films' with 'Proppian plot lines' (Kochberg, 2007: 52), is clear, and this includes the Bond films⁵. Maltby (2003: 258) states that studios are happy to fill this commercially driven demand for predictability, he writes:

the higher the budget the more likely it [the film] will have recognisable elements.

This will result in giving the audience a film with a more recognisable and an 'easier to digest' format (Maltby, 2003). Having familiar plot lines, plot

⁵ Del Vecchio et al, 2018, believe they have uncovered by use of plot algorithms, the formula for commercially successful films. These are summarised by the 'Man in a Hole' and redemption format.

devices, actors and settings will aid this. The easier a film is to 'digest' Maltby (2003) argues, the more likely it is to succeed, in turn making it more attractive for product placements. Metz (1974: 47) makes the point that individuals:

...understand a film not because we have a knowledge of its system, rather we achieve an understanding of its system.

If, however, it is this predictability is what audiences demand, then it would be a financial risk for a studio to deviate from this.

For their revenue raising potential, Monaco (2000) views re-makes and sequels as significant to the studios (Maltby, 2003; Edwards-Behi, 2013). Hollows and Jancovich (1995: 24), take a more cynical approach with audiences when they state:

the masses are happy with such formulaic films because they are not only satisfied with shoddy mass produced goods, but also feel more comfortable with them due to the fact that they are thoroughly predictable and, therefore, easier to consume.

Hollows and Jancovich appear to be dismissive of the enjoyment that audiences derive from these films. Maltby (1995: 7) comments that predictable films:

Occupy the space in our lives where dreams can come true, time after time after time.

This observation suggests that some audiences can be passive and undemanding (Tulloch, 1990), again missing the point that films are often used by audiences for escapism and dream fulfilment (Wiley, 2003). Maltby (2003: 14) reflects on this point, writing:

Hollywood's commercial aesthetic is grounded in a pattern or formula that the audience find satisfying.

Studio output suggests an understanding of who their consumers are, and what they like; this should also act as reassurance for product placement decision-makers. Films are made to engage and to elicit responses from audiences, Eidvik (2007: 43) writes for some films "particularly near the end, a single emotion will dominate". Fox comments:

Movies try to get an emotional response from viewers; you could say that's what movies are all about (Fox, BBC Radio, 2016).

For some audiences an emotional response is what they are looking for, and have come to expect in a film, not meeting expectations will result in consumer disappointment (Monaco, 2009) and not fulfil the requirements of an attractive product placement vehicle.

Marketing communications is a key tool with this research, with the need to understand the consumers being crucial to film producers and to marketers (Donaton, 2005). Style and context are important with marketing communications for consumer understanding of the message, just as it is important for the audience's understanding and enjoyment (Grant, 2008; Braudy and Cohen, 2009). The challenge here is to make both films and products stand out in order to stimulate sales. To harness this process marketers, use:

Teasers, surreal and puzzle advertising to arouse involvement and discussion among target audiences (Taylor and Smith, 2002: 80).

Film trailers and pre-release screenings are used to stimulate interest, which would then manifest itself in sales. Pre-release publicity for 'James Bond 25', raising awareness of the film's release, started well before production began ('Danny Boyle works on Bond' *The Guardian*, 15 March 2018, and in October 2018 'Boyle leaves Bond'). Using hooks is known to attract an audience, this includes the use of a director's own celebrity. So important are directors that Shail (2007) observes that we are living in the age of the director.

Martin Scorsese is a prime example of the importance a director's status and celebrity; his name alone will draw an audience with previous titles including *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Raging Bull* (1980), *Goodfellas* (1990), *Gangs of New York* (2002), *The Departed* (2006) and *Shutter Island* (2010). King writes, "Names of directors are used as all-encompassing hooks" (2002: 85) thereby providing another marketing lever. Ainslie, Drèze and Zufryden (2003: 20) write:

Actors have a direct effect on consumer choice leading viewers to watch the movie earlier in its release, while directors have a more

indirect effect on consumers: good directors make good movies, good movies have positive word of mouth, positive word of mouth delays peak sales.

These 'hooks' are used to stress difference and generate appeal. Bressoud, Lehu, and Russell state that directors have their own 'star power' and some 'movie watchers' will select films "because of the director" (2008:4). Maltby (2003: 49) also comments that directors become "marketable commodities, even stars, in their own right". For the studios the more appealing the film, for whatever reason, the stronger the draw for audiences and for attracting paid-for placements (Lehu, 2008). Possessing a competitive advantage is essential for products and for those who promote them (Kotler, et al, 2016). In crowded markets, consumers need a reason to buy one product over seemingly identical alternatives. Ridderstråle and Nordström (2008: 43) make many points on competitive advantage, they state:

In the wild market economy which now exists it is increasingly difficult to differentiate yourself.

A BBC focus group of young consumers agreed that their jean's brand was 'vital' to them and that being seen in the 'wrong jeans' would be regarded as a social catastrophe (*Branded*, BBC TV, 1998). Image and brand familiarity is therefore, regarded as critical for sales success in a crowded market where individuals have multiple choices (Underhill, 2008). De Botton (2001) believes many individuals repeatedly and blindly purchase products in order to fill an imagined void in their lives. These purchasers imagine, de Botton maintains, that the acquisition of products will improve their feeling of self-worth: although he states that 'more often than not it doesn't' (2001: 58). This exploitation of the consumer mind-set can be to attract them to goods with the promise of success, friends and popularity (Hooley and Nicoulaud, 2007). Placements aim to exploit this phenomenon, the pairing of characters or celebrity-actors with a range of brands makes the acquisition of certain products more appealing.

A well-used marketing technique that implements this approach is that of portraying an actor with a product in an idealised setting, thereby reinforcing the connection between the product and improving the self-

image of the individual as a form of reflected glory (Pringle, 2004; Atkins, 2009). In the context of this research, product placement seeks to attain the same impact with their film presence. Without the retailers' cooperation though, the best-planned placement campaigns are less likely to succeed (Karniouchina et al, 2011).

1.8 Attracting and engaging an audience, the use of signs, language, codes and accepted reality in film.

This section reviews the audiences' engagement and liking of a film as an essential element for film sales and, by default, essential for product placement exposure. For acceptance and liking, the films' consumers need to 'buy into' characters portrayed and the story they are being told, Monaco states an audience will suspend disbelief for "an accepted reality", or 'diegesis' (Monaco, 2000; 519). This could be, for example, with depictions of 'a singing and dancing' contemporary Mediterranean setting, or a futuristic vision of 'deep space'. The shared set of codes, language and approach highlights the communications process whereby the audience are complicit in its consumption. Signs, language and codes in both films and marketing are however, open to interpretation. Maltby (2003) writes that an individual looking for hidden meaning, subtle concealments and artistry will be disappointed by mainstream movies with their relative thematic banality. This again treats the audience dismissively and overlooks the motives that audiences have for consuming films.

Central to the business of filmmaking and marketing is understanding the viewer, particularly how they consume a film (Galician, 2004). The practice of test screening and re-editing are evidence of the studios' commercial awareness of this factor (Wasko, 2003). This practice is well established, for example Buster Keaton's *The Three Ages* (Cline, 1923) was audience previewed on eight occasions with alterations being made each time (Merton, 2009). Maltby states that that filmmaking is "an industrial process" (2003: 147) where every detail from the script, casting, set dressing, costumes and music combine to make a successful, profitable product. This includes product placement decisions.

It would be a mistake to think that these film production details are insignificant. In terms of attracting an audience, their reaction to stimuli is part of accessing the so-called 'black box' of the consumer's decision-making mind (Solomon et al, 2013). Kotler et al (2016: 32), make important points with penetrating the consumer's decision-making processes, and which brands they prefer and what products they buy. They state that for marketing purposes 'human needs are states of felt deprivation', while human wants 'are the form human needs take as they are shaped by culture and individual personality'; it is the 'wants' that drive many purchases. Understanding the consumers makes it easier to communicate and sell to them. The process of persuasion is a key factor and "complicated" with "fuzzy edges" (O'Keefe, 2002: 5), studios must persuade companies to take placement opportunities in the first place and convince them that it is a good marketing spend for them. Simons (1976: 21) describes persuasion as:

...communication designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values or attitudes.

An important step in this context is making films appealing to individuals and persuading them to spend time and/or money to see them. Audiences need a reason to watch films, especially in cinemas. A point not lost on film producer Samuel Goldwyn (Freedland, 1986: 54) who said:

Why should people go out and pay money to see a bad movie when they can stay home and watch bad television for free.

This comment is supplemented with the observation that reflected the growth and trend for CGI enhanced films (Clive James, May 2015):

All television ever did was shrink the demand for ordinary movies. The demand for extraordinary movies increased. If any one thing is wrong with the movie industry today, it is the unrelenting effort to astonish.

Persuasion is a key element of the marketing communications, understanding the consumer is the bedrock upon which the selling a message will succeed or fail; getting the message slightly wrong in marketing terms is to get the message completely wrong in the consumer's terms (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). Product placements are also digitally

changed depending on the product and region of the film's release, this adds flexibility for the studios to make more local/regional placement deals (Lehu, 2007). Altering background posters/hoardings, or drinks brands depending on the film's release location, is also a well-established practice (Lehu, 2007). Shown in Picture Illustration 1.21 (below) is an example of this with the addition, in post-production, of a Woolworths' poster in *Home and Away* (2015).

Picture Illustration 1.21. **Digitally added placements.**



Top, in *Home and Away* (March 2015) a bus shelter is added along with a poster for Woolworths. Below, the Woolworths' logo and strapline.

Local market demand increases the potential income for the filmmakers. Extended from television and film, to video games and music videos, this placement practice is well established (see Renshaw, 2014). Attracting an audience might rely on other factors, such as the appeal of 3-D (three-dimensional) effect of other technique.

Part of a film's attraction is in the consumption experience, with the films below this includes the addition of a '3-D' effect, to give the movie an additional dimension of appeal. Kotler et al (2006: 7), state that:

As products and services increasingly become commodities, experiences have emerged for many firms as the next step in differentiating the company's offer.

Picture Illustration 1.22. **Selling the Film.**



Aside from being 'All New' 3-D *Jaws 3-D* (Alves, 1983) relied on the strapline of 'The Third Dimension Is Terror' as a draw. *Ice Age 3* (Saldanha, Thurmeier; 2009) had the 3-D version as part of its appeal. Meanwhile with *The Final Destination* (Ellis, 2009) the producers combine the sequel appeal with the fear factor using 'Rest in Pieces' as a tagline to appeal to potential consumers.

Not lost on film production companies is the importance of the experience; experience is regarded as all when it comes to the consumption of film. Making one film attractive over others requires careful planning in the production and promotional stages. Kotler et al (2005: 7), observe that organisations can approach this incorrectly:

Many sellers make the mistake of paying more attention to the specific products they offer than to the benefits provided by these products. They see themselves as selling a product rather than providing a solution to a need.

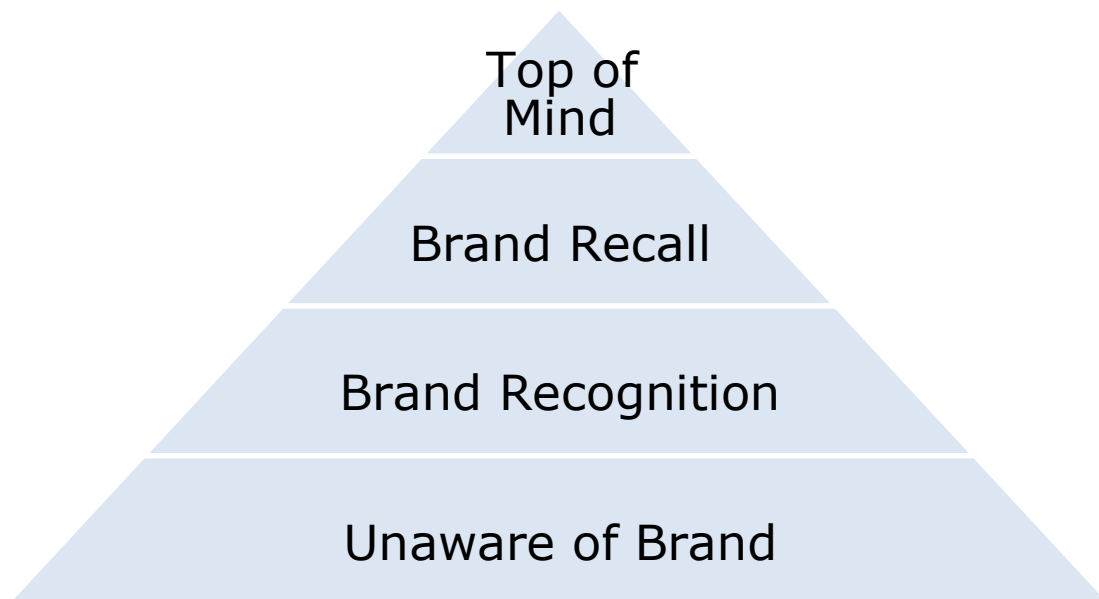
While this *faux pas* may look surprisingly obvious, the cases of organisations falling into this state of 'marketing myopia' are common where the producer does not possess the consumer focus (Kotler et al, 2005). This approach will likely result in studios producing a film few want to watch. The product concept focuses on the product above all else while the production concept looks only at manufacturing efficiencies; the marketing focus meanwhile is an approach which sees (Kotler et al, 2016: 15):

that achieving organisational goals depends on determining the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors do.

One problem for marketing communications is ensuring that these consumers know not just which product is being promoted, but also exactly which brand are being promoted. As Salzman et al (2003: 5), express it "...the trick is to generate company-specific promotions" that benefit the producer and not the sector in general. For promoters using marketing metrics to measure their promotions a key target for marketing communications is achieving 'top of mind awareness' as these are the high product category brand and most likely to generate sales. Solomon, et al, (2009: 162), describe it as:

the first brand you think of when you think of a product category.

Model 1.4. The Top of Mind Awareness Model.

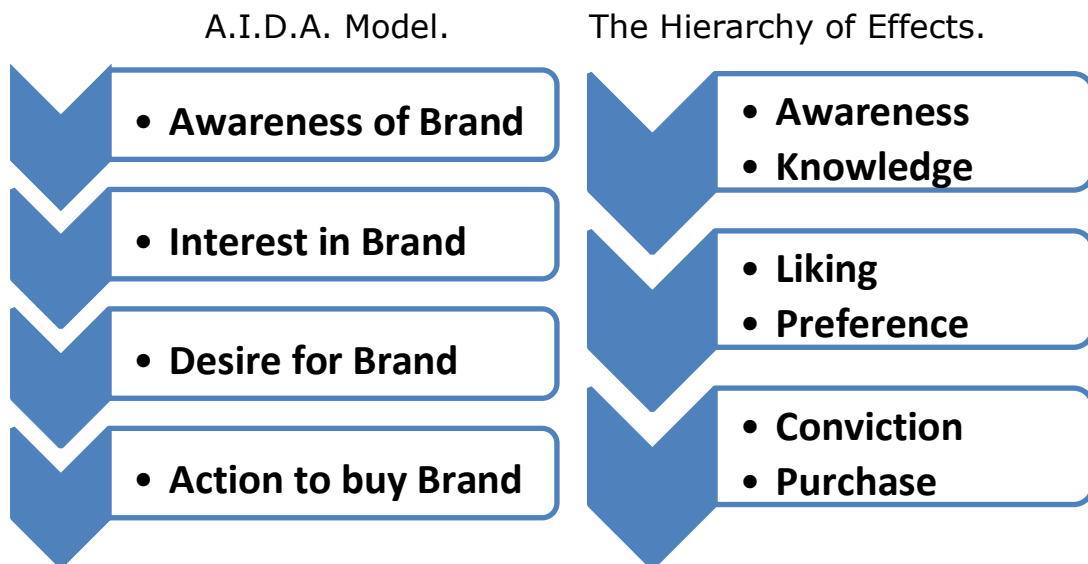


Hakala, Svensson and Vincze (2012).

This 'Top of Mind Awareness' is can be used alongside the Awareness Interest Desire Action Model (A.I.D.A.) as part of the hierarchy of effects theory (Kotler, 2005). The linear progression stated in the models is posited on a stimuli-response model that moves the individual from one stage to the next, terminating in the 'action' of a product purchase. Product placement is considered as valuable by many (Galician, 2004) for raising awareness of a

brand or product, although this can be debated if the placement is not noticed by the viewer.

Model 1.5. **The A.I.D.A. Model, and the Hierarchy of Effects.**



Adapted from Solomon et al, 2016: 129.

This important point applies to products placed in films, a point returned to in the data analysis chapters, where it is not good enough to promote generic cars, motorbikes or whiskey when the brand sponsors have been Toyota, Harley Davidson and Jack Daniel's. Placements need to make an impact on the viewers to raise brand/product awareness, interest, liking, preference, desire, and conviction in order to secure an eventual sale with members of the target audience. Marketing budgets are finite and need to be spent in the most effective manner, in order to achieve this key target audiences need to be identified. As Hegarty (interviewed in Donaton, 2005) outlines market segments are often difficult to define and this has become even more challenging due to the progressively disparate nature of the entertainment and advertising industries. Marketing texts are full of examples of costly mistakes when the audience/market for a product has not been as expected (Brown, 2003).

Films can suffer a similar fate as with *Shoreditch* (Needs, 2003). On the face of it the script, director, cast and plot were the 'right' ingredients to appeal to an audience. As the box office returns of only £2,272 show,

the film did not though bring these factors together in a viable way (IMBD Pro, 2008). Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) had a difficult time in the production, the film is subject to much analysis and discussion by both academics and fans (see "*Studying Blade Runner*" (Redmond, 2008)). As is shown in Picture Illustration 7.9 (page 255) though, *Blade Runner* carries product placements for, among others, Coca-Cola. The film was not a success with audiences when released, in part as Scott's plot was said to have left audiences confused but, unlike *Shoreditch*, the popularity of *Blade Runner* has grown over time (Lawson, June 2008) and resulted in a sequel released in 2017. This highlights the fraught and problematic nature of film production and associated product placements; both can be calculated gambles dependent on potentially fickle audiences. Again, this highlights the difficulties for product placers when attempting to select a suitable film as a marketing vehicle.

Featured brand, courier FedEx, by providing transport and other vital services, is given by the film's director Robert Zemeckis as one reason why *Cast Away* (2000) was able to be made (Friedman, 2004). *Cast Away* is an example of saturation product placement, more explicit than other movies but according to Friedman (2004) presented in 'a wholly believable manner'. Against the images presented Zemeckis (Friedman, 2004: 173) insists, "There was absolutely no product placement" in this production. According to Donaton (2005), this type of blatant placement should be rejected by audiences, but box office sales, awards and ratings show that this is not always the case. Placements that are regarded as being blatant risk outright rejection and that as a marketing communications activity these can 'backfire' (Wei, Fischer and Main, 2008; Karniouchina et al, 2011). The Wilson placement worked so well that the manufacturer brought out the matching product, as a 'retrospective' placement. The Wilson volleyball is a good example of natural and 'seamless integration' where the product was skilfully incorporated into the narrative (Donaton, 2005). The film was a commercial success, however placing products in it should have been regarded as a risky strategy as the narrative revolves around the deaths of FedEx personnel, the destruction of a Fed-Ex plane

and of its cargo. *Cast Away* illustrates both the difficulty in correctly predicting audience acceptance, and the success of placements.

Picture Illustration 1.23. **Screenshots from *Cast Away* (2000).**



Screenshots (above) from the many that feature FedEx. Prominently featured in *Cast Away* was The Wilson Volleyball, a.k.a. 'Mr. Wilson', retrospectively becoming a retail product.

Traditional promotions for car manufacturers was to have a large budget and spend around ten per cent of it on production of a campaign, and ninety per cent of it on distribution costs (Fill, 2006). BMW changed that approach producing some big budget, high production value, 'star studded', short films. Usual placements can see a degree of bargaining, debate and argument as BMW experienced with Bond film placements, such as *GoldenEye* (1995). BMW were reportedly 'uncomfortable' (Purves, 2014) with aspects of the placement in *GoldenEye* in which one of their cars drove off the top of a seven-story car park resulting in destruction upon impact. Following this experience BMW hired directors (including Tony Scott, Ang Lee, Guy Ritchie) and gave them almost complete creative control to make short films featuring their vehicles (Purves, 2014). BMW

then released these films on the internet, at the time considered an unusual and brave choice, this was authorized by the head of BMW North America despite reservations from the BMW head office in Germany (Purves, 2014). BMW relied upon the 'pull effect', meaning that consumers would actively search for these films. Helping to make the project a success was the power of viral marketing, the films had an estimated budget of around \$15 million (Donaton, 2005). As Salzman et al, (2003: 156) comment the films "were so successful that BMW started a new series of them" and later released all of them on DVD. The basis of the success here was on consumers seeking out and recommending these films to others (Ishida, Slevitch and Siamionava, 2016). This type of development is important for marketers and film producers alike. Hegarty (in Donaton, 2005: 18) remarks on the transition that the marketing and entertainment industries have undergone, saying that we have moved from the "age of interruption to the age of engagement" which perfectly fits the BMW example. Donaton (2005: 19) also sounds a warning:

The integration of commercial messages into entertainment content resulting in blatantly commercial content will be rejected by audiences. If it [the marketing] isn't communicated to us in an entertaining way we're not interested.

The BMW films were entertaining, invitational and therefore able to create positive word of mouth, which ultimately resulted in increased brand awareness, improved brand values and an 11% increase in sales (Purves, 2014). For studios though this internet-based approach may result in fewer products wanting to invest in a potentially risky venture such as traditional film releases when other, more controllable, options with more predictable audience exposure levels are available. See also the Estrella Damn example on page 70.

The 'age of engagement' requires audience appeal (Donaton, 2005). Kidman in the Chanel short film (promotion) was paid \$5m appearance fee, adding to the image of glamour; the effect required. Rojek (2001: 10) writes, "Glamour is associated with favourable public opinion". If a star/brand loses that favourableness the quick procurement of replacement will be initiated (Lehu, 2009). In marketing communication

terms, the Estrella, Chanel and BMW approach gives producers an alternative to product placement but while still using celebrity-actors with the advantages of distribution via the internet.

1.9 Film distribution, consumption and the use of misé-en-scene for placing products.

One of the most significant challenges for filmmakers and marketers is getting films and products to an audience. The distribution and potential exposure of films is essential for reaching audiences, this section reviews the issues that impact upon this process. As a precursor for film consumption, distribution is a critical issue in this research as films and product placements both depend on exposure and audiences. Film distribution is a complex and competitive issue; filmmakers George Lucas and Stephen Spielberg illustrate this. Lucas and Spielberg commented (*Variety*, June 2013) that they struggled to get their respective films *Red Tails* and *Lincoln* into cinemas; this in turn would have a direct impact on their commercial viability. Table 1.2 (page 62) illustrates importance of consumer access, the number of screens that a movie is shown on is a key factor and the table shows the number of screens accessed. As with the release and distribution of tangible products the more outlets that stock a product, or carry the film, the bigger the potential audience. The cinemas for their part will want to show what they believe will be the most popular films in order to maximize their own ticket income.

Table 1.2 (next) shows the newly released (five days showing) *Glass* (Night Shyamalan, 2018) playing at 3,841 theatres (cinemas). In twenty first position the 12 day released *Replicas* (Nachmanoff, 2018) was shown at 2059 locations. The former yielded on average \$993 per theatre and the latter \$40 per theatre. On an economic basis, this would suggest that those making commercial decisions would be more likely to screen the most popular films for the greatest monetary return. In terms of audience reach and exposure, these numbers are important for both the studios and for the product placers when determining the success of the venture in terms of audience exposure for the placements. The distribution profile of films is

difficult to determine before release, but factors such as being a sequel, or having 'big-name' stars will influence this. For that exposure, one of the most popular placement methods is having the product in the mise-en-scène (Galician, 2004). The mise-en-scène is often unnoticed by viewers but vital for establishing the 'look' and 'feel' of a film (Maltby, 2003).

Table 1.2. Box Office Returns (USA):

Daily Domestic Chart for Tuesday January 22nd, 2019

Previous Chart		Chart Index						
	Movie	Distributor	Gross	Change	Thtrs.	Per Thtr.	Total Gross	Days
1	(1) Glass	Universal	\$3,814,910	-38%	3,841	\$993	\$50,319,860	5
-	(2) The Upside	STX Entertainment	\$1,881,257	-44%	3,320	\$567	\$48,562,588	12
-	(6) Aquaman	Warner Bros.	\$1,101,903	-57%	3,475	\$317	\$307,853,910	33
-	(5) Spider-Man: Into The Spider...	Sony Pictures	\$765,302	-70%	2,712	\$282	\$161,917,707	40
-	(3) A Dog's Way Home	Sony Pictures	\$711,465	-74%	3,090	\$230	\$24,800,064	12
-	(10) Escape Room	Sony Pictures	\$580,516	-52%	2,709	\$214	\$42,815,919	19
-	(8) Mary Poppins Returns	Walt Disney	\$554,725	-72%	2,810	\$197	\$161,203,429	35
-	(12) On the Basis of Sex	Focus Features	\$525,750	-42%	1,957	\$269	\$18,206,552	29
-	(9) Bumblebee	Paramount Pictures	\$500,364	-62%	2,711	\$185	\$117,839,052	33
-	(13) The Mule	Warner Bros.	\$498,015	-19%	2,688	\$185	\$97,782,510	40
-	(14) Green Book	Universal	\$426,805	-28%	912	\$468	\$42,897,361	68
-	(-) Vice	Annapurna Pictures	\$307,807	-18%	1,175	\$262	\$39,836,331	29
-	(15) Bohemian Rhapsody	20th Century Fox	\$306,221	-37%	1,177	\$260	\$202,824,319	82
-	(-) If Beale Street Could Talk	Annapurna Pictures	\$232,212	-46%	1,018	\$228	\$11,145,120	40
-	(11) Ralph Breaks The Internet	Walt Disney	\$194,005	-82%	1,936	\$100	\$194,555,890	63
-	(-) The Favourite	Fox Searchlight	\$181,133	-3%	517	\$350	\$23,171,696	61
-	(-) Second Act	STX Entertainment	\$118,352	-17%	1,051	\$113	\$38,040,593	33
-	(-) A Star is Born	Warner Bros.	\$94,595	-28%	415	\$228	\$204,896,191	110
-	(-) Replicas	Entertainment Studi...	\$81,698	-20%	2,059	\$40	\$3,848,875	12
-	(-) Mary Queen of Scots	Focus Features	\$57,730	-26%	405	\$143	\$16,175,014	47
-	(-) Destroyer	Annapurna Pictures	\$26,826	-18%	50	\$537	\$695,777	29
-	(-) Perfectos desconocidos	Lionsgate	\$25,659	-3%	132	\$194	\$793,869	12
-	(-) Instant Family	Paramount Pictures	\$24,659	-60%	253	\$97	\$67,099,066	68
-	(-) Fantastic Beasts: The Crime...	Warner Bros.	\$23,456	-65%	288	\$81	\$158,963,564	68
-	(-) Canal Street	Smith Global Media	\$17,666	-47%	73	\$242	\$159,505	5
-	(-) Creed II	MGM	\$17,563	-71%	525	\$33	\$115,310,959	63
-	(-) Dr. Seuss' The Grinch	Universal	\$8,815	-81%	174	\$51	\$270,275,295	75
-	(-) Widows	20th Century Fox	\$5,858	-31%	76	\$77	\$42,327,075	68

Our box office charts are compiled from data provided to us by distributors. To be included on our charts, please send reports to bodata@the-numbers.com.

Variety, 22 January 2019, *Weekend Box Office* <http://www.Variety.com>

Defined in different ways and referred to as 'films great undefined term' Mise-en-scène is a major medium for placing products (Thompson and Bordwell, 2002). Fox (2006) shows how it used by filmmakers, and how this in turn determines the tone of the film, and the emotions elicited from the viewers. To illustrate this Fox (2006) poses the question:

What are the ways in which the urban mise-en-scène and iconography contribute to the rising sense of conflict in "*Do The Right Thing*"? (Lee, 1989).

The setting will instantly speak about what the filmmaker is trying to convey, with for example, Bond in a back-street bar or in a luxury hotel.

From a marketing perspective, this will influence how the consumer will perceive the placed products; this is an important element of filmmaking and the theme is returned to in the Data Analysis chapters.

Picture Illustration 1.24. **Bond dressed to kill in *Casino Royale* (2006).**



The bar display is populated with Bombay Gin and Smirnoff Vodka, but may be too subtle for viewers to notice. This mise-en-scène exudes elitism and privilege, primarily to enhance the product's appeal.

What has changed in the placement industry is the nature and intensity of product placement activity (Kavallieratou, 2013; Muzellec, Kanitz and Lynn (2014)). Studios take a proactive role when looking for placements. In the first instance, placement search assists with the supply of equipment and services, it provides finance and it acts as a marketing communication tool to promote the film through the use of co-ordinated product/film marketing (Donaton, 2005). The latter supports the argument that placements are essential for 'realism' by using products and brands that the viewer is familiar with (Russell, 2002; Lehu, 2009). This change in placement deals is illustrated by Donaton (2005: 167):

In 1985, Pepsi would provide about 25 cases of soda each week to the film crew during the three months or so that it took to film a movie. That product would appear in the film but would also be used as free refreshments for the film crew.

By 1995 though, Pepsi had agreed the first animated product placement deal appearing in the DreamWorks Pictures' *Antz* (Darnell, 1998) and by

2005 Pepsi placed brands in around 25 films a year (Brand Channel, 2010), all for a fee. This highlights the scale of the industry and the degree of financial inter-reliance that the filmmakers and marketers have. As is developed below, product placement is not a cure-all for marketing dilemmas and for it to be most effective supporting marketing techniques are required. Despite this there are still questions. Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Kräuter (1997: 58) write 'results regarding the efficacy of products placed in movies are mixed'. This remains the case according to Lehu (2009). Placement agencies, such as HOLLYFY quote impressive statistics concerning the efficacy of the practice, and how they can provide direct access to key studio decision makers.

Table 1.3, **HOLLYFY Agency Claims for Product Placement Efficacy**

Example	Claim
<i>Man of Steel</i> (2013) placement impact	Generated \$160million of income to off-set around 75% of the production budget.
<i>Frozen</i> (2013) impact on flights to Norway	Internet searches for flights to Norway increased by 153% following the film's release
Number of US prime-time shows using product placement	Listed at 75%
Exposure via placements in video games	59% of Americans are gamers, 48% of them are female
Adverts skipped after five (mandatory) seconds on YouTube	Skipped by 94% of viewers
41% of US homes have digital video recorders	90% of these are used to skip traditional TV advertisements
Impact of a Pontiac placement in the (USA) show <i>The Apprentice</i>	Pontiac had hoped for 1,000 sales in ten days but achieved 1,000 in just 41 minutes

Source: Hollyfy.com (June, 2016).

Rose (2014) claims that in 2012 the placement industry was worth \$8.25bn, with the expectation that this figure will 'nearly double' by 2019. The potential negative to this is that product placement has previously resulted in the cancellation of several American television shows; the type of rejection Laemmle warned of in 1931. Donaton (2005: 152) writes:

Anyone interested in the brand integration space needed to study *The Restaurant* to learn what absolutely not to do. The placement appeared crass and phony, making it difficult to enjoy or trust the show. Such deals show a complete lack of imagination. They treat viewers as morons while betraying their trust.

Other placements have resulted in success however, and suggest that product placement can be an efficacious tool. MediaCom's placement of Nerf guns in the German television show *Stromberg* (2011/2012) and the significant rise in product sales (and the staff habits in some German offices) is one example (Collins, 2014).

Picture Illustration 1.25. ***Stromberg* and Nerf guns.**



Still (top) from *Stromberg* (2012) in an episode featuring a selection of Nerf guns. An advertisement (bottom) reinforcing the *Stromberg*/Nerf gun link.

The integration into storylines was key to the success of the Nerf gun product placement within *Stromberg*. This promotion was also complemented with well-placed support from Twitter and Facebook campaigns, with

hyperlinks to Amazon and the official Stromberg on-line shop for the sales of Nerf guns; the servers for which crashed several times due to the surge in demand with many Nerf product lines selling out repeatedly (Collins, 2014).

With the questions of authenticity and consumer impact, Helen Mirren in the title role of *The Queen* (Frears, 2006), provides proof of product placement working effectively and clearly influencing some viewers. In the film, Mirren wears a Barbour jacket, sales of which soared after the film's release. An entry on Barbour's website read:

*The first thing they say is "Have you seen the movie The Queen?"
Then they say they want the jacket that the Queen is wearing
(Barbour, October 2006).*

This is a prime placement example, a seamlessly integrated product placement-gaining acceptance as being authentic by the audience, and has evidence of stimulating product sales. From *The Queen* it is clear that for some consumers at least, product placement can be persuasive. This is an issue that shapes this research seeks to analyse product placements to identify the most efficacious approach. The Literature Review has also influenced the approach taken with the research methodology, the move from a quantitative approach to a qualitative being one of them, it also influenced the participant questioning with the focus being split between attitudes to celebrity-actors, product placement with marketing communication as a unifying tool.

Picture Illustration 1.26. **Barbour and *The Queen*.**



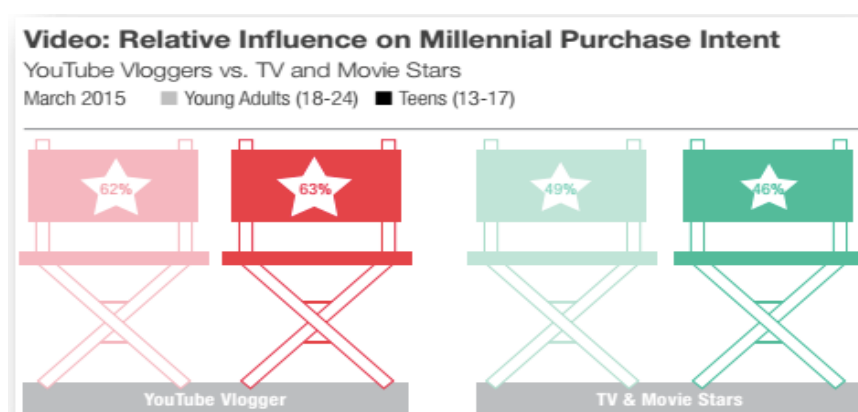
The bonus for Barbour was that they had not paid for the placement (Saunders, 2008). *The Queen* shows the impact a well-placed product placement can have on audience members.

Marketers and film producers face far more and pressing challenges than just dealing with the sometimes unpredictable public. Structural and industry changing developments have impacted how films are made, how products are promoted and most importantly how consumption of marketing, film and brands has radically changed over a relatively short space of time. Most prominent among these changes is the use and impact of the internet alternatives and new attempts to overcome perceptual barriers to film and brand promotions.

1.10 Breaking from tradition – alternative marketing communications strategies.

This research has highlighted that using product placement to achieve marketing goals is challenging, furthermore this placement tool is just one option for marketers. There are many choices for marketers when it comes to choosing the most effective method/s for promotion, not least with using the more controllable and flexible tool of social media which Gray and Fox state *"It is all about standing out from the rest of the pack"* (2018: 13). Using the internet (with short film releases, or music videos on YouTube for example), or bloggers and vloggers to promote brands has proved to be highly effective methods for marketers, this can be more cost effective and easier to track its impact for the marketers (Rosen, 2015; Grimani, 2016). The next illustration shows the influence vloggers have on some viewer segments.

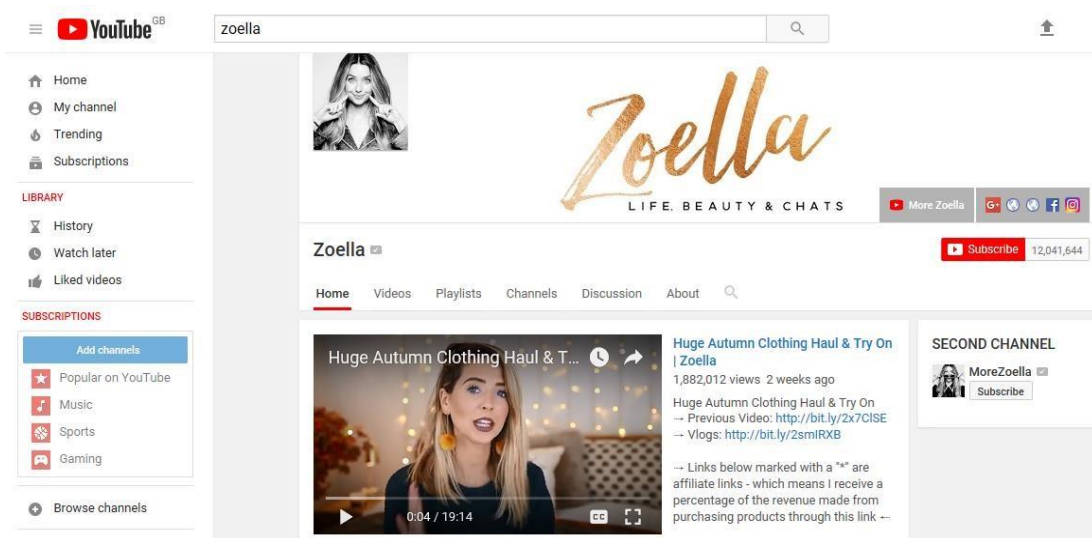
Picture Illustration 1.27. **The Shift of Influence** (Grimani, 2016).



For viewers who are consuming content online there is also an impressive benefit for marketers who use this medium. Many of the bloggers and vloggers use placements, or simply present products directly to camera. Lifestyle vlogger Zoella, with over 12 million subscribers and over two billion views (Zoella, 2019), is an example of this approach for a range of products; she has a followership of predominantly young, female viewers. Lisa Potter-Dixon, Head Make-up artist for Benefit cosmetics, takes an engaging direct approach with the products, see Picture Illustration 1.28, next. Grimani (2016) reports that around 75% of these YouTube audiences then browse the company retail sites after viewing the vlog/blog. These YouTube channels not only draw a specific audience to their videos but also additional targeted pre-play unescapable five-to-thirty second commercials making them more attractive to advertisers.

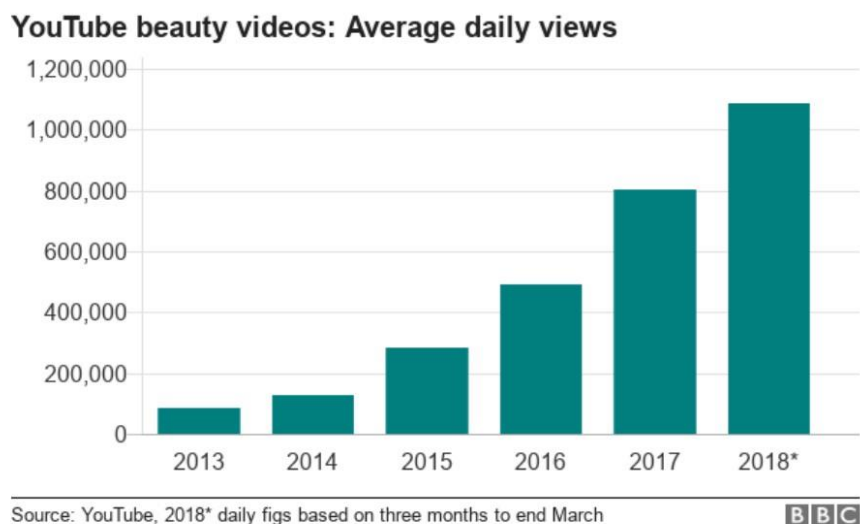
With the consumption of beauty products promotions, YouTube has witnessed a massive growth in viewing figures. In what is termed as being 'selfie-ready' these promotions are heavily aimed at 16-44 year-old females (BBC, June 2018) and divert expenditure away from other types of traditional marketing spend, including product placement.

Picture Illustration 1.28. **YouTube and Influencers: Zoella and Lisa.**
Vlogs and a growing marketing trend.





Lisa Potter Dixon, promoting Benefit Cosmetics, and linking with children's charity, Rays of Sunshine.



The growth of online promotions (Jones and Gelbart, 2018).

This builds on the BMW example on page 59 with the consumers' willingness to accept a marketing medium. While BMW rejected the traditional model marketing communications when they embarked on getting their products noticed, and at some stage, purchased (Evans, Jamal and Foxall, 2006). BMW had previously tried, and later rejected, the use of film product placement (Galician, 2004; Phillips, 2006). The imaginative, and at the time considered 'risky' (Purves, 2014), method used by BMW worked for them and has been termed as 'branded entertainment'. For the films, the placement of BMW cars was central, they were obvious, they were used in context but avoiding looking contrived or blatant. Perhaps crucially though the films were sought by the viewer and therefore fell into the 'pull' rather than 'push' category of marketing communication, suggesting that

by this factor alone it is likely to have more impact by way of attaining audience engagement (Ouwersloot and Duncan, 2008). In this same vein Zoella, Lisa Potter-Dixon and many others, have used Vlogging and Blogging as effective media channels to inexpensively promote brands.

Hegarty foresaw this industry change when he stated that there has been a move from an “age of interruption to the age of engagement” (in Donaton, 2005: 19). This engagement has since developed into a situation where consumers seek out internet sites promoting products, and the free to view promotional films importantly. Estrella Damm commissioned eight 15-minute-long films to promote their ‘Mediterranean lager’. The films have a list of high-profile actors and directors, ‘*The Little Things*’ (Rodriguez, 2017) for example stars Jean Reno and Laia Costa and was directed by Alberto Rodriguez. As seen next, Estrella lager features in various shots of the films. As with the BMW and Vlogging examples, Estrella Damm are trading entertainment and/or information for the viewers’ attention - as a marketing communications opportunity.

Picture Illustration 1.28.

Estrella Damm Lager, and the Short Film Format.



The Little Things (2017), starring Reno, Costa and Estrella Damm. Estrella is placed throughout the film and on the promotional poster. The main distribution channel was a sponsored link on YouTube.

Salzman et al (2003: 1: see also Kerpen, 2011)), make a comment that media aware consumers will be resistant to the efforts of those trying to communicate with them, stating:

Today's consumer is jaded and fed up with overt distortions and a one size fits all attempts to influence.

If Davies' figure (1997) is correct that some consumers are exposed to 13,000 messages a day; or even Lehu's (2009) figure of 'only' 3,000 messages a day, then it is not surprising that consumers are jaded. This relentless stream of promotional material may leave individuals indifferent to these forms of stimuli so that they simply do not 'see' or notice promotions. This latter point could explain the low numbers of interviewees here who did not recall any celebrity-based marketing. Using product placement is one method that has the potential to overcome this degree of consumer 'jadedness' and avoid those overt distortions where, as with the Levi's *Sisterhood* below, placed products can be positively presented in context to a better-defined audience (Kerpen, 2011).

1.11 The consumption of media and structural changes to viewing. Barriers and alternatives for product placements.

This section looks at the issues of consumer consumption of films and placements with a focus on how the placements impact, or fail to impact, the viewer. A major factor with this process is whether consumers' perceptual filters are a barrier to the absorption and recognition of placed products and brands on the viewer, and for the forming or reinforcing of attitudes (Stokes and Maltby, 2001). Perceptual filters are described as the individual's ability to:

...see and hear what they choose to see and hear, to 'screen out' messages they do not wish to attend to or be influenced by or even consider (Foxall, Goldsmith and Brown, 1998: 54).

In the research context here, this may depend upon the setting of the placement and the 'response opportunity factors', the extent to which consumers are being distracted by other stimuli (Foxall et al, 1998). Foxall et al, (1998: 54), highlight other factors shaping the individual's own motives, preoccupations, values and attitudes, stating:

...messages that are intune with what the individual already believes stand a much better chance of gaining attention, being perceived, and actually being remembered than those which are at odds with the individual's preoccupations or merely tangential to his or her interests and needs. The latter are likely to be condemned without a hearing.

This counters the view (Matthes et al, 2007; Lehu 2009 below) that mere exposure to a placement, be it seen or not, is enough to exert a positive influence on an individual, see also Campbell, Mohr and Verlegh (2013) and Arnold (2013). Williams (2010) builds further on this stating that perception will have a direct impact on the process of interpretation being the 'process of attaching meaning to new knowledge' which in this research context would be pairing an actor or character with a branded product. This process is most important with the implementation of product placement, Williams (2010: 366) writes:

...perceptual filters also affect retention, that is, what we're likely to remember in the end.

Recall and impact on the individual consumer is central to product placement as an efficient marketing tool. While a film placement may target an audience that matches the same audience profile as the film itself, it would become embedded even more deeply in the minds of the consumers. Within a cinema setting a Nivea sun screen promotion that employed ambient scents, deployed through the air conditioning system, to accompany the images and sounds of the screened commercial, resulted in an exit recall rate over 400% than for the same advertisement shown without the paired olfactory stimuli (Solomon et al, 2013). In addition to this short-term feedback other evidence suggests that this multisensory engagement approach can enhance the consumers' memory beyond the short term and that 'these effects can be long lasting' (Lwin and Morrin, 2012). As the ultimate goal of marketing efforts is sales then this should bode well for eventual success if that purchase stage can be achieved. Some respondent responses in this research echoed this point noticing products that they already possess and ignoring unfamiliar brands as coincidental or anonymous.

Some previous studies suggest that the manner, conditions, situation, personal considerations and style of an influence will be key when considering the impact on individuals of stimuli (Norberg and Horne, 2007). Consideration of other factors is also required; earlier work carried out by Sabherwal, Pokrywczynski, and Griffin (1994) clearly demonstrates how recall for product placements in films relies on a memory-based perspective. A variation on this by, among others, Matthes, Schemer and Wirth (2007), state that 'a mere exposure effect' is enough to elicit a response from viewers. Matthes, Schemer and Wirth (2007: 475), go on to state that:

A frequently presented brand placement can have a positive effect on brand evaluations although viewers do not recall the brand.

There are caveats to this and Matthes et al, (2007: 475), comment, "This effect can only be found when there is a high involvement in the programme and low persuasion knowledge". The evidence from this research appears to collaborate this, although some interviewees are not willing to admit that an influence exists at all. Matthes et al, (2007: 475), suggest that 'mere exposure' can be enough, the counterclaim they make is that:

In contrast, when persuasion knowledge is high and involvement is low, frequently presented placements lead to a deterioration of brand attitudes.

While the process of product exposure may be enough for some positive outcomes for the brand managers, the context and execution of the placement is open to accusations of being a vague and clumsy route to attain marketing goals.

Sabherwal et al (1994), continue with this theme of exposure and commenting how the frequency and type of placement can make an impact on the viewers' recall and how this links to the image of the product. In one strand of their research they suggest that viewers assumed that if a product had a high frequency appearance rate then it must have a wide distribution and be popular, leading to comments from the interviewees across the research who expected to see certain brands - Apple being singled out when they watched the research films. Particularly important for this research, is as Wiseman (2011) states, that people (despite their denials) can be influenced without them realising, and without realising

what it was that influenced them. For example, many products, around 20–50 per month, appear in the 'Top 40' music charts as they are 'name-checked' in music tracks and appear in the accompanying video (Pringle, 2004: 104). Unlike many Hollywood films at around 100 minutes long, music videos are often only around three minutes long. Music videos can also enjoy multiple playing which will increase exposure of products placed within. The remit for placing products here seems to also have a wider set of parameters from viewers as it is overtly commercial, and not a film. One viewer expressed her opinion as:

They can do what they like in a [music] video. Take Beyoncé for example. They use a load of brands.

Pringle also commented on how McDonald's would pay to have a positive 'name check' tracks thereby encouraging this alternative product placement practice, a particularly prevalent element among rap artists who often mention brands as part of their subculture (Omerjee and Chiliya, 2014). This would be an attractive option for marketers looking to place products with high exposure, market reach and potentially more control on the products' presentation. As the picture illustration below shows, the exposure and reach of a music video placement can be enormous with, in this case, LMFAO and Party Rock Anthem featuring cars, clothing, shoes, sunglasses, Beats headphones, watches, hats, and Cherry Tree Cola. The massive exposure that music videos can attract, make this type of product placement opportunity attractive to marketers.

Picture illustration 1.30. **Product Placements Alternatives.**



LMFAO *Party Rock* video screenshots. With over 1,654,197,000 views on just one YouTube channel (June 2019), giving Cherry Tree Cola massive exposure.

The total of views here does not include the millions more from unofficial postings of the video on YouTube and other sites which further extends the placements' reach and the brands' exposure. With so many potential influences it is difficult to isolate which is the most influential (Schiffman et al, 2008) and therefore which is the best promotional method for any product. Perhaps a crucial point here is one that Heslin (1999: 2) draws our attention to; namely that when individuals:

...watch a movie or something on television our defences are down and we become more receptive to the messages that are coming at us. So this type of product placement is a very effective 'niche' marketing tool.

The influence of the internet, such as YouTube and Netflix, has been immense and continues to change how the film, music, television, marketing and advertising industries function (Kerpen, 2011; Hatton, 2018). An example of this was given by some research stage two respondents here who stated that they rarely watched terrestrial television because they preferred these alternatives, one claimed she would watch 'TED Talks on YouTube' rather than 'regular TV'. The negative reception given to (the production company and online broadcaster) Netflix at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival (Thorpe, 2017), and the 2019 Oscar nomination for the Netflix film *Roma* (Cuarón, 2018) is further evidence of this change and how rivals regard Netflix and the potential threat that they pose to the old order of studios, distributors, cinemas and retail sales (Mumford, May 2017). The opening weekend of Netflix film *Murder Mystery* (Newacheck, 2019) drew an audience of 30.5million viewers, that audience at the cinema would have made it the third highest grossing film ever (Lee, 2019). Again, this highlights the impact new channels/platforms are having on the film industry. There is also the implication that this change will affect upon the practice of product placement.

The process of structural change on these industries is still underway, however it does not, contrary to warnings (Cannings, 2012), appear to have suppressed the appetite for film and the fears over the decline and imminent death of film production have been misjudged. The key issue here is that the rise and development of digital and social media promotional opportunities provides yet more choice, and fragmentation,

for consumers of media *and* for decision-making marketing managers (Ryan and Jones, 2012; B.A.R.B., 2017). While not matching the historic highpoint, there is a recent relative revival and levelling out of cinema sales and the continued appeal of film as entertainment. Over the last twenty years the television industry has been subjected to massive fragmentation. One older stage two research participant commented that there was a time when everybody seemed to have watched the same television programmes the night before, but that had 'all changed' and '*our viewing choices are now limitless*'.

Making this point is for two important reasons. Firstly, to illustrate the potential pitfalls of marketers overly relying on only one medium for product promotion, and secondly to reinforce the point that while television as a medium was dominant for the latter part of the twentieth century this position was not going to last and media producers would need to adapt their practices (Wasko, 2009). The 'explosion and reach of the internet and social media' has been even faster than the growth of television. Director Christopher Nolan fears that cinema is under threat (in Hoffman, 2017). For Nolan, this chiefly concerns the use of digital prints and the decline of the use of 70mm film resulting in a diminished viewing experience. The rise of CGI and other film technologies seem to contradict this, furthermore the audiences for *Avengers Endgame* (Russo and Russo, 2019) firmly repudiates the claim that cinema is not capable of bringing big audiences through the box office (*Variety*, April 2019, reported: 'Avengers: Endgame' Heads for Monster \$300 Million U.S. Opening'). Meanwhile the increase in the number of films released will also have an influence on the practice of film product placement with the sheer volume of choice offered to potential placement partners. This in turn attracts marketers to the product placement option with the greater choice and potential for better audience targeting.

From the research here there appears to be an overstatement of the efficacy of product placement as a 'very effective' marketing tool; it appears to be more honest to state that 'it can be a very effective' tool (Kitchen and Mirza, 2013), but it may also be unnoticed, discounted, and disregarded. The worst outcome would be the consumers consciously rejecting a product

seen in a placement, as with an interviewee's L'Oréal comment stating that she 'knew claims for the product were overstated' and that the high profile 'star names' only added to the product's price.

1.12 Alternatives to traditional promotions. Using placements to overcome consumer resistance.

The apparent consumer indifference to promotional stimuli and the on-going fragmentation of potential marketing vehicles is a major concern for the marketing industry, as this will have an impact on their returns. This supports the case for overcoming consumer indifference or resistance to marketing, and one way to do this is to communicate with consumers when they are a relaxed and receptive (Solomon, et al 2009). In this instance during the consumption of films. Lehu (2009: 63) states that:

...a viewer's anti-advertising 'defences' are lowered at the cinema, thereby offering brands an opportunity to communicate that may be very competitive.

Product placement in films as well as television, novels, live theatre, radio, concerts, music videos (see Party Rock Anthem on page 74) and computer games (Galician, 2004), is one part of the shift from the mass inculcation approach of the '30 second TV spots'. This, however, does not mean that other forms of marketing and promotion have become redundant, marketing objectives and costings would always have to be considered (Kerpen, 2011). Some television advertising has also adapted and utilised new technologies to make their promotions more interactive and engaging, an example of this was the Iceland supermarkets' promotion sponsoring "*I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*". This saw the use of an interactive link and a celebrity centred integrated website; the overall result was a 17% lift in sales for the supermarket (Mediacom North, 2014). This approach also illustrated that consumer resistance cannot only be overcome, but their support actively engaged.

These so-called 'old' promotional formats have changed with the fragmentation of the media and marketing industries but are still attracting revenues (Doole and Lowe, 2012). Lehu (2009: 29) however, with

reference to 'Gross Rating Points' (GRP - an index used by marketers to measure marketing communication effectiveness), writes:

Not only does the sacrosanct 30-second spot today seem too expensive in terms of audience volumes reached, but the doubt cast on its actual effectiveness seems increasingly justified. Taking into account the lower audience figures, in absolute terms, more spots are needed to achieve a desired gross ratings points score, but even this does not guarantee the desired result.

Salzman et al, (2003: ix), underscore this point that marketing and promotion needs to be, above all, effective, and to be implemented in "...the most efficient way to reach people in a meaningful way". To paraphrase Mark Twain, the reports of the death of traditional television advertising, have been greatly exaggerated.

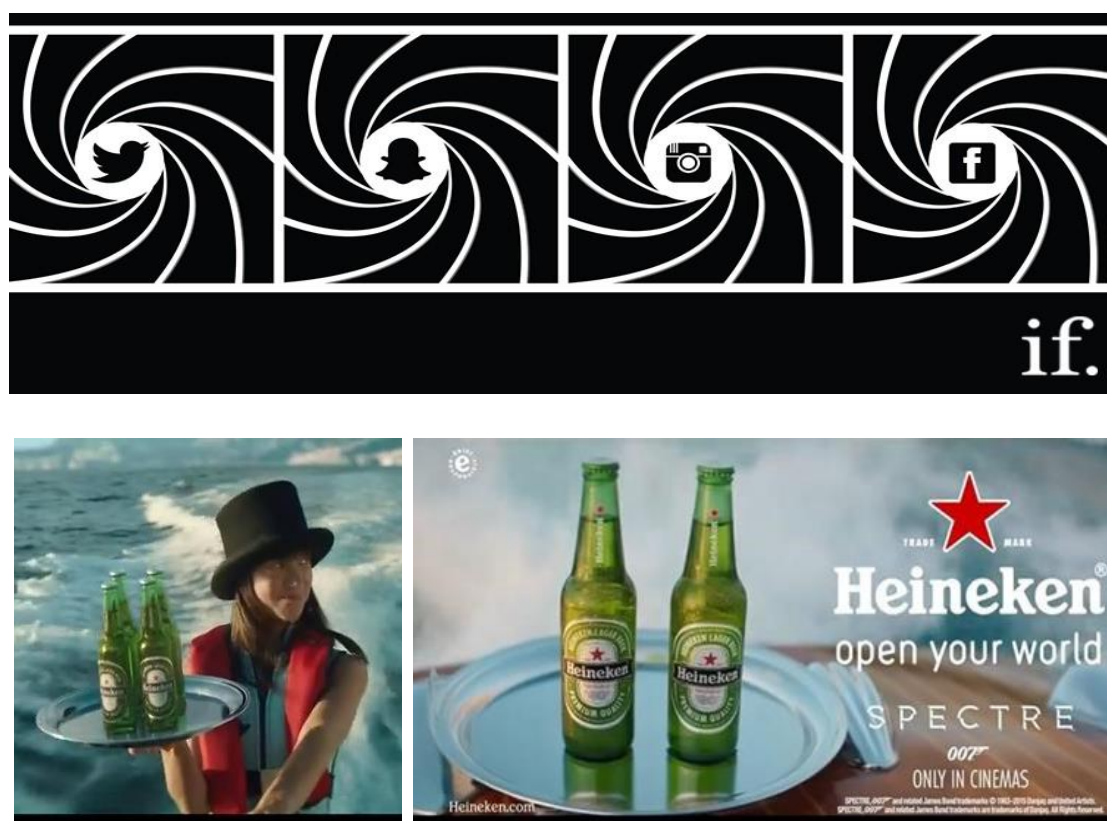
With reference to comments regarding the 'old certainties' of promotion, and commenting on the future of the television industry, producer Peter Bazalgette (in Flint, 2009: television documentary) observes that with internet content the model will only work when viewers "sell their personal attention" and that it will be based on consumers exchanging "twenty seconds of their time in order to receive content". This approach is in use on internet news, games and social media platforms such as YouTube where some content is accessible only after exposure to an embedded advertisement (Kerpen, 2011). In a period of such rapid change, it is useful from a marketing (and film) industry standpoint to add a voice from senior marketing practitioners. From the influential Campaign/Turner conference, Susan Canavari (chief brand officer at JPMorgan Chase) stated:

I don't think the 30 second TV spot is going to die. But it would be nice if one thing died so you could put all your brand dollars towards the thing that is working. The consumer and media landscape has changed so significantly I don't think anyone has truly grasped the enormity of that change (in Chapman, June 2017).

This reflects the comments from Donaton (2005) and stresses that even for senior marketing communication professionals with multi-million-dollar budgets and extensive resources for data analysis, they are still struggling to ascertain the best way to promote their brands and overcome the

uncertainty that Wanamaker referred to (see page xv). A major and growing area for marketing expenditure is social media (Hatton, 2018). Bazalgette's 'attention exchange' (see Picture 1.31 next), will be 'enormously successful' as internet users are more 'trackable' and therefore marketing can be better targeted to the individual (Strauss and Frost, 2016); tracking film viewing with such accuracy would currently be impossible. Internet sites already use systems with well-tailored, often locally focused marketing promotions, what Kerpen (2011: 26) describes as 'hypertargeting and nano-targeting'. For the *Spectre* (RF11) film promotion, the dedicated website attracted over 19 million views.

Picture Illustration 1.31, **Social Media to promote *Spectre* (2015).**



Popular blog Immediate Future (2015) (top) combines Bond iconography with logos of the popular social media channels. Below, screenshots from the YouTube Heineken promotion for *Spectre* (2015).

Some social media users, however, complain about what they consider the invasive nature of these advertisements into what they regard as their personal digital space, one stage two interviewee stated:

I don't like the way Facebook sells out to advertisers; we don't use Facebook to see a heap of adverts.

This shows the issues of perception with social media users whereby some have the idea that service is and will forever remain free; ignoring the issue that an income stream is required to provide the service. The rise of social media marketing poses a direct threat as an alternative marketing tool to product placement as it provides a channel that would be cheaper, easier to control, monitor, change, target and track (Hatton 2018).

1.13 Chapter Conclusions.

The chapter has examined how products placed within films can enhance brand values and improve sales. This chapter also shows the range of both new and old of product placement techniques used, and the perceptual barriers that need to be overcome in order to make an impact with consumers. The differing impacts that these varying forms of product placements have has also been assessed and form the basis for the following research; currently there exists little agreement on how best placements should be undertaken. For example, that merely appearing in shot is enough to guarantee success for a placed product (Russell, (2002); Karniouchina et al (2011)). The chapter includes the importance of the celebrity-brand association for the profile of the individual, for the films they promote and the brands that they are associated with. The chapter outlines the two sides to the product placement process: the way in which products are placed, and how viewers receive these.

The Literature Review has explored the interpretative models from Hall (1980), Dyer (1998), Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (2003), and the work on celebrity attraction from Smith (1995); Pringle (2004); Redmond and Holmes (2007); Sternheimer (2011). These themes have shaped and informed how this research would proceed. For example, the issues raised by Dyer's work on the four categories (emotional affinity, self-identification, imitation, and projection) of the actor-audience parasocial relationships made the researcher aware of the different levels of celebrity influence, not least how different this bond of affection/liking can vary between viewers. Central to this research is the 'celebrity-actor'. Developed as brands in their own right, these individuals are central in marketing communications promotions. With this latter point, it

is clear to see the appeal for marketers to place products in films in order to boost the product's appeal. Filmmakers will also use brands to define their characters and to benefit from pre-film-release income. The chapter highlights celebrity status and product placement as the central topics, but also brand and actor image, the consumers' emotional attachments, while informing how the following methodology and the data collection stages should be approached. The audiences' attitudes towards celebrity-actors and the degree, depth or type of parasocial relationship they have with them (Horton and Wohl, (1956), Wiseman (2011)) is key. Whether the product has a role in the narrative, if it is part of the mise-en-scène or if the brand receives a 'name check' in the dialogue, is also an important element raised here and is worthy of investigation not least because it can overcome stated consumer obliviousness to product placement (Donaton, 2005; Kavallieratou (2013)). The premise that any placement is good, is challenged. This also informs and shapes the research methods; a point developed in the next chapter.

Finally, an example from 1946 showing that well placed products can continue to gain exposure for brands long after the film's initial release. This also highlights the potential of well-judged product placements.

Picture Illustration 1.32. For National Geographic and Coca-Cola: *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946).



Embedded placements in an 'ever-popular' classic showing the potential long-term exposure with Coca-Cola and National Geographic.

Chapter Two

Research:

Methodology and Methods.

2.1 Introduction.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Part One examines the research methods used, while Part Two gives the rationale as to why the research was carried out, reviewing and critiquing the methodology that underpinned and informed the research process.

The focus of the fieldwork concerns the efficacy of product placement as a marketing tool, in order to answer the research questions, the respondents' attitudes and opinions concerning celebrity status and marketing communications first needed to be established; to facilitate this a combination of different research techniques were employed. This chapter highlights the research paradigm adopted with the factors that informed and shaped the study. The key aim will be to assess how, and how often, products appeared in a film, thereby indicating how many opportunities the viewer had to register that the placement had occurred. There will be a review of the role of semiology (Berger, 2010), a tool useful for the interpretation of film and marketing communication images, enabling multiple possible consumer interpretations of each. This chapter also highlights the importance of signs, symbols, logos and semiotics to both marketers and filmmakers alike (Lindner, 2003), and how semiology is used by consumers to inform, influence and reassure them of their purchase preferences.

Stage one of this research was based on quantitative data collection undertaken in a cinema foyer when the researcher administered a questionnaire. The research approach was reconsidered following this process, with the decision made to pursue a qualitatively and mixed methods approach with the use of interviews. This was considered to be a more appropriate approach as it allowed the respondents' voice to be heard; for this in research stage two, 48 respondents were interviewed. This research stage used semi-structured interviews and while they have some limitations (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) they were considered the most effective technique to gather meaningful feedback for this research process. Anderson (2013: 79) states that the semi-structured interviews approach allows participants to express their opinions while the researcher maintains control of the direction of the process. Stage three of the research process involved interviewing six participants who, unlike the second stage interviewees, were aware of the nature of the research and were primed to look for, and be aware of, product placement within films and that it is a form of marketing communications. The focus with these interviewees was to examine issues raised from stage two of the process and to explore these issues in more detail.

Part One

2.2 The Research Strategy, research approach and fit.

In total 86 respondents took part in this research. These were split between those taking the questionnaire in stage one of the research, 32 respondents, and 48 who were later interviewed for the second stage of the process, and six in the stage three interviews. Mason (2010: 38) states that while sample sizes are still 'hotly debated' a mean sample size for qualitative PhDs is 31 respondents. The number used in this research gave a suitable sample for views and opinions.

Stage two research consisted of 24 male and 24 female interviewees; selected through a non-probability approach. One female interviewee here was discarded as the respondent had been informed by another as to the nature of the research, she was therefore primed before the process had begun and thereby considered unsuitable for inclusion. Shown in Table 3.1. (page 131), are the gender and age distribution. The viewer age has been highlighted as a possible factor in placement awareness, and therefore included as a key variable (See Chan, Lowe and Petrovici, 2017). The data gathering locations, and interviewee reactions are discussed below.

In stage one of the research process, a high-profile film was selected and one that would be rich in placed products, namely *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) (Forster, 2008). As a part of the James Bond franchise, it also attracted considerable media coverage as an 'event film' (meaning a high-profile film release and therefore a news item in its own right). This would increase awareness of the film and by association some of the related products. For example, the pre-release publicity with *Spectre* (2015), was started a year before the film's release date (see Supporting Material 18, page 348) generating pre-lease anticipation and interest.

Quantum of Solace and later with *Spectre* (2015) used in stage three of the research, held a high number of high profile placements (such as the cars, watches and alcohol) plus a number of lower profile placements (such

as clothing and sunglasses) thereby making both films suitable for this research. For stage two of the research a conscious decision was made to select a variety of mainstream films that would appeal to a wide range of consumers with three broad genres-dominant film types (drama, romance and comedy). These films have a range of well-known actors and was undertaken in order to make the films appealing to the respondents.

Table 2.1. The Research Films⁶.

Stage One	<i>Quantum of Solace</i> RF1	
Stage Two – Romance <i>The Switch</i> RF2	<i>Letters to Juliet</i> RF3	<i>Morning Glory</i> RF4
Comedy <i>Little Fockers</i> RF5	<i>The Other Guys</i> RF6	<i>Grown Ups</i> RF7
Drama <i>The Mechanic</i> RF8	<i>The Town</i> RF9	<i>The Social Network</i> RF10
Stage Three	<i>Spectre</i> RF11	<i>The Big Short</i> RF12

Giving interviewees a choice of films to watch for the second stage of the process, the 'research films', are listed here as romance, comedy or drama titles. Each title used in the research is indicated with a suffix to indicate that it is a selected film under review. Interviewees regularly mentioned other films as points of comparison or for explanation. In research stage two, most respondents based their choice on which actor/s were in the film, this illustrated how actor

⁶ Research Films are indicated in the text as such, and are numbered from RF1 to RF12, as shown in Table 2.2.

appeal influences film consumption. Stage three of this process was a series of six interviews with RF11 and RF12 both being viewed. These six interviewees were fully aware of the nature of this research and therefore knew that the focus was on product placement as the key subject. Laid out in Table 2.3, is the rationale behind this approach (page 95).

2.3 Questionnaires: the first stage of research.

During the first stage of the data collection assessing the challenges, issues and flaws relating to the quantitative research methods and tools data became clear. The first stage was of value for not only providing initial data, but also helping to influence, inform and shape the second research stage. The approach taken with stage one research was for collecting only quantitative data. As commensurate with established practice, a first stage, was undertaken in order to assess the potential of the research process, problems, issues and discover flaws relating to the research methods, tools and data collection elements of research. Clough and Nutbrown (2002: 104) state:

It is always best to pilot your interview ideas first with a small number of people who are similar to your sample.

This proved prophetic as, inevitably, issues arose during this stage which led to a change being made in favour of qualitatively orientated interviews being adopted. The questionnaires were a useful tool; Denscombe states that questionnaires are designed "to discover things" with 'consistency and precision' (2007: 153). On this basis, the stage one research did just this. Using questionnaires alone however, proved to be insufficient for this research and for hearing the interviewees' voice and another strategy was required, as is seen below.

It is acknowledged that producing a questionnaire that is 'fit for purpose' is not straight-forward: Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2011: 390) note for example how difficult it can be when needed to disguise the purpose of the research and to discover subconsciously held information. Bertrand and Hughes (2005: 66) also pose a basic question for the would-be researcher regarding the

accessibility of interview subjects, “how easy will it be to find suitable people”. This is a simple yet central point as without access to a suitable sample the research would not have ‘critical mass’ in order to make it either worthwhile or valid (White, 2000). Targeting cinemagoers though, appeared to be an obvious way to overcome this issue.

Although aware of the limitations of using questionnaires, they were useful as they offered direction for the following research. For testing and assessing the proposed data collection approach and appropriateness of the questionnaire, a list of eight questions for audiences leaving a cinema was compiled; the aim was to assess two specific areas. Firstly, to ascertain that after watching a particular film would viewers actually be able to recall any branded products, and secondly would this placement exposure change their perception of the brand values or image - these points being the foundations of the product placement industry (Galician, 2004).

Questionnaires have limitations (Denscombe, 2007). Thirty-two individuals were questioned for this stage of the research. An obvious problem with questionnaires is any poorly phrased or badly worded questions; these are likely to result in skewed or corrupted data. Without careful thought a question may not use the appropriate vocabulary or cover the possible alternatives leaving respondents giving “the least inaccurate response” (Brace, 2008: 16). Peterson (2000: 13) comments:

Unless a researcher asks the right questions in the right way, a research project will not produce useful information, no matter how well other research aspects are designed and executed.

Well-constructed questionnaires can produce useful data and be a ‘valuable tool’ for research, but not all research (Saunders, et al, 2009). The limitations of using only questionnaires in this research quickly became apparent during the stage one process. With this first stage the interviewee voice was missing with the focus on only recall rather than the interviewee attitudes towards the products being expressed, this is shown in detail below when the process of the first stage is reviewed.

Getting access to film goers for the first stage was straightforward with assistance being offered from two Canterbury cinemas; the 'ODEON' and 'Screen 3', a cinema in Westgate and a multiplex in Wimbledon were also options. However, only the ODEON was required. Access to respondents immediately after they had viewed *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) was the approach for the first stage. As Brace (2008: 19) comments "Memory is notoriously unreliable" and so to counter this speaking to film consumers immediately after viewing while the film was fresh in their minds was instigated. Detaining potential respondents to talk to in the cinema foyer as they left the screening was straightforward, most people approached were receptive to being asked questions after the initial greeting from the interviewer of 'Hello. How did you enjoy the film?' The researcher was also wearing a polo shirt and sweatshirt professionally embroidered with the words 'Film Research' and the Canterbury Christ Church University logo clearly displayed.

Picture 2.0. Interviewer Apparel.



The interviewer wore clearly embroidered apparel, indicating where the researcher was from, and that he was carrying out 'Film Research'.

The friendly approach used, and suitable clothing worn, assisted in engaging with people and as Creswell (2009) notes, getting access to the research subjects is essential to all other activities. A major drawback was that during the time that it took to interact with just one respondent the cinema foyer area had inevitably emptied of departing patrons, making it a challenge to speak to many individuals after each screening. In order to overcome this problem of low respondent numbers a further screening of the film in a lecture theatre was arranged for the week that the *Quantum of Solace* DVD was released; this screening was open to all Canterbury Christ Church University undergraduates. This generated an audience of 36 people resulting in 18 respondents; bringing the total number of respondents to 32. White (2000: 31) states that the first stage study will:

Ensure questions are clear to understand and helps remove ambiguity.

The design of each stage of the research built on this advice.

The findings from the questionnaires though, were unanticipated by the researcher with the number of respondents who claimed not to have seen any brands at all. On reflection however, the interviewer's awareness of product placements would be high compared to general film consumers so the response and lack of observation by some of the interviewees should not have been unexpected. White (2000: 66) highlights this potential problem of researcher subjectiveness warning "the researcher may unwittingly introduce bias". A point that Miles and Huberman (1994) raise with awareness of an issue being the first stage of taking action to counterbalance bias. From this the research was better informed as investigating attitudes objectivity was required. Creswell (2009: 7) states:

Being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry; researchers must examine methods and conclusions for bias.

On reflection however, some respondents could have claimed not to see any brands in order to shorten the time taken to answer the questions (Quinton and Smallbone, 2008). Crouch and Housden (1996: 138) note:

The questionnaire should make it easy for respondents to give true answers and care must be taken to avoid questions or words that may 'lead' respondents into giving false answers that do not reflect their true opinions.

Additionally, respondents may give answers in order to please the interviewer (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). There are some other obvious reasons why some individuals refuse to engage with questioning (Aaker, Kumar, Day and Leone, 2011: 200):

People refuse to answer survey questions for a number of reasons. Fear is the main reason for refusal. Other reasons might be that some think of surveys as an invasion of privacy.

In order to overcome such issues, it is not enough just to be 'merely aware' of these factors, there is the need to conduct fieldwork that is non-threatening in order to gather enough data that can be usefully reviewed and analysed at a later date (Aaker et al, 2011).

2.4. How Stage One informed the Stage Two Research Approach.

This experience gained from this first stage of data collection illustrated the need for a different approach to gather more appropriate and useable material for the progression of the research. This prompted the implementation of a new data collection strategy. The questionnaires were carried out by showing the respondents brand names on a laminated sheet (see S.M.3, page 334) while the interviewer recorded their responses; this was found to be quick, efficient and had minimal intrusiveness. This enabled the interviewee to assess quickly that there were only a few questions and that this would not overly delay them, increasing their willingness to participate in this fieldwork.

A flaw with this approach was that simply being able to recall a branded product would tell the researcher little about the consumer's attitudes about placements, placement methods or possible purchase intentions. This point was confirmed by one stage two research participant who said she 'easily recalled' brand promotions but that this said nothing about her attitudes or purchase intentions towards those brands; to underline this point she said *'I'm well aware of McDonald's, but never eat there'*.

Even with film-associated marketing campaigns Burns and Bush (2010) state that brand recall from films is difficult, although Matthes, Schemer and

Wirth (2007) suggest that placements do not need to be recalled to have an impact. It appeared, after the first four responses to the questionnaires, that respondents were vague as to which brands they preferred: this prompted the first change to the research. It was clear from the responses that with questionnaires a 'no preference' option should be available. Creswell (2009: 7) supports such an approach of using and then adapting the approach noting that:

Research is the process of making claims and then refining or abandoning some of them for other claims more strongly warranted.

This also relates to a point raised by Burns and Bush (2010). They argue that interviewees often give false answers, as they 'may feel embarrassed' or (Burns and Bush, 2010: 433):

might want to protect their privacy, or may even be suspect that the interviewer has a hidden agenda, such as suddenly turning the interview into a sales pitch.

Other respondents may simply be bored, tired or distracted resulting in response mistakes or lack of accuracy (Brace, 2008). Providing a 'no preference' option for further respondents was then a conscious decision and assisted in obtaining workable responses and, moreover, to encourage respondents to provide answers and overcome some resistance or reluctance to participate with the questionnaire: this approach was also recommended by Bertrand and Hughes (2005: 73) as a 'sound, pragmatic way to proceed'.

Picture Illustration 2.1.

Quantum of Solace Placed Products and Supporting Marketing.



Left, a screenshot of the Aston Martin DBS and two Alfa Romeo 159s. Right, a promotional shot for 'The James Bond Limited Edition Alfa Romeo 159' pictured in front of the distinctive Intelligence Services building on the Albert Embankment, London (the building featured in the film). Most interviewees failed to mention these placements.

The first stage study was of the utmost use, not least because of how it influenced the design of the second stage interviewing process. A significant outcome from the first stage was the number of respondents who claimed to have a 'no preference' response to the brands shown. This may have been an early indication that for many viewers product placements are not noticed, or at least not on a conscious level; a factor discovered by previous studies (see Lehu, 2009; Kavallieratou, 2013). Given in S.M.3 (page 333) are the results for the brand preferences from the questionnaires which illustrate this point.

The experience gained during this first stage was invaluable not least because, perhaps conversely, the information gained was limited; it was clear that a different approach would be required to gather suitable data. For example, in response to one question respondents may have felt obliged to name the mobile phone brand that they already possessed rather than admit that they preferred another (a type of 'dishonest' or 'skewed' response outlined by Burns and Bush, 2010). It is recognised intentions do not neatly translate into behaviour (Wiseman, 2011). Ulrich and Sarasin (1995: 12), comment negatively:

One thing is clear, don't do any research. Don't ask the public any questions on this subject. The answers are never reliable. In instances where the head says one thing and the heart another, studies are useless if not misleading.

They directly question the public's reliability but overlook the ability of individuals to hold dual views or even for the context to change and the answers to change correspondingly (Evans, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). Ulrich and Sarasin's (1995) observation may also reflect the feedback from poorly framed questions. The issues discovered in this first stage of research were of great value; this shaped and enhanced the second stage of the research process.

2.5 The process of selecting a suitable sampling frame: the second stage research.

While the first research stage was insufficient to collect the responses required to address the research questions; this was considered with the design of stage two of the research process. Producing the research data needed to

yield detailed and substantive qualitative responses, in which the stage two (and three) interviewees freely expressed their opinions, had to derive from semi-structured interviews. While this approach can bring problems (Burns and Bush, 2006) this is offset by allowing the individual the opportunity to discuss their opinions and not passively answering a questionnaire. In the second and third stage of this fieldwork a qualitative approach was used to gather data. This included indications from the interviewees of their overall enjoyment of films, attitudes towards actors, thoughts about a film, and their perceptions of the influence and impact of the products placed within those films. Exposing any interviewee points that might enhance brand image or values for products or for celebrity-actors, or any relationships or associations between these, was the cornerstone of this study. As Kumar (2005: 10) writes, there is a need:

To ascertain if there is a relationship / association / interdependency between two or more aspects of a situation.

Using semi-structured interviews saw that this was achieved effectively (Creswell, 2013). Asking appropriate individualised additional questions as needed addressed this issue efficiently. The most important outcome of the first stage research was the realisation that what was required from this study was the respondents' opinions and attitudes about brands. Also required was whether brands associated with celebrity actors enhanced those values. In this way it would be possible to begin to assess the linkages between marketing communication, celebrity status and product placement. Reflecting on the issues raised by the first stage then, it was clear that in order to obtain data for this research interviewing would be required in order to produce valuable qualitative data.

To collect useable data a sampling frame was required:

A randomly drawn sample is one in which every member of the population has a calculable chance of being included in the sample (Crouch and Housden, 1996: 118).

A sample of almost any film audience represent no more than only their own opinions and attitudes at the time of the interview, given that opinions can vary even over time or be flawed in the moment of answering (Malhotra, Birks and Wills, 2012). The respondents for this research were found through a process

of non-probability sampling (convenience and snowball) (Creswell, 2009; Burns and Bush, 2010). Respondents were supplied with a copy of their film of choice to watch in whichever manner suited them, interviewees' watching an entire film was considered representative of their normal film consumption. Unlike other studies into product placement (McKechnie and Zhou, 2015) it was considered important to avoid using the approach of showing interviewees a truncated film segment of, for example, 10-15 minutes, and then asking questions as this would have felt too much like a 'laboratory memory test' and would less likely reveal data addressing the questions posed. No restrictions or advice as to how stage two or three interviewees should view the films was given so as not to make the process feel alien or pressured; as a result, some respondents watched it alone and some with others, in line with their normal modes of consumption.

Interviewing respondents within 24 hours so that the film was still fresh in their minds was undertaken. They were also interviewed in locations of their choice in order for them to feel comfortable and relaxed with the process; this included in their homes, offices, other workspaces and even gardens. Robins, Spranca and Mendelsohn (1996), comment that the act of observation impacts and changes the observed reality, the intention here was that by watching a whole film at their leisure and in their normal manner should reduce or remove this potential distortion. The researcher was aware that conducting the interview in a manner that would establish trust and build rapport was important in order to get candid comments from the respondents (Fontana and Frey, 2008).

The interviews themselves were more straightforward than anticipated, participants seemed both pleased and willing to discuss films; many of them also thanked the interviewer on the conclusion of the process saying that they had enjoyed the process. Within qualitative research, the subject of research participant enjoyment of the research experience has received little attention (Blackman and Commane, 2012); it did though enrich the process of data collection in this study. Film consumption was clearly of importance to the respondents in this research, and perhaps one of the reasons they were happy to become involved in this process.

Interviewees were typically energised and enthusiastic to discuss films, which made the interviewing process enjoyable and productive. Conducting the interviews in a convivial atmosphere meant that the interviewees were relaxed and forthcoming with their opinions. Giving interviewees a choice of films so that they were able to select one that would be of interest to them was important; this free choice enhanced the interview process. The transition to a qualitatively focused semi-structured interview was ideal for the flexibility it provided, and for yielding quality data.

2.6 Interviewing: The third stage of the research.

With stage three of this research, six interviewees were selected. These participants were aware of the subject of the research before they viewed the two films. The films selected were the James Bond movie *Spectre* (2015) and *The Big Short* (McKay, 2015). The rationale for these choices is set out in the table below on page 107.

With the focus on interviewing individuals with prior knowledge of the subject matter, stage three aims to further explore issues surrounding awareness of product placement and the viewers' responses to it. As with previous research carried out as part of this PhD, the emphasis is on the qualitative responses from participants and their attitudes towards the product placement issues raised from the two previous stages of this research. Stage three gave a chance for a focus to be given to the themes that emerged from the earlier research, and for a period of critical informed reflection to be undertaken. Asking informed respondents directly, and with subject forewarning, questions concerning product placement resulted in the gaining of a set of considered opinions and rich data much of which directly addressed the themes that emerged from the earlier research. This data would further inform and shape the research outcomes of this study. This also supported why a qualitative approach was most appropriate for this study.

Table 2.3.
Stage Three Film Selection Rationale.

Rationale: One	<i>Spectre</i> continues the Bond theme that forms a central part a central part of this research and has often been referred to by participants and authors, using the latest instalment of the franchise extends this practice.
Two	Both films have a good number of high and low-price products placed with appeal to consumers on a range of incomes (low priced lager to high performance, high priced cars for example). This gives a selection of products that would appeal to a range of potential consumers.
Three	<i>The Big Short</i> is a different genre to the action spectacle of <i>Spectre</i> and provides a good contrast. This genre difference will allow me to investigate how relevant a film's genre is to how viewers recognise and/or consume product placement. This difference may be relevant for how viewers internalize films and any placements held therein. This films also contains a complicated plot. Would this, like the dialogue in <i>The Social Network</i> , require the respondents to concentrate more on the plot than other films and therefore miss placements?
Four	Both films have contemporary settings with current and familiar products being placed: this could aid viewer recognition.
Five	<i>Spectre</i> has UK and international filming locations. <i>The Big Short</i> is filmed predominantly in the USA. Differences in location and brand familiarity may be telling with product placement recognition. This point considers preceding examples given by respondents in Stage Two of the research such as Duane Reade, Dunkin Donuts, LiceGuard, Avalanche and others. These came from previously used films; the brands were unrecognized by interviewees which they claimed was due to their unfamiliarity with some American brands.
Six	<i>The Big Short</i> contains some placements that are inconsistent with the timeframe, would viewers notice, and would it distract from the narrative?

This movement to the qualitative approach from a quantitative approach enabled better access to the participant's own experience and attitudes, allowing them to give their interpretation and meaning to their viewing consumption. The flexibility that interviewing allowed was shaped by the nature of the research questions and met the needs of this thesis for allowing the stage two and three interviewees' voices and variations in opinions and attitudes to be heard. While the questionnaire stage recorded what, if anything, respondents had noticed, it was only in the interview stages that provided an exploration of their observations and their attitudes. With this natural variation that Graham (2003) refers to there was another important point to acknowledge from a pragmatic perspective. This is the theory that people are shaped by their culture (Chan, Petrovici and Lowe, 2016), experiences and that they are influenced by new stimuli and that researchers need to approach their work with a degree of understanding and empathy (see The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model, Diagram 1.3, page 22). Graham (2003: 130) argues that when dealing with interviewees that "Most of all the observer needs to be sensitive". This was true not least with the selecting and approach to data collection keeping in mind the points above with those from Saunders et al (2009: 20), namely:

When researchers conduct qualitative research they are embracing the idea of multiple realities.

This underpins the research ethos with this study being that variations on opinions, attitudes, taste and judgement from interviewees will differ markedly and that this is to be expected. Maintaining interviewer objectivity in order to obtain data that is valid for purposes of later analysis in this process was recognised (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). Angrosino (2008: 72) states: "*Objectivity remains central to the self-images of most practitioners of the social and behavioural sciences*". It is also important in order for the researcher to acquire sound data that they must strive to achieve the 'harmonisation of empathy and detachment' (Denzin and Lincoln 2008: 162). The research here achieved this objective; the next section outlines the reasons that support this.

2.7 The interviews, why they were the ideal data-gathering tool for this research.

Interviews proved to be the indispensable tool for this research and, as Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010: 125) suggest, "Interviews are often considered the best data collection methods". As a starting point here Saunders et al (2009: 318), provide the definition:

An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people.

This is a simple yet complex point in that the interview needs to be purposeful, focused on the research question/s, and with an approach designed to yield useful feedback; interviews according to Riley, Wood, Clark, Wilkie and Szivas (2000: 90) are:

...especially good at collecting information on facts and opinions from people.

There are though different types of interview, including semi-structured, in-depth and group interviews, each with its own advantages. The unifying advantage interviews have is affording the (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 74):

interviewee to respond in their own terms, through their own linguistic structures.

As a result of the interviewing, the respondent's voice is heard in the process.

Riley, et al (2005), point out there are many considerations with the design of interviews. They draw notice for the need to ensure that the interview is focused on the research question/s, worded in a clear, unambiguous manner, while allowing for a wide range of responses and also allow or limit the 'don't know' responses (Riley et al, 2005: 95). After several redrafting exercises, the interview achieved a balance of questions and the chance for respondents to express themselves. This process also took into account the point made by Hussey and Hussey (1997: 156) when they commented that interviews are not only useful in ascertaining individual attitudes towards services or products but that they also "...make it easy to compare answers" thereby adding a rich dimension to this data collection process. Conducting interviews in the same manner for stimulus equivalence is essential (Hussey and Hussey, 1997: 157). The

semi-structured interviews used in the research allowed for this and struck a balance between set parameters while permitting a degree of flexibility. This proved to be of use when researching for this thesis as the questions used allowed for consistency, while the flexibility of the approach allowed respondents to be able to express fully their thoughts, opinions and observations.

While it is argued that all interviews, even highly structured and highly formalised ones, carry a degree of presupposition and an element of subjectiveness, the quality of data that they produce is invaluable (Saunders et al, 2009). Clearly interviewing is an artificially constructed event to enable data collection. In this fieldwork it was found respondents positively embraced the interviewing process. Interviewing allows researchers the opportunity to 'capture meaning and interpretation' from interviewees, essential for the qualitative aspect of the process (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). For the interview process one of the most useful techniques used was that of laddering which is employed to move the interviewees from statements of what they regard as facts; (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008: 146):

Upwards in such a way that they gradually begin to reveal the individual's value base.

Two examples from the stage two interviews illustrate this point are the questions "Do you associate any of these actors with any particular brands or products?" and "For the associations and brands that you have recalled, what in particular, would you say, were the reasons for remembering these actors and products/brands?". This style of questioning was useful for giving stage two and three interviewees the chance to name any actor/product combination and then to give reasons for the recall; this latter point was often revealing as factors such as 'amusement', 'being clever' or even 'awfulness' were often cited thereby giving an insight into what made an impact with consumers. While there are other approaches available to use it was felt that laddering was most suited in this case as it took respondents on a path which eventuated with placed products. The semi-structured approach and the laddering

technique enabled the interviewees to discuss issues that were important to them while keeping them on track to address the research topics required by the interviewer. Laddering also adds to the cross-referencing potential of the interview data offering improved validity.

2.8 Part Two: The adopted philosophical assumptions, the research paradigm and the grounded theory approach.

In Part Two, the rationale as to why the research was undertaken in the manner adopted, the selected methodology that underpins and informed the investigation process, is outlined and reviewed. The research methods and methodology used in this interdisciplinary PhD operate at a philosophical, social and at a practical level (Collis and Hussey, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). The approach required for this study does not fall neatly into any single form suggested by some texts, nor is this to be discouraged (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2015). From Clough and Nutbrown's observations (2002) it is clear that this situation is not unusual. Weaver and Gioia (1994) outline the tensions in research methods but also show how combined approaches in the social sciences can be beneficial, that to get the most satisfactory results researchers should approach their work in an open and flexible manner. The research literature review proved invaluable for informing the approach and alternatives to the fieldwork here by shaping the research methods in the pursuit of answers to the research questions. In the pursuit of evidence, researchers need to make statements and claims that are credible, valid and of value. Creswell (2009: 7) reinforces this point stating:

Research seeks to develop relevant, true statements, ones that can serve to explain the situation of concern or that describe the causal relationship of interest.

Creswell (2009: 7) further illustrates the elusive nature of research, he writes:

It is for this reason that researchers state that they do not prove a hypothesis; instead they indicate a failure to reject a hypothesis.

Undertaking careful deliberation in selecting the most appropriate approach was essential. Firstly, a *bricoleur* approach was adopted (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 4), which suited this research as it allowed for what Yardley (2008) describes

as an inclusive and dynamic dialogue between the researcher and the audience. In order to elicit suitable data from this audience and for the audiences' voice to be heard a grounded theory approach was adopted. Charmaz and Henwood (2008: 241) define grounded theory as follows;

We gather data, compare them, remain open to all possible theoretical understandings of the data, and develop tentative interpretations about these data through our codes and nascent categories. Then we go back to the field and gather more data to check and refine our categories.

Glaser (1998: 12), also comments that the nature and usefulness of grounded theory is multivariate "It happens sequentially, subsequently, simultaneously, serendipitously, and scheduled". Shown below this approach, with the developing of codes, interpretations and a return to the audience has been used in this research. Next, the original model of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in turn this draws from Max Weber's (1922/2017) important work on interpretivism. This approach also had the advantage of allowing the interviewee's voice to be heard in the data via the semi-structured interviews employed. The research technique allowed for interview participants to be reflective and consider what is important to them and how they view the issues being investigated. In this manner sensitivity is shown to the researcher positionality while using a grounded theory approach to generate data upon which the interpretation is founded.

2.9 Selecting the most suitable methods, tools and techniques.

During the fieldwork the researcher found that terms are often used by respondents either vaguely, subjectively, incorrectly, interchangeably or contradictorily; what one viewer regards as a 'great film', 'superb acting' or 'effective placement' would be rejected by the next. The priority though for the researcher was to let the respondents' voice be heard and this importantly includes the contradictions, variations and nuances. Consumers interpret film images in subjective ways. An individual's opinion about an actor's personality or appeal is of great commercial importance, but it remains a personal, changeable and subjective matter. With this research an actor's image (and their celebrity status) is a key determinate for 'if' and then 'how' a film is consumed. Other factors such as the film genre, familiarity with characters

(especially with franchise films) or even the comfort and convenience of the place of viewing is of significance in terms of potential variances for research outcomes. Karniouchina et al (2011), identified that some film genres were more suitable for placements than others; this is also reviewed in this research.

In terms of the strategy used in this thesis Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015) set out their 'Research Onion' model (next) showing the philosophies, methods and choices available from one layer/level of the research process to another which offers a coherent framework for researchers to build on. The 'Onion' reveals the stages and elements of the research process; this was relevant for demonstrating the many possible routes when undertaking research. The choices made here are not to suggest that one philosophical approach is better than another but rather that one approach suits certain needs better than an alternative (Johnson and Clark, 2006). However, Saunders et al (2009: 109), sound a note of caution here, stating:

...the practical reality is that a particular research question rarely falls neatly into only one philosophical domain as suggested by the 'onion'.

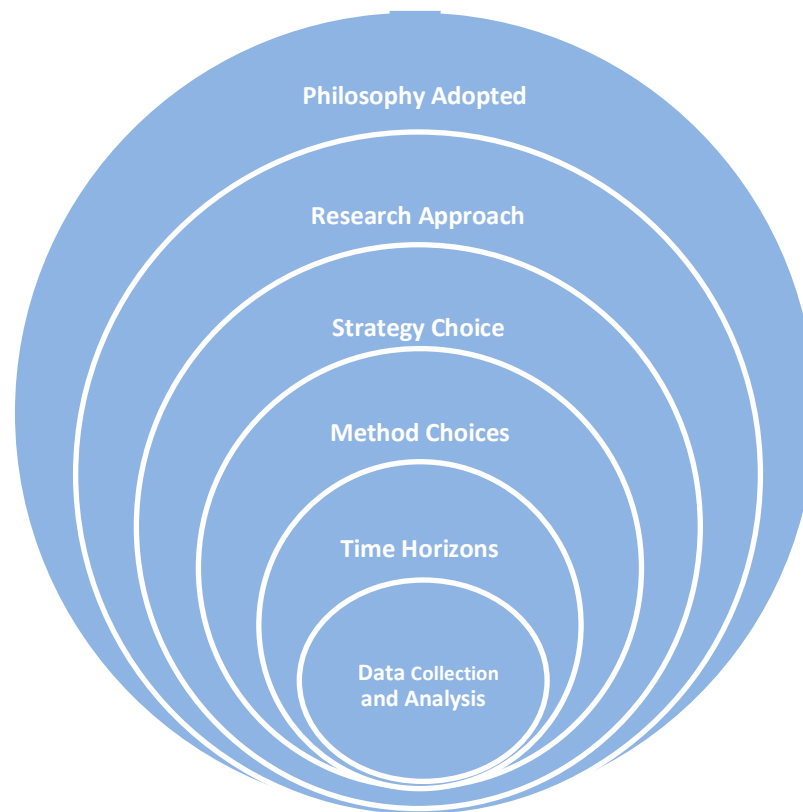
With methods and methodology, Clough and Nutbrown also sound a note of caution and highlight the importance of using a suitable combination of research elements, they state (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002: 22):

*Distinction can be seen in terms of **methods** as being some of the ingredients of research, while **methodology** provides the reasons for using a particular research recipe [their emphasis].*

It was apparent that there would not be a simple 'off-the-peg' research solution as a key aim here was to investigate subjective opinions and attitudes; Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 4) write:

The researcher, in turn, may be seen as a bricoleur, as a maker of quilts, or as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages.

Diagram 2.1., **The Research Onion.**



Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 34) maintain that 'montage creates the sense that images, sounds and understandings are blended together, overlapping, forming a composite, a new creation' and that 'the images seem to shape and define one another'. The need for such a '*bricoleur*' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) research paradigm for this thesis was required. With using a grounded theory approach to data collection to inform the research process and analysis the thesis seeks to capture the reflexivity of the qualitative studies to offer validity (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010).

2.10 Using grounded theory to understand interviewees as consumers.

For this research, a grounded theory approach and an awareness of semiotics were particularly useful for gathering data, and for interpreting film and marketing communications. Grounded theory proved essential for

this research, it allows for flexibility and accommodates the varying positions of participants while allowing the researcher to inductively produce theories based on the analysis of the data collected (Urquhart, 2013). Glaser, as co-founder of grounded theory as a research tool (in 1967, giving it time to have become a well-established, if a somewhat debated theory (Corbin and Strauss; 2015)) presented the following as a definition of it a decade later;

[Grounded theory] is the systematic generation of theory from data that has itself been systematically obtained (Glaser, 1978: 2).

It can be seen with this research and the three data collection stages that the grounded theory approach has been integral. Moreover, as outlined by, among others, Bryant and Charmaz (2010), grounded theory approach discusses systematic inductive approaches for undertaking qualitative research. A grounded theory approach towards the data gathered, through hearing the interviewees' voice was how the researcher here systematically interpreted to generate research findings. A grounded theory approach to data has the two main key features, firstly it is a method that comprises of methodological strategies that are responsive; this then produces outcomes from this form of research. Secondly, a grounded theory approach also allows individuals to concurrently hold seemingly contradictory views on subjects, as seen below this facet proved invaluable for this research. Also, of value is that a grounded theory outlook also allows for both contradictory participant position and for the modification of the researcher's position, this proved to be useful as the interviewees' voice informed and shaped the on-going research, not least with stage three of the interviewing process.

Urquhart, Lehmann and Meyers (2010) outline the four central characteristics of the grounded theory method (GTM) as being:

- 1) To enable the building of analysis and theory from the data gathered.
- 2) Researchers are encouraged to have less focus on preconceived theoretical ideas before they start the research process. Urquhart (2013), describes this as the having an 'empty mind', not an 'empty head' approach.

- 3) Analysis and the development of concepts is formulated via the method of constantly searching for similarities with other data gathered. This style of data analysis will either reinforce and enrich themes and issues or result in new themes or relationships emerging.
- 4) The elements of data will suggest areas of research that can be used for further investigation.

Indeed Walsh, Holton, Bailyn, Fernandez, Levina and Glaser (2015: 620), describe GTM as 'urgent and significant' in the field of management research. Furthermore, they argue, it "highlights data driven exploratory approaches in opposition to theory-driven confirmatory approaches" (2015: 620). Walsh et al (2015: 621), also state that GTM is a newer approach and while it does not fit traditional 'neat and tidy caricatures' that feature well with established practices, it has an advantage of allowing for a researcher to adopt a flexible stance that permits the use of the methods that suit the data – and the changing landscape of the data collection. This in turns resonates with the researcher's situation. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 13) describe grounded theory as:

A strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, to inaction grounded on the views of participants.

Bryman (2015: 691) has a similar approach but with a stronger emphasis on the participants' voice, describing grounded theory as;

An iterative approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two.

As with Creswell and Creswell (2018), Bryman (2015) has an emphasis on the interviewees being placed at the centre of this method of inquiry. This approach is shared by Glaser and Strauss and is shared across their differing lines of approach with the method. Glaser (in Walsh et al, 2015: 625) further describes the method as:

Grounded Theory is simply the discovery of emerging patterns in data. Grounded Theory is the generation of theories from data.

The unifying agreement with GTM is that the theory derives from the data, thereby allowing, and arguably wholly depending, on the voice of the

interviewees to be heard and for it to resonate throughout the research. One idea the researcher here has used is with the idea of celebrity brand associations, based on data gleaned from research participants. Earlier work from Glaser (1992), states that other research method can stifle the data to the point that it can, when taken to an extreme, make the data overlooked and unable to speak for itself. This is the opposite of what is being aimed at here. The central driver of this research is for the participants' voices to be heard and for any themes to evolve unimpeded from the data when analysed. What this research required, and GTM affords, is a pragmatic and flexible approach. The origins of GTM with Glaser and Strauss in 1967, was not the theory it is some fifty plus years later. From soon after publication however the authors were divided in their opinion of how GTM should be employed. From as early as the 1970s the grounded theory method was developed further by the authors (and others, see also by Glaser individually, Strauss with Corbin (1990, 2008 and 2015), and Charmaz, 2006) with Glaser developing a more flexible approach to GTM with dozens of variations on approaches being forwarded (Urquhart, 2012). In this thesis, this central approach of grounded theory has not been to produce theory but to discover patterns of emerging data and offer a sense of research findings.

This process of investigation has been enabled by the researcher's stance and his positionality. What made the research a useful, and a pleasurable, experience was a shared passion for films with the respondents. As outlined above, bias is a potential problem for any researcher and acknowledging and addressing the issue is essential. Minimising bias and/or addressing it is a topic raised by Savin-Baden and Major (2012: 70), with the comment that removing all bias is something 'some researchers believe to be impossible'. Emanating from bias is the key factor of the researcher's positionality. Positionality has been defined by Qin (2016: 619) as:

Positionality is the practice of a researcher delineating his or her own position in relation to the study, with the implication that this position may influence aspects of the study, such as the data collected or the way in which it is interpreted.

The positionality of this researcher has been alluded to above but requires a fuller profiling. As Savin-Baden and Major (2012: 71) state 'researcher positionality is critical to locate researchers' not least as 'a research question is driven by researcher interest'. Furthermore, they state, it requires the researcher 'to consider how they view themselves as well as how others view them', Savin-Baden and Major (2012: 71).

The researcher's position statement is as follows. The researcher has held a fascination and love of film since a young age. The first film he viewed in a cinema (*Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*, Annakin, 1965) at the age of three years old, not only instilled a sense of wonder at the viewing spectacle, but added a further layer of interest and appeal by containing scenes shot on Dover seafront with which he was familiar. The latter could be considered an example of location placement. Many years and hundreds of films later the researcher had noticed how often films contained products and brands whose appearance seemed more than just co-incidental. Examples of this notably include Seiko watch, and a blatant billboard placement for British Airways in *Moonraker* (Gilbert, 1979). Many other films and observed placements followed. The idea of researching films and their potential as successful marketing tool began to formulate when the researcher became a member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and was working as a marketing lecturer.

The discussion with a colleague over the placement of Perrier products in *GoldenEye* (1995) (outlined in the Preface on page XV) ignited a persistent curiosity. An initial investigation revealed extensive research in the area of product placements and their role in film, but the results were conflicting and often illustrated with what appeared to be examples of remarkable success, such as with Reese's Pieces in *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982). These factors not only inspired and motivated the researcher to engage with this topic as an area of research, but also laid the foundations for adopting a grounded approach that sought to hear and share the consumers', as viewer and interviewee, voice. This stance lead towards the pull of the inductive and reflexive approach. Savin-Baden and Major (2012: 76) observe;

that reflexivity helps the researcher to consider that it is not possible to remain outside of the research and look in; rather, the researcher is both integral and integrated into the research.

For the researcher here this approach seemed most appropriate and indeed useful as his knowledge of films and actors quickly helped form a relaxed interview encounter. With interviewing participants and discussing films not familiar to the researcher, the shared interest in film enabled open discussions to be undertaken, much to the benefit for the richness of data collected. The interests and biography of the researcher was elemental in this process. Denzin (1986: 12) underscores the importance of this with the observation that:

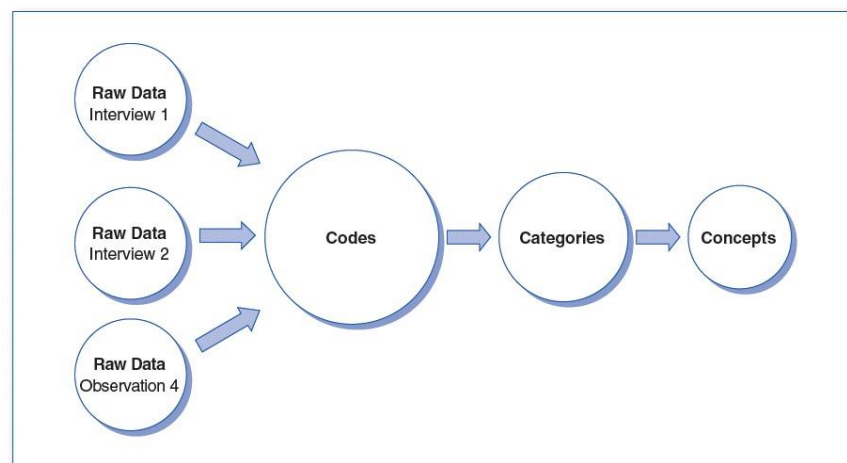
Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher.

While the researcher does not contest Denzin's observation and indeed agrees with the sentiment of it, this should not distract from the grounded theory approach used here or the drive to have the participants' voice as the central, dominant feature.

With film and product placement research undertaken here the context of *who* is seen with a product, *how* consumers read a character and the setting of scene (see Billy-Bob Thornton in *Bad Santa* (Zwigoff, 2003) on page 278 for the development of this point), would be key to the associations given to the interpretations made by the consumer. (See Tables 4.4 and 4.3, with the product placements made in *The Switch* (RF2) (Gordon and Speck, 2010) as an example. The grounded theory approach to data collection and hearing the respondents' voice in the research is vital. Their voice(s) provided the opportunity for the interpretation of their thoughts and opinions in relation to film, promotion and celebrity status to be taken into account on how product placements within films are perceived by film consumers and by potential product consumers. This process additionally corresponds with communications models used here such as Hall (1980), and Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (2003). For those examining advertising, marketing and film, Neuendorf (2002) notes that marketing and film both deal with communication and therefore the nature of meaning is central to understanding both. Krippendorff (2004) and

Lichtman (2012) both note the need, and processes, for identifying research themes. With the iterative process of interviewing these themes become clear, or at least clearer, with the repetition of the interview process and is useful in supporting the grounded theory approach in looking for patterns within the data.

Diagram 2.2, **Lichtman's Three Cs.**



Lichtman's Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts (2012).

Using an inductive approach, the observations from the interviews then coalesced into themes (Bernard, 2011), which enabled the researcher to identify and develop the data gathered in the interviews and form it into something useable with the isolation of issues (Reissman, 2008). Bazeley (2009, 92) describes the process as looking at interpretation that results in pattern analysis, it is these patterns and themes that are sought by the researcher. Lichtman (2012: 252) describes the 'Three Cs of Data Analysis' as collecting raw interview data and then collating this into codes, then into categories and finally into concepts; she presents this diagrammatically, above. With analysis of research data there are limitations, such as with issues of inference and reliability (Kohlbacher, 2006). Lichtman (2012: 262) also states:

In qualitative research analysis, there is nothing that says that one set of interpretations is better than another.

The qualitative researcher must be able to identify important elements and use them to identify and reflect on the issues raised from the data gathering process. Context is essential for understanding the impact that placements have on potential consumers. The grounded theory approach

to the analysis of the data ensures that the research participants are kept at the centre of the research process, as Madden (2010: 8) comments "Data means little without a human touch". Miles and Huberman (1994: 1) also comment that this approach enables the researcher to:

see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations.

These 'fruitful explanations' give this research depth and richness while keeping the voice of the participants. A sense of awareness of the interviewees and their role in this study was essential for the researcher in order to not only collect the data, but to then translate the data into findings after themes have been identified and the data reflected upon. Lincoln and Guba (2005: 210) write:

Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher [and that] It is a conscious experiencing of the self as inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself.

Reflexivity is key here for content analysis, Krippendorff (2004: xiii) writes:

It is a method that is both powerful and unobtrusive. It makes sense of what is mediated between people – textual matter, symbols, messages, information, mass-media content, and technology-supported social interactions – without perturbing or affecting those who handle the textual matter.

The grounded theory approach requires the researcher to have the ability to use shared elements of biography as a valuable strand to this work (Rosenthal, 2004). A combined knowledge of film and marketing furnished the researcher with an ability to understand the subject areas and the interviewees' responses. This is essential for grounded research (Burns and Bush, 2010).

Using semi-structured interviews assisted the researcher by providing the flexibility to explore points raised. This includes examples such as the interviewees' interpretation of the meaning behind why a character drove a certain car or drank a particular beverage, and if the effect of such a placement be greater due to the style of placement or the number of times the placement is screened. These interviews also allowed for the retention of the same overall interview structure from the first

respondent to the last. Research has limitations, such as whether it is adequately reflexive, or the interviewer's role in the process of reaching what Gubrium and Holstein (2002) refer to as a mutually accomplished story whereby the interviewees' voice is clearly represented. As Schreier (2012) states the researcher needs to have the ability to 'interpret the meaning' of her/his/their material, this has been valuable with this research especially when considering the number and diverse types of placements featured and the impact these have on consumers.

To illustrate the importance of context and for using an appropriate research method the Payne Fund Studies (1929–1932) are informative, these studies surveyed the effects of films on young viewers. Initially set to investigate the impact of war propaganda the research showed that films had enough impact to suggest (Lowery and DeFleur, 1988: 41):

...new ideas to children; to influence their attitudes; stimulate their emotions; present moral standards different from those of many adults; disturb sleep; and influence interpretations of the world and day-to-day conduct.

These are ideas that run parallel with product placement aims as marketers attempt to raise awareness of a product or influence brand perceptions. The Payne Fund Studies are note-worthy for several reasons. Lowery and DeFleur (1988: 41) comment that the research was 'correct at the time' adding though:

America was not a media society except in a limited sense in the 1920s. The only mature medium was the newspaper.

Cinema and radio were evolving while television was still in development (Moran, 2013). Lowery and DeFleur's point serves two purposes: to highlight the impact films had on some audiences, and maybe more importantly the need to perform research in a manner to best understand the audience. Looking at the Payne Studies in the 21st Century without first considering the context of the research would be wholly misleading as would be attempting to gauge the impact of product placements without hearing the voice of the consumers. Another element to this though is the need to understand, discern and utilize semiotics in filmmaking, marketing and the wider environment. These key issues of recognition and interpretation of logos, images and signs by consumers are of great

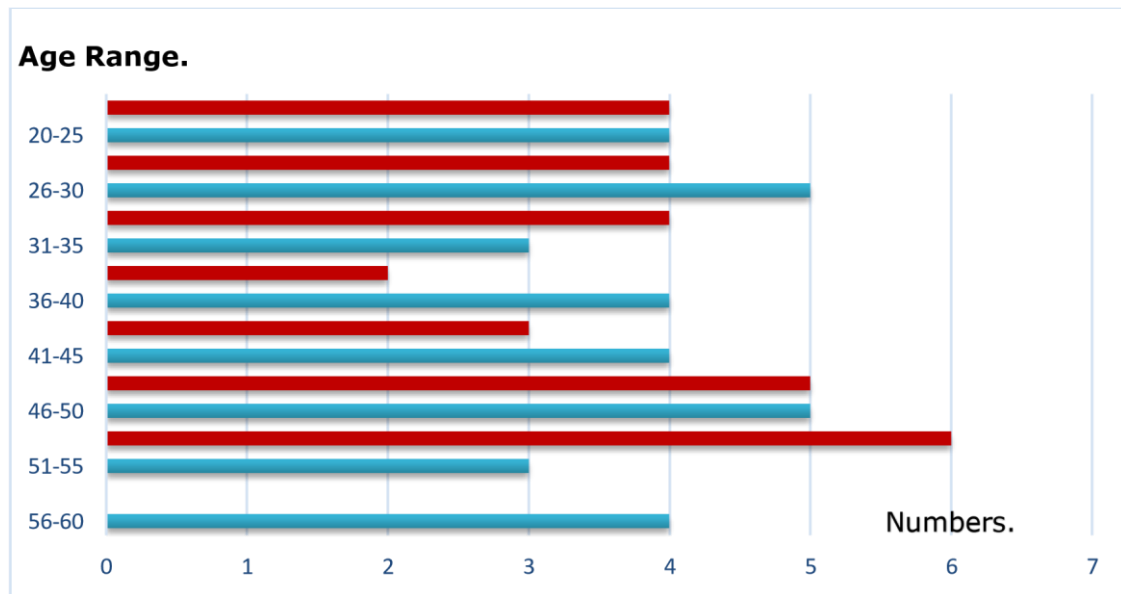
importance here. Like the issue of context, semiotics is important to marketers and filmmakers and consumers alike. These issues are returned to in Chapter Three: Data Collection and Analysis, when the approaches concerning semiotics, signs and logos and how they are utilized in this research are discussed further. Before the research approaches adopted in this study is investigated though, an overview of the research methodologies and research methods is undertaken.

2.11 Stage Two: The research films used in this study.

The second stage research looked specifically at nine films grouped into genres of comedy, romance and drama (see Table 2.1, page 85). During the the second and third stage interviews, interviewees routinely mentioned other films they had watched. This was often for comparisons with the film they had seen here, or to illustrate a point they were making about an actor and so forth. The films listed here are the only ones directly used in this research stage. With the research film selection, initially interviewees had a full choice but as more individuals were enlisted some of the popular titles were 'withdrawn from offer' to prevent one or two films becoming overly dominant. A choice of film was always available. For the stage three interviews respondents viewed two specified films, *The Big Short* and *Spectre*. The six research participants here were briefed fully on the nature of the interviews before viewing the films.

The total sample of research participants in this study was 86, with 32 questionnaires undertaken and 54 semi-structured interviews; details on whom are presented below. Two important variables within the data collection were that of gender and age. With differences between gender Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Kräuter (2000: 54) found, "less favourable attitudes of women toward product placements, especially ethically charged products". This research here looked for evidence for any such differences.

Diagram 2.3 **The age and gender division of Stage Two and Stage Three participants.**



Female respondents – red. Male respondents – blue.

Part of the Data Analysis section of this research investigates wider factors, which can influence upon the individual and their film and product consumption. Initially it was considered that, for example, older viewers having been exposed to marketing and product promotion for longer were perhaps immune to such placement promotions, or simply failed to notice them anymore (Solomon et al, 2009). With younger viewers, having been exposed to a high degree of marketing for a larger proportion of their lives, they might see product placement as a natural backdrop, so it might pass by unseen (Pringle, 2004). With the possible impact on consumer market segments, differences in observations and opinions, feedback was sought in these participant variables. Alternatively, as Ahluwalia and Brunkrant (2004) suggest, differing levels of persuasion knowledge can result in different levels of impact with viewers, not just on age. Winkielman, Schwarz, Fazendeiro and Reber (2003) counter this with an argument that 'mere exposure effect' of a placed product will be of value to the marketer in making products more familiar to the consumer and thereby enhance purchase probabilities.

2.12 Stage Three Interviewees: Questioning the Answers.

Questions raised with qualitative responses often concern the answers given by interview participants (Marshall and Rossman, 1995), this proved to

be the case with some interviewees in this research. For example, as the interviews progressed some interviewees gave detailed information about an actor that they had previously claimed they knew little about suggesting that they knew more about this person than either they wanted to admit, or perhaps realised. These individuals may have underestimated their knowledge or interest or played down their knowledge of a subject for other reasons such as not wanting to appear overly interested in 'celebrity'. This highlights an adverse element of qualitative research in that interviewees can reflect on these comments as the interview proceeds. Here the data collection becomes more reflexive as the research participants judge subjectively held information or the extent to which it might influence them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017).

During the interviews, some interviewees would also often start by discussing a specific actor but then immediately divert on a tangent and refer to other actors or even non-acting celebrities, such as sports people. This would be regarded as misleading or confusing when looking specifically at film research if an interviewer was not prepared and mindful of such distractions and able to keep control of the process (Fontana and Frey, 2008; Peräkylä, 2008). These tangents were of great interest and furnished interesting data, assisting in building a fuller picture of the interviewees and their attitudes and opinions towards celebrities and marketing promotions. This also highlights the cross-media nature of celebrity and the sources that viewers/consumers draw from.

2.13 The role of semiotics in film and marketing.

The importance of semiotics is outlined above in Chapter Two, in this section the themes of semiology and how it relates to this research are further developed. With research, film and marketing communications the use and understanding of semiotics is of great importance as it informs the issue of the personal (for the individual as a viewer and consumer) interpretation of signs and images. In marketing this often revolves around the interpretation of elements such as logos, packaging, celebrity endorsers and so forth (Berger, 2010). While the term has several uses and definitions, in marketing semiotics is defined as (Malhotra and Birks, 2002: 252) "The study of signs in the context

of consumer experience". In media terms the definition is given in a similarly understated manner, Bignell (2002: 5) states:

Semiotics or semiology, then, is the study of signs in society.

A degree of analysis is required to put semiotics into context with this research with regard to celebrities as marketing icons, and for associated brands as symbols (Oswald, 2015). The study of semiotics builds on the works of Saussure (1857–1913) and Peirce (1839–1914). Saussure was both a linguist and semiotician, he is considered a founder of semiology (Holdcroft, 1991). His work on signs and signifiers while criticised and disputed by some (Bouissac, 2010), did lay the foundations upon which further work and theories were built. While examples of the use of signs can be traced to before Saussure (Crow, 2016) he, along with Pierce, was instrumental in establishing this as a field of study. Pierce wrote extensively on the meaning of signs, language, thought and symbols, observing that 'men and words reciprocally educate each other' (Hoope (on Pierce), 1991). Peirce developed the concept of the 'semiotic triad' of icon, index and symbol (Houser and Kloesel, 1991) including the notion that a multitude of things function as signs. Semiotics form a key part of marketing communications and self-identity (Featherstone, 1991; Douglas, 1997; Berger, 2010).

The key point with interpretations of films, logos, brands, people, and specifically in this context product placement, is that much of the interpretation of signs can be influenced by other factors and not only in the interpretant's own experiences (Oswald, 2015). Influencing the symbolic exchange (see Bourdieu, 1992) of brand values between an actor and a product is via the consumers' perception of the actor, and the product. Simply adding a celebrity-actor to a brand by the mere association will not achieve marketing brand value (Oswald, 2015). This is a central issue of the research here when, for example, pairing actors with brands or brands with settings and whether the context of the pairing can transmit a (positive) marketing message not least with the 'value attribution' (Brafman and Brafman, 2009) that consumers will give both the branded product and the actor (Oswald, 2012). The context and content of the message is critical for interpretation by an audience and the success of the marketing technique. Writing on the

'photographic paradox' for example Barthes (1993: 17) asked: "What is the content of the photographic message? What does the photograph transmit?" As with many of the themes of the research here, participants often read messages differently and this includes the recognition and interpretation of logos, actors, their brand images and brand values.

As discussed earlier, the use of signs, symbols and logos are central to the study of marketing, film and celebrities alike. An effective logo by itself though, even one that is widely recognised with widespread and constant 'transmission', will not make a brand great but can help at promoting and reinforcing awareness and recognition (Solomon et al, 2009): content without context will not achieve this. Many aspects of marketing, branding and the use of logos rest on principles of semiology, hence its value within this research. This is a key element of marketing generally but product placement specifically as, for example, an item portrayed in a negative manner will not appeal to consumers. Moreover, an item can be seen but remain anonymous without the brand logo, or other signifier. Gernsheimer (2008: x) observes that:

If, in the business of communication, image is king, the essence of this image, the logo, is the jewel in its crown.

Logo recognition is often instant and needs only partial observation (Hollander and Hanjalic, 2003), thereby making logos especially useful for placements in films. In marketing communications terms, the logo can be the strongest and most obvious representation of the brand and a key part of the representation of a brand's image to the consumer (Aaker, 2007). For example, consider Nike clothing or Jack Daniel's whiskey without any of the identifying marks; with the former the use of the 'Nike Swoosh' and for the latter including their distinctive bottle design. The Nike identifier in its simplicity, echoes pre-linguistic communication (Crow, 2016) and is readily recognised by consumers from different cultures and backgrounds. Consumer recognition of these logos is essential, as part of this research not least, as it can be the only distinction between an anonymous, generic product and a brand. The thesis in particular looks at Apple, Jack Daniel's and Harley Davidson, and their symbolic logos.

The appearance of the courier company's word/logo 'FedEx' without recognition or understanding, who they are and what they do, would render a

promotion meaningless, although recognition for many will be automatic and unconscious (Solomon et al, 2016). The values and interpretation of what the viewer sees and how, is an issue for the semiotician and the marketer. Saussure wrote about what he regarded as the important relationship between the signifié (interpretant) and the significant (sign) and how this contributes to his notion of the 'sign model' (Nöth, 1995). This is important here in terms of research methodology and research techniques. Brand recognition and interpretation is a key factor in this thesis and again illustrates the need by marketers for an understanding of the use of semiotics in promotions; for example, an unrecognized pair of placed running shoes would make them anonymous with little or no promotional value. A recognised logo on a pair of trainers, as with the Will Smith's Converse All-Stars worn in *I, Robot* (Proyas, 2004), an example referenced by a respondent in this research, carries marketing value.

Picture Illustration 2.1.

Brand Recognition: FedEx and *The Runaway Bride* (Marshall, 1999).



The FedEx placement was brief but noticeable. The manner in which consumers read the FedEx logo may reinforce the brand and add to the brand's recognition.

Eco (1979: 4) additionally makes an important distinction between the different forms of semiotics, e.g. 'signification' and 'communication' he argues that:

...in principle a semiotics of signification entails a theory of codes, while a semiotics of communication entails a theory of sign production.

Eco (1979) stresses how, in general, the theory of semiotics is 'powerful' for its capacity for offering definitions for every type of sign-function; underlining its importance with this research. A car may be just a piece of utilitarian transportation machinery but, as semiologist Barthes (2000) points out, there are connotations for an individual (or a film character). Driving a black Aston Martin or a yellow Citroën 2CV would convey signals, perhaps misleading ones, about the driver. One research stage three interviewee in this research made a confirmatory observation on characters driving expensive cars as:

I feel like that's a sticker for any rich guy in a movie.

Using artefacts in films aids the interpretation of the characters, the association with expensive watches, luxury cars, certain brands of alcohol, water and so forth, is commonly used as a shorthand by filmmakers to this effect; such as with the character of James Bond (Eco, 1984). Barthes makes clear the importance of signifiers and the signified, film makers and film consumers make full use of these (Barthes, 1994). Eco (1994: 24) however, warns of the possibilities of misinterpretation of signs and symbols with semiotics, and of over-interpretation, writing:

On one side it is assumed that to interpret a text means to find out the meaning intended by the original author or - in any case - its objective nature or essence, an essence which, as such, is independent of our interpretation. On the other side it is assumed that texts can be interpreted in infinite ways.

Understanding the audience is of central importance for the success of films and brands alike (Morrison, Haley, Sheehan and Taylor 2003), this resonates with how the grounded theory approach has assisted with the research process here. Understanding audiences is not a new development. Simpson, Utterson and Shepherdson (2004: 5) state:

How people see films – their conscious and unconscious responses, the circumstances surrounding viewing, the uses made of this experience – have been recurrent questions throughout film history.

The study and analysis of audiences will often follow gender or political frameworks and provide insights into how film is consumed and how consumers can be viewed. These are important as they will often inform us of the prism through which a person can view a film or regard a brand. This is an example of what Creswell refers to as the 'multiple realities' (1994). The theme of multiple realities is an important one to acknowledge and understand

when investigating audiences and attempting to interpret their attitudes towards symbols, images, films and marketing messages. Multiple realities result in multiple readings and interpretations, as argued by Hall (2010) in his work on encoding/decoding. As this highlights the subjectiveness of interpretation, the need to speak directly to the consumer is all the greater for those with an interest in the viewing experience and the impact that both film and the embedded placements have. For this research an understanding of signs, symbols, multiple realities and how consumers respond to such stimuli, has proved to be essential for gathering data from participants and turning this into useful information.

As a research sample, this group of interviewees may well not be representative of anyone but themselves (Creswell, 2013); while some interviewees were guarded at times with their answers which is always a challenge when undertaking research. This degree of reticence makes assessing the role and influence of celebrity-actors and product placement more difficult both here, and for marketers generally. However, the participants were most often open and forthcoming with their opinions and their voice is represented throughout this study. An issue returned to in Chapter Six, Developing an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion, and in the data analysis chapters, is the honesty and openness of interviewees. The following data analysis explore this and reviews the information provided by the interviewees.

2.14 Chapter Conclusions.

The change from research stage one quantitative to the research stage two and three qualitative approach was the single most important part of this process; without it the richness of data collected would not have been gleaned and the interview participants' attitudes and feelings would have remained hidden. On reflection, the initial approach was never going to provide the depth of data (opinions, thoughts and attitudes) that was required to answer the Research Questions. The qualitative focus with a grounded theory approach permitted a more suitable pool of data to be collected. The stage

two research questions ascertained which and how many placements the viewer noticed; as is seen later, each of the films had a range of placements presented in different ways. More importantly the interviewees' opinions towards the placements and whether the placement adds or detracts value to the brand, or the actor/s involved could be noted. Stage three of the research process was designed to build on the process established before, and to draw out the opinions of the participants on issues of celebrity status, marketing communications and of course product placement and the context of that placement. This latter point also addresses the issue of celebrity brand associations and how that might impact viewers/consumers. Using interviews, with the opportunity to empathize, build a rapport and interact with participants in a relaxed and informal manner. This was invaluable for the fieldwork element of this process, most obviously for attaining the data. There are limitations, as Glucksmann (2013) comments, respondents lie. As with Sarasin and Ulrich (1995) this again presents the audience as untrustworthy or simple individuals and fails to credit them with the ability of holding multiple and even conflicting views.

The application of semi-structured interviews had the required elements of flexibility, such as allowing interviewees to provide their own film and/or marketing examples, or recount how celebrities / actors might have influenced them. The move to a flexible, interactive qualitative approach was the most suitable for this research. Achieving usable data would not have been possible without the first stage of the research, or the adaption and implementation of the second and third research stages.

Chapter Three.

Celebrity Status: Data Collection and Analysis.

3.1 Introduction to the Data Collection and Analysis.

This chapter serves the purpose of introducing the data sections of the thesis, focused on Celebrity Status, Product Placement, Marketing Communications and presents an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films. The research process here is designed to build on each theme and combine these areas as we assess the research participants' understanding of product placement as a film device, and a marketing communications tool. The design of the research methods and interviews was to lessen potential bias to obtain open and honest feedback from the interview participants. To facilitate this process and to generate a full and open discussion all interviewees were encouraged to consider the interview as a 'friendly discussion' which offered anonymity and assured research participants that there were no 'right or wrong' answers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017).

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis: An Inclusive Approach.

This chapter gathers data from the interviewees regarding their thoughts and opinions about actors and films in relation to issues of Celebrity Status, Marketing Communication and Product Placement. The chapter then looks at the interviewees' responses using the unifying theme of marketing communications to assess the value of product placement to potential sponsors. The opening questions gathered responses for use as a basis for more in-depth questioning later in the interview process and are centred on general film viewing and consumption. Leading the interviewees in a predetermined direction, but not via a pre-determined route, these later stages proved to be invaluable as part of the data collection process. By allowing interviewees to vary from a rigidly pre-set path it encouraged them to discuss celebrity and film in a way that they wanted to. This semi-structured interview/discussion approach left the interviewees relaxed and more open, thereby enabling the interviewer to obtain open and honest responses and utilised the advantages of using a grounded theory approach to allow the respondents' voice to be heard (Creswell, 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). On reflection, the interviewer was delighted, and at times surprised, by the interview results and by how much the interview participants *wanted* to talk; it became clear that film is an important part of many people's lives.

3.3 Celebrity Status: Data Collection and Analysis.

Celebrity status is a central theme of this thesis on product placement within mainstream films. This study investigates the impact that celebrities, in particular celebrity-actors, have on viewers/consumers. Celebrity status, and the fame that accompanies it, has a deep-rooted fascination for many people (Smith, 1996; Redmond and Holmes, 2007). Coinciding with comments made by Austin and Barker (2003) and seen with the Tramell example (on page 43), Jong is quoted saying, "Fame means millions of people have the wrong idea of who you are" (O.D.Q. 1992). This public fascination with celebrity suits marketers where a

manufactured, public persona is required (Pringle, 2004), not least in brand and product promotion. Turner (2014: 6) defines celebrities as anyone who excites a level of public interest, this includes many individuals who possess no discernible skill or talent. Such is the level of commodification and commercialization of celebrities that Cashmore (2006: 2) comments:

The cast of characters that make up today's generation of celebrities couldn't be more saleable if they had barcodes.

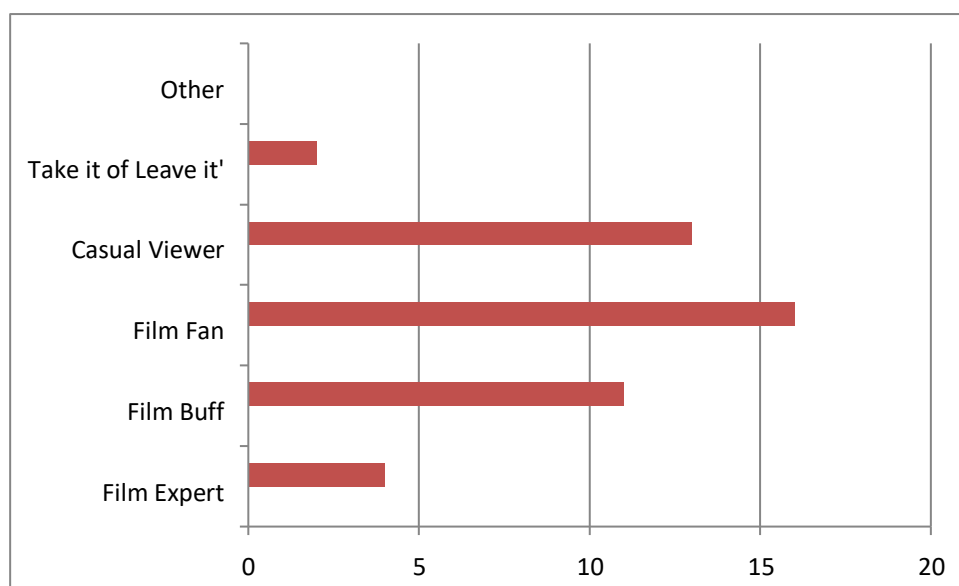
By this measurement, many actors will have the label 'celebrity' attached to them by at least some viewers. This makes the term 'actor' synonymous with 'celebrity' and any of the accompanying degrees of status (Lawrence, 2009). Celebrities are engaged to sell 'every imaginable piece of merchandise' allowing their name and image to be connected directly and indirectly with products and brands that 'they may have never used in exchange for hard cash' (Cashmore, 2006: 3). It is with the celebrity-actors and the appeal that they exert on some viewers and consumers and how that can influence sales, brand familiarity and even brand preference and loyalty, which is of interest here in this chapter.

While this chapter focuses on the celebrity aspect of this research, the two following chapters explore the interview participants' attitudes towards celebrity status and marketing communications. This approach is required in order to address the underlying themes of this research, namely celebrity and marketing communications, in order to then lead us to the third part of this study, the issue of the impact of product placement in films. The three themes, celebrity status, marketing communications and product placement, are not neatly divided or mutually exclusive of one another. In short, there are times these areas entwine and on occasion blur. A degree of convergence and cross-fertilization in these chapters should, therefore, be expected (Burns and Bush, 2010). An aim of this study is to establish the interviewees' level of interest in film and celebrity-actors as a foundation for later discussions concerning product placement. The interview took research participants on a path relating to the research themes of celebrity status, marketing communications and product placement, starting with the investigation into celebrity status.

3.4 The respondents' views on films, celebrities and celebrity status.

To enable the research respondents to speak about celebrity status the idea here was to allow them to discuss their knowledge on film as the basis to express their thoughts and opinions. Stage two interviewees were first asked to classify themselves as to what type of film viewer they considered themselves, as either film expert, film buff, film fan, casual viewer, a 'take it or leave it' viewer or as an 'other'. It was considered that a viewer who classified themselves an expert opposed to a 'casual viewer' might well have a higher level of interest in films, actors and film making in general and therefore have a different awareness and perception of other film related factors such as product placement. For example, therefore, a 'film buff', see Table 3.1 next, may notice details other more casual consumers might miss. A review of any such connectivity is in the data analysis chapters.

Table 3.1, **Stage Two: Self- Defined Viewer Types.**



The four viewers who defined themselves as 'Film Experts' did indeed fulfil their self-billed title as each displayed a comprehensive knowledge of films, film makers and actors. Illustrating this was one respondent who with each film reference, would proceed to give a comprehensive account of the actors or directors portfolio of work with comments such as:

Well, it's typical of Simon West. He really is a 'director for hire' since he did 'Con Air' and 'Lara Croft'. This is just his style which is why they've got him to do 'The Expendables' sequel, again with Jason Statham.

Interviewees were not given outlines or definitions of these viewer terms, rather they interpreted them as to which they felt best fitted themselves. Three stage two interviewees changed their self-classification during the interview, one with the comment:

I suppose I do know quite a lot about movies, so I guess that makes me more of a film buff really.

These stage two interviewees also commented on technical aspects of filmmaking rather than just about the celebrity actors. For example, on the uses of different types of shots, one of these participants stated:

They used some great dolly shots, like at the start of Panic Room with Jodie Foster.

These comments indicate a higher level of participant awareness of more than just the narrative. The attitude of the viewers towards film, celebrity-actors, filmmakers and filmmaking is an important factor and one that might have an impact on their perception, attitudes and even recognition of product placements within the films they were consuming. Before this was investigated though, a review of the stage two interviewees' film consumption was made establishing the number of films viewed, the reasons for their choices, followed by selections for their favourite films to establish their viewing behaviours.

3.5 Levels of film consumption and the consumers' film selection processes.

Stage two research participants estimated how many films in a typical month they would watch, and how they watched them, in order to establish their film consumption as a possible tool to detect if viewing habits influenced upon matters of product placement observation. There was also the intention to establish overall levels of consumption and to ascertain

whether there was a correlation between interviewees' attitudes to actors with product placement. Given next are the consumption results.

Table 3.2. **Stage Two Viewer Film Consumption.**

	Monthly total.	TV Films	Rent/ downloads	Bought	Borrowed	Cinema visits
Total	328	186.5	48	47	11	275
Average	7.0	4.0	1.02	1.00	0.43	5.9
Range	0.3 - 30	0 - 28	0 - 5	0 - 5	0 - 6	0 - 50
SD	5.30	4.58	1.29	1.30	0.96	9.39

With Table 3.2 the interviewees gave a broad range of answers on consumption rates, the parameters being set by two interviewees one of whom watched a film '*almost every day without fail*' to another who watched '*only one or maybe two*' a year. The mean average however was seven films a month. The average consumption of cinema films was only one film every two months, film consumption in the home was by far the most dominant. The split for film consumption was between films on television, rented, downloaded, bought, borrowed and watched at the cinema; only one respondent, the highest consumer, mentioned watching films from her own film library.

The data, at this second stage, suggests that no correlation between film consumption, interest in celebrity-actors and the observation and recall of product placements and it was possible to detect contradictory responses from these interviewees. Initially the response was that these interviewees largely claimed to be indifferent to the appeal of actors, citing that they particularly enjoyed the 'story telling' and escapism aspects of film consumption (see Miller, 2011). This appears to confirm Ulrich and Sarasin (1995) findings with consumers' intentions regarding their ethical purchase decisions, namely that the answers are never reliable. The view on actor appeal directly contradicts the main reason given by these stage

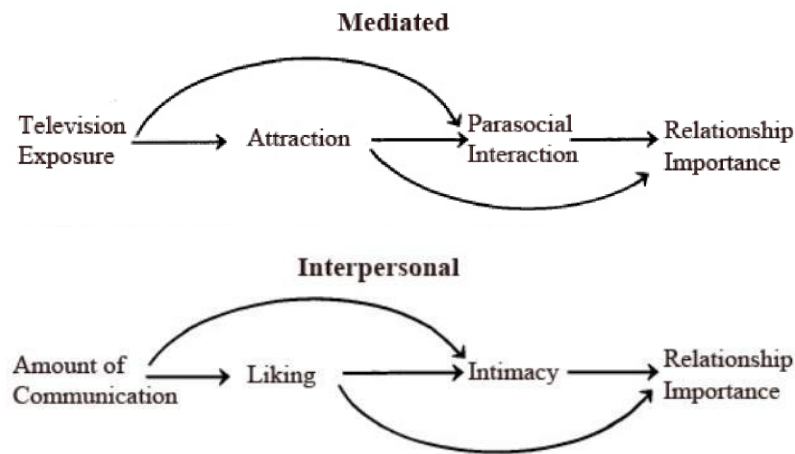
two interviewees in that they choose their film title based on who was appearing. This might substantiate Ulrich and Sarasin (1995), and McQuail's (1997) point about the fickle nature of film audiences, it might more correctly highlight the audience's ability to hold dual views simultaneously. This point is borne out by some respondents in this study, see Chapter Seven; Developing an understanding of the role of placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion.

The next area of investigation was an inquiry into whether stage two interviewees had ever watched a film because of the actor/s featured or the director's reputation. Consumers have an enormous range of choice with media and film consumption (Galician, 2004). The reason/s to select one film from the multiplicity of choice offered from films for sale or rent, streaming from platforms such as Netflix or Amazon or available from television channels and so forth, is important not least when considering other leisure time options open to the viewers. It was no surprise (based on the work of Smith (1995), Maltby (2003) and Monaco (2009)) that the biggest draw to a selected film given by stage two interviewees in this research was the actor/s involved – despite many respondents' earlier claims of actor indifference. This actor appeal will have implications for the marketing and revenue generation not only key for the film but also for brands associated with the film or with the actors; this point is developed in succeeding chapters.

From the 47 stage two interviewees 38 cited the lead actor or actors as the main influence for selecting the film; the next most cited was the director with 22 interviewees (some gave the actors and directors as a joint draw or attraction). Actors were anticipated to be a major draw relating to the interest and a degree of parasocial attachment, the one-way emotional attachment in which viewers feel that they personally know an actor or other celebrity, that many viewers have with them (Pringle, 2004; Kavallieratou, 2013). Rubin and McHugh (1987) refer to this parasocial interaction with marketing communications as a combination to make the Celebrity Brand Association stronger using perceived intimacy and attraction as an on-going process as seen here in Diagram 3.2.

Diagram 3.2.

The Development of Mediated and Interpersonal Relationships.



Rubin and McHugh (1987).

This diagram is useful for several reasons, not least for how it relates to theories used in this communication process. The first stage of the Attention Interest Desire Action model (Kotler, 2005) is for getting the consumers 'attention'. For many consumers and marketers, the focus here is with using the actor as this catalyst for attention and using their celebrity appeal and familiarity as the focal point of a product's promotion. The appeal for marketers is the 'Relationship Importance' and the alignment of brands with actors/characters in the minds of consumers. The trap for some actors, characters and brands may be that in over exposure and/or over familiarity that the 'attraction' can sour while, intimacy results in rejection from consumers (Smith, 1995; Tulett, 2014). Atkins (in his 2009 documentary *Starsuckers*) though claims that 'everyone is attracted to fame and the famous although most will deny it' which can suggest that all the interviewees here might be understating the draw of a famous name. Two enlightening comments conveying this. The first from Redmond and Holmes (2007: 5):

Fame allows us to think about how we measure ideas about success, failure and individualism in modern society, and how the phenomena of fame shapes the understanding of our own identities, achievements and aspirations.

Secondly, Halpern (2008: 189) continues this stating:

Ultimately, our obsession with celebrities isn't about them; it's about us and our needs. Many of us look at these people – who have glamour, beauty, wealth and youth – and familiarise ourselves with them until they begin to feel like real people in our lives.

For Halpern there is a strong attraction for many consumers towards these celebrity-actors, their films and associated products. Cashmore (2006) contends this draw is due to the 'illusion of intimacy' and a psychologically 'hard-wired' desire for individuals to appear to be a part of a dominant or influential group; in this case as part of a star's entourage thereby absorbing some of the 'reflected glory' that a dominant figure might exude. Rojek (2001) highlights this illusion of familiarity with stars as being a relationship on what the public knows (or more correctly what they think they know) about the stars delivered via a 'manipulated and manipulative' media (Atkins, 2009). Many of the interview participants in this research spoke as if they personally knew the actors to whom they referred thereby reinforcing the concept of parasocial interaction (Colliander, 2012). Aligning a brand with actors held in such esteem would result in a positive Celebrity Brand Association.

Many of the stage two interviewees (47%) stated that they regarded the film director as important as the actors. For those who discussed the directors it was clear that directors possessed an appeal based on their work as filmmakers and as celebrities (Pringle, 2004). To a lesser extent the same process of attraction should be applied to these celebrity directors as to celebrity actors. Given as a draw for a film were the few same directors. The directors were, in order of citations, Martin Scorsese (six), Quentin Tarantino (four) and Tim Burton (three); a notable omission was the hugely successful Steven Spielberg (McBride, 2010) despite eight of his films receiving 'favourite movies' selections from the interviewees, see below. Two stage two interviewees though said that they would avoid films of certain directors, namely Michael Bay (known for '*Transformers*' 2007, 2009 and 2011 among other films). One of these viewers stated:

Someone I would pay to avoid; his films are all noise and no plot and no substance.

Popular directors will draw funding and actors to their productions based on the perceived 'bankability' for attracting audiences; Hitchcock's name appearing above the film title is an earlier example of this (see Shail, 2007). Considering directors, who are popular in their own right, is an important factor when it comes to reviewing the product placement process for the film industry. As a reason why an individual would choose a particular film, and with 17 mentions each, recommendations from 'a friend or colleague' and 'film reviews' was the third jointly most cited; although many people also stated that they wanted to 'decide for themselves' and that they avoided listening to other people. The data suggested that a recommendation from a friend or colleague will carry a persuasive element as individuals can feel that watching a film might heighten the strength or feeling of group bonding between individuals (Cashmore, 2006). Word of mouth recommendations can carry more weight than other forms of promotion not least because individuals believe they are hearing from real people for film recommendations and not others regarded as commercially motivated spokespeople (Godin, Kawasaki and Sernovitz, 2009).

3.6 Stage two interviewees and their favourite films. Looking for a product placement link.

The responses from these stage two interviewees naming their three favourite films were diverse; this was an open question and was not intended to refer to the research films used in this research. This question was designed (see S.M.6, page 339) to establish if the interviewees' 'favourite actors' appeared in their 'favourite films', and if there was a link between these choices and a particular film genre that should be regarded as most suitable (or effective for achieving marketing goals) for placing products. The interviewees in stage two gave 125 titles for their favourite films that resulted in a diverse range of movies. This was an early opportunity for individuals to discuss in broad terms their favourite films and the importance of films to them. Importantly this question created a relaxed atmosphere; empathy and trust between the interviewer and interviewee (see Malhotra and Birks (2012), and Creswell (2013)).

Animated respondent behaviour was observed frequently whilst they were discussing their favourite films, suggesting that they regarded their choices as a reflection of their own personality. Highlighting this point one stage two interviewee named *Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, 2006) as a favourite film stating that she wanted her selections 'to sound better' stating:

I wouldn't want to be regarded as dull or obvious.

This may have been no more than a flippant remark or to show a willingness to give an answer the researcher might like, despite the reassurance that any answer was an acceptable one being repeated by the interviewer: it might also have been a product of social compliance and therefore should not be regarded negatively (see Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004).

Two questions illustrated how much the interviewees remembered their favourite films. In order to ascertain the level of film involvement in an attempt to gauge if there was a relationship between favourite actors, film enjoyment and engagement to the possible degree of receptiveness to product placement these questions proved to be useful. It was also considered that a connection might have been initiated by the answers here with favourite films to favourite actors and then to interviewee comments concerning products with actors; this did not prove to be the case as interviewees, here in stage two and later in stage three of the research, proved to be consistently inconsistent for example with 'favourite films' not featuring any 'favourite actors'. The questioning here did though elicit some other notable results such as the unanticipated interviewee outcome of favourite films having a low plot and actor recall level (see below) despite them being 'favourites'. Two research participants in stage two stated of their film choices:

I just like it; and, It's just a feel-good film that makes you feel good.

The interviewer was aware that bias and skew are always potentially present (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Naming and discussing favourite films however was useful for assessing these interviewees' actor and film knowledge, and as a way to get individuals to talk freely which assisted with following questions. Thus, the methodological strategy of getting research

participants to discuss their favourite films had a positive impact in getting interviewees to offer personal and reflective responses. It also enabled the researcher to build common ground and actively reflect with the participants and thereby achieve increased empathy. This reflexivity was founded upon the researcher's own knowledge of films and actors.

3.7 Favourite Films: Interviewees' levels of plot and actor recall.

Asking these stage two interviewees how much they recalled about their favourite films in terms of plot, actors, settings and other details on a scale of 1–10 was constructive. Informing interviewees that they would not be tested about their responses and that it was an unchallengeable rating just to give an indication of how well they felt they knew the films was reinforced at this stage. Initially it was considered that cross-referencing film recall levels with those from product placement recall might produce useable results and indicate effective placement methods, this proved however to be inconclusive with no correlation found. Table 3.3 shows the interviewees' ratings and the actors recalled in their favourite films.

Table 3.3. Stage two interviewees' Recall Rates on their All-Time Personal Favourite Actors and Films.

Actors		Film 1	Film 2	Film 3
Average		3.4	2.5	2.3
Range		0 to 12	0 to 10	0 to 7
Plot Details				
Average		8.1	7.8	7.6
Range		3 to 10	3 to 10	4 to 10

Table 3.3 was useful to the researcher as it helped gauge the level of recall a respondent felt they had with the films they listed as their favourites. Films that were stated to be an interviewee's favourite were recalled with more clarity, though ironically for some people they were unable to name any actors in their favourite film or only recalled the name of one actor involved, so it might be expected that they also noticed details about what the film includes, perhaps,

any products featured. It is also notable that only two of the film choices made by the interviewees here were for animated films where the actor features only as a 'voice talent'; for example, the popular actor Steve Carell was mentioned for his voice being used for the character 'Gru' in the animated film *Despicable Me* (Coffin and Renaud, 2010). This is noteworthy as animation is a well-established format attracting large audiences (Film Distributors Association, 2017) although perhaps less obviously product placements (Galician, 2004). In this case it might have been the stage two interviewees wanting to avoid naming films that might be perceived dismissively as 'cartoons'; see Picture Illustration 3.2, next.

Picture Illustration 3.1.

Actors as voice talents: Steve Carell and John Goodman.



Left, the yellow 'Minion' characters and right, the smiling monster characters, plus the placing of the words 'From the Creators of Toy Story', would indicate the nature of the films to most consumers.

In a similar vein, interviewees were also asked to give a level of recall for the plot of the film with the idea that a score of ten would mean that they could give a 'perfect' account of the film. Asking this to ascertain a level of interest in the films and to test if there might be a relationship between film popularity, actor preference and placement recall was undertaken. Some avid film consumers claimed 10/10 perfect recall for their three favourite films. Despite these strong claims, and many positive

comments made about films, no correlation between these highly scored films and placements was established.

In Table 4.3 (page 134) there is a decline on average scores recall is recorded, from 8.1, to 7.8 and to 7.6. The number of 'favourite' films though getting a lower recall score was not expected. To account for this many stage two interviewees stated that they 'hadn't seen the film for a while' but it was still a favourite, when asked why it was a favourite the interviewees mentioned that a favourite actor had appeared in it, another contradiction for actor appeal. The lack of detail on recall could be related to a worry that the interviewer was about to 'test' them on the details. More likely is the possibility that film details were 'lost over time' as is synonymous with the 'forgetting curve' discussed by Sikstrom (1999: 460) with his work with 'exponential decay and flat forgetting curves'.

Finding a link might exist, the data suggests, between favourite films, the actors who appeared in them and any products associated with those actors. Firm evidence for this however was not forthcoming with only the occasional respondent mentioning something about a product or a 'look' such as clothing or hairstyles. It did though reinforce the popularity of films and of certain actors as a recurring draw for film consumption.

3.8 Stage Two interviewee recall responses: assessing the impact and role of actors and their influence on consumers.

In order to establish if there was a noticeable difference in recall or attitudes pertaining to men or women being associated with product placements interviewees were asked to name four of their favourite actors or actresses⁷. A gender distinction has potential for those making

⁷ It was made clear to interviewees that thespians of either gender were being discussed. Film academics and others speak of 'actors' in a unisex manner but all of the respondents here still made the gender distinction; the language used by the researcher reflects this. It should also be noted that the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences award 'Oscars' (as with the BAFTAs) to both the Best Actor and Best Actress and also make that clear gender distinction. Gender-neutral awards are a current topic of discussion and actor Emma Watson won the first major gender-neutral acting award from MTV in 2017 (Mumford, 08 May 2017).

marketing decisions, for example if one gender was found to be more persuasive for promoting seemingly gender-neutral products such as for example coffee or air travel, then this would prove important for marketing these products. So too would it prove useful if it was found that specific genders were better at promoting specific products. This question was also intended to act as a measure of 'celebrity name attraction' and celebrity status value attribution as a marketing tool, Celebrity Brand Association or box office draw as a potential primer to gauge the degree of influence an actor might exert on a viewer when it came to film choice. Celebrity actors project their own brand values (value attribution (Shani and Coget, 2015)) onto the products that they are associated with, thereby shaping the brands' image. Actors will bring their own viewer expectations; these in turn can be associated with a brand or product. Brafman and Brafman (2009: 56) state that:

...expectations change the reality we live in. The value that we attribute to something fundamentally changes how we perceive it.

This supports the actor/product pairing and the use of Celebrity Brand Associations. The full table of 'favourite actors' is in Supporting Materials S.M.6 (page 339) while the 'Top 15' is shown below in Table 4.4 (page 139). Actor appeal was considered to be an important factor as a possible aid to product recall, as developed further in Chapter Seven (Developing an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion), with De Vany and Walls (1999) arguing that 'star power' as a 'box office draw' is a myth and that studios are inept at predicting success. Some actors were more 'liked' than others were, but few names dominate the list. Interviewees in stage two were asked to name four favourite actors, some however named only three and one respondent none. As with the film selections there was a suspicion that some interviewees may have been selecting actors who perhaps made themselves appear to 'look better'; again interviewees being less than honest was not unexpected with this type of research (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005; Creswell, 2009).

A noteworthy point from this is that from the 158 thespians nominated, only 32 were female actors. With this sample, male actors appeared to be

some four times more popular than their female counterparts were. This gender divide was not anticipated, not least as there was an almost equal split with the interviewees' gender. Only one (female) respondent gave more actresses than actors on her list of favourites. This may be a statistical anomaly or perhaps a point worthy of further research concerning 'star appeal' for product placement vehicles and the 'bankability of stars'. Questions concerning widespread sexism in the film industry (Kord and Foster, 2015 (plus the #MeToo campaign)) could be linked to this issue, further evidence would necessitate a study outside of this research remit.

Many of the thespians mentioned only receiving single nominations despite being 'big names' - such as Bruce Willis, Julia Roberts and Jack Nicholson. A notable point was that James Stewart who, despite having died in 1997, attracted five nominations. Other deceased but still popular actors also mentioned included Buster Keaton, Alec Guinness, Audrey Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart and Marilyn Monroe. Clive James (2012: website) though described Monroe as virtually unemployable and that:

She was good at being inarticulately abstracted for the same reason that midgets are good at being short.

Thereby illustrating the subjective nature of perceived acting ability and star appeal. It may be of significance that deceased actors are for some consumers more popular than their living counterparts. Marketers occasionally use dead actors in promotions for example: John Wayne, Marilyn Monroe, Peter Cushing, Humphrey Bogart, Jack Hawkins and Steve McQueen.

Picture Illustration 3.2. **The Popular Departed.**



From left to right, James Stewart (1908–1997),
Buster Keaton (1895–1966) and Alec Guinness (1914–2000).

Posthumously popular, these actors still have appeal with some consumers.

Table 3.4. **Favourite Thespians** (with nominations).

Meryl Streep	7	Robert DeNiro	7
Morgan Freeman	6	Tom Hanks	6
Johnny Depp	5	James Stewart	5
Leonardo DiCaprio	5	Denzel Washington	3
Will Smith	3	Colin Firth	3
Brad Pitt	3	Jeff Bridges	3
Hugh Grant	3	Nicholas Cage	3
Tom Cruise	3		

From Table 4.4, the fifteen most popular actors from the stage two interviewees but with only one actress appearing. This list of 'favourites' might inform or influence the observations made by these interviewees concerning actors and brand association, discussed below.

Prompted by the concept that consumers possess an inclination to copy celebrities (Pringle, 2004; Storey, 2007) the attention to potential actor influence is driven by a 'hard-wired desire for individuals to associate with those in society deemed to be influential' (Atkins, documentary film,

2009). This relates to the value attribution that actors can give to a brand (or hairstyle or fashion and so forth) (Norton and Wohl, 1956; Brafman and Brafman, 2009). Anthropologists and psychologists have both documented this phenomenon, Halpern (2008: 120) states that "The power of association is far more powerful than we realised". This association factor might be the reason why product placements can work and why Consumer Brand Associations (C.B.A.) are so attractive to both promoters and ultimately to consumers. Atkins (2009) suggests that the perceived proximity to celebrities is a powerful factor for influencing brand preferences for consumers. These hierarchical associations could be insinuated with products implying that if a leader, a prominent or dominant person, of a group uses a certain product then that product would become more attractive to the followers (Atkins, 2009); in this context meaning the followers as potential consumers (Monaco, 2000).

The perception of how actors are portrayed away from their film appearances is important to their overall appeal and their marketability. The actors that the stage two interviewees most recalled in promotions (see Table 4.5 page 154) were George Clooney, Keira Knightly, Ewan MacGregor, Penélope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Uma Thurman and Morgan Freeman. Freeman is the only actor to make the top section here and onto the Favourite Actors list. This might suggest low correlation between actors and product recall at least at a conscious level, although at a sub-conscious level this might not be the case (Wiseman, 2011). On a practical level though some actors have a much lower, or even non-existent, number of appearances in non-film related promotions. Meryl Streep is not known for taking part in commercial promotions (see Picture Illustration 3.3 next) and the few that Robert DeNiro does are primarily for the American market, such as his advertisement for Santander Bank. This could make any product placement associations more valuable and impactful. The promotions of most interest are by George Clooney and Keira Knightley who receive a lot of exposure internationally. Recall by interviewees in this research did not show notable awareness of them. This at a conscious level at least, appears to do little to boost the Celebrity Brand Association

rating or provide direct evidence to use celebrity actors to promote products and/or brands.

Picture Illustration 3.3 **Meryl Wears Prada.**



Fans of Meryl Streep might be inspired with their eyewear choice after seeing her wearing the same Prada sunglasses in both *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and *Mamma Mia* (2008) (fashion-times.com).

To investigate the extent of potential actor influence further stage two interviewees were asked if they had felt encouraged, swayed or persuaded by actors to adopt certain hair styles, clothing, mannerisms, speech, sayings or in any other way. This produced a mixed response with most of these interviewees stating that this was not the case either in the present nor had it been in the past. Only three research stage two

interviewees directly recalled as adults having been influenced by actors with hair and clothing styles while another five said they 'might have been' influenced when younger. One research stage two interviewee stated that:

I have been influenced by "Friends" to use certain language. I think this programme and others like "Sex and the City" have made me want to buy certain clothes too and, in some ways, adopt their lifestyle.

From the research stage three only one interviewee admitted that she had bought a dress directly after seeing it worn on the television show *13 Reasons Why* (2017), but then went on to say that she had never worn it.

From those interviewed only one thought she *might* be currently influenced by seeing brands she recognised in films, but this was only a 'might' indicating some ambiguity or reluctance to acknowledge influence. Atkins (2009 – documentary film '*Starsuckers*') states that individuals will maintain that celebrities do not influence them:

Most people will say that aligning celebrities to brands does not affect me.

Interviewees in all stages of this research regularly voiced this position. Five of the six research stage three interviewees voiced this with one saying:

We do live in a very much celebrity orientated culture so maybe I'm one of the minority and perhaps it has a much better effect on a lot of people and I'm just one of the few that, that don't think it has an effect.

The issue that respondents '*don't think it has an effect*' was echoed by many here and is a feature that is returned to below. Another stage three respondent had a further comment to make which was:

When I think of a celebrity perfume, I can't think of a single celebrity perfume that I like. So I kind of um, so if it's like celebrity branded thing I kind of always assume it's not going to be a good product.

In this case the celebrity association has a negative connotation. This highlights the duality of an individual's nature as it was the same individual who said that she had bought the dress she had seen worn in *13 Reasons Why*. This form of contradiction and even denial by consumers will further complicate efforts by filmmakers, marketers and researchers to assess the impact these promotions have on potential consumers.

As has been outlined in the literature review many individuals will have the impression that they personally know an actor due to the level of familiarity that they have. Seeing actors in many films will reinforce this illusion of personal acquaintance and in terms of selling a film or another product (Pringle, 2004). This familiarity combined with repeated exposure of seeing these celebrity-actors with particular brands be it in films, magazines, retail merchandising or elsewhere, may be the stimuli needed to elicit an effective response from the consumer (see Obermiller, 1985). With this research, respondent feedback proved useful if only to provide insights and to gauge an initial level of influence that actors might exert. Asking interviewees how much they felt they knew about the actors they had nominated as individuals, would contribute to uncovering possible parasocial relationships (Rubin and McHugh, 1987). The rationale for this was to ascertain a level of interest in actors away from their film roles with the intention to establish whether this non-film interest in actors would result in a greater awareness for products they were associated with.

This question typically provoked three main types of reactions: *first*, being those who knew a great deal about certain actors, in many cases through reading popular culture celebrity focussed magazines or actively visiting 'news, gossip and entertainment' websites. Reflecting the issues concerning audience manipulation Gans (1999: xiii) asks:

Is popular culture something that is created in New York and Hollywood by skilled profit-seeking enterprises.

This reinforces the points concerning the relationship/s between 'celebrities, Hollywood and Vine' (meaning the interwoven relationship between the individual as consumers, the film industry and the marketing industry). This knowledge was from reading actors' auto/biographies rather than the 'gossip industry' stage two interviewees' claimed; the feedback averages are set out on Table 3.5. (page 143).

The *second* most common interviewee response in stage two research was to say they knew something about actors from watching mainstream television news or shows. Interviewees frequently, in relation

to knowing about celebrities, gave this as if some defence or apology was required. The *third* response stage two interviewees claimed was that they in fact knew nothing about actors or indeed any celebrities. The researcher was unable to determine the validity of such statements; it is though questionable as some interviewees would later refer to details of the actors' private life despite their earlier denial of any knowledge. These responses helped in building an overall picture of the individual respondent as a film and a product consumer, it also helped to gauge their level of interest (or stated level of interest) in celebrities and more particularly celebrity-actors that assisted in addressing the research questions.

On a 0–10 scale (zero meaning they claimed to know nothing about the actor and 10 being an all-encompassing knowledge) stage two interviewees were asked to rate their knowledge about actors. The interviewees who gave a 'ten' for complete knowledge was something of a surprise as the idea of 'complete knowledge' was unanticipated by the researcher. This claim was made for James Stewart, and Buster Keaton; basing on the interviewee's certainty on having read their auto/biographies.

Table 3.5 **Actors as individuals, knowledge index scores.**

	Average
First Choice Actor	2.8
Second Choice Actor	2.6
Third Choice Actor	2.4
Fourth Choice Actor	2.8

Stage two interviewee knowledge was on a scale of zero to ten.

From Table 3.5 the level of interviewee self-rated knowledge concerning actors appears to be low. For most stage two interviewees, their level of knowledge was habitually proffered with apologetic justifications, even when the claimed score was low. Typical responses were:

Well, they're always on the news, or:

You can't but help hearing about them, people are always talking about them so you're bound to hear things.

Only a few stage two interviewees admitted to actively seeking information about stars such as accessing websites to 'find the latest gossip'. At times the responses came across to the interviewer as evasive on the part of the interviewee and it is considered that some will have wanted to play down their celebrity knowledge (see Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). The expectation might be that with a higher level of knowledge about celebrity actors would coincide with a higher level of knowledge or awareness about their associated products. Some of these stage two interviewees seemed unwilling or unable to recall, divulge or share such information.

From Table 3.5 stage two interviewees claimed to know more about their first-choice actor than their second, and more about their second choice than their third. With the fourth choice though, the 'average claim' to knowledge was in fact equal to the first choice. This factor was considered to be of potential importance with film selection as many interviewees saw on the fourth choice as someone who was often justified in terms of being a 'fun' choice or associated with a 'fun film'. One such response was with reference to Hugh Grant, the interviewee stated:

He always seems to play the same type; he made the list because well, he was good in 'Four Weddings', that was such a feel-good movie.

This positive association between a favourite actor and being regarded as 'a fun person' or appearing in 'fun films' was frequently cited; liking an actor and not liking their films would seem, at best, counterintuitive. Interviewees might have assumed that admitting to liking actors who might be regarded as 'lightweight' or 'superficial' would reflect negatively upon them, whereas citing actors of 'depth' who are held in high regard by others might equally influence responses (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). This might also be a simple case of wanting to bask in their 'reflected glory' (Atkins, 2009). The question of favourite thespians did assist in giving insights into respondents as viewers, and with the investigation of the degree of interest in and knowledge about actors, also with actor liking/preference and actor centred product promotions. This served as a

useful point for discussing actors; it also served as a good foundation upon which to base the following section of the interview process.

The degree to which the lives of celebrities are reported upon is extensive (Cashmore, 2006; Turner, 2013). This level of scrutiny can be of benefit to the celebrities themselves and to the films and products that they are promoting (Pringle, 2004). The level of interest and awareness of celebrity-actors away from their appearances in film was an area of interest here. This awareness is a possible key link between the actor and the product placements.

For individuals who expressed a high degree of knowledge about certain actors the intention was to ascertain if this extended to being aware of products and/or brands with which they were associated. While some of the stage two interviewees claimed an 'encyclopaedic knowledge' about certain thespians others, outwardly at least, were far less informed. Many of these interviewees liked an actor without claiming to know anything about them. For example, one stage two interviewee stated:

I don't know and don't want to know, I would avoid reading or hearing about them as I don't want it to colour my view about the characters they play. I heard something about one particular actor 25 years ago and I haven't been able to see them since without thinking about the event and it has put me off them. It's like with [footballer] Ryan Giggs, [I] don't know and don't want to know.

This comment was not an isolated example in this research of a participant wanting to split the 'real' person from the screen persona. Stage two interviewees stated:

I really couldn't give a monkey's! Just not interested. I don't remember who they are anyway so it doesn't interest me.
I don't like actors; I like characters so I don't think of the person playing the role.

Whereas one dismissed all actors stating:

Directors are more important to me than actors; I go off actors if they give a bad performance in something.

This latter comment appears to hold a contradiction in it as actors are discounted on one hand but then the respondent states that she could 'go off' them suggesting that they are more important than was acknowledged. Maltby (2003) and Shail (2007) champion the role of the director, both outline the director's importance as an auteur, and as a draw for many people to watch their films. These opposing positions concerning actors, characters, roles and directors demonstrate a wealth of understanding and information possessed by research participants. Audiences are full of contradictions and inconsistencies, but they display feelings of attachment and identity to certain celebrities and, as developed below, to brands (Ulrich and Sarasin, 1995; Atkins, 2009).

3.9 Chapter Conclusions.

In this chapter, the findings from the interviewees presented inconsistencies that would be challenging to reconcile. The interviewees' attitudes concerning actors, with especial reference to celebrity-actors, were reviewed in order to establish the multiple and flexible understandings with the relationship between attitudes relating to actors and films featuring them or associated products and was considered a central issue for answering the research questions. The responses given here though suggest that interviewees can idolise actors one moment but later deny all knowledge about them. Given that the participants were almost nearly evenly split between female and male, it was of interest that so few actresses, to make the clear distinction, than actors were given as the viewers' favourite thespians. Participants will also on occasion berate actors if judged to take what they regard as overtly commercial roles in a marketing promotion, with television advertisements being the most commonly cited and most widely derided example. Overt placements can also meet with viewer resentment (Karniouchina et al, 2011) which will negatively influence the promotion. Netflix and UK television channels do give notice at the start of television programmes that they contain product placement, several viewers mentioned seeing the warning notice during the introduction for ITV's *Coronation Street* and on Netflix for *Sense8*, there was though the impression that these warnings were seen as regarded as irrelevant by the interviewees as placements were expected. The interviewees holding diverse opinions and positions concerning celebrity actors is a positive factor. The contradictions held means that rather than being unified and homogenised their opinions have a depth and multiplicity of features that while they will initially complicate the consumer profiles, they result in the possibility for film makers and marketers to better segment, target and serve their consumers.

From the data, mixed interviewee attitudes were also a finding, relating to both celebrity status and actor attraction, with respondents not only contradicting each other but also, at times, themselves. The interviewee inconsistencies and ambiguities illustrate that any such

relationships are at best illusive or perhaps simply non-existent. Wiseman (2011) contends that individuals are frequently unaware of what, or who, influences them. That they are subject to influence, he continues, surprises many individuals. Interviewees can themselves regard admitting to 'celebrity influence' as a sign of weakness or lack of personal integrity, maybe more so if the influence was a film or an actor.

Chapter Four

Product Placement and the Featured Films: data collection and analysis.

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter discusses the interviewees' observations and opinions about product placement. Provided initially are broad perspectives, these are followed by a detailed discussion and analysis of the data collected. The chapter investigates the interviewees' attitudes towards product placement specifically to consider whether positive feelings or empathy towards certain actors or the characters they portray, are projecting associations onto products they are seen with. In short, looking for evidence of any Celebrity Brand Association. There is also an analysis of the different film genres involved, namely those of comedy, romance and drama. The first part of this chapter establishes the observational context for the interviewees in relation to their specific research film, including the details of the film watched, the actors and crew, their enjoyment of the movie and reasons why they had chosen that title. The second part examines the product placement element of the films with a profile outlining the products and their placing type.

4.2 The interview process, assessing the viewers' attitudes.

To assess in stage two of the research, the interviewees' overall impression of their selected film, they were asked to give it a rating out of ten. Most viewers were inclined to give a generous rating (see Supporting

Materials Table S.M.12. page 336). It was considered that there might be a correlation between the level of film enjoyment and product recall or impact and that this would be worthy of further investigation. As an indication of how well each film was received stage two interviewees were asked how likely they would be to recommend the film to others, and if they would be likely to buy, rent, or download the film. Most of these interviewees answered in a positive manner when it came to be recommending the research film they had viewed.

The interview also intended to encourage the interviewees in stage two, to consider and think about their film in more detail as a form of preparation for some of the following questions. As a comparison, the ratings from IMDb as a website for film fans and Amazon Prime have been included in order to gauge if the stage two interviewees' views on film popularity are in-line with reviews elsewhere, or if some kind of distortion or bias had appeared perhaps due to the research process. The argument that the overall popularity of films with consumers and the sales at the box office, plus sales of films following the cycle of cinema releases, as being of more importance than film critics' opinions or any awards. Film director Peter Jackson (2012) argues that the only popularity rating that counts is the one for the 'Gross' - the money taken from paying customers. For this research the relationship between the film's popularity, and the level of observations on the placed products was considered important and is investigated further in the following section of this chapter.

4.3 Viewers' attitudes to product placement: is it an acceptable form of marketing communication?

The issue of product placement as an acceptable form of in-film marketing communications (Galician, 2004) is the unifying theme of this research and directly addressed with the interview question 'Do you feel that product placement is an acceptable marketing technique?'. For most research participants this was the first time the topic had been addressed to them and this informed the issue of acceptance for placements from the stage

two interviewees with one major theme emerging; summarised by one participant with the comment:

As long as it's not too overt then that's fine, it shouldn't be detrimental to the film.

Contradicting however, were comments from elsewhere in this research.

From research stage three, four respondents made these observations:

I mean if it's really obvious and the camera lingers, lingers on the label for a little while then that's when I object to it really.

I think that can be done quite well but then it could have a negative effect if a product is used out of place.

Sometimes it can appear very, very obvious which is laughable really. To me it doesn't do the brand any good at all.

It's like Apple have sponsored this. And that can be a bit annoying.

The theme that placements represented a distraction from the film was a common concern and one repeated across the research; this corresponds with an observation from Russell (2002) and Brennan, Dubas and Babin (2015) that a visual appearance with a low plot connection appears as intrusive to the audience. The single most common objection revealed in this research was about the possible blatant nature of product placement; there was a strong feeling that a film should not 'feel, behave or look' like a television advertisement. Typical was the contradictory comment:

Yes. No. If it's not out of place. It's harmless enough.

For the brand promoter products that were not 'out of place' and noticeable were often not consciously noticed thereby potentially defeating the objective of the promotional process. Highlighting this dilemma from research stage three are the comments:

I'd probably notice more if it looked really fake.

The whole thing was based around 'my watch, my watch'. So it was obviously a watch, and I'm supposed to notice what it is, but it just washed over me and I didn't get the brand.

This encapsulates the placement dilemma. The latter comment concerned the placement of an Omega watch as a narrative device in *Spectre* (2015) (RF11). Making the comment was a respondent who was primed to be looking out for placements, and still the brand 'washed over' her. Making it

any more obvious and the placement and brand risk rejection by the consumers and film risks devaluation as an entertainment product.

The resistance to product placement from many of the interviewees in stage two was negative and strong. Research stage two participants expressed this with comments such as:

It's a bad way to create films via product placement sponsorship.

It can be jarring and seems a bit sneaky.

It would annoy if the placement interrupted the narrative or the artistic endeavour.

I pay to watch a film not some collection of adverts.

A research stage three interviewee adds to this theme with a comment chiming with earlier ones:

I think actually that it's wrong. I personally would prefer not to see any advertising at all.

The repetition of unwanted or distracting interruption was a theme throughout the research with two stage three interviewees voicing the opinion that they would rather see a block of advertisements than have placements in a film. Speaking on the immersive appeal of film as storytelling director Roman Polanski makes the related point about film engagement: 'Cinema should make you forget you are sitting in a theatre' (quoted in Cronin, 2005; 70). While Polanski is discussing cinema consumption of film, the sentiment of a distracting and encompassing experience is an important one for all film consumption. Youngelson-Neal (2014, 70) describes the cinema experience as 'non-rivalry consumption' and that 'viewers of a feature film are unaffected by the size of the audience' which while it can be true for many is not, from the research here, true for all. Several respondents claimed they avoided cinemas as they found other audience members disturbing and wearisome with people talking, eating and so forth. Polanski's suggestion, however, highlights the ability of film to absorb the viewer, the research here proposes that 'blatant', 'missing' or 'fake' placements can be jarring or distracting for the viewer from intended immersive story telling of film.

Noted on this latter theme by three stage two interviewees that 'fake' products undermined the realism and that as a viewer one stating that she expected to see familiar brands:

But like in the right setting. Like seeing the Budweiser in a bar, not KFC on an island in the middle of a lake.

This latter comment being a reference to what was regarded here as a clumsy placement in the film *Grown Ups* (RF7) (Dugan, 2010), see Table 5.3., page 213. To encapsulate the interviewees' feelings here, some additional comments from stage two of the research are illustrative:

In East Enders they don't have real brands in the pub there and it looks phoney.

It's fine as long as it's not blatant. [Product placement] Can be useful, it adds to the realism.

Some stage two interviewees spoke in favour of product placement as they felt that it gave the feel of realism; this corresponds with some other research studies reviewed in Table S.M.1. (page 324). Others commented:

It's how you expect to see life represented, you expect to see things you know, and it looks fake if you don't see them.

I would expect it in film, it's representative of the world.

Films have to imitate life.

Products are around us all the time, so yeah, they should be in films.

This leaves a contradiction with some interviewees stating that they appreciated and expected branded products for added realism, while also expressing a negative opinion about the use of generic (and therefore apparently fake) props. This corresponds to what DeLorme and Reid (2002: 78) found, namely that many viewers:

felt irritated and insulted by generic product props that were judged to interfere with movie realism and to interrupt the movie viewing experience.

This would form a strong argument for filmmakers to include placed branded products, however, to do this in a manner that overwhelmed the art direction, or the misé-en-scene would be potentially harmful to the integrity of a film and rejected by audiences. This, however, leaves the

judgement to be made by filmmakers on how to strike the balance between natural yet noticeable placements and not being regarded as overwhelming, out of place or fake. The data from the fieldwork suggests that audiences need careful consideration and that the fundamental requirements for a successful placement, at least in part, relies upon 'natural integration' of the product with the film or scene. For the research participants in this study they considered that this would be things such as alcohol brands in a bar scene, the cars and phones characters use, or a featured airline. Even then, some participants commented that the inclusion would have to fit the flow of the narrative and not appear to have been included merely to provide a promotional opportunity (Russell, 2002). This leaves a dilemma as being a natural part of the scene can increase the chances that the placement will be missed. Two research stage three participants (the group who were primed and asked to look out for placements) made the comments after being prompted about cars in a chase scene in *Spectre* (RF11) said:

Again, I didn't think 'oh, there's a Range Rover!' I just watched the scene.

I'm not very good at spotting them, I get too involved in the story.

The notion of natural integration is problematic given that there is no commonly held consensus by filmmakers on what the 'right' approach for this would be (Cowley and Barron, 2008). It is useful to remember that in this research process the stage three participants were fully informed that the study was about product placements in films, rather than being about the films. This meant that the interviewees here were primed for placements and hopefully more reflective and critical about the implementation of them. This may account for some of the apologetic tone in some of the feedback, such as the two comments immediately above. See S.M.18 for examples of *Spectre* placed vehicles and back-end marketing, page 348.

4.4 A review of the research films.

In the second stage research process, interviewees were questioned first about the products on a 'free recall' basis, namely which products they

saw (if any) and in what context. This was followed by a stage two research 'prompted recall' section where interviewees were shown a list of the placed products and asked which (if any) of these they remembered seeing and in what context. Inviting interviewees, in both cases, to give opinions about their observations, such as placement appropriateness or their attitudes towards the placement and product was undertaken. The exact type of product placement presentation was a key research consideration, as was whether this made a difference to the viewers' placement recall. This product placement process is regarded of paramount importance for determining if one method of placement was more effective than another, see also Donaton, 2005; Lehu and Bressoud (2008); Kavallieratou (2013). If, as other research suggests (see S.M.1; page 324), that the mere inclusion on screen of products is enough to prompt recall, then the problems of how a product is placed would be solved. If though a difference in the level of placement recall and impact from the participants was found for different types of placement styles, then this would inform promoters and filmmakers of the most effective method/s of placements. To distinguish the product placement process, the thesis used three placement categories based on the products' profile and prominence within the film. Shown next in Table 4.1 are the three types of placement considered.

Table 4.1. The Three Placement Categories.

High Placement	- Products that are used by an actor/s, named and/or forms a part of the film narrative.
Low Placement	- Products used by an actor/s.
Passive Placement	- Products used in a film as part of the 'set dressing', appearing in the background of a shot.

Given a higher-level classification are products that appear in several of these categories, while also noted are the number of product appearances and verbal mentions to see if this might make a difference to

recall levels and interviewee feedback. Table 4.3 (page 165) gives an example of a placement grid used for this research. In order to assess the level and type of placement in each film, and to use this to investigate comparisons with the other research films, this table shows the films by main genre type with the placed products in their corresponding placement type, i.e. High Placement or Passive Placement.

Table 4.2. **The Placement and Genre Grid.**

Genre/ Placement	Romance.		Comedy.		Drama.
1. High Placement.	Times in shot. Times mentioned.		Times in shot. Times mentioned.		Times in shot. Times mentioned.
2. Low Placement.	Times in shot.		Times in shot.		Times in shot.
3. Passive Placement.	Times in shot.		Times in shot.		Times in shot.

The results for each of the research films were collated for analysis, viewer reactions for individual films were explored, and questions of potential actor associations investigated. Other viewers however were not even aware of product placement as a marketing tool and one stage two interviewee asked: *Are you sure they do that? Are they allowed? Is it even legal?* Whether there were differences between the observation of luxury or aspiration products, such as Bulgari, Omega, and Maserati compared to lower priced consumer goods such as Coke, Starbucks or McDonald's was also considered; all of these branded products are regularly placed in films (Brand Channel, November 2011) including some of the films used here.

4.5 The products featured in the research films; how different presentation can affect viewer perceptions.

Each placement in the research films was considered in relation to just how the product is presented, be it in a positive or negative manner, with a high or low profile and other important issues such as the general setting and mise-en-scène. Considering the style of the product placement was important, whether the portrayal of the product was in negative or positive context, see for example Prius in *Little Fockers* (RF5) and *The Other Guys* (McKay, 2010) (RF6). Nappolini and Hackley (2008) illustrate the settings context issue with an example from the film *Lone Star* (Sayles, 1996) to describe the way in which a product can make a strong impression upon viewers. In this case, a character draws a line in the sand using a Coke bottle. In *Lone Star*, this is a symbolic moment between characters, given additional impact by:

The music, what he was saying and in what manner, the camera angle and other elements are also important in framing the viewer's interpretation of the scene (Nappolini and Hackley, 2008: 6).

The context of the placement is clearly important in shaping the viewer's interpretation of a scene. The expectation would be for music to exert an influence on how the placed product is received; for which consideration should also be given. In the '*Lone Star*/Coke bottle' example, the Coke bottle features prominently during a key moment in the narrative, thereby providing it with a high profile. This latter example also garnered some feedback from two stage two interviewees in this research with both remarking on how cleverly Coke had been featured with one comment being made that it looked both 'incongruous yet believable' at the same time. In this research, similar high-profile placements and their recall were looked for here.

Some products fall into more than one placement classification within a film. A brand might appear as a location, for example a Dunkin' Donuts outlet in *The Town* (RF9), or as a prop - this time as a Dunkin' Donuts cake box in *The Other Guys* (RF6), see below. One stage two

interviewee commented that she 'didn't notice' when Dunkin' Donuts was featured but:

If they had Starbucks I might of [sic] noticed, that's a brand I know. Like they did in The Devil Wears Prada.

This may though be the objective, or one of the objectives, of the placement namely to remind people about it who already know the brand and to inform other people about the brand so it does look familiar when they actually see one of their outlets; thereby making purchasing a higher probability (Solomon et al, 2012). This would also be one of Wiseman's (2011) examples of not knowing what influences us or what Slywotzky and Weber (2013) term as part of a product's unnoticed but 'magnetic appeal'. Another stage two interviewee on this familiarity theme stated:

It was like in Wayne's World with Pizza Hut, it was so blatant but they did it in a way that made you feel that you were in on the joke; you laugh with them. You also notice that it's Pizza Hut.

Picture Illustration 4.1. **Product Placement Star Billing.**



Examples of, left *Wayne's World* (Spheeris, 1992) with the blatant placement for Pizza Hut. Right, Anne Hathaway, with a Hermes bag, Starbucks coffees and a Blackberry PDA in *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006).

Quoted by several research stage two interviewees in this research, as an acceptable way to include product placement was this Pizza Hut example. Regarded as being subversive or anti-establishment, respondents

praised it as they felt they were included in the joke - rather because of the blatantness of the placement. As is seen from the analysis below though, few placements appear to have such a positive reception. Findings overall of viewer reactions to placements were varied and contradictory.

An ultimate achievement in placement terms for prominence alone should be as having the product brand name in the title of the film, as with *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006): in this case, a film with a main theme concerning conspicuous consumption of luxury brands – such as in this example the fashion brand Prada. During the course of this research, an even more explicit form of product placement in films appeared in the form of *The Lego Movie* (Lord and Miller, 2014). The estimated production costings were approximately \$60,000,000 while the film grossed in the region of \$260,000,000 (Variety, March 2014). Sales of Lego during 2014 increased by 11 percent and profits by 12 percent (Campbell and Davidson, September 2014). Attribution of a significant sales boost following the release of the *Lego Movie*: this also saw the company overtake Mattel as the world's largest toy maker by sales volume. Many of the increased sales were for sets designed specifically for the film and merchandised accordingly. While the word 'Lego' is not used in dialogue, one character refers to it as 'a system of interconnecting building blocks', the entire film though is populated by Lego figures and features a huge range of Lego products on a constant basis. The only non-animated scene is set in a basement that is full of Lego models and sets. The researcher is not aware of any film that promotes a brand in such an all-encompassing and relentless manner. Furthermore, the placement appears to have met with consumer approval, referring to the box office receipts, the extension of the film into a '4D' experience and the production of further Lego films (Pulver, 2016). This builds on a series of Lego video games where the angular Lego figures, including a range from Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Marvel Superheroes, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Pirates of the Caribbean among others, also feature (see Picture Illustration 5.2, next). The success of the film and the acceptance of the completeness of the product placement is in part due to the way the Lego product range lends itself to the film process. This follows the success of the Toy Story films with their mix of familiar and new toy characters.

Picture Illustration 4.2: **Lego, as video games, a film and toys.**



From the top, a selection of Lego video games, the DVD cover from the film and model kits based on models featuring in the film. Screen shots from *The Lego Movie* (2014). Bottom, a range of Lego characters including many made especially for *The Lego Movie*.

4.6 The research films, the viewers and their product placement observations.

The purpose here is to ascertain and gauge the interviewees' observations about the specific research film they watched and about their recall and opinions concerning the product placements shown within. Linking with a point made in the methodology chapter viewers may have previously viewed a selected film thereby giving familiarity with it. Bressoud, Lehu and Russell (2008: 2) state that previous film exposure is: *...expected to act as a priming device for recognising brands.*

None of the interviewees here however, had seen their selected film beforehand. The impact of exposure is a key issue, Lehu (2009: 63) writes:

Brand awareness can be concretely reinforced. The more the brand is seen or heard, the better the chances that it will be remembered.

With the Toyota Prius examples in this research, it would be a mistake to assume that all 'concrete reinforcement' was positive. The simple process of repetition would appear to have an inculcation effect whereby the mere act of repeat exposure is, according to Lehu (2009), enough to ensure brand exposure and recognition. The viewers do not receive all placements positively. The brands highlighted in the Literature Review, with Ray Ban in *Men in Black* (Sonnenfeld, 1997) and FedEx in *Cast Away* (2000), do provide some support for Lehu's position but as argued below, this situation is not a guarantor of positive outcomes for product placements but more of a possible predictor.

Regarding products with placement prominence, one stage two interviewee commented that:

They're like FedEx in Cast Away, after a while you don't really notice.

While another stage two interviewee stated that, he thought Will Smith advertised Ray Ban sunglasses because:

Well, he wears them all the time in Men in Black.

The respondent read the wearing of not just sunglasses, but especially Ray-Ban sunglasses, as 'cool' and 'stylish'. She highlighted that Will Smith wore them 'all the time' adding that this included indoors and at night, which, according to this respondent was 'a cool thing'. The repetition approach seen here with the actor and the product is an established technique in areas of marketing communication (Solomon et al, 2016; Evans, Jamal and Foxall, 2009). However, this will not be without potential hazards for the marketer; not least with the deceptively difficult task of ensuring that enough of the 'right market segment' is exposed to the promotion in the 'right manner' and using the 'right variables' (Kotler et al, 2016). Bressoud et al (2008: 2), state that these variables include:

whether the placement is centrally located on the screen, the amount of the screen taken up by the placement.

Additionally, a key factor is whether the product has an 'auditory mention' is something to be considered. From the research gathered here this latter point appears to be one of the main factors as to whether a placement achieves consumer awareness before being even able to consider any positive associations and influences it can have.

Placement recall and the influence it might have on viewers are different propositions, and can have a markedly different impact on viewers. While Pokrywczynski (2005) notes how the verbal and visual placement combination achieves a high impact Russell (2002) suggests that some placements have a high recall rate due to their incongruous placement: the high recall does not guarantee a positive recall. Russell (2002: 306) argues:

Memory improves when modality and plot connection are incongruent but persuasion is enhanced by congruency. While congruous placements appear natural, incongruent placements adversely affect brand attitudes because they seem out of place and are discounted.

This is a key point that resonates with some of the interviewees in this research. This issue is pursued further below.

4.7 Placement modality: incongruity, impact and attitude – how obvious does a product need to be?

The data from this research and from the literature review, it is clear that consumers can be difficult to communicate effectively with, including via the medium of film. This issue is important to this study in that placement impact and recall alone will not be enough for marketers wishing to promote a product efficiently. Incongruous placements while being noticed risk rejection from the audience (Bressoud et al 2008), the manner and context of the placement are key to the communication process. Nappolini and Hackley (2008: 16) build on this stating:

It appeared that although various elements of the mise-en-scène could substantially affect the way in which the audience would engage with the brand, the actual story and action of the film appeared to matter more.

It would be surprising if the story mattered less than the misé-en-scène, but the latter does also matter - and will give context to the film's plot and the manner of the products' presentation. For the filmmaker there is a balance to achieve, while they will receive income relating to a commercially placed product, the question of realism is important for believability *and* familiarity and risks devaluation by the manner of the placement (Gould, et al, 2000). An illustration of this was provided by a research stage three interviewee who commented on Bond and his companion being collected in a Rolls Royce in *Spectre* (RF11) that:

If a Volvo had turned up to pick them up or something, then it just wouldn't have the same effect.

Clearly, in this case the filmmakers met audience expectations, although this leaves the question as whether an alternative vehicle might have held more product placement impact.

Evidence from the data here correlates with other research that if a placement is consciously noticed by the audience in the course of a film, but in a jarring or unrelated way to the narrative, then the "viewers tend to think about its presence in the show and raise their cognitive defences"

(Russell, 2002: 325). This would lessen the value of the placement and damage the integrity of the film. A well placed product in an expected or natural setting is more likely to find acceptance and even approval from an audience, but as this and other studies (Russell, 2002; Pringle, 2004; Lehu, 2008) demonstrate these placements can be so well integrated as to render them invisible. Interviewees here rejected blatant placements, as with Blackberry in *The Town* (RF9) and Prius in *Little Fockers* (RF5). This highlights the issue of balance and what was blatantly obvious to one viewer passed unnoticed by another.

In a manner that contradicts other statements, Russell (2002: 325) claims that even products that were:

...merely placed in the visual background were as persuasive as audio placements that were highly connected to the plot.

This view runs counter to the findings here. To be consciously noticed viewers need to absorb details that can be difficult especially in films with many variables such as action sequences, fast paced editing, unusual or unfamiliar settings or quickly delivered dialogue. This was a factor in this study and with respondents who had viewed *Casino Royale* (2006) and later with *The Social Network* (2012). With this latter film, many viewers commented that the dialogue was delivered so quickly that they struggled to keep up, this will distract viewers from noticing any of the many placements featured. With *Quantum of Solace* (RF1), the Virgin Atlantic placement (where an entire scene was filmed on board one of their planes with an actor playing a uniformed crew member, and other clearly branded features) elicited almost no recall from the 32 individuals who watched it. Outlined below evidence to support Russell's findings from this research was mixed at best, and at worst simply missing.

Chaiken and Maheswaran (1994) underline the importance of using a high or low credibility source. An act of persuasion rests in part on whether Daniel Craig (playing James Bond) would fulfil this criterion; with this research he appears to have made little impact on the audience and that 'source attractiveness' as McCracken (1988) terms it, is not a

guarantee of product placement success (see also Sertoglu, Catli and Korkmaz, 2014). This contradicts both Russell (2002), who considers that brands used that are not explicitly connected to a specific actor to be effective, it also contradicts research carried out by Mackie and Asuncion (1990). Mackie and Asuncion (1990: 5) state that the:

recall of message content will at best predict persuasion when message content is encoded free of elaborations.

It is possible the interviewees here found Daniel Craig, or the pace of the editing, or the speed of the dialogue or even the tension within the narrative too distracting to notice any placements. In which case, this would reinforce the call to have integrated retail promotions to establish and support the placement efforts (see *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, page 238). The following section looks at the films reviewed for this research and the placements therein. The films are in three groups starting with the 'romance films', followed by the 'comedy' and then the 'drama' titles.

4.8 Featured films and the products recalled: the romance films.

The following section reviews the research films that were viewed by the participants for this study, with attention given to stage two of the research process with the semi-structured interviews, a review of stage three is given later. As each film is reviewed, an introduction is provided with brief details including details of how the products were placed. Following this is analysis and comment on the interviewees' feedback related to how they as consumers regarded these placements. For reasons of clarity, only the details from one of each of the films are included here. The films directly used for this research are listed on page 93. The first of the research stage two films is *The Switch* (RF2). This is a romance set in New York City starring Jenifer Aniston and Jason Bateman; the stage two interviewees who viewed it reported that it followed a predictable formula, to quote one: *It played out pretty much as expected*. Table 5.3 (next) reviews the brands that interviewees freely recalled from the film, and those brands that they recalled with prompting. It also addresses the question of

the products' placement method. As an example of the placement styles the following tables (Tables 4.3 and 4.4) are included here.

Table 4.3. *The Switch*: Products Placed.

	Number of Times Product Mentioned.	Number of Times Placements Shown, how used.
High Placement		
Stella Artois		Five times, drunk by lead.
Apple Store		Setting for one scene.
Café Cluny*		Setting for one scene, two prominent sign shots.
Umbra Picture Frames		Five shots, two prominent, narrative device.
LiceGuard	Once	Used as a narrative device.
Duane Reade	Once	Setting for one scene.
TRUE Treadmills		In three scenes, prominently used by leads.
Low Placement		
(Apple) iPod	Once	Used by lead.
Wharton University		On shirt worn by lead.
Rolex Watch		Worn by lead, prominent.
Spoon Watch		Worn by lead.
Tide (washing detergent)	Once	
Web MD	Once	
Craig's List	Once	
Passive Placement		
Tanqueray (gin)		Twice as set dressing
San Pellegrino		Once as set dressing
Lacoste (shirt)		Once by supporting actor.
Sony (TV)		Once, as set dressing.

*A café on 4th West Street, New York.

The following table shows the products remembered by the stage two interviewees. The Free Recall column gives those products readily

recalled. The Prompted Recall column the products were recollected only after interviewees were shown a list of the products placed in the film.

Table 4.4. *The Switch*: Products Recalled.

	Free Recall	Prompted Recall
High Placement		
Stella Artois	1	1
Apple Store	1	
Café Cluny		1
Umbra Picture Frames		
LiceGuard	1	1
Duane Reade		
Low Placement		
Apple iPod	1	
TRUE Treadmills		1
Wharton University		
Rolex Watch		
Spoon Watch		
Tide		
Web MD		
Craig's List		
Passive Placement		
Tanqueray		
San Pellegrino		1
Lacoste (shirt)		
Sony (TV)		
Total	4	5

Four female stage two interviewees watched *The Switch*; it received some noteworthy comments on the placements including:

I don't recall any!

LiceGuard, she was a bit hysterical about it.

She was on about LiceGuard; she got really freaked about it like he'd got plague or something.

None, I'm terrible! I can't remember any!

None, they must have been subtle.

On prompting: *Still none, I remember Jennifer Anniston holding a beer, but not which brand.*

The overall analysis of the films is given after all nine have been reviewed but as might be gathered from the comments above *The Switch* was not high for product recall but was of great use for this research with the responses collected.

The second romance film, *Letters to Juliet* (RF3) (Winnick, 2010); four viewers watched this film producing some relevant observations. Even though most of the film was set in Verona and the surrounding Veneto region, none of the viewers saw this as being a type of placement although all remarked on how attractive the city and countryside were. For viewers to overlook this type of obvious tourism placement, which can result in visitor increases of up to 300% (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006; see also *Mamma Mia!* and *Lord of the Rings*, above), is understandable. The setting is natural and subtle and, therefore, more persuasive for those who seek to promote visitors to the area.

The only products that were freely recalled were cars, the Fiat 500 (a new model in an eye-catching red) and the heavily featured Alfa Romeo Giulietta, the Italian for Juliet so linking, perhaps subconsciously, to the name of the film. One stage two interviewee claimed not to have seen any products but with prompting then recalled the brief appearance of an Audi A4 convertible at the end of the film with the comment:

I spotted the Audi as I have one.

The featured Condé Nast publication '*The New Yorker*', while not a publication widely read in the UK, was thought by two interviewees to have been 'made-up for the film' with one commenting "*I didn't realise it was real!*". This might support the concept that familiar products are more

noticeable, see also the 'Dunkin' Donuts' example above. One interviewee though, on reflection, commented how much the lead character used her Blackberry; though not enough to prompt free recall. None of the other placed products were recalled by the interviewees.

Morning Glory (RF4) the third romance film, is set in a television studio broadcasting a morning magazine show. As one viewer commented:

The plot is as predictable as the poster for it suggests, and by that standard doesn't disappoint.

This is similar to a comment made for *The Switch* (RF2) and underlining the importance of film posters to promote the movies, and to act as a frame of reference for them. In total four interviewees viewed the research stage two film *Morning Glory* (RF4), out of these one claimed to have seen no brands, even after prompting. She did though make the comment:

I liked her dress in the last scene, I wondered if they wanted to sell it.

While the viewer had not noticed brands, she had spotted one item and thought of a commercial connection. Two other interviewees made comments about coffee, a regular feature of the film:

I saw lots of coffee, but no brands.

They did drink a lot of coffee, but I didn't see the brand.

This suggests that the producers here missed the chance to have a coffee brand placed in a fitting and suitable context. However, as has been noted before, the next comment from an interviewee appears central to the product placement process, namely:

Because they are in context they didn't jump out at me.

An interesting comment from research stage three built on this issue of context. In this case the interviewee was speaking about the television zombie drama *The Walking Dead* (2010 – to date). His comment was:

In the TV show itself they had their brand new Hyundai as a car that the characters drive, but it doesn't make sense within the show because this is the zombie apocalypse and its set a few years on and it wouldn't make sense that Hyundai would have released a new car during the apocalypse. So it kind of had a negative effect on me as a viewer because it made it a bit more unrealistic as if it wasn't

enough already, but it had a bit of a negative impact the fact they weren't using a car that would have actually been able to use.

This again highlights the balance between placements being prominent but not obvious/blatant and risking rejection, being in context and not observed or being noticed out of context and rejected on those grounds. The next two comments from this group emphasise this:

Well, they said 'Blackberries' as a general term for mobiles;

and about placements in films generally,

Well, it's not as blatant as Iron Man, Transformers ones or even as obvious as the Coke ones in Blade Runner.

This suggests that firstly brand names can be interpreted as generic terms and secondly, that such blatant placements are at times regarded in a negative manner. One of the most common comments made about product placement with this film, as with other films, was:

I don't think it works on me.

Here we can see the consumers' perceived indifference to the influence of product placement.

4.9 Featured films and the products recalled: the comedy films.

The first comedy film used in research stage two is *Grown Ups* (RF7) (2010), viewed by four interviewees. This film carries a high number of placements). Two products particularly deserve attention here, one is Amoskeag Lake t-shirts (designed as a prop for the film (Brand Channel, 2011)) and the second is Voss, expensive Norwegian bottled water that features in the script. With the latter, the context of these for Voss were verbal as they formed part of the film's dialogue. These, however, were usually negative and given by a character portrayed as spoilt, or as one interviewee negatively observed about the placement:

That's what that whiny child kept asking for.

A negative response for the brand promoters.

Picture Illustration 4.3.
Images from *Grown Ups* (RF7), and Voss Water.



Left, Salma Hayek in a reverse product placement Amoskeag Lake t-shirt, centre Voss Water and right, Kevin James sporting his KFC 'bucket/hat'.

In a case of 'reverse product placement' (Bullen, 2009; Muzellec, Kanitz and Lynn, 2014)) (where products made for a film become commercially available), the Amoskeag Lake t-shirts have now become products as have a range of similarly branded Amoskeag Lake merchandise. Amoskeag Lake was the fictional setting for the film. Two further notable comments with this film included:

*American brands don't register with me; and
I didn't see any [placements], were there some?*

Raised again is the idea of familiarity, although many of the brands used in this film are globally known, such as Sony, Coke, Levi's and KFC, they still did not merit a response from participants here. The first respondent when asked said she did not think of Coke, Levi's and KFC as American brands, but they did not register with her anyway. Other brands would be American-centric and therefore not expect recognition with audiences away from the USA; Dunkin' Donuts used in *The Town* (RF9) is an example of this.

The second research stage two comedy film, *The Other Guys* (RF6) (2010), is fast paced with a lot of action scenes, a high-profile cast and

constant product placements; it was viewed by five interviewees. Of note were the placements for the Toyota Prius, the car appeared throughout the film. The leading characters also discussed the Prius, but in a particularly derogative way. The car was, at best, framed as a second-class product being driven by a 'boring, dull and geeky' character, so while it had a high profile within the film it wasn't portrayed as a desirable product or even as a neutral product. The film generated a selection of research stage two interviewee comments including:

Saw some of them but didn't think about it as product placement, they are just there anyway, or feel that they are.

Coke? Well they would be - they're everywhere.

The Prius looked good - and bad.

Coke and Apple get everywhere, and I'd expect to see them anywhere and everywhere like in Slumdog or Kite Runner or really anything.

The third comedy film *Little Fockers* (RF5) (2010) is the second sequel to *Meet the Parents* (Roach, 2000) and features a well-known ensemble cast. All five of the interviewees had high expectations of the film suggesting some degree of pre-viewing anticipation and expectation; some selected the film due to one actor - Robert DeNiro. Populated heavily with a range of placed products, this film features them in a variety of ways. These research stage two interviewees when asked about placements (shown in Table S.M.19) responded with these noteworthy comments:

No, I certainly didn't!

What's a Tesla?

They were in a Hilton?

Despite its prominence both visually and verbally the Prius and the Tesla appeared to have no positive impact with these viewers and there was a low rate of recognition from them.

4.10 Featured films and the products recalled and genre issues: the drama films.

The first of the drama films reviewed in stage two of this research, *The Social Network* (2010), was set mostly in 2003/04 with much of the film portraying undergraduate life at Harvard University. This film was received well by the interviewees, it also contained a high number of products placed. Observation of these products was quite high and elicited some notable responses from these stage two interviewees, namely:

*They were drinking Becks or Budweiser in his room. [They were not].
Sometimes the camera lingers too long on a brand, makes it too obvious.
Contextual thing isn't it, when they look in place you don't notice them.
Apple, but that's like ingrained in the culture though.
None apart from FaceBook and Harvard, does that count?
None, were there many in it? The pace of the film was quick. They
felt proper, like they should be there.
I was expecting Bud or Grolsch in the fridge. Were there some fictional
products?*

These remarks from interviewees included the important point that the fast pace of the dialogue meant that they had to concentrate more on what was being said rather than other aspects of the film, such as product placements. This could be a key placement consideration for others involved in this practice. Some of the themes mentioned by these interviewees, such as the context of the placements and viewer expectations, have been commented on above and show the emergence of common issues from the film consumers in this research. The question asking if there were fictional products in the film was unanticipated by the researcher and was felt to provide a depth of observation from the viewer. The viewer followed this comment by the stating that she preferred 'real' brands for issues of authenticity unlike the phoney ones used in programmes such as the BBC's *EastEnders*, a theme mentioned above and returned to below.

With the second drama film *The Mechanic* (West, 2010) (RF8), some differences compared to the previous films emerged. *The Mechanic* is an action/drama movie with plenty of explosions, firefights and a mounting body count. There were many placed products in this film, although not all of these were easy to identify. One such product was the Jolida sound system. The product was used as a narrative device but was not obviously branded, so while it was noticed by two interviewees it was unrecognised, however one stage two interviewee said that he did not know which brand it was but:

I just knew it was expensive.

The SIG and Glock weapons (the latter was given a 'Lifetime Achievement Award for Product Placement' by Brand Channel, February 2011c) were also noticeable as essential props to all viewers here, but they were just regarded as generic/anonymous guns. From a UK perspective, this would appear to be reasonable. From an American viewpoint though the market for these firearms is estimated at around \$11billion in 2013 alone (Brauer, 2013). Firearms are commonly used narrative devices in films and the market for them is significant (around 10.5 million weapons in 2015 alone for the USA market (A.T.F. Report, 2017)); it should be of no surprise that these products appear in Hollywood films for the significant American domestic market, and for showcasing to the potential export market. In *The Town* (RF9), several of the firearms are 'name checked' in the dialogue – perhaps in a bid to overcome the otherwise anonymous appearance and generic look that many of these products have for an unknowing viewer. Participants who viewed stage three research films *The Big Short* (2015) and *Spectre* (2015) (RF11/RF12) said in relation to namechecking:

Goldman Sachs is named checked, quite a few times they say Goldman Sachs.

He said it was a Rolls Royce, a 1948 Rolls Royce Silver Wraith. The fact that he says it makes it obvious.

Oh yes. The Rolls Royce.

The girl on the train when they were ordering drinks and she asked for a 'Dirty Martini'.

In one of the scenes the girl orders a Martini and she says the name of the brand there.

That is the James Bond signature drink. Of course, they're going to go for a Martini, shaken not stirred.

The last quote was followed with the additional comment:

Martini has managed to give itself a kind of brand because its association with the James Bond thing.

With the Audemars Piguet watch used in research stage two film *The Mechanic*, it was assumed to be expensive, but the product was not recognised by the interviewees and remained unrecognised even when the interviewees were told its name. The number of Free Recall compared to Prompted Recall placements was higher here, perhaps due to the overt nature in which they were presented; although this does not necessarily translate to positive brand associations as is reviewed in 'Chapter Seven, Towards an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films: a critical discussion'.

The responses to *The Mechanic* (RF8) prompted a diversity of comment. With these stage two interviewees, two freely placed the Maserati while another said that the opening of the film:

It looked like a car advert with that car with the trident badge.

Although he 'knew it was a luxury car' he was unable to name it. Another viewer reported that:

I noticed the Apple laptop as it's like mine.

These comments appear to both confirm and contradict the idea of familiarity and congruence as outlined above. One particularly interesting comment made here was:

They used Apple to make the character look good.

This highlights how filmmakers and viewers use brands to define characters and suggests how viewers use the product to enhance their own image. Using brands to help viewers (consumers) define characters, such as James Bond, illustrates the use of marketing communications by both the filmmakers and by the viewers (Williamson, 2010; Oswald, 2015). A

powerful or successful character would be expected to drive, for example, a certain type of vehicle. The context of the character and film would help establish this for the consumer. Serving as a narrative device was the E-type Jaguar used in *The Mechanic*, it was renovated by one character and used later as a booby trap killing another lead character. While the Jaguar did attract three recalls, it is for a model that is no longer manufactured so perhaps doing more for the Jaguar brand image than anything else. With other placements, one person commented that:

I saw things like cars, but they didn't stand out.

One stage two interviewee, on prompting, recalled the Cutty Sark whisky, stating:

He gave the Cutty Sark to the man at the jetty. I didn't think it was a good brand, maybe it is in America.

The reading of the Cutty Sark whisky as being a standard brand placed amongst expensive brands was of interest as it acknowledged that the brand be perceived differently elsewhere. It could, however, be trying to elevate itself on a brand hierarchy as wanting to be regarded as a more superior product, perhaps like the Maserati or Jolida.

This highlights two immediate points. Firstly, that even though the whisky was a narrative device and attracted two exposures it did not register strongly with other interviewees. Secondly, as touched on with *Letters to Juliet* (RF3) (2010) and other films here, it illustrates the issue that some brands have different profiles and levels of recognition (Kahn, 2013) in different countries; Cutty Sark, LiceGuard and Dunkin' Donuts being three examples given by the interviewees. It also relates to how individuals interpret and make sense of the world by explaining their own perceived oversights as being down to unfamiliar brands rather than being say subjectively unobservant. The researcher re-iterated the point that he did not expect any respondent to memorize and recall brands and products in films, and that no one watches films in order to observe placements.

Picture Illustration 4.4. **Brands in *The Mechanic* (RF8).**



The Maserati logo, top left, featured prominently in an establishing scene. Centre, Cutty Sark whisky, and top right an Audemars Piguet watch, both brands were placed in this film. Expect to pay around £110,000 for the Maserati, £25 for the whisky and £17,000 for the watch. Below left, a Jaguar identical to the one used and blown up in *The Mechanic*, bottom right (screen shot).

The cars and the watch are expensive, luxury consumer goods while the whisky is affordable for a much wider audience segment. Having the whisky placed alongside such aspirational goods might make, by association, the whisky more attractive through an enhanced brand image (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). The comments made by research stage two interviewees on page 186 here, do not suggest that is the case.

The third research stage two film is *The Town* (Affleck, 2010), a tense drama about a gang of armed robbers set against a blue-collar Boston (Massachusetts) neighbourhood. This film carries a high number of placements, it was reviewed by eight interviewees. The level and nature of the response to the placements here was noticeable for several reasons.

For a film with a wide selection of placements, the Free Recall rate was low at only six while the Prompted Recall rate was a much higher 41. The comments made by interviewees here were also noteworthy and included the following:

No, none. I watched the credits and it said there was no money from tobacco sponsorship, but I didn't notice anyone smoking during the film, he said his dad chain smoked when his mum went missing but we didn't see it.

Brennan et al, (2015), note that free recall without prompting or the supply of a memory retrieval clue is more highly valued by marketers than aided recall. Lower free recall rates would be expected based on previous research, see Gupta and Lord (1998), for example, but less welcomed by marketers.

While a denial of tobacco placement was in the credits, the incidence was of dialogue in the film and not as a visual presentation. Making the same verbal connection with comments about the Toyota Prius, also took place. For the first participant the placed product, a Prius, was noticed as, like the Audi example above, the vehicle was owned by the viewer and therefore it drew on his personal biography. The same was not true however for other research stage two placements noticed here:

The Prius as I've got one, and I did notice Budweiser.

They talked about C.S.I. for ages, and Prius they mentioned about six times in twenty seconds.

The mention of the Prius I remember, but it's the type of car she would drive [this wasn't said as a compliment but as a negative reflection of an interpreted 'yuppie' character].

The Prius, it was clever, they talked about it, but we didn't see it.

One perspicacious participant commented:

We live in a branded world, just brands everywhere – in here [her office] there are brands [we counted over twenty brands]. Some products are so ingrained in our lives, just part of our lives, so we expect to see them and maybe don't notice them.

This concept of 'being noticed' is a recurring theme with this research. Not noticed was the vehicle, driven by the lead actor, the Chevrolet Avalanche, despite three name checks and two clear visual placements. An interviewee made the following point concerning familiarity and why she had not noticed the Avalanche:

Maybe as it's an American brand and not known in the UK?

This observation echoed a previous comment concerning brand familiarity. However, another stage two interviewee commented on a retailer that does have a UK presence:

Staples, really? I didn't see that. No obvious ones (placements), can't think of any. Now I've seen the list some do look familiar.

So, while a direct connection was not made the idea of an impact being made upon the subconscious does appear to have some support. As referred to above, the subconscious can exert a strong influence on individual actions, outlined by among other Wiseman (2010): this would make the issue suitable for further in-depth investigation.

The genre of the film, or the dominant genre given the nature of multi-genre films (Altman, 1999), was a potentially important variable concerning the recall and subsequent attitude shown towards placed products in films. Selecting three distinct genres, for this reason, for which the results for each film and genre recorded within these groupings. Presenting the breakdown of the recall results is here in Table 4.5 (page 179). The initial approach was to investigate the level of recall for each film and then by genre to ascertain if factors that aided or influenced recall from film consumers for identification. For example, if a product placed in a passive manner in a drama genre film would have the same recall level as a narrative device, a car or laptop for example, in a romance film. This section gives an overview of the findings and summarises the overall product placement observations made by the interviewees. Additionally, a more detailed analysis of the findings is given; it also takes into consideration and adjusts the number of viewers for each film. Inspection of the data gathered in this research reveals very little difference between the film genres and product placement impact and observation. To uncover

potential differences with genres a more in-depth level of analysis would be required. Table 4.5, next, shows the recall for placements per film and below that Table 4.6 (page 180) shows the average recall per viewer per film as an average for research stage two participants. With the latter very little genre difference was found between.

Table 4.5. Placement Recall by Film and Genre.

	Free Recall	Prompted Recall	Total Recalls
<i>The Switch</i>	9	20	29
<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	4	5	9
<i>Morning Glory</i>	4	11	15
Genre Totals	17	36	53
<i>Grown Ups</i>	3	11	14
<i>The Other Guys</i>	15	12	27
<i>Little Fockers</i>	9	20	29
Genre Totals	27	43	70
<i>The Social Network</i>	17	23	40
<i>The Mechanic</i>	15	4	19
<i>The Town</i>	6	41	47
Genre Totals	38	68	106
Grand Totals	82	147	229

These recall figures provide a framework to which further analysis of these interviewees' opinions are based upon. The significance of marketers opting for different film genres does not present itself as being an important factor, how the placing of the product appears to have more impact. As seen in the Tables, no particular product placed made an immediate or high-profile impact on these stage two interviewees. Next though, the recall rates are investigated further and are presented by the

average number of recalls per viewer and as an average for the number of placements in each film. This is broken into an average for Free, Prompted and Combined Recall with an average for the number of placements in this stage two research film, shown next.

Table 4.6. **Recall by Film and Genre.**

	Number of viewers	Free Recall Average	Prompted Recall Average
Romance			
<i>The Switch</i>	4	2.25	5
<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	4	1	1.13
<i>Morning Glory</i>	4	1	2.75
Genre Average		1.3	3
Comedy			
<i>Grown Ups</i>	4	1.3	2.75
<i>The Other Guys</i>	5	3	2.4
<i>Little Fockers</i>	5	1.2	4
Genre Average		1.9	2.7
Drama			
<i>The Social Network</i>	7	2.42	3.3
<i>The Mechanic</i>	6	2.5	0.67
<i>The Town</i>	8	0.75	5.13
Genre Average		1.8	3.2
Overall Average		1.75	3

In an attempt to find a link between placement recall and a film's popularity, based on interviewees' feedback in this study, the following table was compiled. As can be seen, no firm relationship was established, and it is suggested that this line of possible research would require a larger data set for analysis purposes.

Table 4.7 (Stage two research films).
Comparison of Film Popularity to Placement Ranking.

	Viewer Popularity Ranking		Placement Recall Ranking
1	<i>The Other Guys</i>	1	<i>The Social Network</i>
2	<i>The Social Network</i>	2	<i>The Town</i>
3	<i>The Switch</i>	3	<i>Little Fockers</i>
4	<i>Morning Glory</i>	4	<i>The Mechanic</i>
5	<i>The Town</i>	5	<i>Morning Glory</i>
6	<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	6	<i>The Other Guys</i>
7	<i>The Mechanic</i>	7	<i>Letters to Juliet</i>
8	<i>Grown Ups</i>	8	<i>Grown Ups</i>
9	<i>Little Fockers</i>	9	<i>The Switch</i>

Looking for a link between a film's popularity and product placement recall is an area of research that requires further investigation for several reasons. While popular films with many viewers will result in the showing of placements to large numbers of potential consumers, the mere inclusion and subsequent exposure of products is not an indication or guarantee of commercial success. If though a correlation between placement presentation, or which type of film genre was most effective in prompting recall from consumers, then this would be of use for both filmmakers for marketing communications decision makers in terms of placements and their commercial appeal and usefulness.

4.11 The featured research films and the products recalled, Stage Three interviews.

Stage three of the research process is distinct in that the interviewees received a briefing on the purpose of the research. They were informed before viewing that the focus of the interview would be product placement. They were also reminded what constituted product placement to be sure that all participants were equally briefed and aware of the issues involved. The interviewees at this third stage were given two films to view. Chosen by the researcher to give a contrasting viewing experience were the two films, *The Big Short* (RF12) (2015) and *Spectre* (RF11) (2015). Table 2.3 (page 97) gives the rationale for selecting these films. There were three particularly notable themes to emerge here in this stage of the research process. The first is the belief that product placement does not work on the individuals interviewed, with a caveat by some that there could perhaps be a subconscious effect. The second is that placements perceived as blatant meet with a negative reaction from viewers. Thirdly is that spoken placements appear to have a greater impact than those that are receive only a visual presentation.

4.12 Conclusions.

This research did not find significant differences with the film's dominant genre to be able to make a statement as to which genre appears most useful for boosting a placed product impact with the consumers. With this study, the split in age and gender indicates possible differences that might show which product placements consumers notice and recall. Also shown in Table 4.6 (page 180), the average recall based on placements within the films appears low. These figures are lower for females watching romance films than males watching either drama or comedy selections. The indication of a difference here would be an area of possible future research. The findings here did not reveal evidence to support this proposition that mere inclusion in a shot was enough to make an impact with viewers to prompt recall. Many interviewees in this study did not notice the products

placed or, perhaps worse from a marketing communications perspective, noticed placements and reacted negatively to them. The key to this may lie in the viewer's subconscious as a powerful influence (Brafman and Brafman, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). The most common feature from this fieldwork is that many interviewees when they do notice placements see it as natural if the context is 'right': and then regard it with indifference. A few individuals viewed placements in a negative manner and even then, they would often proceed to cite examples where it was either acceptable, for character definition purposes, or when they found it amusing.

This chapter has reviewed several important points such as issues of prominence, noticeability, viewer acceptance and rejection, the question of 'blatantness', actor associations, brand recognition and mistaken brands. While some areas of research have found to be in keeping with and confirm previous research, points of difference also exist. Issues such as whether mere product inclusion as set dressing is enough to prompt recall and impact with a viewer, or the claimed importance of whether seeing a brand in context is important, or the use of generic or anonymous products being regarded as phony and distracting have also been considered.

Chapter 5.

Marketing Communications as a tool for placement analysis.

This chapter builds on the previous data analysis by examining the interviewees' attitudes about marketing communications, especially with celebrity-actors. There will be an interpretation of the interviewee data relating to the use of celebrities in promotions and marketing. In order to ascertain participant attitudes towards marketing communication, questions were set (see S.M.4; page 334). It was considered that attitudes to actors, as discussed in the chapter above, and attitudes to marketing communications might exert the most influence on how product placements in films were regarded by the interviewees (see Galician, 2004; Pringle, 2004); potentially the most important variables in this research.

5.1 The interviewees and their conflicting attitudes towards marketing communications.

Reviewed in this chapter is how the interviewees were generally negative with their attitudes towards marketing communication, and to product placements to a lesser extent. The unrecognised or unrecalled placements, despite what viewers say or consciously remember, have an impact on consumer attitudes and their buying behaviour according to some research (see Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007; Solomon et al, 2016).

The data presented here reviews the second part of the stage two interview and analyses responses to the marketing themes outlined above. During the interview stages of the process, the respondents were relaxed, and the answers given appeared natural and open. Interviewees were asked in research stage two if, in general, they found advertising or marketing distracting or annoying and to rate their answers on a scale of one to five, namely '1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree'. This facilitated the next interview process stage to focus on the product placement aspects and have this as a reference benchmark.

Interviewees in stage two were set three questions relating to whether they found advertising informative, enjoyable or unethical. Inviting interviewees to expand their answers and give examples obtained further illustrative data. Given next are the response averages for research stage two Questions 9-12.

Table 5.1. Questions 9-12 Average Responses.

Question Number	Average Weighting	Question. I find advertising:
9	3.56	- distracting
10	3.24	- objectionable
11	2.76	- informative
12	3.15	- enjoyable

All four questions here were set against a sliding scale from 1–5 as outlined above and discussed below.

The overall sentiment from these interviewees was that advertising and marketing were both considered as 'distracting or annoying'. Acting as a 'baseline' these questions established interviewees' opinions on a general level before more specific questions later. Expanded upon next are the reasons for this overall negative reaction and the interviewees' contradictions.

The interviewees in this research commonly made comments about marketing, these included the repetition of words such as 'boring', 'blatant', 'annoying' and 'invasive'; this corresponds with sentiments expressed elsewhere (see Donaton, 2005; Solomon et al, 2016). Interviewees though did make exceptions for advertisements that they saw as either funny, entertaining or intelligent. Many interviewees claimed in particular to ignore TV advertising either by fast forwarding it (one stating that he watched television 'at times 30' meaning that he avoided using his Sky+ system), mentally switching off to it or claiming to use the commercial break to 'make tea'. This sentiment was summarised by one stage two interviewee who commented that he thought marketing communications were:

Usually crass, ugly and badly put together; it's like litter with a remit.

An attempt in stage two of this research to balance negative comments about marketing communication by asking interviewees to rate on the same five-point scale whether they sometimes found advertising or marketing informative was made. It should be noted that although a range of advertising/marketing' activities were given by the interviewer; interviewees would inevitably talk only in terms of television advertising. The dominant response from the interviewees here was on the negative side of neutral, as can be seen with the weighting of 3.24, Table 5.1 (page 185). While many interviewees did give a neutral response to this question accompanying this often with negative caveats or comments, representative responses include:

At times, the information aspect, letting you know that a new product exists is OK, but usually not.

Occasionally there might be something about a product you hadn't heard of, that might be kind of useful.

I switch off, ignore it. Sorry.

Interviewees would usually invoke exceptions. Typical of this would be an interviewee who would hold a negative, or a neutral view, but then say how marketing promotions could be 'funny', or even 'informative'. It should be stated though that most interviewees seemed to hold the marketing industry

in low esteem despite many of them being willing to give examples of marketing that they had enjoyed. A comment that summarises this negative view was made by one stage two respondent:

No. They are always trying to flog you stuff you usually don't need.

In a manner that was typical of interviewee contradictions present in this research this comment was immediately followed with:

I liked the Honda mousetrap advert though, [it was] clever and inventive.

Interviewees' responses were inconsistent and contradictory; this again suggests evidence for the view that audiences hold dual views. While directors from Chaplin and Hitchcock onwards claimed to be able to manipulate audiences (Monaco, 2002; Oderman, 2005) it should be clear from the number of 'right formula' films that fail and the 'non-formulaic' films that succeed (consider the converse examples of *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Green Lantern*). This 'contrary' nature would be more akin to audience members being more discerning than they are (in some quarters at least) being given credit for (see McQuail, 1997). The argument that audiences hold dual views on marketing communications, particularly with television advertisements is also a factor.

In order to build on positive attitudes in relation to marketing, interviewees were questioned regarding elements of enjoyment; the average response score of 2.76 is leaning towards the negative, although not resoundingly so. Nearly all interviewees gave examples of marketing promotions that they rated as 'enjoyable' although again all of these were television promotions. Often cited examples were for a Budweiser and a Cadbury's commercial; the latter featuring a gorilla playing drums. Another promotion often mentioned in this research was for the Honda 'domino effect' advertisement that several interviewees described as either 'funny' and/or 'clever'. The exchange here between the consumer and the marketer is well established (Bagozzi, 1975), in this scenario the consumers' attention is exchanged for exposure and/or engagement with the marketing communication. This also relates to Donaton's points above about the on-line exchange by the consumer for content (2005), a common feature of internet promotions where viewing a

promotion must be undertaken before content is reached⁸. This demonstrates not only a variation on this exchange process but the again unpredictable nature of audiences and the potential problems they present to both researchers and to marketers (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005).

5.2 Interviewee attitudes towards hidden marketing communications, the vulnerable and free choice.

Some of the literature on product placement raises issues concerning the ethics of featuring 'hidden' advertisements in entertainment programmes and films (Wenner, 2004; Brennan et al, 2004; Chan, Lowe and Petrovici, 2017). Some respondents raised this concern here. Research stage two interviewees were asked if they felt that advertising or marketing was unethical or amoral. Posing this question was in order to elicit a stated position, using this later as a reference point for following questions: this would also inform the answer to the second research question concerning the consumer's reactions to product placement as a strong response here would have significant implications. This approach was beneficial as it resulted in the collection of some strongly held opinions. Opinions fell into three main divisions - those in agreement, those against and, in the smallest category, those with neutral feelings on the matter. A common theme given concerned 'free choice' and 'self-determination'. This would typically manifest itself with comments such as:

People can decide for themselves.

Make your own mind up about brands and stuff; you can ignore it if you don't like it.

No one makes you actually buy things.

Some interviewees dismissed the question with the 'you-can-ignore-it' response while others considered marketing to be somewhere on a spectrum from mild persuasion to coercive manipulation, and that people less astute than themselves might be negatively affected by it.

⁸ Much YouTube content, for example, involves either five seconds of a promotion before the user can press the 'Skip Ad' option, or a longer mandatory promotion that has to be viewed before the sought content is shown. This is an example of Bazalgette's exchange of attention for information/entertainment.

Interviewees suggested that the people who marketing communications influences would be either 'children, weak minded or naïve' and for whatever reason were unable or unwilling to exercise free will over their decision-making and choices. Raising the issue of protection was for children while the others were, by these interviewees at least, to defend themselves against the perceived machinations of the marketing industry.

From the qualitative data the following examples of responses on marketing communications are representative and reflect the widely held dismissive attitude that was displayed by interviewees about marketing communications. The sentiment that marketing 'may work on other people, rather than on us the individual' was a clearly held view here; along with the idea that the individual has a choice and can express their free will on purchase decisions. The first three comments from stage two participants epitomise the most commonly expressed sentiment:

No, it's just a waste of time; no one takes any notice of it.

Not really, people can make their own minds up about things; the adverts are only really suggestions.

You don't have to buy things, there comes a point when individuals need to make decisions and take responsibility for themselves.

The over-arching feeling was that consumers have the ultimate decision as to whether they are influenced by marketing communications, and while everyone would like to consider that they as individuals have free will, free choice and self-determination. This though overlooks or ignores the persuasive nature and the sub-conscious ways in which marketing communications can work on individuals (Wiseman, 2011; Solomon et al, 2016). Stage two interviewee comments on this included the following:

You can't deny people the opportunity to advertise, whether people buy it is another thing.

I hate how sports are being taken over by sponsors, it is insincere, meaningless platitudes such as 'we are proud to sponsor'. It's just rubbish.

I don't like the way that they equate products with success in relationships.

Finally, a statement from a respondent with an air of resigned acceptance:

It's just part of life.

At this point of the stage two interview process, the intention was to take the interviewees to the next part of the process: connecting actors, films and product placement together. This is a central point of this study with the Celebrity Brand Associations being scrutinised directly. As is shown below the interviewees were often dismissive of the concept but as seen above would on occasion be contradictory and give some unanticipated answers. This added to the richness of the data and gave the researcher more material to use with later questioning. The interviewees were asked whether 'I would be more likely to buy a product that I saw promoted by an actor I liked' and 'If I saw a branded product in a movie I enjoyed it would enhance the image and I would be more likely to buy it'. The general level of response to these open questions was negative with only a few interviewees stating that a celebrity-actor promotion might be influential. Given by respondents were varied reactions to this question; the following interviewee statement though summarises the overall sentiment:

Absolutely not, just wouldn't work on me.

This comment is unequivocal in the rejection of the possibility that actors have an influence; the interviewees in this instance were adamant with their opinions. Some were later to contradict this stance though. With one research stage three interviewee however, there was a rare admission that a placement would be influential, this was an exception. Her comment was:

If I like a character, that I like is wearing something I'm like 'Oh, I want to get something like that'.

5.3 Interviewees' awareness of promotions and the 'Hierarchy of Effects'.

The next question raised concerns that if the interviewees did consciously notice products, then this too would be a bad thing in the consumers' opinion and rejection of product placement as a method of

promotion would follow. Illustrative comments from stage two research participants include:

It would just irritate me; take my eye off the film.

You want to watch a film, not an expensive advert.

Other interviewees at stage two took the point in another direction and stated that such marketing communication efforts can have a 'de-promotional' effect, viz;

I'm sure it would and the converse is true, I'd avoid some products if I didn't like the actor.

No, if anything it would have a negative effect.

A good product by a bad actor would leave a negative image.

While other interviewees, straying from the focus on actors commented that:

I think I'd be more likely to buy from a sports star promotion.

I think sport people would have more impact.

Those interviewees who admitted that such associations between actors and products can be effective, did so in a reserved or reluctant manner.

Their comments include the following:

It might work subliminally a bit.

I guess it might embed the product in my mind; the exposure may help with promoting it in a subliminal way.

Consciously I don't think it has any, it might do subconsciously that I'm not aware of perhaps. I don't know.

As with earlier respondent comments these are referring to consciously recalled promotions and do not acknowledge or include the role and influence of sub-conscious, unrecalled associations and the impact that they might have (Solomon, et al, 2016; Wiseman, 2011). One interviewee commented that marketers argue that product placement reduces cognitive dissonance and delivers reassurance to consumers and value to the product. This second stage interviewee commented:

No effect, but I like seeing things I've already got used by actors or in films, like my laptop. If I see someone using a Vaio [Sony laptop] like mine it's reaffirming.

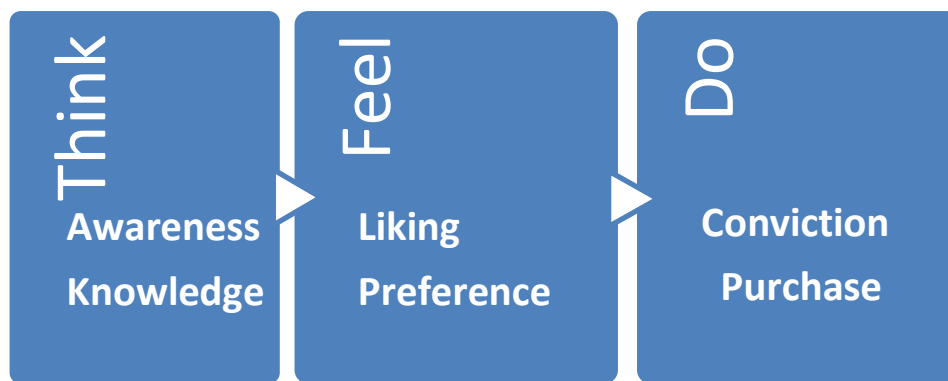
From the responses here, the impression is that individuals like to see themselves as immune from promotions while admitting that they have some influence at times, but usually as an exception. Delorme and Reid found similar response from consumers who:

...considered themselves immune to the persuasive power of brands encountered in films (2002: 78).

In this research interviewees considered that other people would be more susceptible to brand influence. As highlighted on page 202, despite being only asked about actors in the stage two research process some interviewees spontaneously stated that they believed that celebrity-sports people were more effective as brand ambassadors. Although the interviewer kept the focus on celebrity actors, some interviewees would mention other types of celebrities perhaps regarding them as interchangeable. Several respondents stated that they would avoid products promoted by some sports stars: Tiger Woods and Wayne Rooney in particular. This was a distraction from the theme of actors illustrating the blurring of celebrity, for some consumers at least, thereby providing yet another variable for marketers looking for product ambassadors. This blurring might be due to the nature of celebrity, reflecting the manner in which viewers consume celebrity product (Cashmore, 2006). As mentioned above, for some respondents seeing celebrity-actors with brands they possess, or aspired to possess, was reassuring and reaffirming.

The interviewees' comments that this 'reaffirmation' is relevant also gives some currency to Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (1957), in this case the post-purchase reassurance of a product featured in a film. The notion of brand familiarity has a strong influence on this process, as Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008) note product placement helps to raise brand awareness and is part of the Hierarchy of Effects and a model unknowingly referred to by interviewees when they make connections with what they see by way of marketing promotions and their reactions to them.

Diagram 5.1, 'The Hierarchy of Effects'.



Adapted from Weilbacher (2001).

This 'Hierarchy of Effects' attracts much attention from marketers and practitioners and has been criticised as "Too simplistic and reflects an outdated and discredited model of human thought processes" (Weilbacher, 2001: 4). Weilbacher (2001: 4) however, develops his theme:

In the vast majority of marketing situations, sales are caused by a combination of marketing factors.

For consumers buying products in a retail environment, where a majority of brands gain their most sales, McGoldrick (2002) contends that around 90% of purchases are emotion based. This reinforces Weilbacher's case for the pivotal role of 'Feel' in the centre of the 'Hierarchy of Effects'. Linking celebrities and characters to products will for some consumers, reinforce emotions and brand connections resulting in sales. The links here though are complex and far from clear in establishing a concise cause and effect connection with product placement, celebrity brand associations and sales. The practice of product placement would act as one element contributing to this process of sales but the issue of being able to track and measure connections in terms of cause and effect, remains elusive.

The practice of actor endorsements is an important feature of marketing communications and a central theme of this research. In order to establish a guideline on interviewees' stated attitudes regarding celebrity product endorsements, interviewees were asked in the second stage of research if they would be more likely to buy a product they saw promoted

by an actor they liked. It is argued in the literature that there is a strong link between consumers and actors, the latter regarded by many as influential role models (Merton, 1968; Smith, 1996; Atkins, 2009) and is considered one main reason for marketers to use placements (Amos, Holmes, and Strutton, 2008). Most interviewees played down any influence from actors. Two respondent comments, from the stage two fieldwork, illustrate the blurring of actors and characters and the idea of individual actor sponsorship. The first comment being:

I like Harrison Ford but don't want to dress like him!

On further discussion it was revealed that this was in reference to Ford's 'Indiana Jones' role rather than the actor himself or the actor in another of his many roles, illustrating the blurring of identity of the actor from a screen persona. The second comment contained an admission of actor influence but also held a key qualification:

I hate to admit it, but yes, I probably would but only if the actor matched the product. I saw Jodie Foster at the Oscars one time, wearing a gorgeous Armani trouser suit, she looked stunning and it matched her status.

Even here though an important caveat was added with the comment that 'it matched her status', Foster was perceived to be wearing the suit out of choice at the event rather than in a marketing promotion. Foster, as is common practice, would most likely have been paid to wear the brand for the promotional value of being seen in media outlets such as gossip magazines (Pringle, 2004). The perception that the Armani was as a personal preference rather than for individual commercial gain will have given the celebrity brand association more impact and commercial value (Kotler et al, 1999).

In order to further investigate the interviewees' association between actors and brands/products, questions were set in order to explore the linkages that individuals held in this regard. When there were connections made, the interviewees in stage two were asked what their opinions about these associations were. Underpinning this process, again in a way that is implicit as to be overlooked perhaps by a casual observer, is the issue of

image, for brands, products, actors alike. With the association of a celebrity with a brand the promoter is relying on the celebrity's popularity and own brand value or public persona to boost the value or image of the brand (Pringle, 2004; Oswald, 2015). The marketer's aim is to match the celebrity with the product/brand in a way that best suits the product. For the latter the pairing of high-profile actors with expensive perfumes or watches are obvious examples and reflects the way in which the image of both brands and celebrities are read by the intended potential consumer. These issues are central to the impact that actors have on interviewees concerning celebrity brand recall and any influence that the interviewees felt that they might possess.

The range of actors and associated products was not as comprehensive as might have been expected given the huge array of actors who are involved with brand promotions, especially when both past and present campaigns are considered (some older promotions were recalled by interviewees here, see below). This question elicited a selection of product types, correct brands and wrongly attributed promotions. A few interviewees did not, at least in the moment of asking, recall any associations at all. Posing the question as a 'free recall' one and the interviewees received no prompting on this part of the process, the results shown in Table 5.2 are from the second stage of the research process, next.

Table 5.2. Free Recall for Actors and Associated Brands.

James Bond	Aston Martin 3	Natalie Portman	Dior	Leonard Rossiter	Cinzano
	Rolex	Scarlett Johansen	Dior	Orson Wells	Sherry
	Skin Care Products	Nicole Kidman	Chanel	Arnold Schwarzenegger	California
Pierce Brosnan	Omega 2	Anne Hathaway	Chanel	Stephen Fry	Little Big Planet
Gerald Butler	Skin care	Audrey Tautou	Chanel	Kylie Minogue	Lexus
George Clooney	Omega	Penélope Cruz	L'Oréal		'A car'
	Japanese Whisky	Rachel Weisz	L'Oréal	Robert Downey Jr	Audi
	'Coffee Thing' 5	Eva Longoria	L'Oréal	Ryan Reynolds	Aftershave
	Nespresso 3		'A beauty thing'	Morgan Freeman	Mimicked MoreThan
John Malkovich	'Coffee Thing' 2	Keira Knightly	Perfume		
	Nespresso 2	Jodie Foster	Armani	Mickey Mouse	Disneyland
	British Airways	Reese Witherspoon	Avon Cosmetics	Martin Scorsese	Amex
Del Toro	Magnum Ice Cream	Orlando Bloom	Aftershave	Werner Herzog	Champagne
Mark Wahlberg	Calvin Klein	Ewan MacGregor	Davidoff Aftershave	Tiger Woods	Nike
Kevin Spacey	'An airline'	Julie Walters	Tesco		Gillette
	American Airlines		Smoke Alarms	Terry Wogan	Tesco
Leonardo DiCaprio	Rolex	Ronnie Corbett	Lyle and Scott	Britney Spears	Pepsi
	TAGHeuer				

The table shows responses from the second stage of research. One mention per product unless indicated otherwise, the colour coded entries are specifically referred to below.

Table 5.2 shows a broad selection of responses with 38 names recalled. Six interviewees, from a total of 47, stated that they had not noticed any promotions or think of any actor centred promotion: this was usually accompanied with an apology such as '*I'm not very observant, sorry*'. Respondents were noted for often being 'apologetic', for adding a

'sorry' if they felt they had not answered a question in a way they felt was helpful when in reality a blank or negative response was as interesting or useful as any other reply. There is a significant difference in a respondent not being able to recall a celebrity endorsement in open questioning and having seen it and been (perhaps subconsciously) influenced by it (Wiseman, 2011). On the bottom right of Table 5.2 are five individuals who are not actors but were mentioned by interviewees, and the 'grey area' of Mickey Mouse being cited as a promoter for Disneyland but with the interviewee comment *'Well, he's not really an actor though is he?'* Several respondents also cited the fictional character James Bond. Although the interviewer was asking these second stage interviewees for actors only, other figures in popular culture, including Martin Scorsese, Werner Herzog, Tiger Woods, Terry Wogan and Britney Spears, came to the fore. This again highlights an obvious alternative to actors for market promotions when a celebrity front-person, product representative or brand ambassador is sought (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008).

Although the influence of television has been noted as waning (Donaton, 2005; B.A.R.B. 2017), respondents gave two particularly notable and 'historical' examples. These were with Orson Welles and Leonard Rossiter who had featured in television adverts from the 1970s and 1980s. For the two interviewees here, the first respondent was in his early 40s and the other in his late 50s, these actor-led promotions had obviously made an impression so long after the original airing and serves to illustrate the potential impact of marketing promotions using the right combination of actor, product and humour. While these two interviewees were able to clearly recall previous celebrity centred promotions it raises the issue of to what extent an advertisement stays with individuals.

5.4 Celebrity promotion recall, celebrity suitability and mistaken identity.

While many actors were linked correctly to the product/s they promote, as with L'Oréal and Chanel, some were linked just to the product type i.e. 'shampoo' or 'perfume'. Perhaps the most noticeable name to be

included here is James Bond who as a character, variously portrayed by nine different actors, was linked by the stage two interviewees to three different products; namely Aston Martin, Rolex and Dom Perignon champagne. All of these examples given, the generic product categories, the mistaken pairings and the zero return responses, are useful on the basis of the insights it gives into the impact that celebrity based promotions can have on consumers with the level of recall and observation on the part of the interviewees here.

The issue of impact was pursued further in the second stage of this research with interviewees being asked what their thoughts and opinions were about the promotions that they did recall. The research considered that if an actor was strongly associated with a brand, for example, coffee, whisky or a car manufacturer, then there would be possible benefits or conversely potential problems for the brand managers if a character they play is featured in a film with a competing product. If the actor was only associated with a product type then this might suggest that more needs to be done by the marketer to strengthen the connection, in this context the role of retail marketing, particularly that of in-store merchandising, can reinforce the link and motivate sales. However, Rossiter's Cinzano advertisements were said to have also boosted sales for rival brand Martini as consumers, who were said to have 'loved' the advertisement did not realise it was for Cinzano and failed to connect it to the correct product (www.leonardrossiter.com 2015).

The respondent response to the promotions was almost uniformly unfavourable or negative. A few interviewees did though acknowledge they have unknowingly been influenced by the promotions to at least consider a product, while consumer behaviourists suggest that an individual's denial of influence often fails to reflect the impact that marketing communication does have and how it can and does shape buying patterns (Evans et al, 2009; Solomon et al, 2016).

Following the free recall above interviewees were given a sheet of actors to ascertain if the responses here would differ with this aide memoir to prompt and provoke recall (see Table 6.3, page 214, for the names and

the response rate). Some actors such as Clooney and Cruz were featuring heavily on television, web and in print media promoting products at the time of the interviews, however despite this, and the high budgets and the high profiles of this marketing only a few interviewees commented upon them. Other actors though appeared to have no promotional roles either at the time of the research or previously. As with previous interviewee comments, several unprompted sports stars such as Tiger Woods and Maria Sharapova received mentions. This again suggests a blurring of distinction by some interviewees between types of celebrities whether they are 'sports stars', 'film stars' film directors or singers. For some of the stage two interviewees there was indifference about what someone was a celebrity for, and more interest taken in them and their presented persona and perceived status (Pringle, 2004; Atkins, 2009). Other interviewees did make a distinction with a preference expressed for sports celebrities over acting celebrities for some type of promotions; see above. This shows discernment on the part of the interviewees for one type of celebrity over another for brand and/or product associations based on the perceived value attribution (Brafman and Brafman, 2010) with sports stars seen as a better match for promoting goods with an active lifestyle element. This would include items such as non-alcoholic drinks and trainers, while perceiving actors as being better suited for products such as whiskey, coffee and airlines.

With brand representatives Hackley (2006) observes that marketing communication planners are concerned with discovering the nuanced meanings that occur within different kinds of brand representation with marketing vehicles, this would include the preference of consumers to one type of celebrity over another, in some cases actors over athletes. Some of the actors had not directly promoted brands but were included by the researcher in order to ascertain whether they elicited any recognition based on the film characters they portrayed or had a false recall (Brennan et al 2015). As can be seen below this proved to be the case while other actors from the list, namely Jada Pinkett Smith and Gemma Arterton, did not register with any of the interviewees. Overall, these stage two interviewees gave negative opinions of actors promoting products either in traditional marketing or as screen characters.

The free recall rate from the interviewees in this second stage of the research for actors linked to brands was low, or in the case of Morgan Freeman noticeable but wrongly attributed to an insurance company he has not promoted, see the Literature Chapter. The most often named actors were George Clooney for Nespresso and Penélope Cruz for L'Oréal, see Table 6.2 on page 207. Many interviewees did not name any actors with brands or were vague with comments like '*Keira Knightly and that perfume*' or '*Ewan MacGregor and some aftershave*'. Alternatively, actors were linked incorrectly with a product as with Uma Thurman who had been strongly promoting Alfa Romeo - she was linked by interviewees with both Volvo and Fiat, or just generically with '*some car*'. These vague comments suggest that the respondent/s here was not the target audience and missed the connection, the respondent/s was unobservant, or the marketing communication was poorly constructed and implemented. Perhaps as Wiseman (2011) suggests it registered with them, but on a subconscious level only and as such would still be of some value commercially; a review of these points is undertaken in Chapter Seven, Developing an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion.

Picture Illustration 5.1. **Actors, Brands and Mistaken Identity.**



Josh Robert Thompson, the misleading voice for MoreThan Insurance left.
George Clooney and John Malkovich promoting Nespresso coffee. Right,
Penélope Cruz as 'the face' of L'Oréal's Elnett.

The images used by marketers rely on consumers reading them in a specific way, as highlighted above with the E.K.B. Model (shown on page 22) and again highlights the issues surrounding the importance of image in a marketing

context. Several respondents mistook the Clooney/Malkovich 'Cab Driver' poster for the Nespresso for a film poster and assumed it was to promote a new movie. While the poster carries a shot from the television advertisement, it was not familiar or obvious enough for respondents to make the link to the Nespresso coffee machine despite the word 'Nespresso' being centred in the image. One respondent had also commented that as they had made it look like a movie poster it would be seen as a movie poster and people tend to see what they expect to see (see Balcetis and Dunning, 2006). Other respondents commented that they thought Elnett had used a model and did not recognise Penélope Cruz, as '*it doesn't look like her*'. The images below support this view and calls into question the impact of using a well-known, although in this context not a well-recognised, celebrity to promote a product. The examples given here in Picture Illustrations 6.1 and 6.2 highlight the challenges in dealing with image decisions by marketers, and how individuals interpret pictures.

Picture Illustration 5.2. **Three Faces of Penélope Cruz.**



Images of Cruz (right in *The Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (Marshall, 2011)) showing how some consumers may not recognise her and L'Oréal would have not benefitted from her celebrity status and any parasocial relationships or associations.

Chosen below is the list of a selection actors ('celebrity-actors') some of whom were known to regularly promote brands, and others who might be strongly associated with brands such as Will Smith and Ray Bans. Others were not known to be associated with any particular brands or products. This was as a test for celebrity-brand association idea, outlined above, and to gauge viewer/consumer attitudes of these. It is worth noting that none of the actors in Table 5.3 (next) appears in any of the films used for this study.

Table 5.3. **Actors and their Associated Products (Research Stage Two. Prompted Recall).**

Prompted Actors:	Product/brand.	With numbers.						Total
George Clooney.	Something 6	Coffee 9	Nespresso 4	Vodka 1	Bacardi 1	Armani 1		22
John Malkovich.		Coffee 1						1
Uma Thurman.	Something 2	Some Car 6	Fiat 1	Volvo 2	Alfa Romeo 2	Omega 1	TAGHauer 1	15
Ewan MacGregor.	Something 1	Motorbikes 6	BMW bikes 2	Soap 1	Aftershave 4	Davidoff 2	Diesel 1	17
Nicole Kidman.	Something 1	Perfume 4	Chanel 8	Watches 2	Cosmetics 1			16
Orlando Bloom.	Something 1	Aftershave 7	Hugo Boss 1					9
Keira Knightly.	Something 1	Perfume 7	Chanel 9	Cosmetics 1				18
Tom Cruise.		Scientology 5	Ray Bans 1					6
Renée Zellweger.	Something 1							1
A Schwarzenegger.	Something 1	Humvees 1	California 7	Florida 1				10
Will Smith.		Sunglasses 1	Ray Bans 1	Guinness 1				3
Morgan Freeman.	Something 2	Insurance 2	Liverpool Victoria 1	Mimicked for MoreThan 3	MoreThan 5	Credit Card 1		14
Thandie Newton.	Something 1	Make-up 4	Shampoo 1	Watches 1	Ulay 3			10
Peirce Brosnan.	Something 1	Watches 1	Rolex 1	Omega 1	L'Oréal 1	Skin Care 2	Just for Men 1	8
Julie Walters.		Tea 1	Tesco 1	Morrison's 1	Lloyds Bank 1	Game Boy 1		5
Jackie Chan.		Frying pans 1						1
Helen Mirren.		L'Oréal 1	Wii Fit 2					3
Leonardo DiCaprio.		Watches 3	Aftershave 2					5
Penélope Cruz.		L'Oréal 7	Mango 1	Perfume 2	Cosmetics 3	Shampoo 3		16

The most noticeable incorrect match occurred with Uma Thurman matched with incorrect car brands, a wrong watch brand and mentions of respondents having vaguely seen her in 'something'. From a marketing communications viewpoint this would concern any of the brand managers while reinforcing the need for further retail-based promotions as illustrated with the *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* and Levi's jeans example, see page 238. Jackie Chan seemed an unusual example to mention here with the frying pan reference, on investigation it was found that while he is not known to promote frying pans a FaceBook campaign was started in 2010 to see if more people would 'Like' a frying pan more than Jackie Chan. At 63,880,518 'Likes' to 116 for the frying pan, Jackie Chan, for now at least, remains ahead (Facebook, January 2018). For marketers using either Thurman or Chan, or other celebrity-actors, this blurring and confusion from consumers will dilute the impact of their promotions. Chan indeed has a long list of advertising including V8 smoothies, Kaspersky, Woolworths, Canon, Pepsi, and Samsung among others but from the interviewees the only ready association was with a frying pan. This would be a blessing as Dicker (2010) described Chan as 'An advertiser's worst enemy' due to the number of commercial failures he has been associated with. Evidence from the data suggests that remembering vaguely that an actor promoted 'something' rather than a named product, as was the case here on eighteen occasions, should be of concern for marketers trying to make an impact (Donaton, 2005).

Mistaken pairings are also relevant in the case of Morgan Freeman and his celebrity associations. For the MoreThan insurance promotion a voiceover was provided by 'comedian and voice actor' Robert Josh Thompson mimicking Morgan Freeman, this was done so well that many interviewees thought it was indeed the actor; five interviewees stated that they were surprised, and pleased, to learn that it was not. Here respondents felt that Morgan Freeman was above such advertising and the advert somehow diminished him, one interviewee said that Freeman had '*gone right down in my estimation doing that advert*'. This would, were it to become a widely held opinion, damage his reputation as an actor and by

default have implications for other acting or commercial work he engages in or brands and films he was associated with.

5.5 Matching celebrities and brands; successes, losses and the potential threat to integrity.

In the second stage research, interviewees identifying correctly the actor and corresponding brand was quite low, although Chanel scored relatively well with Keira Knightly as did L'Oréal with Penélope Cruz: both were current marketing campaigns during the research. What is noteworthy here is the number of interviewees who linked actors with products and brands they used on screen. Examples of this include Will Smith with Ray Ban sunglasses and Ewan MacGregor with BMW motorbikes; this gave a positive C.B.A. with both the brand and actor regarded favourably. The former from films roles where he wears the brand, such as in *Men in Black* (Sonnenfeld, 1997) and the latter following two television series, *The Long Way Round*, 2004 and *The Long Way Down*, 2007, involving Charley Boorman and MacGregor riding BMW motorcycles. The setting here, and with the sequel programme, with an audience that knows what the shows are about, the rugged mountainous background, and the BMW motorcycles equipped for adventure would assist consumers in reading the image in the way that is intended by the marketers.

Picture illustration 5.3.

A Successful Television Pairing of Actors and Products.



Charley Boorman and fellow actor Ewan MacGregor (right) with the prominently featured BMW GS1150 motorcycles.

This direct Consumer Brand Association (C.B.A.) is a useful promotion tool and better than the high degree of association between actors with just general brand categories, such as 'George Clooney and coffee' and 'Keira Knightly and perfume' (nine and seven interviewees respectively). Again of the usefulness of Clooney or Knightly in marketing communications terms depends ultimately on how they are read by potential product consumers, from Turner's viewpoint (2013) celebrities were only invented to sell goods and this resonates with the reason why any celebrity would be engaged and paid to promote any product. For the former examples, this would give reassurance to those involved in traditional style campaigns involving 30-spot television slots combined with supporting print promotions while the latter demonstrates the potential of the placement option. The 'Boorman-MacGregor-BMW' combination was considered to work well by the stage two interviewees here as it was read by them as being a 'natural combination' essential for the journey and therefore not viewed as fake or overtly commercial. The programmes proved to be a perfect medium for the BMWs and won acceptance, good recall and positive reviews from the interviewees (Galician, 2004). Former BMW North America C.E.O. Tom Purves (Purves, 2014) confirmed the commercial success of these placements. Investigating the celebrity brand associations and brands that interviewees recalled, it was considered important to ascertain their opinions about the actor and brands that they were promoting, as with BMW above. The reaction and opinions given were strong with most interviewees having firmly held opinions concerning actors promoting products. A few interviewees showed indifference to the actors, but most considered them with a degree of distaste and even vehemence; typical stage two interviewee comments were:

It just cheapens them as actors.

They bastardise themselves.

They're sell outs with no integrity.

Certain interviewees were clear in their low opinions of the actors who, once established names, took part in commercial marketing promotions, the extent of the positive influence though is harder to gauge

with the possibility that a number of interviewees have been disingenuous or mistaken with the impact of these promotions on themselves or others. This is illustrated with the following stage two interviewee comments, which suggest that actor centred marketing, is completely wasted, contrary to a wealth of opposing evidence (Ohanian, 1990; Carroll, 2009). Interviewees commented:

No impact at all.

I'm not influenced by it.

It doesn't register with me.

Any interviewee who answers in this manner might wish to state their independence of mind proposing that they are immune from external influences (Wiseman, 2011). There was a widely held opinion given during both the second and third stage interviews though that these placements, while being consciously rejected may have an impact on the consumer. An illustrative comment from a research stage three interviewee stated:

I don't really think that, that product placement has much of an impact. I could, I say, be completely wrong and maybe subconsciously it does.

This theme is returned to in Chapter Seven, Developing an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion. The prevailing interviewee response concerning actors regarded as stars was substantively negative suggesting that most do the advertising as they were 'greedy' because 'they can't need the money', a comment often made about George Clooney; whom one respondent described as 'an advertising tart'. Another stage two interviewee said of George Clooney:

Why does he do it? He doesn't need the money; you'd think he'd be too busy to do adverts; he did one for some alcohol too, but I can't think which one.

Some interviewees suggested that it 'cheapens the actor' it also seemed to have a negative impact for all concerned and failed to elicit a strong association between the promotion and the featured brand. Viewing this as a 'double fail' with the negative comments, it would be of concern for anyone considering hiring Mr Clooney as a celebrity promotional vehicle.

Two stage two interviewees made comments expressing the observations:

I hope some people are above that.

Not for Meryl Streep say, standards must be kept up! It would diminish her. Depends what they're doing, and how they're doing it.

One negative respondent response though was followed immediately with:

Although I would buy Suntory Whiskey after seeing 'Lost in Translation'.

Showing that, as ever, consumers can be contradictory and difficult to both predict and please making the work of those engaged in a marketing communication capacity even more challenging.

Picture Illustration 5.4. **Bill Murray with Suntory Whisky.**



Bill Murray (screen shots) plays Bob Harris, a fading star and in-film promoter of Suntory Whisky (*Lost in Translation*, Sofia Coppola, 2003).

Even with some interviewees who considered themselves above or immune from both product placements and the appeal of celebrity

promoters, exceptions were forthcoming. In this case the interviewee positively mentioned Bill Murray and Suntory whisky. As the actor was popular with the consumer and the placement was part of the narrative, this should have overcome any negative reaction. Audiences can be 'fickle' (McQuail, 1997) or 'unreliable' (Ulrich and Sarasin, 1995), or perhaps less cynically simply discerning or selective with the ability to hold conflicting views at the same time (see Martin (2007) and his paper 'The Opposable Mind'). The placements featuring a brand as a narrative device with a popular actor should prove to be a crucial element required for a successful placement.

5.6 Chapter conclusions.

This chapter established a baseline of interviewee responses which inform the next section of the interview process; it also gave the researcher reference points to develop and explore. The interviewees gave useful and revealing insights into their own perceived influences and motivations for purchase decisions, some of which corresponds with the literature in this area (Cashmore, 2006; Solomon et al, 2016). Developing these insights is undertaken next when directly addressing the use of product placement in films. The interviewees' opinions concerning marketing communications also proved to be revealing in that their opinions about actors and promotions were overwhelmingly negative and would suggest that no celebrity-focused promotion would stand a chance of producing any positive outcomes. This is contrary to much research carried out elsewhere (see Galician, 2004; Pringle, 2004); it was also contrary to other views also presented by the interviewees in this research.

This chapter has provided useful insights into how interviewees view actors. The interviewees conspired to make the data more intriguing by contradicting not only each other but also on occasions themselves. The denials and declarations of immunity to both marketing communications and celebrity influence by interviewees were also revealing, as were the recall levels for actors and products. Drawing upon these issues will take place in the following chapter.

Chapter Six.

Developing an understanding of the role of product placement in mainstream films and how consumers regard it: a critical discussion.

6.1 Introduction.

This chapter has several central themes. The first is the on-going debate concerning the effectiveness of product placement as a marketing communications tool for the promotion of brands. The second, and arguably the more important for this thesis, is having the opportunity to more fully hear the participants'/consumers' voice, and give them the opportunity to have their thoughts, opinions and attitudes heard in more detail. To this extent examples of the participants' voice is given throughout this chapter and their observations are central when considering the academic view and the industry implementation of product placement as a marketing communication technique. As film and brand consumers it is their views and opinions that in commercial terms carry the most influence. This chapter is comprised of two parts, the first of these explores several theoretical models, the usefulness of semiotics, as well as themes and issues derived from the research participants to advance a critical understanding of product placement. Several prominently promoted product placement brands, Jack Daniel's, Harley Davidson, Apple, Levi's, in addition to brand ambassador and screen icon James Bond, are also discussed to assess the potential effectiveness of product placement as a marketing communications technique. These examples are based not only in the literature, but also reflects the comments and observations made by

the participants in this research. Part two is concerned with how brand values may exert influence on film, marketing and product consumers and the use of product placements as a marketing tool. Both parts of this chapter will provide observations from the research participants to highlight their concerns and opinions.

PART ONE.

6.2 Understanding the film and brand target audiences – the key to film and brand (sales) success.

Understanding the audience, or in marketing terms the consumer segment, is essential for any organisation or individual with a product to sell (Kotler et al, 2016). More specifically in this case is the task of having a film to sell to an often demanding and at times a hard-to-please public (Maltby, 2003). The data from this research suggests that when placements work well they can be effective in generating sales and enhancing brand values; these successful instances though are not the norm and are referred to as 'home runs' due to their rarity and the value attached to them (Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006).

The practice of product placement can also be controversial and divisive among viewers and stakeholders as well as with commentators such as Gupta and Gould, 1997, Bressoud, Lehu and Russell, 2008 and Karniouchina et al, 2011. A potentially contentious, and ethical point (Brennan et al, 2004) is that viewers are often unaware, as indeed some were within this study, that paid-for placements are embedded within the entertainment and that they are being targeted by this form of promotion (Wenner, 2004; Lehu, 2009). This issue attracted accusations of it being an underhanded, distracting and a deceitful method of marketing by many of the interviewees across this research with the research films used in this study. Some interviewees in this research, and consumers more generally, are wary and even antagonistic towards placements. One stage two interviewee, for example, objected to how a KFC placement had been

clumsily inserted into the research film *Grown Ups* (RF7). Lehu (2009: 62) also writes:

Consumers themselves are often unhappy about placements if they find them too distracting.

Donaton (2005: 156) also states that consumers reject blatant placements or ones not presented within 'a meaningful context'. Several of the participants across this research made this point. Participants did though fail to recognise that marketers use product placement as a form of 'natural' promotion because it is not universally recognised as a marketing communication tool by consumers, and is therefore less likely to meet with consumer resistance.

An important finding in understanding the participants was the capricious nature of audience members, both with this research and elsewhere, with the number of contradictions forwarded not only between individuals, but also by individuals with themselves. For example, there was a clear expectation by later stage research interviewees here to see branded products in films for issues of credibility. One stage two research participant made the point with the research film *The Social Network* (RF10) that the placed brands gave the film a familiar look and, with the concept that products can be used as signifiers, tell you something about the characters; in particular twin brothers who were cast in the role of privileged, rich 'villains'. Nappolini and Hackley (2008), found that some viewers shared these views despite earlier in their interviews claiming that they had not actually seen any branded products. The key to product placement success ultimately rests with the audience. Studies into the nature of audiences have identified many factors and reasons for why films can be such a powerful medium and why the actors can make an impact on audience members (Lewis, 1992; Gauntlett, 1998; Atkins, 2009; Patton, 2014). The study of audiences and spectatorship is both fascinating and complex (Mayne, 1993; Stokes and Maltby, 2001; Lehu, 2009) with many of its facets shown in this research. As Stake (1994: 240) comments;

Many a researcher would like to tell the whole story, but, of course, cannot; the whole story exceeds anyone's knowing, anyone's telling.

What is achieved here though is, as Creswell (1994: 18) expresses it, 'to tell the story' as it relates to this thesis and the findings made within. Part of that

story here is the limit of the actor's role and appeal in relation to the impact on the consumers of product placement as an effective method of brand promotion. The role and perception of the celebrity-actor in the placement process is critical. Interviewees in this research ranged from those who would select a film based primarily upon who was appearing in it, to those who claimed to be completely indifferent to actors and celebrity:

I don't like actors; I like characters, so I don't think of the person playing the role.

The actor's role, celebrity status or even as icons, in the communication process, is of critical importance to the promotional effort not least because they function as the focus of the campaign and the 'point of contact' with the audience (Aaker, 1997; Pringle 2004). Projecting the actor's character, or perceived character, onto the product acts as a short cut for establishing a brand image for some promotional campaigns. The semiotic association can and does work in reverse with the brand projecting association onto the actor/character (see Tehrani (2013) on page 32, the Bond's Brand Associations on page 241, and the Bond research film *Spectre's* product list on page 381). This process of using brands as signifying marketing tools, is an important point for placements. The perceived audience associations will influence how the product/brand is valued (Brafman and Brafman (2009)).

Participants across the research indicated how they unknowingly used value attribution instinctively. For example, Uma Thurman was said to be 'suited' to the Alfa Romeo car she was seen promoting with one interviewee from stage two saying:

It's sleek and stylish like her, and she had her children in the back.

The reading of semiotics here by the respondent was that both the celebrity and the product shared similar characteristics. The reference to the children was a positive point for the interviewee suggesting that the image portrayed was natural and credible: unknown to the interviewee the children were also actors but looked like they *could* be Thurman's children. The long-held belief that 'celebrities sell more effectively than non-celebrities' (Ashbrook, 2011), is a persuasive argument for using celebrities and in this context celebrity-actors in product placement and other promotional campaigns (Lawrence, 2009).

This promotion was contrasted with the placement of Alfa Romeo cars in research film *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) where they were used by 'henchmen' trying to kill Bond, or in research film *Letters to Juliet* (RF3) where the placement as a hire car left it almost invisible, or as one research participant described it as "*Some car*". This central 'selling role' fulfilled by celebrity-actors is especially important when a consistent brand message is required, for example when a specific celebrity-actor is used for promotions both on and off screen. The actor's associations (in this context their celebrity brand associations) are 'automatically transferred to the brand' although actors "...are expensive, and they live their own uncontrollable lives" which at times can result in problems for the sponsor (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008: 188). Maltby (2003: 141) comments on the importance of these celebrity actors to product and film promotion, he writes:

As well as being the most visible part of the industry, the star system is central to the standardisation of the movie product, and to its interrelations with other consumption industries and advertising.

An example here is that of George Clooney with the Nespresso coffee (see page 195) where he uses his 'celebrity' to promote the brand. Some interviewees suggested that an actor gaining over exposure in this type of commercial promotion could degrade them as an attraction for film promotion. With many of the research interviewees here selecting a film directly because of the actor/s featured in it this could pose a commercial dilemma. From this research it appears that the strongest celebrity brand association was not with traditional consumer products but rather with the type of film the individual was appearing in and how that film was marketed.

6.3 The audience: reactions to actors as role models and brand influencers.

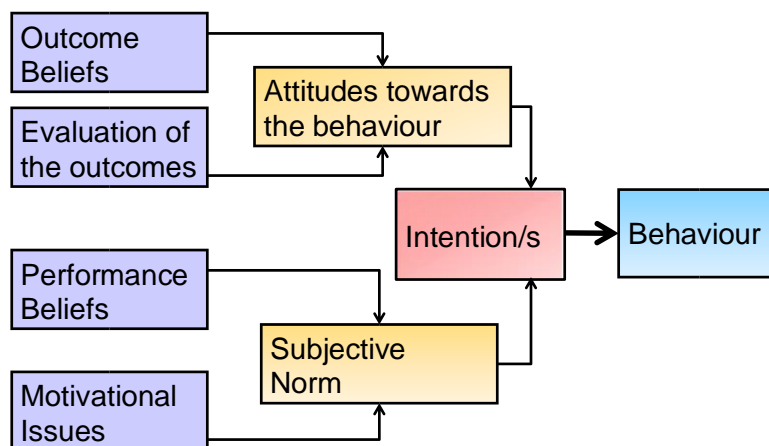
The Theory of Reasoned Action Model (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1972) (see Diagram 7.1, next), shows the stages consumers pass through with the influences they are exposed to (Schiffman et al, 2008). A powerful influence is that of actors as either part of a reference group or as a motivational factor (Merton, 1968; Atkins, 2009). The actor will also be used by producers, marketers and consumers again as a role model and film and

product signifier (see Engel et al 2003, on page 22). As one stage two participant expressed it that if you see a film featuring Bruce Willis looking stern, 'you know what kind of film you're getting'.

An individual developing a preference for Apple products showcased by a favourite actor in an enjoyable film may boost purchase probability; most interviewees in this research denied this would have an impact on them. An unpopular actor or a blatant placement could have a negative effect as this third research stage interviewee illustrates:

It's like Apple have sponsored this. And that can be a bit annoying. It's alright if it's a brand that you use, or you like but if you don't then it could have a negative effect because you might be thinking 'it's bloomin' Apple again. I hate them'.

Diagram 6.1. **The Theory of Reasoned Action.**



Adapted from the Ajzen, Fishbein and Ahtola Model (1972). The model shows how product association with an actor can help to form or shape the subjective norm and to enhance the purchase probability.

The stage of purchase, for those with a good or service for sale, the crucial stage that counts the most (Hooley, et al, 2007), will often witness that this final buying decision, domestically and in the workplace, would not always be the individuals to make (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Additionally, the individual's voice may not feature as part of the purchasing decision making process (Palmer, 2011). A viewer's preference in this context would then be irrelevant (Kotler, et al, 1999: 284). Therefore, although a celebrity-actor can function as an influencer in a successful product

placement exposure, this exposure be wasted if the purchase decision is made by a person who has not been subject to the promotion.

A vital factor is who influences the consumer, many of whom may not be consciously aware of the influences or from which source/s they emanated from (Brafman and Brafman, 2009). This is also a good reason to have supporting retail marketing activities taking place to either tell consumers of a link between an actor and a product or to remind and reinforce such a link and to try to exert influence on the consumer and their choices. Wiseman (2011: 152) has stated a critical aspect of influence:

The ways in which we think and feel are frequently influenced by factors outside of our awareness.

This is pertinent to this study because of the actors, characters that they play and the attitude/s of the consumers who are viewing/consuming them. The challenge for determining the link and strength of connection between films, actors and products is overcoming the issue that these associations are unlikely to be recognised or acknowledged by the individual, they are though important for how placements can be internalised by the viewer (Holt and Thompson, 2009). Only a few of the research participants in this study admitted to being subject to influence from actors or other celebrities. However, several stage two and three interviewees stated that they *may* have been influenced when they were younger and more impressionable: only one second research stage and one third research stage interviewee admitted that a film had recently influenced them. One commented:

I bought Max Factor after seeing 'Sex and the City 2'.

Other stage two interviewees did though give examples of actors as influencers from when they were younger, and by default more impressionable, as an excuse or some justification for this perceived lapse in independent thought:

I did buy some [Ray Ban] sunglasses like Will Smith, can't think which film it was though.

I dyed my hair blonde after seeing Margi Clarke in 'Letter to Brezhnev'; it was a disaster I had to wait for it to grow out.

I bought my [Rolex] watch because I liked the one Pierce Brosnan had in James Bond.

The respondents who bought the Ray Ban sunglasses and the Rolex watch read the semiotics of the brand as being desirable, by owning and conspicuously wearing the brand they would benefit in some way by the associated brand values. There would also be the perceived consumer benefit of the links made to Will Smith and James Bond with these examples of cross-promotional marketing communications and the parasocial relation with these celebrity promoters/icons (Cashmore, 2006). The overall impression given by the interviewees, however, was that they would not 'be so shallow' as to be influenced now as adults, although others might not be so independent of thought as themselves.

Certain comments from interviewees across the research here though were an expression of commercial rejection and resistance, perhaps as a statement of self-reassuring individualism or of perceived marketing imperviousness. Stage two interviewees for example stated:

Not that I can think of, or it has been co-incidental. I try to let advertising wash over me.

I avoid L'Oréal products though; they always have celebs in them, too blatant, selling a false promise.

In addition, the contradictory interviewee who stated:

Must have done. Can't think what. Don't think I have.

Interviewees gave a range of statements reflecting conversely held positions that would be misleading for both themselves and marketers alike. From both the literature (Merton, 1968; Galician, 2004; Donaton, 2005; Pringle, 2004) and from the data gathered in this research, it is clear that actors as part of a reference group or as role models can be influential and that for some consumers the products that they are associated with, becoming more desirable. Noted however, from several of the research stage three interviewees, is an admission that product placements could unknowingly have an impact on them, reflecting Wiseman's (2011) observation on unrealised influences above. Their comments included:

It annoys me a little bit, I guess. Perhaps I am aware of it a little bit and I just choose to dismiss it.

It's subtle advertising really off the back of something else. Don't think it affects me.

These comments from the research participants demonstrate their commitment to film as consumers, and shows that actors can be persuasive influencers, and films can be a powerful influence. This influence could be unrecognised by the participant, and may have become internalised without an influence being acknowledged or realised.

6.4 Products, brands and actors as role models. Linking these key factors and the importance of shared target audiences.

This perceived influence of product placement is essential for filmmakers who want marketers looking to use this as a promotional tool. If the impact of placements is though regarded as low or minimal then this tool will lose its appeal to marketers. The major defence for the use of product placements is the argument that the unrecalled product placements subconsciously gives consumers the impression of familiarity, thus aiding future sales; thereby appealing to the brand promoters. In addition to this product placement companies can also use the film links with their backend supporting promotions as seen with *Levi's* and the *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (2005) (page 225), and with Jaguar/Land Rover with *Spectre* (RF11) (2015), see S.M.18 (page 348). According to Brown (2007) the main argument for promoting brand awareness is the expectation that when a consumer sees a product for sale it will have a 'reassuring familiarity about it' and therefore 'improve the purchase probability' (Nappolini and Hackley, 2008; Lawrence, 2009). Some hints were given by the stage two and stage three interviewees that exposure to unfamiliar brands would be beneficial to the stakeholders. On questioning one viewer of *The Other Guys* (RF6) assumed that the fictional Castien Jewellers (featured in the film) was an American jewellery chain that they had simply not heard of. Meanwhile they assumed that the real 'Bed Bath & Beyond' was a fictional retail store created for the film. Creating awareness for both though would fulfil the

first A.I.D.A. criteria of Awareness (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008). The Bed, Bath and Beyond store was particularly vividly recalled as the second stage interviewee especially liked the character played by Michael Keaton who had several scenes based at this retailer. On questioning though this second stage interviewee 'admitted', as if it was wrong in some way, that she did not really like the character as such, but claimed she had since seeing *Beetlejuice* (Burton, 1988) been a fan of the actor.

A liking for an actor who is linked with a brand can strengthen a positive association between the two, George Clooney with Nespresso or Uma Thurman with Alfa Romeo as examples here; this though would hinge on the connection being noticed in the first place between the actor and the product - with neither the actor nor product being misattributed. Even the interviewees who listed Clooney in this research as a 'favourite actor' did not link him directly with the Nespresso brand; only with prompting, did interviewees recount the connection. This would appear to negate or undermine the marketing efforts or highlight the lack of awareness on the part of consumers of the links between celebrities and products, as presented below this would be of use to influence or sway attitudes towards these brands, but frustrate efforts made to measure and quantify them.

In this research, some interviewees commented that filmmakers regularly use branded products, as do audiences, to define screen characters (Maltby, 2003). Nappolini and Hackley (2008: 5) comment:

Brands in the scenes of entertainment vehicles can help a consumer identify with the characters because they feel their prior knowledge of the brand helps to clarify the identity and personality of the character. If the theory that viewers metaphorically see themselves as characters in films is correct, then it is possible that the linking of brands and characters can act as a powerful approval message.

This is a strong argument as to why product placements are such a valuable and efficacious method to promote brands and sales as consumers acquire products to reinforce an association with an actor or character to themselves or perhaps a wider audience. A research stage three interviewee summarised this phenomenon with the comment:

When you see it in a film it tells you where that character has come from, what's their history, where they've come from based on how much they've spent on whatever they're wearing and whatever they're driving.

A denial of the persuasive power of placements is given by the research interviewees here who claimed such placements do not work on themselves. The converse of this would be then when a negative portrayal of a product can act as a 'powerful disapproval' in the minds of the consumers, in this research the second stage interviewees suggested that this had occurred with the Prius and Voss examples. As a research theme this was pursued further in the third research stage and builds on this negative view. A highspeed car chase through the streets of Rome in *Spectre* (RF11) elicited the following comments from four of the research stage three interviewees:

What was that car? It was an old person's car. Again, it was a brand being targeted at an old person. You associate it with an old person. Trying to think what the brand is. Was it Renault? No, it must have been Fiat. Probably a Fiat 500 or something.

This comment may hurt the sponsors twice. Once for the negative comment, and once for describing their car as one aimed at the 'old person's market'. More negative comments follow on this *Spectre* placement.

I thought that was a bit mean actually yeah, because that was a negative. And I thought that was a negative advertising campaign by Fiat 'cus they just showed it as a slow car that just got in the way of all these flashy sports cars. And I thought - why would you do that? So, I reckon Jag had put that in there [laughing] as a campaign against Fiat to make everybody buy the other cars or whoever had the other cars. That's just typical because they're just running down Fiat [laughs]. So, it wasn't a very good advertising campaign for them.

It seems unlikely that Aston Martin would want to impinge on the Fiat 500 market, or that the markets for elite cars and hatchbacks would overlap. The negative association was drawn here though. This is followed by a considered comment from this third research stage interviewee who said:

So, I'm just thinking in the film Spectre during one of the car chases which already has two obviously placed brand cars in. They put a good amount of emphasis on a point where another car holds up the chase and pulls out in front of one of the cars. It's quite obvious what the car is. It's a Fiat 500. And they put a lot of shots of it. There's a lot

of shots of each angle of the car and you can clearly see the Fiat badge. And it's quite an iconic car anyway. And again, it kind of devalues that scene in a way. They were kind of making too much of a big deal on, on this product. It was almost as if they'd put this scene in there to sell, to have that as a placed product in their film. I like the scene less because they did that. So, I guess you could say it had a negative effect on me. Because they made it way too obvious that it wasn't just something they'd subtly slipped into the film they'd actually almost created a scene around this product and that's not what a film is for.

This final comment is a warning for the associated placed brands, and for the filmmakers on how context on how they are placing products:

It definitely had a negative effect, and it drew away from the fact that they were in car chase and it almost made it Johnny English-like.

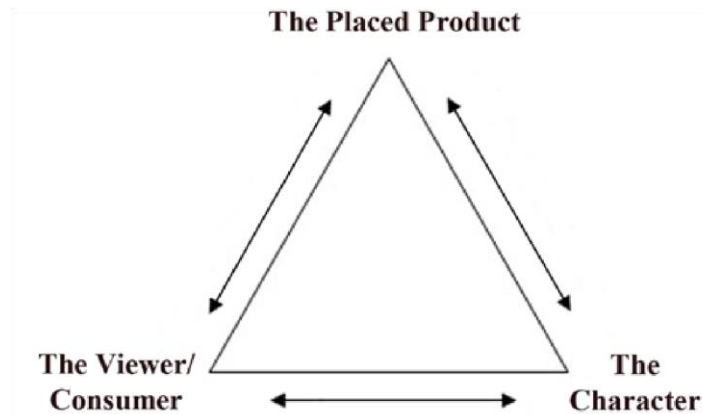
This suggests that brands placed without due consideration, or without the marketer's voice in the presentation decision, may be prominently featured but not to the sponsor's or brands advantage. In the last example detracting from the film too.

Humans appear to be 'hard-wired' to be attracted towards dominant people as role models and leaders (Atkins, 2009; Wiseman, 2010), in this context celebrity actors. The potential of celebrity role models as influencers is well known by marketers, psychologists and sociologists alike, see Merton, 1968; Solomon et al, 2013. Maltby (2003) describes role models as individuals who crave status, they are then often emulated by others. Wanting status from others for appearing successful or dominant is a powerful driver for some. Atkins (2009) takes Maltby's idea and shows the commercial and marketing implications of them particularly with the promotion of brands and products. According to Cashmore (2006), individuals will imagine or perceive that they belong to a celebrity's entourage or 'tribal group' as a form of parasocial interaction (see Lawrence, 2009). This can be reinforced via the mechanism of buying products that the dominant person is associated, with examples of this was found with the research here. This is a powerful process helping to influence consumer preferences and should not be underestimated (Atkins, 2009; Cashmore, 2009). Regarding placements as potentially powerful marketing tools is of little surprise then; showing the lead character with his or her product/brand of choice in a well-received film should have a positive impact on consumers.

While many interviewees here denied that this would happen to themselves, there was data found here to suggest that the influence was working pervasively at an unrecognised level.

The evidence from the interviewees in this research does not convincingly support the case for devoting marketing budgets to product placements. For the first example here, second and third stage respondents read the product/brand in a negative manner and transposed those associations onto the character portrayed. The Prius used in *The Other Guys* (RF6), *Little Fockers* (RF5) and mentioned but not seen in *The Town* (RF9) all appear to have served at least one promotional purpose, attaining awareness (see Brennan et al, 2015); but were presenting the brand as a negative signifier for the associated character. Research stage three interviewees with the Fiat 500 in *Spectre* (RF11) further echo this sentiment. This was though that in each of these films the placements are met with negative comments. It was noticeable that the cars used in the research films often assisted in defining characters. Respondents described the three 'Prius characters' negatively as a 'dull geek driving a boring' car, a 'dullard' and lastly as a 'trendy yuppie'. Conversely the second example here featured a fleeting appearance of the lead actor driving an Audi convertible in *Letters to Juliet* (RF3) was commented on by one stage two interviewee as "*making her [the character] look successful*". For example, Karniouchina et al (2011) use the number of placement appearances with a main character as a key variable when looking at impact, but they do not specify whether viewers consider the characters positively or negatively, or what impact this could have on the placement. Russell and Stern (2006) referred to the relationship between the viewers (consumers), film characters and the placed product as being a 'triadic relationship', which is shown immediately below with their Model of Placement Effects (Diagram 6.2, page 222). This suggests that a parasocial relationship will exist between the viewer and the character featured in film. The depth of affinity with the character/s, the film genre, film conventions, the manner of the placement can all influence the way in which the placement is perceived and absorbed by the viewer.

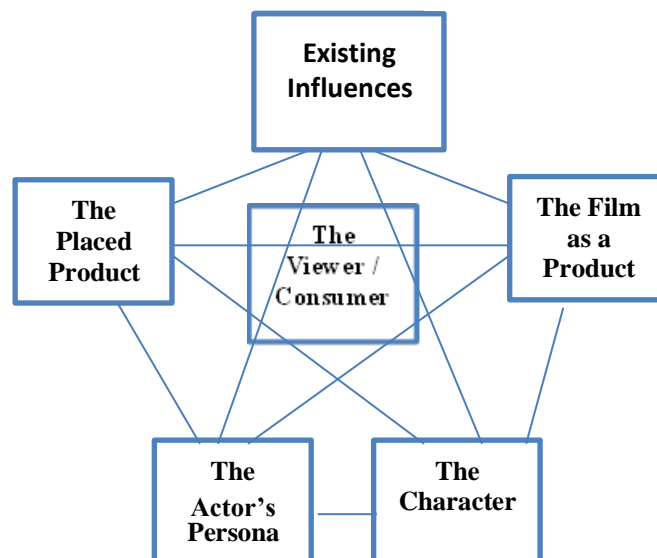
Diagram 6.2, **Russell and Stern's Model of Placement Effects.**



Adapted from Russell and Stern, 2006.

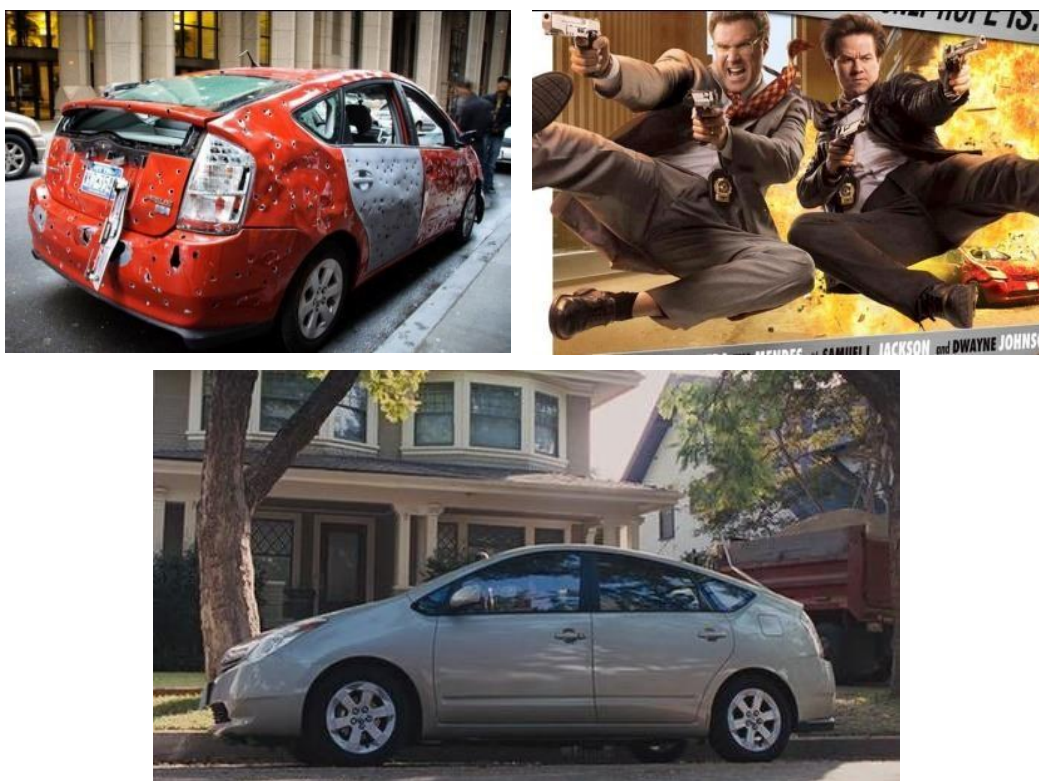
The placement effects from Russell and Stern's model are here with both the above films with the Prius examples in the research films (*The Other Guys*, *Little Fockers* and *The Town*) where the characters associated with the vehicle will influence the perception of the product. The presentation of a fuller picture is possible when the actor's persona/image and the film as a product itself (such as context, genre, conventions) are also considered. The development by the researcher of this simple web of relationships is shown in Diagram 6.3, with the 'viewer/consumer' at the heart of the web and subjected to potentially conflicting and competing influences. Consideration should also be with the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model (page 22) regarding 'existing influences'.

Diagram 6.3. **Film Placement Effects.**



In the case of actors, they can be seen as being synonymous with the character they portray or regarded as being independent; or in most cases the viewer will perceive an overlap (Smith, 1996). This was specified by participants with Sharon Stone as Elizabeth Tramell, or with Harrison Ford and Indiana Jones, Daniel Craig as James Bond, and Ben Stiller as Greg Focker in *Little Fockers* (RF5) or Will Ferrell as Allen Gamble in *The Other Guys* (RF6). The interconnectedness of factors and the influence of potentially many variables can make isolating the role of any one influence more problematic. The recognition that it is a combination of factors, as shown in Diagram 6.3, is essential for assessing placements.

Picture Illustration 6.1.
The Prius in *The Other Guys* (RF6) and *Little Fockers* (RF5).



The Prius, top left, damaged but '*still getting incredible mileage*', dialogue from *The Other Guys*. Top right, the Prius also appearing in the promotional poster, adding to its presence if not to its image. Below, the Prius featured as a 'responsible family car' in *Little Fockers*.

The style and manner of the Prius placement beyond mere inclusion, is a factor. This would also include placement decisions of narrative inclusion and film conventions. The same ideas would hold true for products placed

within films; the prominent but negative portrayal of the Prius attracted attention from the interviewees here - although none of it in a positive vein.

This link with consumer/viewer attitudes is simply and effectively illustrated by the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model, is described as “The most influential multi-attribute model” (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2006: 153). The model measures the elements that combine to form attitude, these are salient beliefs, object attribute linkages and evaluation (Cohen, Fishbein and Ahtola, 1972) and it is elements of this that product placements seek to utilise. Measuring and determining attitude using this, or any model, is fraught with difficulties as attitudes range and vary in their intensity (Norberg and Horne, 2007). Norberg and Horne (2007: 832) give an illustration of this, they write:

On a general level, attitudes range from non-attitudes through weakly held attitudes to those that are strongly held. Strongly held attitudes are expected to be more predictive of behavior.

This is a significant research discussion point, looking at how placements can influence, or help to influence, attitudes about brands. Relating to this point are the parallel attitudes about celebrity-actors; especially how they can assist in raising noticeability and awareness. The evidence from the films used in this study would challenge and erode this line of argument. Showing a brand in context and in a consistent and positive manner would reinforce positive brand values, especially if it attracts the consumer’s attention and awareness (Aaker, 1997; Donaton, 2005; Bressoud et al, 2008). Brafman and Brafman (2009) suggest that even relatively low-level exposure can be enough to sway attitudes and decisions and influence consumer behaviour. The negative placements identified above would seem to diminish from the product image while the fleeting and anonymous placements, such as for example Oreo and Ritz biscuits in *The Other Guys* (RF6), appear to add little in the way of positive brand associations or value beyond perhaps a little familiarity with interviewees in this research.

The relationship between the marketing and the media industries is established firmly, as is their common need to communicate with target audiences (Galician, 2004). Communicating with people in a covert manner

when they are relaxed, watching a film is one way to overcome consumer resistance, although when done badly, as both the literature and interviewees in this research suggest, it can result in viewer rejection. This research demonstrates that marketing and the media should not ignore, dismiss or underestimate the risk of audience rejection. Highlighting an example of how product placements integration works was a research participant, with *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (Kwapis, 2005); based on the book of the same name. One stage two interviewee mentioned how she used to buy Top Shop jeans, but:

I found myself wearing Levi's after watching the Sisterhood.

This was a contradiction to her stated view that 'advertising doesn't work on me'. Like many films based on books, this example would encourage studios to commit money and resources to produce a film as it will be perceived to have an audience in waiting. The '*Sisterhood*' related products have the same coherent presentational style, shown next in Picture Illustration 6.2., page 238. With the jeans used, the Levi's 'red tab' label is a distinct signifying logo making it perhaps unmissable signifier / logo for viewers. More significantly as the narrative link with the film/book/product is a happy, positive and popular one to be associated with. Based on a series of successful books (aimed primarily at a teenage female market (Brashares, 2007)) the title gave the chance for a jeans brand to become a central part of the narrative and thereby have a fully integrated placement opportunity (Johannes, 2005). It is worth noting that a successful book, does not automatically translate to film success. To illustrate this, Marich (2009: 7) notes that:

Films with popular stars and films based on popular books bomb all the time.

Product placement expenditure in films carries a risk, one that cannot be expelled by using popular stars, nor by the adaptation of a popular book to the silver screen. For Levi's or any other brand linking with a popular book carries no surety of attaining desired outcomes. With '*The Sisterhood*' though a balance was achieved with the product well integrated into the narrative resulting in a positive outcome for the brand image and sales. The scope of the promotional reach is illustrated next.

Picture Illustration 6.2.

The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants.



Left, the book, and second left the film of the book.

Middle right, the Sears promotion of jeans from the film of the book; all with the distinctive Levi's jeans 'red tab'. Right, screenshot of Blake Lively receiving, via FedEx, the travelling Levi's (*Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, 2005).

'*The Sisterhood*' also gave an excellent opportunity to promote the jeans in-store with 'excellent point-of-sale merchandising' (Perrey and Spillecke, 2011). This is a critically important sales opportunity and one not to be underestimated, it is described by Galante, de Block and Schmidt (2011: 168) as "...the last single touch point that you can reach 'the masses'" and as therefore being "...particularly valuable to retailers and their suppliers". With retail marketing this last 'point-of-purchase' marketing approach is known to be of great use for generating additional sales particularly with fast moving consumer goods items that are acquired as unsought purchases (Gilbert, 2003; Underhill, 2008). If some 70% of high street purchases (Varley and Rafiq, 2014) are 'unplanned' then the commercial importance of this should not be underestimated.

Several stage two respondents in the research undertaken here commented on occasional retail / film links they had noticed, including one who admitted that she had purchased the soundtrack to *Mamma Mia!* (Lloyd, 2008) despite that she already possessed the music featured. The justification for this was given in that the new CD had a cover that matched the film poster and that the CD "*Had the film's magic about it*". As with the

Mamma Mia! example in the retail environment a level of high-intensity interaction between the product, retailer and consumer, what Galante et al call "an unbeatable marketing vehicle" (2011: 169), can take place. In keeping with a feature of the film's storyline Levi's, with the co-operation of the retailers, were not only promoting the pants (jeans) but also with a 'limited edition' applique kit to enable consumers to decorate their purchase in the same manner as the film's heroines. It was the characters rather than the actors here who gave the consumers an emotional attachment (Fedorikhina, Park, and Thomson, 2008) with the brand, strong enough for many to consume the film/s, book/s and the Levi's jeans. Supporting the Levi's brand was good in-store promotion, Johannes (2005, no page) writes:

Through the Levi's brand, Levi Strauss & Co. has launched a national retail program at Sears, featuring a Sisterhood jean decorating kit gift. Consumers who spend \$24 or more on Levi's products will receive a jean decorating kit. In-store signage and print ads support.

A Levi's spokesperson stated:

These partnerships presented a great way for us to build awareness and help drive box office with the female audience, while offering our partners the opportunity to connect with their consumers in an exciting and meaningful way (Johannes, 2005).

The consumers were able (literally) to buy into the brand and into 'sisterhood' (other themed merchandise was available) and attain a feeling of 'connectedness' with the story and characters. At the same time Levi's promoted box office sales for the film realising that benefits for all the stakeholders, giving an example of ideal brand-film co-operation.

The key to success here is due in part to the linking the brand/product with the consumer in an environment that generated sales. The brands and products here benefited because of the perceived natural and central link with the narrative and themes of the story; here the jeans are the key narrative device and essential to the plot and the consumers' attention.

Russell (2002: 309) comments on this point writing:

Product placement may indeed appear natural to many audience members, as consumption symbols are often used to enrich the plot, theme, and characters.

This can be observed with this Levi's placement. However, the very 'naturalness' of a placement would though also serve as its 'disguise' and thereby rendering it unseen to many viewers. Creamer (2005: 128) notes:

That's the most ideal situation when you're entering into a partnership that it is organic and so everyone from day one has felt like it's a really good fit.

This notion of an 'organic' link is a difficult one to judge and will leave some viewers oblivious to the promotion taking place. From a perceptual viewpoint this is understandable as it corresponds with Chabris and Simons' (2011) research with the 'invisible gorilla experiment' – something that is in plain sight but unobserved as the viewers' attention is elsewhere. In this research many interviewees were dismissive of products that did not have this 'natural' fit with the narrative, setting or theme of the film. The feeling of brand and film 'connectedness' is most influential when it involves the viewer beyond the 'exposure experience into his or her social life' according to Balasubramanian, Karrh and Patwardhan, 2006; with the *Sisterhood* it includes the direct imitation of characters portrayed.

6.5 Product placement and the potential pitfalls of using a subtle or an obvious approach: James Bond.

Claims of product placement benefits, especially in the long term, are supported by Aston Martin being named again as one of Britain's 'coolest brands' (Cool Brands, 2018). This is partly due to the marques' association with James Bond since their first pairing in *Goldfinger* (1964). This example was given by several interviewees here in this study and witnessed a positive celebrity brand association between the actor and the product. In this case the image would be said to be formed or motivated with the association with James Bond as a character rather than the actors who play the role. With the Aston Martin brand for most consumers it is only an aspirational product, unlike the more readily accessible Heineken beer, but with both brands benefitting from Bond connections. As with *The Mechanic* (RF8) there are possible advantages of having more affordable items alongside aspirational items to reflect some 'glory', or perhaps more

prosaically their brand values, onto the products that are associated with the same actors, characters or films. With *The Mechanic* (RF8), Cutty Sark whisky was noticed by research participants; albeit not in a positive manner, meanwhile Maserati and Jolida went unobserved. For a range of James Bond *Skyfall* placements see Picture Illustration 6.3, next.

Many of these brands used in *Skyfall* are building on an existing relationship with the film franchise having appeared in earlier movies. While this exposure gives brands the chance to make an impact on consumers, this method is not without negative issues. Lodge (2012) criticised the number of brands featured while acknowledging that the £28m paid by Dutch brewer Heineken covered one third of the production costs and helped to fund a higher quality film than might have been possible otherwise. Three of the stage three research participants who, post interview, commented on the high level of *Skyfall* fall placements with two of them complaining that the pre-film cinema trailers contained, as one of them expressed it, “*about half an hour of Bond product adverts*”. Despite these concerns, all three participants stated that they enjoyed the film and ‘forgot’ about the brands ‘once the action started’.

Picture Illustration 6.3.
James Bond and *Skyfall* (2012) Product Placements.



Daniel Craig and Judi Dench (left) with the original ‘Goldfinger Aston Martin’ DB5, ‘destroyed’ (right) during the film.

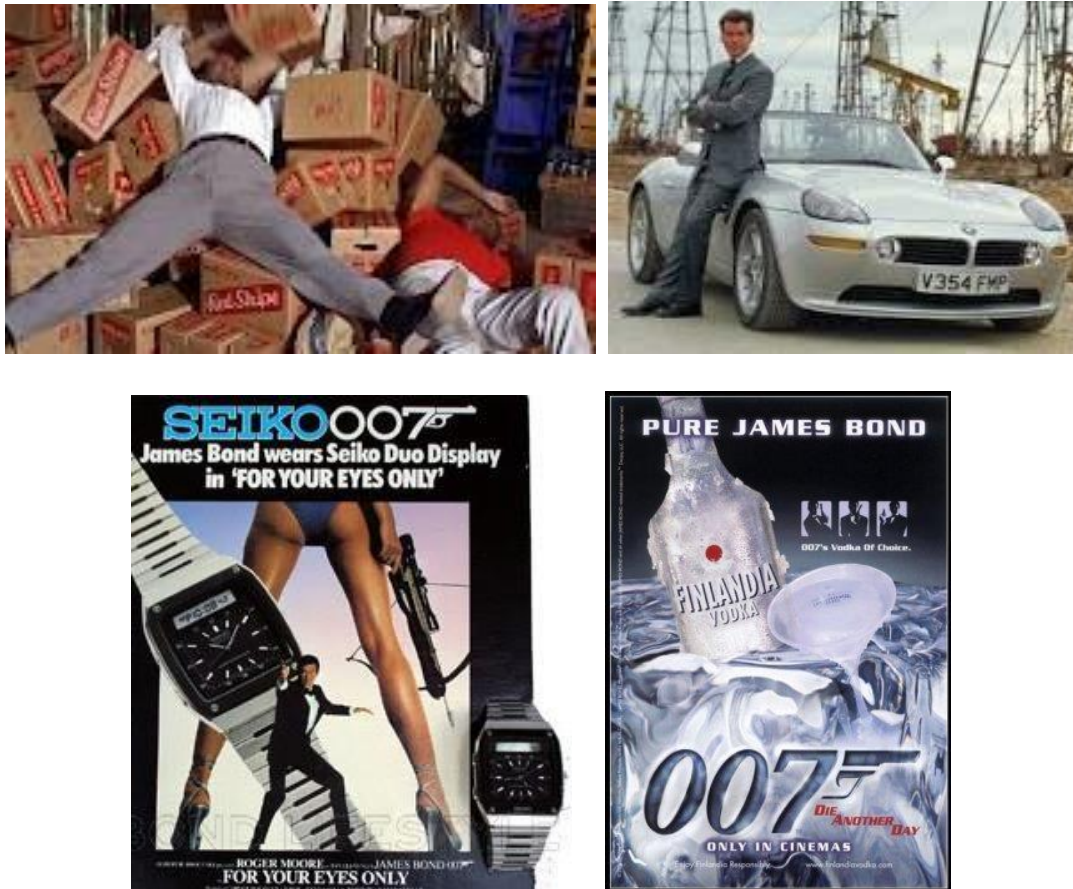


Skyfall product placements included Audi and Land Rover (middle left), Honda CRF250R motorcycles (middle right), VW Beetles, Land Rover and a Caterpillar 320DL excavator (bottom left), and Macallan Scotch. There were many other placed products including Sony mobiles and Vaio laptops, Omega watches, Adidas running shoes and Heineken.

The brand choices have changed since the first Bond film in 1962 with the potential to confuse consumers with this change of semiotic clues as to his wealth, status and manly prowess (Eco, 1966). It also gives placement critics grounds for commercial exploitation accusations concerning product placements (Steel, 2012). Consumers here, and in other studies, have reacted against placements that they consider too blatant or too crassly presented. While viewers often saw examples during this research the long running Bond and Aston Martin one was the most cited - often with the longevity of the relationship used as an exemplar of what many interviewees considered to be a 'natural' and acceptable form of product placement. Umberto Eco (1966, 242) wrote of Bond concerning the predictability of the narrative structure saying that readers, of the books or of films, can easily predict what will happen to him, the villains or any female that he finds himself alone. One participant in this research repeated Eco's sentiment concerning Bond seeming indestructibility with: *You know he's going to*

escape or survive, the only question you have is 'how'? Shown next are examples of James Bond with placed products.

Picture Illustration 6.4. **Bond's Brand Associations.**



Top left, Red Stripe beer in *Dr No* (1962) and top right a BMW Z8 in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997). Bottom left, Roger Moore with Bond's watch choice; not a Rolex or Omega but a Seiko, *For Your Eyes Only* (1981). Finlandia replaced Smirnoff in *Die Another Day* (2002).

While producers can come to rely on the pre-release income that these placements generate, viewers have also become accustomed to seeing Bond with consumer products and being used as a signifier of success and sophistication that is projected onto the products he is associated with. This image of strength that Eco alludes to, will add to the character's appeal to many consumers not least as a changing signifier of aspiration for some consumers; the most interviewee cited placement example was with Bond and Aston Martin cars as an aspirational product. Lindner, among others, develops this building on the films made since and comments on 'the staggering success' of 007, which he states is:

...linked to the status of Bond himself as a 'mobile signifier', a floating cultural icon who is continually reconfigured and repositioned in the face of social change (Lindner, 2003: 3).

It appears that the consumers of Bond are satisfied with both the narrative predictability as they are with the inevitability of the inclusion of products in the films and the reinforcement of them as semiotic signifiers.

6.6 Cool brands: The challenges of building a brand: Jack Daniel's, Harley Davidson and Apple as benchmarks of success.

The long term, repeating the placement and 'leaving the point implicit', approach of O'Keefe's (2002: 180) can be argued as one way to promote a product with brands being seen, and therefore associated, with favoured actors or characters assisting with this process. This also serves to illustrate the difficulty in assessing the impact of product placement, as many placements appear to function at the subconscious, subliminal level (Sabherwal, Pokrywczynski and Griffin, 1994; Gupta and Lord, 1998; Atkins, 2009). If the actor, film, setting or context of the placement is not suitable though this would then work against the product in the eyes of the consumer and can, if regarded as one stage two interviewee here termed it '*A blatant advert shoe-horned into a film*', then the association can be a negative one and the marketing efforts thwarted. This is contrary to many Jack Daniel's, Harley Davidson and Apple film placements which tend to have a more subtle and naturally embedded approach. The portrayal of the Toyota Prius and Fiat 500 reviewed in four of the research films used in this study, fall into the 'shoe-horned' category for several of the interviewees here; this could be why so many of them read those placements negatively.

For an exemplary long-term brand building approach, the Jack Daniel's and Harley Davidson examples of marketing communication can be more favourably considered than many product placement examples in this research. These examples illustrate how the careful alignment of brands to actors/characters can be successful, with Jack Daniel's, Harvey Davidson and to some extent Apple, using semiotic analysis which can be regarded as having an image of an 'outsider' or non-conformist image to boost their

appeal. This latter point is discussed further below in this chapter. Several stage two and three interviewees mentioned Jack Daniel's and Harley Davidson as 'cool brands' which they had also seen in films. Karniouchina et al (2011: 46) also raise the question whether an actor or character, citing Will Smith and Ray-Ban along with James Bond and Rolex, having a long-term relationship with a product actually benefits the brand. They question the impact of Bond's switch to Omega in *GoldenEye* (1995) as having a negative impact on consumers. The example with Jack Daniel's below, also gives a placement alternative to a product being associated with just one film franchise or actor, thereby avoiding possible complications of misattribution - as with Bond and Smirnoff/ Finlandia/ Belvedere vodka, Seiko/Rolex/Omega, Heineken/Red Stripe or even BMW/Aston Martin.

The film '*HUD*' (Ritt, 1963) is an example of how placements can succeed despite what appears to be an unpromising film formula and is a useful example for future attempts at making placements with a positive impact. Set in Texas, Paul Newman plays the eponymous '*Hud*', a tough, uncompromising, cheating, amoral cowboy 'at odds with his father and indeed the world in general' (BFi, 2010). The character *Hud* was read and interpreted by many viewers via his demeanour and behaviour as a 'cool, anti-hero role model', a symbol of the 'true pioneer American spirit' and as a rejection of the 'new, capitalist, consumerist America' (Holt and Cameron, 2010). The semiotics for the characters in *Hud*, as with James Bond above, and with the brand character of Jack Daniel's, has been carefully constructed to convey a certain meaning to consumers (Metz, 1974). For whiskey producer Jack Daniel's, the placement carried throughout the film formed an important part of their brand building strategy, a strategy created to distinguish Jack Daniel's from their many competitors and to establish the 'true American' heritage image that they wanted to portray as part of their brand positioning and differentiation (Holt and Cameron, 2010). A high degree of semiotic analysis is not required for viewers to interpret the *Hud* character or his brands of choice, as Holt and Cameron (2010: 60) write:

The drink's position as the iconic whiskey of the frontier was etched in stone by the film HUD ...He drinks Jack Daniel's from the bottle,

throughout the film – whether chasing women, getting into bar fights, or wrestling pigs.

The factors of success here for the Jack Daniel's brand is the seemingly improbable audience liking for such a disagreeable as the character *Hud*, but this seems to have been combined with an affection shown for Paul Newman as an actor. This is a hard combination to achieve in film given the apparent fickle nature of audiences (McQuail, 1997) and perhaps a risky strategy for a brand to align itself. Furthermore, this strategy has not appeared to work with the Prius in this research. While the filmmaker and marketers can gauge the popularity of an actor, to what extent the product placement makes an impact is less easy to establish. For Jack Daniel's the film *Hud* marked a key point of a long, consistent representation of a brand portrayed in a series of films (Brand Channel, 2013).

Picture Illustration 6.5. **Jack Daniel's placed in plain sight.**



A promotional shot for the Jack Daniel's drinking *Hud*. Newman's presentation of an anti-hero character is intended to be read as 'rebellious' by viewers – hence: 'The Man with the Barbed Wire Soul'. The Jack Daniel's bottle is circled and clearly shown in other scenes.

This approach to product placement is the opposite to the traditional linking 'nice people' to brands, as with the research films used here Ben Stiller with Prius in *Little Fockers* (RF5) and Jennifer Anniston with Apple in *The Switch* (RF2). One research respondent here though mentioned that Ben

Stiller's character in *Little Fockers* was nice but 'wimpy', which was she then thought projected onto the car. This is unlikely to be an image to appeal to marketers or consumers. For Jack Daniel's the brand strategy was one to build an image of (Holt and Cameron, 2010: 61):

a folksy straight-talking "anti-marketing" style of communication [which] rode on the coat-tails of the exploding demand for culture promoting the revival of frontier masculinity.

The marketing campaign/s has also been maintained over a long period of time so now Jack Daniel's is regarded as a luxury/heritage brand with its own associations and the market position, this has been further maintained by the simple use of premium pricing (Catry, 2003).

It should be remembered though that when considering product placement as a promotional tool that its primary aim is as a means of communicating persuasively with consumers (Weilbacher, 2001), some interviewees in this research gave examples where this had been recognised, including a stage two participant comment with Jack Daniel's:

Sometimes I see Jack Daniel's, it's a drink I drink. The square bottles stand out.

One research stage three interviewee made two salient points on this. The first echoes the above point on recognition, while the second sounds a warning on associations and reinforces Jack Daniel's decision not to be placed in *Bad Santa* (2003) and risk negative associations of their product being seen with a dissolute and disreputable character. This third research stage interviewee said:

If you don't know what it is, you won't see it. There's a movie I remember seeing a while back, it was forever ago, but the character always drinks Jack Daniel's. So, if he did not make very good decisions ever in his life, he'd always blamed it on Jack Daniel's.

Being noticed is not the same thing as being persuaded, therefore making the degree of persuasiveness debateable. Using a co-ordinated long-term approach however does appear to be a better method to attain promotional goals from the research carried out here and from previous studies. These would include those relating to building brand values and brand image, these

though take both time and money, and this would not fulfil the marketing needs of an organisation with, most obviously, short-term sales.

Throughout this research three brands kept appearing in both the literature, and from the research participants as exemplars of product placement practice. These semiotically distinct brands were Jack Daniel's, Harley Davidson and Apple, each of them had used product placement to promote their brands and products, and each of them had invested heavily in this form of marketing communication over a long period of time. Jack Daniel's approach was of building a brand image and brand myth, as Holt and Cameron (2010: 62) term it, a signifier of 'pre-industrial past times and an independent frontier spirit', using a 'counter-cultural strategy' to "...reassert the value of historic ideology" that has resulted in "...enormous credibility and authenticity" which has taken decades to establish. In addition to this is their perhaps seemingly contradictory decision to sponsor rock concerts thereby targeting younger, more affluent consumers (Catry, 2003) showing that the brand and its relationship to customers is being carefully managed with new and potential consumers. Several interviewees here spoke of Jack Daniel's as not only being a 'cool' product but one that also had '*character*'; what marketers would term brand personality or brand values (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008).

Jack Daniel's placements originally drew on the culturally embedded ideal of the masculine American male, a myth that had been "...articulated in the ideology of rugged individualism" (Holt and Cameron, 2010: 51). This is a personality type that a Jack Daniel's drinker may well wish to be associated with, a form of reflected glory for the consumer sometimes delivered, promoted via film and product placements therein. If brands can build on associations of, for example 'credibility and authenticity', by utilising the opportunities of placements then they will be able to establish or reinforce brand values for their products and help marketers achieve their aims. To have a prominent placement and then to have consumers react negatively and regard the brand as inferior, as can be seen though with several examples quoted above, is harmful as a marketing promotion. In this research, the brand that received the most negative research participant comments was the Toyota Prius, placed in three of the research films. A

potential downside though with the strategy of giving a brand a macho and rugged image is as Holt and Thompson (2004: 425) comment that:

American public opinion takes for granted that men strive to prove their manhood through compensatory consumption, using whatever symbolic props are available. No man riding a Harley is above suspicion that he is on a quest to compensate for insecurities about his masculinity.

For one research correspondent this image of Harley Davidson encouraged him to buy a 'Charley Boorman inspired' BMW GS1250 instead of an 'obvious mid-life crisis Easy Rider'.

6.7 Cultural meaning, symbols and associations of strong brands: Harley Davidson.

Following a similar strategy to Jack Daniel's is the motorcycle manufacturer Harley Davidson. One research correspondent even claimed that her daughter had decided to name her child Harley after the motorcycle, because she loved the brand so much. These brands, along with Apple and a host of others, are attempting to identify and share audiences to establish their profiles and, as seen in this section, move consumers from product awareness to purchase action. Holt and Thompson comment that, 'the romanticization of the American West and glorification of the American cowboy arose in conjunction with growing cultural anxieties about a loss of vitality, independence and virile manliness among middle class men' (2004: 426). This is the sub-text to *Wild Hogs* (Becker, 2008) wherein the lead characters, four middle aged men who perceive that their lives have become stagnant and unfulfilling, find themselves in rugged and challenging situations; drawing on the semiotic associations and the 'pioneer spirit' of the American frontier, and cinematically drawing on some classic Western imagery (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002). This type of film context and narrative gives marketers the chance to align their products in what they perceive as a favourable setting.

Wild Hogs is of interest here as the lead, Harley Davidson riding, actors are initially presented as dull suburbanites (dismissively referred to in the film by 'real bikers' as RUBs, 'Rich Urban Bikers', Schouten and

McAlexander, 1993). The use of Harley Davidson motorcycles is of particular note not least based on their rebel image and association with outsider 'biker gangs' such as the Hell's Angels and Outlaws, outsiders from mainstream society (Blackman and Kempson, 2016) also known as the 'one percenters' (Thompson, 2012). Thompson (2012: 9) suggests to would be biker gang members 'equip yourselves with large motorcycles, ideally Harley Davidsons'. For Harley Davidson the challenge in marketing terms is maintaining and controlling their 'outsider/rebel' image while nurturing mass market appeal. The multiple placements of Harley Davidson (referred to by insiders as 'The Motor Company' (Osgerby, 2005)) in the film *Wild Hogs* has both white collar citizens⁹ and Motorcycle Club gang members riding Harley Davidsons. With *Wild Hogs* the lead actors are portrayed as incapable of managing themselves in a challenging road trip environment but they, in the tradition of 'happy endings', overcome personal issues, misunderstandings and adversities. What is of primary interest for the research here is the product playing a lead narrative role and the mix of disparate products, characters and storylines. Indeed, the basic premise is akin to *The Other Guys* (RF6) in that it has some unpromising characters transforming into heroes/winners (another popular film storyline); it was also referred to by one stage two interviewee who, after watching research film *The Other Guys* (RF6) commented, that the film was like:

Wild Hogs where the underdogs come good in the end.

HOG is a reference to the Harley Owners Group (Harley Davidson (2013)) hence the film's title. Harley Davidson was one of the first brand symbols reproduced by 'fans' as a tattoo and now this forms a part of what Schouten and McAlexander (1993) refer to as part of the Harley Davidson's 'Mass Marketing Mystique'. The brand history of Harley Davidson, including regular appearances in films is well documented (Berry, 1995; Schembri, 2009) and has, like Jack Daniel's, been built up over decades and can now too be considered a 'heritage brand' in which, with careful management consumers feel that they are part of a brand community, as Ouwersloot and Odekerken-Schröder (2008: 571) write, consumers:

⁹ 'Citizens', the term used by Motorcycle Club members for all non-gang riders (Thompson, 2012).

experience strong relationships with the brand, which causes them to recommend it to others, feel emotionally inclined toward it, and perceive themselves as part of it.

Again, it is noteworthy to consider the place that Harley Davidson holds in popular culture and its image as a counter-culture icon, Yates (2000) describes the Harley as the 'Outlaw Machine' (title of his book). Meanwhile Osgerby (2005: 8) makes the observation that bikers have assumed the mantle of the 'rugged individualism' of the cowboy as romanticized icons, he continues:

Just as the hardy frontiersman personified the sense of personal freedom and robust self-reliance at the heart of the American Dream, the biker has come to symbolize American ideals of confidence, resourcefulness, and individual liberty.

Picture Illustration 6.6. **Harley Davidson at the Movies.**



WILD HOGS (2007), featuring Harley Davidsons. Also, *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man*, starring Don Johnson, Mickey Rourke and featuring characters called Jack Daniel's and Virginia Slim (Wincer, 1991).



Harley Davidson has built on a long line of film placements including *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) (left) and *Terminator 2* (Cameron, 1991).

For consumers to feel that they are a part of the brand it is important to have brand loyalty and clear brand values, a process that turns consumers into 'brand advocates' or 'brand ambassadors' (Gemmell et al, 2013) – consumers who will promote the brand of their own volition. Harley Davidson in these placements are semiotically using their image of a rebel/outsider to appeal to consumers as inheritors of the American pioneer spirit. As Blackman and Kempson (2016: 8) hint at the semiotic potential of the Harley Davidson brand, they write:

Harley Davidson and others have shown interest in subcultures of consumption to increase their market potential. This means that subcultures have built-in attractions due to their unorthodox, noisy and seductive features.

These seductive features are key components with the rebel/outsider image and used as a describing mechanism in the films above, with Harley Davidson and the image of bikers as rebels and outsiders, it is inevitable that *The Wild One* (Benedek, 1953) is cited and a slew of biker-exploitation movies that followed and reinforced this image¹⁰. From a marketing communication standpoint this is also important as a marketing technique of importance to other brand campaigns (Scott, 2010).

Technology brand Apple in many ways could be regarded as being at odds with the rugged image of Jack Daniel's and Harley-Davidson. The company which was founded in 1976 had two decades of niche appeal and low sales before co-founder Steve Jobs returned to the organisation and instilled an ethos of sophisticated products with simple, elegant design (Kahney, 2014). As with Jack Daniel's and Harley Davidson, Apple have followed a policy of often placing products in films and television shows, the brand featured in several of the films used for this research. For *Wild Hogs* Apple also featured, this included one of the Apple placements of the logo as a tattoo (a reference to the tattooed biker culture featured in the film and ingrained in American folklore, Schembri, 2009). As with the example

¹⁰ Including among others *Wild Angels* (1966), *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967), *Devil Angels* (1967), *The Wild Rebels* (1967), *The Glory Stompers* (1967), *Run, Angel, Run!* (1969), *The Losers* (1970). The biker outsider image has also been cemented in other media too, such as books, magazines and songs. It is noted that in *The Wild One* lead actor Marlon Brando rode a Triumph not a Harley Davidson, the film nonetheless helped cement the rebel biker image.

of Jason Statham using an iPhone, see Picture Illustration 1.7 above (page 20), the placement relies to some large extent on the viewer being able to read the logo as an Apple brand mark or signifier.

The filmmakers here appear to be happy to mix the contradictory brand messages in this film perhaps to reflect the characters own different personalities, fortunes and lives, given of course that film makers use branded products to help define their characters (as reviewed above). This helps to the widen the appeal of their products to more potential customers and to enable consumers to read the brand in many ways depending on what sources they have been exposed to and relate to. Apple follows Harley Davidson's trail in regularly placing their products in films, thereby building brand values and awareness to a high level and establishing themselves into consumers' psyches by this method of inculcation (Brand Channel, January 2012). One research participant however, commented that he did not notice Apple products as:

They're so ubiquitous they're everywhere, it's more glaring when they don't use them.

Placements like this and in a host of other films reinforce the brand, see Picture Illustration 6.7, next.

Picture Illustration 6.7. **Apple and Harley.**



William H. Macy sporting and discussing his Apple tattoo (left), and with his Harley Davidson riding road buddies, *Wild Hogs* (2007).

Unlike the more selective Jack Daniel's though, Apple appear to be pursuing a film policy of mass saturation featuring in 30% of 'Number One Films' in the USA in 2010 (Brand Channel 2011b) and being named as the "Biggest Movie Star of 2011" (Brand Channel, 2012). For the years, 2000 to 2010 in the USA Apple featured in 127 of the 374 number one box office films (Brand Channel, January 2012). This policy was perhaps accountable for interviewees in this research commenting above that they expected to see Apple products in films, suggesting perhaps that for some viewers, Apple products are read as being technologically advanced and signify success, while also being regarded as the norm. Apple have been shaping and forming consumer attitudes by the consistent and almost ubiquitous use of placements. While this would help with product/brand familiarity, it might also render them so familiar as to be 'unseen'. Of all the interviewee feedback in this research, the comment that individuals had not seen products was the single most common response; seen but unnoticed would be a better description perhaps (de Botton, 2005). The issue for those placing the products is whether the sub-conscious impact of these 'unseen' placements, including the regular placements for Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel's and Apple, has enough effect on the consumer to influence them in a way that would result in future sales due to an unrecognised thought process leading to a preference for one brand over its rivals. This echoes the points made by Brafman and Brafman (2009), and Wiseman (2010) about the nature of influences on individual and on their buying decisions.

PART TWO.

Part Two of this chapter specifically looks at issues concerning the attitudes and behaviours of consumers and how these impacts and interacts with film, marketing and placement practices. The evaluation of product placements is also reviewed, with a focus on the use of humour and viewer rejection as key components. Finally, the issue of placement recall, placement believability and brand preference persuasion are also scrutinised.

6.8 Viewers as consumers: their attitudes and behaviours.

At the centre of the promotional process is the need for building awareness, preference and ultimately loyalty that links to consumer behaviour (Solomon et al, 2006). Belch and Belch (2001: 118) observe: "Attitudes are one of the most heavily studied concepts in consumer behaviour". Belch and Blech (2001: 118) continue defining attitudes as "...learned predispositions to respond to an object" adding that they are:

a summary construct that represent an individual's overall feeling toward or evaluation of an object.

This, they contend, extends not only to brands and how their semiotics are read, but also to companies, product categories and, with importance for this study, to the celebrity endorsers. Making the point Belch and Belch (2001: 119) state:

Marketers' keen interest in attitudes is based on the assumption that they are related to consumers' purchase behaviour [and that] considerable evidence supports the basic assumption of a relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

The picture is not, as they and others acknowledge, quite so clear or definite. Belch and Belch supplement the earlier point with the observation: "The attitude-behaviour link does not always hold; many other factors can affect behaviour" (2001: 119). Perrey and Spillecke (2011) also state that claiming a link between attitude and behaviour can be flawed and keeping in mind that consumers do not always know what attracts them to products (Slywotzky and Weber, 2012). Participants in this research often struggled or were reluctant to explain the influences as to why they liked an actor, although one stage two respondent did comment that he had always been 'a bit in love' with actor Emma Thompson. This makes product placement more difficult to assess in terms of influence and value for a product; away from that is the attention and influence that a handful of headline-grabbing performances from the likes of Reese's Pieces, Barbour and Ray Ban. With the film consumers in this research, nearly all of them admitted to feelings of attraction to either celebrity actors or placed products, a typical comment with the choice of research films was – 'I watched it because so-and-so was

in it'. As outlined above, the placements may function best as promotional tools at a sub-conscious level and not through direct and conscious links made by consumers between an actor, film and a product/brand.

Gupta and Lord (1998) observed that prominently placed or verbally mentioned brands attained higher levels of recall, more influence and a better attitude rating than those used in the background of shots or as set dressing; this was also found to be the case with this research. Pokrywczynski (2005: 41) notes:

Previous research has shown that product placements including both visual and verbal displays of the product have the most impact on recall and brand attitudes, followed by verbal only and finally visual only appearances.

This suggests that responses are initiated from different levels of placement prominence. Pokrywczynski (2005: 42) also states that 'other variables' will affect impact too, such as the context of the scene and the empathy of the audience.

Within this research the issue of character empathy did arise with several research respondents including: one respondent who said he liked Indiana Jones but 'did not want to look like him'; the individual who spent two years saving for a James Bond Rolex; and finally, the *Mamma Mia!* (2008) fan who wanted some of the 'film's magic' by purchasing the 'film official soundtrack' of the music she already owned. There are then many factors to consider when evaluating cause and effect determining product placement success, which in turn means that with this technique there hangs a level of uncertainty over its impact and effectiveness. These 'other variables' as Pokrywczynski (2005) notes, cast doubt over the process and practice of film placement therefore isolating one single factor would be highly problematic.

There are many variables impacting upon the process of product placement, this suggests a lack or loss of control in placement implementation for the marketer. This makes the placement technique uncertain, inflexible once embedded within a film (FedEx in *Cast Away*

(2000) and *I, Robot* (2004) are examples of this). Placements are also impossible to change or control and, critically, difficult to quantify and predict the outcomes of. For film alone, the variables including brand presentation, editing, post-cinema consumer exposure levels, film sales, longevity of the film, actors and characters popularity and whether the consumers even notice the placements. A prominent placement may suffer if the viewers' attention is diverted, crucially (Bressoud et al, 2008: 5):

Distraction, in the form of multiple placements appearing simultaneously, is found to hinder recall.

As one interviewee in the research noted after watching *The Social Network*:

There was so much going on and they spoke so quickly. It was hard to notice anything, I had to concentrate on what they were saying a lot of the time to notice anything like brands, they had computers of course but I couldn't tell you which ones or anything.

This relates to Davies' (1997) original point about 'cluttered and noisy' environments (see above) and Brennan et al's point (2015) that film consumption has fewer distractions and an environment that is conducive for exposure to product placements. Substantiating this further is possible with the feedback given by interviewees in this research. One research stage two participant commented:

It's bad when it's badly done and when it's really good you don't notice it. Some products are so ingrained in our lives, just part of our lives so we expect to see them and maybe don't notice them.

Another research stage two participant commented on what was regarded as a clumsy placement in *The Town* (RF9) after recalling the brand dialogue inclusion:

"Give us all your Blackberries!" It's an odd thing to say. What about Give us all your mobiles! Or cell phones as it's America!

These comments encapsulate the marketer's dilemma about placement impact, although it does acknowledge the role that placement can play in showcasing brands in a natural setting, or for making the product familiar to the consumer resulting in a positive attitude towards that brand and thereby raising the purchase probability (Ouwensloot and Duncan, 2008). Familiarity though raises another challenge, namely "When advertising

begins to blend in with the wallpaper, it can take guerrilla tactics to grab buyers' attention" (Gemmell et al, 2013: 394). For example, with the second stage research film *The Social Network* (RF10) the interviewee's attention was not 'grabbed', several claiming that they were unable to identify or recall any placements despite its high product count.

6.9 Evaluating product placements: consumer expectations, rejection, ethical concerns, humour, and spoofing Starbucks.

There are ethical concerns regarding the treatment of consumers, and of the promoters paying for placements. Filmmakers and marketers must be careful not to overstate what their placements can deliver commercially. From the placement industry's viewpoint, especially the agents between the studios and the product producers, guidelines are in place to set parameters and expectations. For example, Article 5 of the Entertainment Marketing Association Code of Standards and Ethics states:

A member shall not guarantee the achievement of specific results beyond the member's control (E.M.A., 2012).

The key words here are 'the member's control', which should remind those involved in placements not to over promise possible placement benefits and provide a defence against unhappy clients. With the pressures on the film makers to deliver a profitable product and the apparent fickle nature of audiences (Maltby, 2003) this would suggest that there is little within the member's control for the members to guarantee placement success with any confidence. Consumers being unaware that they are being 'marketed at' may well confuse the situation and render any promises of positive outcomes even less certain. A stage two research participant voiced her opinion on the practice thusly:

I don't like the idea of advertising taking over. I don't like the idea of advertising spreading its tentacles into everything. If I'm engrossed I wouldn't necessarily notice and it wouldn't make me buy.

Some respondents in this research claimed that they were oblivious to the practice of product placement and were surprised at the technique and the revelation (to them) that they had been exposed to such marketing. Many

consumers are not aware that they had been 'marketed at' with product placements with some viewers being unaware that the practice even exists (Atkins, 2009). As Heslin (1999: 2) writes:

Certain brands of food or clothing used in major motion pictures, or power tools used on 'how-to' television shows, are integrated so carefully that the audience is unaware that their presence is a form of advertising.

Atkins (2009: film documentary) adds, "Of course a lot depends on the quality and quantity of the product's exposure. As an advertising medium, product placement is still a gamble". This highlights the difficulty in finding a balance between quantity and quality of product placement and the risk of being missed by the viewer or being perceived as appearing too blatant to the viewer and risking rejection on artistic, or other grounds. One stage two interviewee here made the point underlining this concern:

Product placement makes sense commercially but not necessarily from an ethical or an aesthetic one.

If though, a placement can make an impact in an unobtrusive manner with consumers at a subconscious level, then concerns about the aesthetics are less significant however, consumer impact and ethical concerns remain.

Campbell (1988) and Eagle and Dahl (2018) have, for example, raised reservations about product placement from an ethical standpoint although Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993) maintain that only a small proportion of interviewees object on these grounds. Gupta and Gould (1998) found some evidence that the level of objection increased for placements involving guns, alcohol and tobacco. Ethical concerns (Gupta and Gould, 1997: 38) have previously been on grounds where some feel that there is:

an element of deception in that product placements are not labelled as advertisements and therefore may be viewed as hidden but paid messages.

Gupta and Gould add that placements are "...perceived by some people to have a subliminal aspect which may make it seem especially threatening" (ibid). From a commercial point filmmaker Atkins (2009: film documentary) comments again that "Placements are most effective when

you're not aware you're being sold to". Some research stage two interviewees felt this approach to be unethical whether it was for products that carry health concerns such as cigarettes or cola, or whether it was for health neutral products such as spring water. Interviewees suggested that they would avoid products using this type of promotion as being, as one stage two interviewee put it, a:

Slightly underhand way to sell things, at least with a billboard or [TV] advert you know where you are and can ignore it.

In this research there was not an explicit undertaking to consider the ethics of product placement, but this issue needs to be raised as it will be a concern for some viewers, marketers, regulators and even film makers.

The key to successful product placement appears to be understanding your audience, one common with much marketing promotion. Nappolini and Hackley (2008: 4) state:

developing a deeper understanding of the way that consumers/audiences engage with product placement experientially in the context of a mediated entertainment experience is needed.

Being well received by the consumer is all important for both film and placement, even potential ethical or claims of blatant selling can be overcome in some circumstances if the public's approval is won; this is shown with Starbucks and *Austin Powers* (2002) meaning that this approach should not be discounted or written off. It can be seen, despite views to the opposite, that overt placements can be effective if done with the viewers' consent, as explored next with *Austin Powers* (Roach, 2002). Interviewees here and in other studies have criticised films and filmmakers when they have made product placements too blatant or ill-fitting to the scene in question (Galician, 2004). One stage two research participant spoke for many when she commented:

I don't think you see placements unless you're looking for them. I don't like them if they're blatant.

Repeatedly the question of blatant placements was raised and rejected by participants. As with *Wayne's World* though, there are exceptions. Several interviewees here referred to *Austin Powers* as an example of good or funny

placement technique. In the *Austin Powers* sequel (Roach, 2002), Starbucks opted to cover all the bases in placement terms with having the arch-villain's headquarters not only featured in Seattle's 'Starbucks' Tower' but was equipped with its own Starbucks 'boardroom-café'. Furthermore, Starbucks' product was in shot and talked about (praised) by cast members (see Picture Illustration, 6.8, next). In line with the theme of the film (a spoof), it is done 'tongue-in-cheek' which with research participants here at least, met with audience approval.

Austin Powers and *Wayne's World* contradicts what interviewees here (and in other research (e.g. Galician, 2004)) said about film product placements. Friedman (2004: 181) reconciles this and writes "The marketer takes a small dose of self-criticism up front, and in return receives immunity from more damaging criticism".

Picture illustration 6.8. **The semiology of Starbucks: *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997).**



Top screenshots from *Austin Powers* (1997), actors Robert Wagner and Mike Myers in the 'Dr Evil' boardroom/Starbucks café. Below, screenshot of the Seattle Tower as Dr Evil's Headquarters. Two Starbucks' logos, one adapted to depict the film's 'villainous Dr Evil'; intended to be read by viewers as a spoof of Bond villain Blofeld.

With this form of blatant placement having the viewer being 'in on the joke' acts as an inoculation against complaint or viewer rejection. Olson (2004: 85) provides another line of argument writing:

The spoofing of product placement while actually placing products in the film Wayne's World is an example of how the film industry stays one-step ahead of the audience. Ironic self-reflexivity and postmodern pastiche such as those found in the film are the latest adaptation of consumer capitalism.

The result with this approach is a high level of exposure for the sponsoring brand which was spontaneously referred to in a positive manner by interviewees in this research.

This example, of a heavily placed and integrated Starbucks brand, could have an inappropriate effect on product placement decision makers. These decision makers may feel that they can imitate such perceived success with a similar placement, but the success would be difficult to emulate due to the film's quirky nature and a potentially fickle audience.

6.10 Placements: consumer recall and consumer rejection.

Gilbert (2003) argues that one of the most important functions of marketing communications is to persuade, in order to achieve this goal though the message first needs to be processed by the consumer (Doole, Lancaster and Lowe, 2005). From this research the main cautionary note to make regarding product placement is that many of the placements do appear to pass viewers unnoticed. Even when the placement is consciously noticed Brennan et al, (2004: 2) state that audiences "only accept it to a certain extent"; this was also a common reaction found among the viewers involved with this PhD research. Russell (2002: 326) comments that while some placements were indeed noticed in her research, incongruent ones draw a damaging audience reaction:

Incongruent placements were found to adversely affect brand attitudes because such placements appear to be unnatural and are therefore discounted.

Thus Russell (2002: 326) allies with the next observation, namely:

In particular, this study showed that conditions that maximized memory did not necessarily maximize persuasion.

More evidence here to dismiss the widely quoted myth that all publicity is good publicity (Stauber and Rampton, 1995). From the finding in this study Russell's point is substantiated as the level of persuasion appears to be minimal. Percy (2006: 114) also sounds a note of caution:

High recall rates are not necessarily a reliable indicator of purchase intention. The difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of product placement might therefore invite questions as to the purpose of the practice.

These comments resonant with what has been found in this study, not least with the respondent who denied he would be influenced by placements but had spent two years saving for a 'James Bond Rolex watch', that model being in particular a signifier of Bond's status. Getting products noticed and, moreover, noticed in a positive manner, is not an easy goal to achieve and may well not result in a sale or other positive outcome for the brand. Further to this there is also the risk that a product is portrayed in a negative or poorly judged way and this in itself is enough to damage or undermine the brand and its image; as here with the Prius used in *Little Fockers* (RF5), *The Other Guys* (RF6) and *The Town* (RF9), or the Fiat 500 in *Spectre* (RF11). This is also seen with Voss Water in *Grown Ups* (RF7), all of which attracted negative comments in this research. As one stage two participant observed:

It would annoy me if the product placement interrupts the narrative of the artistic endeavour. You don't want it to be too blatant. I think blatant product placement is a turn off, might put me off a brand, or the actor, or the film.

Given the strong sense of identity that many individuals have with 'celebrity-actors', the 'parasocial relationship' (Rojek 2001), which results in a 'strong imaginary relationship' from the consumer with the celebrity to the extent in which the individual feels that they actually know the actor in question can be an issue. Any negative impact from a product placement may be all the stronger and more damaging if it comes from a dominant or influential celebrity source: almost as if it were a 'de-promotion' or a 'reverse recommendation' from a 'celebrity-actor' with whom the consumer

feels a bond with. This would amount to a negative celebrity brand association; a variation with the Prius is shown next.

In this PhD the notable examples of this are with actor Mark Wahlberg being (particularly) rude and contemptuous about the Prius in *The Other Guys* (RF6), and Owen Wilson also being dismissive about the Prius in *Little Fockers* (RF5) while in turn promoting an alternative and rival product (Tesla). In *Little Fockers* Owen Wilson's character describes the Toyota Prius as 'yesterday's technology', hardly a ringing brand endorsement. As noted above Mark Wahlberg's character in *The Other Guys* (RF6) is far ruder about the Prius, again perhaps reinforcing a negative image. The Prius was blatantly used in these research films as semiotic representations of the owners' characters. These are other pitfalls to avoid with product placement beyond just the problematic one of being noticed in the first instance, in addition of course to the audience's dislike of incongruous or blatant placements.

6.11 Consumers and the issues of product recall, placement believability and brand preference persuasion.

Recall and persuasion are important for success of placements, but they do not always evenly combine. The reasons for the separation between recall and persuasion are not surprising when considered with comments from the likes of DeLorme and Reid (1999). DeLorme and Reid (1999: 78) write that the typical response to incongruous placements was made, namely that:

Moviegoers in studies disliked excessive or inappropriate brand props that clashed with their expectations of movie scenery. The general opinion was such "shameless plugs" detracted from movie realism, were associated with "promotion intent," and cheapened movies and the movie going experience.

The viewer's opinion on *Wayne's World* and the ability of reconciling this contradiction was not given. DeLorme and Reid (2002: 78) continue this theme stating that the strength of feeling was strong with some interviewees:

Moviegoers did not like "being sold" and some descriptors were "tacky," "lame," and "insulting".

Notably the same negative vocabulary was employed by some interviewees in this research about these issues. Several interviewees in this research commented similarly with the issue of manipulation, one representative remark from the second research stage summarises this sentiment:

Product placement cheapens the film. I take exception to product placement when it's blatant, I don't like it.

Within this research *Wayne's World* was given as an example of how product placement was regarded by consumers as acceptable and even fun, an example that matched the context of the film and the nature of the placement. Two research stage three interviewees echoed earlier comments in defence of product placement with the comments:

I think quite importantly it makes the film more realistic.

With this film being based on a true story you don't want them to be making up names of banks to use because it devalues it.

Another research stage two research participant balanced this example with his observations on the popular film, regarded by some interviewees and authors as a 'cult classic' (Brooker, 2006), *Blade Runner* (1982). The film though drew criticism from one second stage interviewee for the style of the placement for Coca Cola;

In Blade Runner the placement for Coke is really jarring. Harrison Ford drives past a giant red and white sign for Coke. The sign flashes with the message 'Enjoy' and 'Coca Cola'. At least in The Invention of Lying it is done with humour. Maybe the audiences in the 80s were less aware? It's so blatant and in-your-face. Then, just in case you missed it the first time, Harrison Ford drives back past the same giant sign. As much of the film is set in a gloomy back-drop the fully lit advert stands out there even more. It's jolting and it's crass.

An alternative is the 'tongue-in-cheek' approach of allowing viewers in on the product placement joke is repeated in *The Invention of Lying* (Gervais/Robinson, 2009) with the blatant, mocking inclusion of brands such as Coke.

Picture Illustration 6.9. **Coke and *Blade Runner* (1982),
Pepsi, Coke and *The Invention of Lying* (2009).**



Above, screenshots from *Blade Runner* (1982).



It's Very Famous

Screenshots from *The Invention of Lying* (2009). Some interviewees here stated that they felt as if they were 'in on the joke'.

The moviegoers that DeLorme and Reid interviewed, qualified their opinions further by stating that the films in which they felt placement had been 'shoe-horned' in with no attempt to blend or integrate the brand's appearance treated the audience with contempt, as if they the viewers were 'ignorant' (DeLorme and Reid, 2002); this is a theme that recurs with some of the interviewees interviewed here. In this research interviewees stated similar views with some making a case for the inclusion of product placements for aiding believability, congruousness and signposts to define characters. Comments from the second stage interviewees in this research included this aesthetic judgment:

We live in a branded world, just brands everywhere – in here [her office] there are brands [twenty were counted in about thirty seconds]. Some products are so ingrained in our lives, just part of our lives so we expect to see them and maybe don't notice them.

You expect to see the world you recognise, things you know, and this includes familiar things and brand names in the scenes.

Other participants added:

In a café scene you'd expect them to have brands for realism. I'd rather see a brand than a logo covered in tape or something like they do in the soaps. I like to see real things.

If you've watched the film and noticed the product placement, then you haven't watched the film.

In the last remark they are claiming that if you have viewed a movie and come away with a list of placements that you have noticed, then you have not properly watched and enjoyed the film.

It was found that not all interviewees share this same opinion on product placement which brings challenges to anyone to use a film as a vehicle to communicate to consumers; the question of the precise nature and context of the placement and of the viewer receptiveness is a key issue. It may, however, be the case that for placements this can only be carried out retrospectively when the film is completed, and the placement already embedded. While a pair of Levi's jeans may fit one film, in the case of *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, perfectly the placement would easily be undermined if the prop, a narrative device, was referred to excessively or the brand name over used making the placement blatant, without any of the humour employed by say *Austin Powers* or *Wayne's World*. This would result in audience rejection.

The theme of audience rejection was a key focus of research stage three with questions directly addressing this issue. With the film *Spectre* (RF11), the Rome car chase sequence drew negative comment for the inclusion of the Fiat 500 being driven by an elderly man as alternatively:

It definitely had a negative effect, and it almost made it Johnny English-like.

They made it way too obvious.

*I thought that was a negative advertising campaign by Fiat.
They're just running down Fiat.
It was an old person's car.*

In addition to the negative comments made at the expense of the product and the film, the latter also appears to miss the key target market for the brand. The most significant target segment for the Fiat 500 is a younger, trendy, urban professional looking for a sub-compact car. Having it driven in the scene by an elderly male in a placement that was at odds with the scene could not be the result that was wished for. With *The Big Short* (RF12), a similarly negative response was gained from research stage three respondents with the Red Bull placement. The comments here included:

The Red Bull one kind of made me laugh because... I don't know how to put this in words. Red Bull, I feel like people like, at least in my mind, who drink Red Bull are like the most exhausted, unhappy people. Like, if you've got to drink a Red Bull to keep you going, you're probably mentally, physically and emotionally exhausted.

The Red Bull thing, I guess that annoyed me. Felt it wasn't necessary. The one I noticed most was Red Bull which was placed near the camera. The camera seemed to linger on that a little bit.

The placement here seemed to lurch between being seen in a blatant manner, and being regarded as a signifier of 'exhausted, unhappy' people who had worked in a corrupt environment and had just lost their jobs as a result of it. The style and delivery of this placement would have to be questioned by Red Bull marketing people before more placements were commissioned. The aligning of brands with celebrities, and in this case with actors and characters, will continue to reinforce the link and is perhaps the strongest reason for the continuation of the practice of product placement. This relationship of a brand with celebrity associations can be especially observed with Harley Davidson.

6.12 The demand for 'happy-endification', and the importance of brand values.

The importance of films and their associations are central to the study of the possible impact on consumers of product placements, not least with the image of brands with their associated brand values. This point is highlighted by Nappolini and Hackley (2008: 6), they write:

The fundamental argument is that the meaning of the brand is inseparable from the experience of the film. So that at the simplest emotional level, audiences who positively evaluate a film as being 'happy' will be more optimistic in their outlook towards other things, including the brands that appeared within the film.

This may well push marketers who are inclined to use product placement as a marketing tool towards films with a happy ending described by Rohrer (2009) as "happy-endingification" - a process going back to the 1930s to distract audiences from economic depression and to attract them into the cinemas of the day as a simple form of escapism (Hall, 2014). This also appears to draw on film as a sign function (see Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis, 2005: 5) for brands and linking the semiotics of the two in the minds of the consumer. This does support Maltby's (2004) statement that audiences crave film fare that is 'predictable, ready-made, pre-digested and easy to consume', the plus side for marketers might be that predictable storylines are easier for viewers to follow and therefore placements become more noticeable. Maltby here echoes Adorno (1994) who comments on the standardisation of popular film, as part of the (low) culture industry, to provide a distracting and easy pleasure for the masses. From this fieldwork interviewees who watched *The Social Network* (RF10), commented on how they found the pace of the film and speed of dialogue demanding and reported a low rate of product recall, this was despite the high number of placements featured. Research stage three interviewees had similar comments, but this time related to the speed of the editing and the fast pace of some of the action scenes in *Spectre* (RF11).

Many parties with commercial interests wish to provide film consumers with happy endings. From an artistic perspective a source of support for 'happy endings' comes from director Joe Wright (*The Observer*, 11 September 2005) who stated:

Pride and Prejudice [2005] is my first film with a happy ending. Before, I naïvely thought they were a cop-out, but now I've come to believe that happy endings and wish fulfilment are an incredibly important part of our cultural life.

Here then the key theme with attitudes towards films, as with brands and stars, is that of emotion; attempting to understand audiences and their

attitudes and likely emotional responses in order to perhaps predict and shape their behaviour is an ultimate goal, albeit a rather ambitious one, for marketers and film makers alike. It should not be overlooked that a film is also a product that also needs consumers and sales.

A final point for promoters is the misattribution of actors with brands. This would no doubt cause concern for marketers as too would actors being associated with generic products as opposed to the wrong product as with Uma Thurman above, or just with a general 'something' or as 'just some' car/perfume/coffee as with many interviewees here. In line with these participants who had watched *Letters to Juliet* (RF3) in stage two of the research made the observations on the placed Alfa Romeo car:

Was the car a Volvo?

Some Italian car.

Some car, don't know which one.

Brand values will not be improved with promotions that fail to be recognised, this will strengthen the argument for in-store marketing and merchandising to remind potential customers at the point of purchase about the connection between the actor, the film and the brand/product (Foxall et al, 1998): this is assuming sales *are* the objectives rather than, say, brand or product familiarity. The in-store promotions featuring James Bond and Heineken are typical examples of this practice.

For film placements to be effective, a delicate balance is required for success. A major factor alongside the level of recognition for aiding the process of promotion within films (and indeed with any placement) rests on the receptiveness of the viewer. The method of placement is a key consideration for recall, as is individual viewer differences; as Bressoud, Lehu and Russell (2008: 2) state that:

There are several variables that can affect prominence and that are therefore expected to benefit recall.

The key for promoters, as with all marketing campaigns, is having the right mix of variables to make the venture worthwhile in terms of meeting

promotional objectives (Hooley et al, 2007). The research here showed that placements with a verbal and a prominent visual placement worked better when it came to recall and receptiveness of the placement itself, this may not result in additional purchases though. The Prius 'dialogue only' placement in *The Town* (RF9) is an example of how a verbal placement can have an impact on the audience in terms of recall at least. With the third research stage the question of verbal namechecking of brands was pursued further to further understand this theme raised from earlier fieldwork. It would appear from the following interviewee comments that this method of placement has an impact on the viewer and has a high degree of noticeability. Stage three interviewees said:

Goldman Sachs is named checked, quite a few times they say Goldman Sachs.

He said it was a Rolls Royce, a 1948 Rolls Royce.

Silver Wraith. The fact that he says it makes it obvious.

Oh yes. The Rolls Royce.

The girl on the train when they were ordering drinks and she asked for a 'Dirty Martini'.

In one of the scenes the girl orders a Martini and she says the name of the brand there.

That is the James Bond signature drink. Of course, they're going to go for a Martini, shaken not stirred.

The last quote was followed with the additional comment:

Martini has managed to give itself a kind of brand because its association with the James Bond thing.

Such is the strong link between the film character and the brand, and that the line is used in so many of the Bond franchise films as a signature remark in the actor's dialogue that it has become part of the nation's vocabulary. Martini and Aston Martin have become synonymous with Bond, and both act as signifiers for the other. This verbal approach did not work so well for other brands included in this research such as the Chevrolet Avalanche, Tiffany or Duane Reade perhaps due to their lack of familiarity with the audience or other variables and elements concerning the placement context being different, even if only by small margins. As the UK based interviewees were not familiar with, for example, the Chevrolet Avalanche

as a brand, this left them unable to read the logo or follow this out-of-context reference.

Hackley (2003: 11) builds on this to argue that:

The wisdom among Hollywood agents handling brand links in movies is that the portrayal of the brand must tell a story because simply showing the product does not offer a sufficiently powerful narrative context to enhance the brand identity.

This may though, apart from any other issues such as believability or 'naturalness', immediately bring points of difficulty or conflict with the film makers whose primary role is to make a film and not an advertisement.

As Ogilvy (2004: 98) states:

A good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself.

A well-placed product would need to have the capacity to do just this.

6.13 Conclusion.

This chapter was divided into two parts in order to illustrate the breadth of issues related to the research in this study, with both parts reflecting the attitudes and opinions of the research participants in relation to product placement as a form of marketing communication. Three key brands were also reviewed in relation to the practice of product placement, namely Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel's and Apple – American brands but available globally.

Evidence from the data gathered in this research suggests that research participants possess multi-layered identities and attitudes, being able to hold seemingly contradictory positions with their attitudes and behaviours. This is shown most clearly from this research with the participant (mentioned above) who denied films, actors or placements affected him, but spent two years saving for a 'James Bond Rolex watch'. Stock (2004), Pringle (2004) and others, argue that audiences will 'mimic' celebrity-actors in what to wear, how to behave, and what to name their children (Maltby, 2003). A significant challenge of assessing the impact of

product placements on consumers is the consideration of all the possible variables. The models selected were useful for this assessment role with the evaluation of influences upon the consumers such as brand values and the influence of screen characters/icons.

The participant led appraisal of screen characters, most notably that of the iconic James Bond, and the three brands of Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel's and Apple, was useful in showing the degree of influence screen characters and high-profile brands can have, and how a campaign of multiple placements over a long period of time can also be used to cement the image and awareness of a brand in the mind of the consumer. These points rest on the consumer noticing the brands and then interpreting them with the use, perhaps subconsciously, of the brand semiotics and meanings. A brand that isn't read in a positive manner is unlikely to attain sales, the ultimate purpose of any such marketing promotion.

The findings from the research participants have confirmed some established theories, while contradicting others. Research participants also contradicted each other, and at times even contradicted themselves. The profile of what makes a brand or product placement successful in a film remains unclear with research participants giving a list of conditions and caveats as to what is acceptable and what works for them; and what does not. The research conclusions are discussed next.

Chapter Seven

Thesis Conclusion.

Introduction.

In this thesis conclusion I will review the implications of the research findings. Firstly, the research methodology is profiled with a rationale of how central it was to forming and shaping the research process, and ultimately the findings. Secondly, the research findings themselves are presented with observations on the importance and merits of each. Thirdly, there are suggestions for potential areas of future research. In essence, this is a study of product placement as a marketing communication tool within films, and most importantly the participants/consumers' responses to it.

7.1 Research methods: a developmental methodology.

The research methods employed in this PhD enabled the participants' voice to be the major focus of this study. The research methodology and research techniques were vital to this research and enabled rich data to be collected, and for the interviewees' voice to be heard. At different stages the research process was developmental in the way that it adapted to the needs of the participants and for accommodating their responses. This thesis has sought to give priority to research participants to gather their

opinions on the use of product placement, the use of celebrity-actors, icons and brand representatives; and the process of brands and brand associations – for example with long running placement brands Harley Davidson, Apple and Jack Daniel's. The participants' attitudes towards the key themes of this research are mixed; this informs the findings here. The research found that participants demonstrated inconsistent, contradictory and multi-layered attitudes.

Stage one of the research process was to pursue a quantitative approach which was based primarily on product placement recall from a given film, *Quantum of Solace* (2008). With stage two of the research process this stage one approach was superseded by a more responsive and interactive qualitative approach to gather data. This change was not anticipated, but with hindsight considered to be a positive adjustment and a more appropriate research method. Stage three of the research process, directly focused on issues raised by stage two with participants being primed about what the researcher was interested in before viewing as to the chosen film what was being researched. This was undertaken in order to obtain a considered response from the participants to elicit a deeper level of conscious thought from them. As a research method this worked well. While some interviewees would claim that product placements would not influence them, they would then proceed to give examples of how it *had* influenced them, on occasion with products that they had purchased as a direct result of seeing a product placement. Using a grounded theory approach with the qualitative interviewing, the researcher's positionality was central to the process and the open exchange. The researcher's biographical experience and knowledge of films enabled rapport to be quickly established with participants (see Merrill and West, 2009). It was found that during each interview encounter that participants would want to talk about films they had enjoyed, or not enjoyed. They wanted to discuss favourite actors, directors and film genres, and on occasions about film making technique. The latter included many examples, such as Hitchcock's editing of *Rope* (1948) and the research participant's opinion on the use of building suspense that 'all these years later, it is still an exemplar of how films should be made'. The researcher found that his own interest in, and

knowledge of film, allowed him to be regarded as a 'film insider' and fellow film enthusiast by participants, enabling him to build an interview rapport that yielded research data. The researcher was also aware of how his own film interest would influence his research stance (see Savin-Baden and Major (2013)); the researcher's stance was regarded as an asset to the research process, not least with encouraging the participants to voice their thoughts.

In total 86 respondents were involved in this research, this sample enabled themes to emerge as consumers of products and of films alike, not least as a third stage of research was employed to directly discuss issues that were raised by earlier respondents. Within the literature, and throughout the fieldwork for this PhD, it was found that consumers can be inconsistent and contradictory; on one hand they dismiss and denigrate the practice of product placement while on the other hand saying that they at times like it and even expect it. For the latter, participants insist that it is required for purposes of realism and credibility, and that unbranded or invented brands (see *Little Fockers* (RF5), *The Other Guys* (RF6) and *The Social Network* (RF10)) are considered phoney and undermine the film's credibility. With *Little Fockers*, and *The Other Guys* this response was unexpected given that both films are both comedies and may therefore not be expected to follow demands of realism such as *The Social Network* which is based on a true story. Furthermore, this research data found that placing a product out of context, or too often, will result in consumer hostility, potentially with damage to the brand, the actor involved or to the film itself. The research data also shows that participants display a strong degree of commitment towards their film viewing and took these matters seriously.

Participant opinion was split as to whether they considered the practice of product placement as 'manipulative', 'degrading', 'unethical' or 'harmful' to viewers, although they thought 'weaker minded' viewers (or children) might be unduly influenced. In a few cases, this viewpoint was reinforced by some interviewees considering that the overt/obvious style of the placement was patronising. This gave a negative association with the

product that was being promoted and degraded the enjoyment of the film. The findings are listed next and are discussed in the following sections.

7.1. A Summary of the Research Findings.

- Finding 1** Products placed with celebrity-actors, appear to make a greater impact on viewers than placements with lesser known actors.
- Finding 2** Viewers find placements of what they already own as reassuring.
- Finding 3** Most viewers like brand placements as they say that it reflects 'real life' for them.
- Finding 4** Phoney or fake brands are rejected by viewers for not portraying 'real life'.
- Finding 5** Unfamiliar brands, products and locations are more likely to be ignored by viewers.
- Finding 6** With some placements, viewers accept blatant placements if they are executed in an obvious manner to make them feel that they are a part of a knowing in-joke.
- Finding 7** Products used as set dressing have low participant recall rates.
- Finding 8** For the greatest level of effect on viewers brands and /or products need to be mentioned by name in the dialogue.
- Finding 9** Products placed, or brands mentioned, during fast paced editing or fast paced dialogue will often be missed by viewers.
- Finding 10** Excessive placement of a product or brand can cause a negative and even a cynical response from viewers.
- Finding 11** Repeat exposure can assist recall.
- Finding 12** To reinforce impact products should be used as a narrative device.
- Finding 13** A product used directly in shot, such as a clearly visible car, smartphone, hotel or airline brand, can assist with viewer recall rates.
- Finding 14** A popular film does not mean a product placement within that film will also prove popular.

7.2 Assessing the research findings.

In this first section the importance of celebrity-actors to the participants is analysed along with how products are placed within films and how this can affect film consumers. This research embarked on exploring three specific research issues of celebrity status, marketing communications and product placement. Critically assessing these three issues has met with varying degrees of success, the question of celebrity-

actor status and popularity is certainly a key issue, not only for the viewer but also for filmmakers and marketers. It can be seen with the participant-generated data that if the actor's status is not a draw for the viewers then it is unlikely that those actors will appeal to any of the film's stakeholders. These stakeholders will include those who pay for product placements that help to finance production. This research illustrates how celebrity-actors are a major draw for film audiences. Celebrity-actors are important for the marketers wanting to maximise the link with celebrity-brand associations, and there is evidence from the research here that these associations reassure consumers with their own brand choices. However, once an audience has been attracted to a film, the pairing of products with celebrity-actors is problematic and that it does not guarantee success for brand awareness, brand preference or sales. With international audiences there is also the additional element of those charged with the promotion of marketing communications having a working understanding of how the semiotics, the interpretation of film and placed products signs and symbols, will be read by these global viewers/consumers.

7.3 Participant-Centred Research, hearing the participants' voice.

This research has been driven and shaped by the participants' voice. The chief joy of this research was the constant surprises that participants supplied with their opinions, their likes and their dislikes. The mercurial nature and the unpredictability of these voices produced a wealth of data and also a wealth of contradictions. For example, while some participants stated that celebrity actors were a draw to watch any given film, they were reluctant to admit celebrity-actors had any influence on them, including when it came to brand or product values and awareness. This included the participant who, despite saving for two years to buy a watch identical to one worn by Pierce Brosnan as James Bond, refused to admit that he was influenced by the actor or the film character (Finding 1). Other participants though were more willing to admit a film influence such as those participants who stated they had purchased for example cosmetics, hair dye, adopted language and phrases used by actors in films and one

interviewee who named a child after their favourite actor¹¹. It was notable too that some participants found it reassuring to see products they owned used in film (Finding 2) to overcome any lingering cognitive dissonance.

The issues raised from the participants in response to the practice of product placement found that many participants like, and even insisted, that product placements appear in films. The central reason given for this was that branded products, especially familiar ones, give scenes realism, plausibility and credibility (Finding 3). The participants' view against 'phoney or generic' products was that they undermine the credibility of a scene, which caused the participants a degree of cognitive dissonance because of the lack of realism – this included films where a high level of suspended disbelief was required such as with fantasy or science fiction genres. One interviewee commented that seeing a Vaio (Sony) laptop like hers in a James Bond film was conformational (Finding 4). The voice here was not universal. The placing of genuine but unfamiliar brands demonstrates this and reaction to the Dunkin' Donuts placement is a good example. Despite having over 12,000 outlets worldwide (including in the UK) the brand was unfamiliar to the participants who viewed the research film *The Town* (RF9), Dunkin' Donuts was ignored by these viewers as being 'phoney'. Meanwhile a fictitious brand that was noticed in the research film *The Social Network* (RF10), was rejected for undermining the authenticity of the scene (Finding 5).

Product placement can be a method to make brands familiar to an audience, while reinforcing it to others who already know it. This point also relates to familiar brands that are unrecalled. In *The Switch* (RF2), one scene is set in an Apple store. On questioning, the Apple brand was familiar to all the research participants; with many stating that they possessed Apple products. Despite this scene being located in the clearly branded store and one-character handling Apple products, and the brand name used in dialogue, the placement still did not register with the participants. This lack of free recall, but high prompted recall rates, suggests that as a familiar

¹¹ Liam, after Liam Neeson.

brand, viewers see it but without it making a distinct impact on them; what de Botton (2005) terms 'seeing but not noticing'. It is possible that this product placement reinforces the brand, which viewers regard as being a normal part of the world. One participant commented '*it's almost more glaring*' when filmmakers do not use Apple products.

Rejection of product placement by participants was given on what they regarded as blatant instances, although this point held contradictions. Product placements that consumers saw as being 'natural' were supported, and indeed encouraged by participants, for 'reflecting the real world'. An example of this was, perhaps unsurprisingly, James Bond driving a placed Aston Martin in research film *Spectre*. This was regarded by the research stage three participants as the type of car he would drive and was therefore in keeping with the character *and* believable. Not every placement in *Spectre* was seen so positively by all participants though. The placements participants considered as blatant drew strong criticism, with *Spectre* this included a clumsily placed Fiat 500 car which was regarded as excessive and obvious (Finding 10). In *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) Bond's Omega watch was rejected by viewers, participants voiced dismissive comments for both. From the research films used in this study, other examples of placement rejection by participants were given in *Grown Ups* (RF7), *The Town* (RF9), *Spectre* (RF11) and *The Big Short* (RF12). With *The Town* verbal placements for the television show *C.S.I.* were regarded as unacceptable due to a high number of name-checks in a short run of dialogue.

Another blatant product placement saw Kevin James sporting a KFC 'meal bucket' modified as a hat, on an island in a lake in the wilderness, this drew derision from participants (p170). The idea that this had been 'shoe-horned' into the film to meet a placement contractual obligation was regarded as obvious to the participants who viewed it (Finding 6). With *The Big Short* similar accusations were made for the Red Bull placements. Here though lies a contradiction. Several participants mentioned blatant placements that they consider acceptable, most prominent among them was the often-cited actor Mike Myers in *Wayne's World* (1992) and Pizza Hut, shown on p157. Film viewer and placement theory would suggest this

approach should not work, but in this case, it does (Finding 6). Participants voiced the opinion that this pizza placement felt as though they were being included in the joke. This made it successful, although a particularly hard approach and style for other placements to replicate. This point underlines two factors. Firstly, that there is more than one method to create an impactful product placement with viewers, and secondly that audiences are difficult to correctly predict; echoing Goldman's (1996) observation that no one in Hollywood knows for certain what is going to work, and what will not.

7.4 Which product placement method is most effective?

A central research issue within this research, for filmmakers, marketers and audiences, is which product placement method is most effective? Previous research suggests that the mere inclusion as set dressing will be effective at promoting a product or a brand (Russell, 2002). Evidence to support this was not found here (Finding 7). Examples of how respondents often could not recall brands and products they were familiar with found in this research, they could rarely recall unfamiliar brands. Respondents also gave negative response for 'phoney' brands, which in this research included unfamiliar but genuine brands.

There are though placement examples that have made a positive impact on the participants in this research. Products that feature prominently, as narrative devices for example, attracted more attention and better recall rates. Even here though, there are exceptions with many of the research films used. With celebrity-actor Jason Statham in *The Mechanic* (RF8), several prominently featured products failed to produce positive recall rates. Having a brand name checked in dialogue was an improvement on both previous methods (Finding 8). This had an impact on audiences even when the product was not in shot, it also had a better response from the participants than named and seen products that were unfamiliar – such as the Chevrolet Avalanche vehicle used in the research with *The Town* (RF9). For simple name checking the television show 'C.S.I.', 'Tiffany' jewellery and 'Prius' also did well on participant recall from *The Town*. This is not all good news though for the marketers. With Prius

in three research films used here, participants had a good recall rate but regarded the product as undesirable due to the car's negative portrayal. Only one participant liked the Prius placement, this was the one who already owned the vehicle and took the placement as affirmation of his purchase. The fast dialogue of *The Social Network* reduced the impact of placements (Finding 9).

The combination of techniques that appear to influence the audiences most effectively *and* positively was the combination of the viewers seeing the product as a narrative device, and the product being name checked. An example of this came from *Quantum of Solace* (RF1) when Bond is asked about his watch of choice by the female lead. Many respondents recalled the brand, Omega. Bond is also shown wearing the watch. In the Bond film, *Spectre* (RF11), his Omega watch is also name checked, shown in shot and acts as a narrative device (Finding 12). Placement recall from across the research was strong for this approach.

7.5 Contribution to the field of product placement research.

This thesis is located in the context of marketing, film studies and cultural studies. The research was undertaken with the intention to contribute to the discourse on audience responses to product placements in mainstream films. The flexibility afforded by the grounded method approach gave this researcher the ability to use the qualitatively underpinned semi-structured interview technique to gather data from the participants. This resulted in a research method that addressed research questions via the participants' collective voice in respect to issues of celebrity, marketing communications and product placement. A voice that has been observed to evolve, be surprising and be contradictory. This was seen quite notably with participants' opinions on celebrity actors, who while they used them as a major influencer on which film/s to watch, often denied that they had any influence on them with product placement impact, celebrity inspired brand preferences, or their consumption choices although this would include the consumption of film itself.

As a marketing communications tool, product placement is not simply about brand awareness or adding positive brand value, the ultimate goal is sales. With the participants' responses many claimed not to have seen any placed products and more stated placements had no effect on them personally; although the question of any subconscious impact remains an issue. Illustrating this point in the literature review, and directly from this research, consumers noticing a placed product and recalling it, is not in itself an adequate goal from a marketing standpoint. There are various examples given from the research films with cars placed in *Little Fockers* (RF5), *The Other Guys* (RF6), *The Town* (RF9), *Spectre* (RF11) and *The Big Short* (RF12) where brands *have* been noticed - but in a negative manner. To illustrate this problem with the Toyota Prius and Fiat 500 examples from this research; this is at best ambiguous, and at worst undesirable and damaging. This research found that having the product only in shot as set dressing lessens the impact that a placement will have upon the viewer (Finding 9). The diminishing impact this approach to product placement has, was even more noticeable when the brand or logo was obscured, or partly obscured in shot (Alfa Romeo in *Letters to Juliet* (RF3)), or the editing pace was high (*The Social Network* (RF7), *Spectre* (RF11) Finding 10), the set too busy (Sony Ericsson in *Quantum of Solace* (RF1)), the unfamiliar brand (Dunkin' Donuts in *The Town* (RF9)), the brand too familiar (Apple in *The Switch* (RF2)), or a complicated plot (*The Big Short*, see below).

The Prius example raises several issues. In the films featured in this research the cars were used to help define the characters who drove them, namely, an incompetent father figure (Ben Stiller in *Little Fockers* (RF5)), an ineffectual police officer (Will Ferrell in *The Other Guys* (RF6)) and a yuppie* bank worker (Rebecca Hall in *The Town* (RF9)). (*As termed by the participants who used it pejoratively for the character and the car). In three of the research films, *The Town*, *The Other Guys* and *Little Fockers*, the Prius was harshly criticised verbally in-film with an exchange between lead characters. With *Little Fockers* featuring the Prius, the product's associated character was portrayed as hapless and ineffectual, more so when compared to his dynamic, successful rival (Owen Wilson) with the newer, and stated to be superior electric/hybrid Tesla vehicle technology.

The character dynamic reflects themes and issues from the previous two films in this franchise and reminds viewers of the negative connotations between these leading characters and, by default, the products with which they are associated. The pejorative terms used in the film dialogue resonated with the participants across this research, and while they had noticed the brand, the overall impact due to the negative presentational style was unfavourable. This illustrates that participants merely noticing placements is of itself insufficient for positive placement outcomes.

7.6 Assessing product placement impact: awareness of consumer contradictions.

As has been shown in this research some participants often voice views on issues such as the impact of product placement, but will change these views without hesitation, or even being consciously aware they are doing so. The PhD findings suggest that attitudes towards actors, product placement, films, directors, marketing communications and brands is complex. This makes assessing viewers' opinions and their attitudes towards placements and marketing promotions challenging to evaluate.

Within this research, the participants reacted negatively towards the placements they considered excessive, clumsy, crude, obvious or even patronising (Finding 10). Examples from this study included in research stage one, Gordon's Gin in *Quantum of Solace* (RF1); in research stage two an overt verbal placement for Tiffany necklaces and CSI (TV show) in *The Town* (RF9), Facebook in *The Social Network* (RF10), for LiceGuard in *The Switch* (RF2); while one research stage three participant cited an inconsistently placed (due to timelines) Hyundai cars in *The Walking Dead* (2010 - to date). Some participants found that repeated product exposure did assist with placements becoming noticed though (Finding 11), with a fine line before they were considered as being obvious and over-exposed. Contrary to the findings in the research here O'Keefe argues that to be successful a subtle placement approach is required, namely to "Leave the point implicit and let receivers figure the conclusion out themselves" (2002:

217). Whereas, the results from this research suggest that this would leave many placements unnoticed and in need of further support, such as from retail marketing activities (as seen with *Spectre* (RF11)).

Other participants across this research voiced the opinion that they regarded placements indifferently thereby questioning the placements' impact and effectiveness, or perhaps the viewers' accuracy in assessing placements' impact upon themselves. The variables with placements are many and at times contradictory, this is reflected with the viewers who themselves can possess an unstable agency. The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model (see page 22) is a good example of this as it highlights the many sources of influence that can affect an individual, and one that relates to the research here not least with some participants as to what (often unknowingly) influences them. While viewers liked to consider themselves as free-willed and independent thinkers, immune from stimuli such as product placements, some participants took the questions as a suggestion that their own integrity might be at stake, other viewers though admitted they were more influenced by it than they initially liked to acknowledge. Recognising audience contradictions is essential for any progress to derive from this research, or from product placement as a marketing communications technique.

Hall's Encoding and Decoding Model (1980) (p19), in conjunction with the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model (1968) (p22), illustrate the difficulty that viewers have in knowing what has influenced them and how it may have influenced them. Judging audiences therefore appears to be unfair and unjustified. Audience duality, as Maltby (2005) termed it their 'fickleness', is a major factor in what makes placement (and film) success difficult to correctly predict. The genre, the edit speed and subject matter are also factors to consider with placement effectiveness. Karniouchina et al, 2011, identify that action sequences and rapid narratives can result in placements being unobserved by viewers. Fast-paced editing was a feature with some research films here. Participants in stage three who watched *The Big Short* (RF12) (2015), exhibited the same reduced level of placement observation, as one viewer commented:

It was such a complicated plot it was difficult to keep up with what was happening let alone notice other details.

Karniouchina et al, (2011: 42), claim that this state of cognitive overload with complex and demanding films can explain the 'lack of success' for placements as they leave viewers 'unable to process secondary information' such as the placements. This research confirms that finding.

7.7 Consumers and the challenge of building brand awareness and brand value.

Evidence was found that participants stated that at times (although as with so much else the statements were often made with caveats and conditions) they like seeing the products they already own being featured, and how this provided a glow of post-purchase reassurance. This is clearly a positive outcome for the brand placement. Other consumers though will be exposed to brands that will influence their awareness as a first step towards potential purchase or to reinforce a brand image, often without viewers realising that this has taken place (Matthes et al, 2007; Brafman and Brafman, 2009; Wiseman, 2010). A few examples of this came to light here. One participant in stage two who watched *The Town* (RF9) noticed the placement for the Boston Red Sox and thought that the featured stadium (Fenway Park) might be a place to visit when holidaying in Boston later that year (Finding 12). Other stage two participants stated that they thought brands such as Dunkin' Donuts and Tesla became familiar because of film exposure, but that they may not be aware of the process by which this occurred. This reinforces the notion of pre-existing influences highlighted in Diagram 6.3 (page 222) with the Film Placement Effects, comments made by Wiseman (2011) and also the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model (page p22) which also proved to be useful with illustrating the range of potential influences on a person as was the case in this research. Russell and Stern's 'Model of Placement Effects' (2006) also finds validation with the participants in this research with some acknowledging the influence that placed products had on them due to the film characters associated with them. Diagram 6.3 (page 222) also reinforces Russel and Stern's model

but more usefully includes non-film potential influences that may trigger recognition with a placement. The latter would include traditional marketing activities and exposure to products while overseas. These factors make the isolation of marketing influence more difficult to evaluate with certainty with so many variables to consider.

In relation to brand awareness and value, many participants in this research have been shown to hold ambiguous and contradictory views of themselves and of the world around them. These participants appear to be more enlightened and media literate, less gullible and complex consumers. They are willing to be 'in' on a joke, as with *Wayne's World* or *Deadpool 2* (Miller, 2018), but offended by a placed product if a subjective, unspecified and constantly moving line was crossed. While Ulrich and Sarasin (1995) cautioned against asking the public anything on account of their unreliability, this PhD research suggests that it would be more useful to regard them as constantly evolving, with constantly developing participants' views and opinions.

Some marketing campaigns will not have short-term sales goals; Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel's and Apple brands are good examples of the use of product placement as part of their long-term image building and brand maintenance. Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel's and Apple have engaged in a longer-term strategic marketing process of appearing in a high number of films over many years, the effect in this research was that participants stated that they expected to see these brands. Some participants even claimed surprise when these brands were not featured in films. The balancing act that these brands have, Harley Davidson being a prime example of this, is remaining a mainstream brand while preserving their image of rebelliousness and 'outsider-ness' (Schembri; 2009).

In terms of brand familiarity, one possible goal for marketers for a high level of 'top of mind awareness' with consumers is Apple, an example from this research of a brand wanting to keep their products firmly in the public eye. Like Harley-Davidson, Apple started their commercial life as a

non-conformist, outsider brand which is an image that they too have managed to maintain despite their massive sales and market dominance (Kahney, 2014). If brand managers are using placement for familiarity and positive reassurance to current and potential purchasers, then on the evidence from this research they would claim success and justification for using product placement as a form of marketing promotion. The 'Attention-Interest-Desire-Action Model' and 'The Hierarchy of Effect Model' (page 193) combine with the 'top of mind awareness' theory to illustrate this, and to underpin the foundation behind why marketers invest time and money into product placements instead of one of the many other marketing communications options.

Here though lies a vital component to answering the research questions, what was the objective of the placement exercise for the marketers? Knowing this will influence the evaluation of the usefulness of the placement. If an instantaneous sales lift is required, then the use of a film product placement would not be the obvious promotional method. This issue is further complicated for the researcher who may question the return on investment of paying for a placement and expecting some measurable result, they will often not be able to ascertain commercially sensitive information required. Reports of huge lifts in immediate sales following a placement are the exception. The examples of the success that Reese's Pieces enjoyed following the placement in *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) and Ray-Ban sunglasses with *Top Gun* (1986) have been overstated (Galician, 2004) by those with an interest in promoting this marketing communications technique. With reinforced confidence with these and similar but exceptional successes, marketers may be allowing themselves to be seduced by the glamour of 'movie-making' and the kudos of being involved with the production of a Hollywood film.

7.8 The power of a name-check; the attractiveness of film placement and fragmenting audiences.

A key point in this research is that commercial films are also products and need consumers to be successful in terms of cinema and DVD sales,

and the downloads/streaming numbers. This simple point is vital for all those with a financial stake. To achieve brand exposure for a product placed in a film, that film needs to attract an audience. Ideally, the audience would be large and match the same market segment as that of the brand/product. The product placement technique is the critical factor with this marketing practice. Evidence from this research shows how easy it is for consumers to miss placements, at least consciously. Even placements that are narrative devices can remain unnoticed by the viewer. The method that appears to elicit most response is for those products that receive a verbal mention, especially when combined with a high-profile visual exposure (Finding 13). With the stage three research undertaken with *The Big Short* (RF11) and *Spectre* (RF12) participants were asked before viewing to be aware of name checking of brands to further understand this theme raised from earlier stages of the research. It would appear from the following participant comments that the namechecking in dialogue of brands is a method of product placement that has a noticeable impact on the viewer. Such is the strong link between the film character and the brand, and that the line - 'a martini, shaken not stirred' - is used in so many Bond films as a signature remark that it has become part of the wider vocabulary. To assume this exposure combination is a positive endorsement would be a mistake, the example with the negatively regarded Prius illustrates this.

From this research, participants like positive brand associations and the reassurance of buying familiar brands, not least knowing that other people and celebrity-actors also use the same products, thereby reinforcing the value of positive celebrity-brand associations. As shown in this research, marketers need to be mindful of the alternative ways of managing promotions. The fragmentation of film and media audiences means that marketers will be working with smaller, better defined audiences. This media diversity should ideally result in better targeting and the implementation of more cost-effective promotions. If the marketing spend is tracked and monitored, as many marketing campaigns are (Hatton, 2018), then this should contribute to answering the 'Wanamaker conundrum' (page xiii) of knowing which part of the marketing budget is most effective. This research finds that marketers should take the product

placement option for promoting their products or brands only if they feel confident that it will deliver the outcomes that they are seeking. As product placements and mainstream films are both commercial activities it would be foolish not to have this approach. However, high-profile placements with several verbal mentions may look reassuring to marketers, but not if the placements are conveying a negative message to the audience. Agrawal, Menom and Aaker (2007) claim that high levels of negative emotions will adversely impact the viewers. To maximise the positive impact and exploit the commercial possibilities that placements can yield back-end marketing may be required and, if appropriate, supporting in-store merchandising as seen here with films such as *Spectre* (RF11).

With the potential benefits and appeal from film product placements, it appears certain that marketing in films using product placements, will continue to attract brands. Placements avoid the pitfalls of piracy as they are integral in the entertainment, and by the same association avoid being scrolled past on recorded television. The continuing decline and fragmentation of audiences will enhance product placement attractiveness to marketers if matched audiences can be found for both film and television output. What will continue to come under review is which implementation method used for product placements. The impact that these placements have on consumers with the high number of variables such as placement method used, film popularity, actor popularity, character popularity and back-end marketing activities. It does appear though that for maximum impact a brand should be in shot, used as a narrative device and, most importantly, positively name checked in dialogue.

A final comment should be made about the interdisciplinary nature of this research. The author would, on reflection, advise any potential researcher to follow two simple rules. Firstly, have a clear and tightly focused question to research. Secondly, try to limit yourself to one, or a maximum of two disciplinary areas. If the latter proves impracticable, then be confident that the research topic will absorb and fascinate you. Thankfully the latter was the case here. What was originally intended to be a marketing communications thesis quickly spilt into other disciplines,

rightfully too as this reflects not only the discipline of marketing, but also of course themes of cultural studies and film studies. To attempt this research without this wider encompassing approach would have left the research deficient and incomplete.

7.9 Possible Future Research.

This research was dedicated to the investigation of product placement within mainstream films, with a focus on celebrity. The results here found that male actors appeared more popular than their female colleagues, this could reflect institutional sexism, marketing industry bias or viewer bias that merits further investigation. For marketers the use of film genre to segment a target audience may hold commercial advantages and justify further research. Table 5.2 (page 156), give some indication, but not enough for any strong claims, for the efficacy of using one film genre over another. The method and style of placement appear to be the most important variables with viewer impact. How a placement is implemented and whether the product is associated to a high or low credibility source, and the source attractiveness of a featured actor warrants further study. A film that has a negative theme or ending, could have a negative impact on the viewers and merits research.

The twin concepts of misattribution and false recall are issues that also warrant future research. Clearly, a marketer would not wish to find that their product had not made an impact from a placement deal, or worse that a consumer had recalled a rival product instead. A point similarly worthy of consideration is that of differences with how and where films are consumed. Several interviewees made comments concerning this during the research that they watch films via laptops, tablets and smartphones, often while travelling. The involvement and engagement of watching a film on a screen measuring seven inches across, or less in some cases, may have an impact on how films are internalised, and by default on how product placements impact the consumer. In consideration of this, and the growing popularity of downloaded/streamed content, how films are viewed merits future research. The concept of celebrity and their image and brand values

is a central issue for marketers and filmmakers alike. The rise of vloggers and bloggers gives marketers a cheaper, more immediate and a more controllable placement alternative to product placements in films. This too deserves possible future research.

7.10 A Final Observation.

Following the research, the author would advise any marketer contemplating using paid-for product placement in film to be wary and to think again. With so many influences and variables impacting the viewers/consumers, and with no guarantee of film success and a generated audience, this marketing option is fraught with potential pitfalls. In addition to this so many cheaper and more controllable alternatives exist for a better marketing return. The final word concerning the future viability and attractiveness of product placement to those involved in this joint endeavour should be with the many participants in this research who voiced the opinion that:

Films have to imitate life.

This again serves to highlight the contrary nature of audiences. While Maltby (2005) and others discuss audiences' fondness for familiarity and 'pre-digested fare', this overlooks the audience appetite for wish-fulfilment, escapism, new spectacles and the unreality of super-heroes, science fiction and fantasy. Goldman's (1996) observation that even life-long Hollywood insiders cannot often correctly predict film success, and the proposition that 'nobody knows anything' underscores this dilemma; this dilemma is also reflected with some of the inconsistent comments from some participants across this research. Viewers also showed inconsistencies when claimed to be both drawn to celebrity-actors, while stating an indifference towards them and to the products they were associated with. This research shows though that elements for product placement success can be identified, such as the desire for what an audience perceive as realism even in 'unreal' film settings. The contrary nature of audiences though, make audiences want films to imitate life – except when they do not.

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Supporting Materials

The materials listed below relate to points made in the body of the thesis. They are points that while important do not for reasons of style, space or succinctness warrant inclusion above. These materials are of value and help to support or further explain, illuminate and/or contextualise points made elsewhere.

S.M.1. A Sample of Previous Product Placement Research.

Research Themes and Focus	Author/s	Title	Research Summary
Viewer's attitudes regarding product placements	Gupta and Gould (1997).	Consumers' perceptions and acceptability of product placements	The study's findings showed that, overall, participants had positive attitudes toward product placements, but placements of ethically-charged products such as alcohol, cigarettes and guns were perceived as less acceptable than other products. In particular, participants who were frequently watching movies found ethically-charged product placements more acceptable than others. Those who valued perceived realism, tended to be more favourable toward the acceptability of product placements in general.
	D'Astous and Senguin (1999).	Examination of the impact of different strategies of product placement in television programs on consumer reactions.	The results of the study indicated that product placement effects depend on the type of television program. Negative evaluations of placements occurred for miniseries/dramas and for implicit placements in quiz/variety shows and information/services magazines. Implicit placements had more negative evaluations than any other type. Strong sponsor-program congruity led to better evaluative and ethical reactions for all programs except for miniseries/dramas. Moreover, a positive image of the sponsor was not found to result in better reactions to placements.

	Schmoll, Hafer, Hilt, and Reilly (2006).	Baby Boomers' attitudes toward placements in multiple media.	The findings revealed a generally favourable attitude toward product placement in all formats (movies, television, music videos, video games, internet), regardless of media consumption. Some implications of disapproval were observed with regard to the inclusion of alcohol and cigarettes in media content aiming at children. However, Baby Boomers, in their majority, were found to be indifferent about the inclusion of products in media works.
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	Eisend (2009).	Cross-cultural generalizability of product placements' acceptance	By applying a generalizability theory approach, the authors analysed the Gupta and Gould's (1997) replication studies that had been executed by other researchers in different cultures: USA, France, Austria, Australia, China, Germany and Bulgaria. The results showed, that acceptance of placements is generalizable over different cultures as far as ethically-charged products are concerned. Cross-cultural generalizability is not supported for neutral products. However, the acceptability of ethically-charged/ controversial products was found to be indifferent across all countries. Acceptance of neutral products' placements was found high for all countries, but highest scores were observed for US, and France, while Australia and Germany had lower scores.
Placement Recall and Recognition	Gupta and Lord (1998).	Effect of prominence and mode of product placements on recall	Comparison of product placement types recall effectiveness with each other and with advertising. The results showed that generally, prominent placements elicited higher recall than adverts, which outperformed subtle placements. However, audio-only placements had better recall than subtle visual-only placements.

D' Astous and Chartier (2000).	Factors affecting consumer evaluations and memory of product placements.	This research found that product placements that have a positive effect are: when principal actor is present and placement is positively evaluated, resulting in enhanced memory; evaluations are more positive when principal actor is present, when the placement is manifest, and when it is well integrated in the scene. Placements have negative effects when: placement is evaluated as unacceptable and is well integrated in the scene, which results in declined memory. Moreover, prominent placements enhance recognition memory but have a negative effect on recall, while manifest placements are better liked than subtle ones but are seen as more unacceptable.
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Law and Braun (2000).	Effectiveness of product placement With measures of explicit and Implicit memory	Comparison of explicit (recognition and recall task) and implicit (effect of exposure on product choice indirectly) memory measures for their responsiveness to product placement according to its modality (prominent/subtle). Results showed an overall enhancement in product recall and recognition due to placement. Prominent placements were remembered and recalled more but no implicit effect on choice was found. Subtle (visual-only) placements were least recalled but influenced choice.
Lehu and Bressoud (2008).	Effectiveness of product placement based on brand recall	Brand placement effectiveness measured through spontaneous day-after recall (SDAR), according to number of placements remembered, and was based on second viewing of a movie on DVD. The findings revealed that viewers who had previously seen the movie in cinemas showed more SDAR than those watching it for the first time on DVD. In addition, liking of the movie was found to be related with better recall of placements.

	Karniouchina, Uslay and Erenburg (2011)	Do Marketing Media Have Life Cycles? The Case of Product Placement in Movies	An investigation into the U-shaped theory relationships between product placement/s in films and impact on consumer behaviour. The consideration of the novel effect of placement promotions.
Brand placements in general media and in brand sponsored entertainment	Avery and Ferraro (2000).	Brand appearances in television	The study explored the manifest and latent aspects of brand portrayals. Content analysis results showed that the majority of portrayed brands in TV are subtly displayed. Mentioned or/and seen brands were more positively portrayed than subtle ones. Portrayal was found to be reinforced by character interaction.
	La Ferle and Edwards	Brand appearances in television	Five categories of TV programmes were examined: storied and special event programming, game

	(2006).		and news and magazine shows, and sporting events. Content analysis showed that most placements were visual. The type of program seemed to affect the type of placement (visual, verbal, audio-visual) and its prominence. Little interaction was found between characters and brands.
	Hudson and Hudson (2006).	Determining branded Entertainment	The article presents the evolution of the product placement practice over the years, by reviewing main researched aspects of the practice. A conceptual framework for the comprehension of the various forms of the practice was presented.

Impact on Attitudes	Cowley and Barron (2008).	Effects of program liking and placement prominence on brand attitude.	The study investigated conditions under which placements can cause negative shifts in brand attitudes. The results showed that prominent placements have a negative impact on brand attitudes for viewers who reported high levels of program liking. Viewers with low levels of program liking were found to have a positive direction shift in brand attitude after exposure to prominent placements. Yet, this positive shift disappeared when persuasive intent prime preceded the exposure. Subtle placements were found less likely to result in negative shifts in brand attitude.
	Homer (2009).	Effects of placement type and repetition on brand attitude.	The results revealed that brand attitudes decreased when placements were prominent and especially when product mentions were repeated. Conversely, for subtle placements brand attitudes were relatively positive and repeated exposures had little incremental impact.
	Kavallieratou (2013).	Utilizing balance theory, parasocial interaction and genre theory in evaluating product placement effects on consumer attitudes.	This examined sitcom product placements and the effects it had on consumer attitudes. The research utilizes the balance theory, parasocial interaction theory and genre theory. This research also used character product associations and the effect on viewers.

Consumption And the impact on selfidentity.	DeLorme and Reid (1999).	Interpretation of brand placements within the audience's everyday lived experience.	The qualitative study employed a grounded theory approach and the findings revealed that participants were active in the movie viewing experience and actively interpreted brands embedded in movies. Interpretations of brands were found to be part of moviegoers' constructions of reality. For older moviegoers brands in movies symbolized social change from a sacred movie viewing experience to a commercial event. For younger moviegoers placed brands were associated with feelings of belonging, comfort and security. Placed brands were interpreted as part of the audience's everyday experiences, as a reflection of moviegoers' past, present and anticipated experiences.
	Nelson and McLeod (2005).	Product placements relation to brand consciousness and perceived effects on self and others.	The results showed that commercial media consumption (movies) was related to brand consciousness. High brand conscious adolescents were found to be more aware and have more favourable attitudes toward product placements. All adolescents perceived that others would be more influenced by placements than they would be themselves. High brand conscious teens perceived the greatest effects of placements on their selves and other's buying behaviour

	Hackley and Tiwsakul (2006).	The role of product placements on consumer self-concept and identity.	The authors identified and proposed three key areas for future research: Brand representation, namely they proposed examination of the way that brands, as cultural representations can be aligned or associated with certain consumer's values and qualities. Consumer Experience; the authors recommend the examination of the different interpretations that viewers might give to the same entertainment work and consequently to the placed
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			brands. Another area of suggested investigation refers to Consumer identification. As brands can be used as a cultural resource which in turn can generate the formation of social identity, the different interpretations of the branded entertainment experiences can also impact on consumers' formation of self-identity.
Impact on Consumer Behaviour	Morton and Friedman (2002).	Examination of the correlation between beliefs about product placement and reported product usage behaviour.	The results of the study provided evidence (though inconclusive) for supporting the correlation between general beliefs about product placement and reported usage behaviour. In particular, the study's findings supported that products' positive portrayals can contribute to decisions about the product's use whereas negative portrayals can encourage discontinued use.

Interaction effects between memory and attitudes	Russell (2002).	Effectiveness of product placement through investigation of modality and plot connection effects on memory and attitude.	The results showed that the modality of placements (visual and auditory) and the degree of their connection with the plot (i.e. degree of congruency) interact to influence attitude change. Memory was improved when modality and plot connection were incongruent, but persuasion was enhanced by congruency. Congruent placements appeared more natural whereas incongruent placements were found to have adverse effects on brand attitude because they appeared unnatural and thus, they were depreciated.
	Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2007).	Product placement effectiveness by investigation of different levels of placements and their effects on memory, attitudes and brand choice.	The study defined the different levels of visual placements, as: background, used by character and connection with the story. The results showed that brands were recognized more when used by the main character or when they were integral to the story, in comparison to products featured in the background. On a choice task, participants' attitudes toward the brand were found to have an influence on their choice, since
			they were observed to be more likely to choose the brand just seen in the movie in comparison to other participants who had not viewed the brand.

S.M.2. Pilot Study Questionnaire Sheet.

Branding Awareness Research.

This PhD research is being carried out in order to assess brand awareness and preferences across a range of products that feature or are shown within films.

Which of these brands would be your preferred choice?

Heineken	Sol	Fosters	Cobra	Carling

Vodka

Vladivar	Absolut	Ikon	Finlandia	Smirnoff
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Laptops / PCs

Dell	Eee	IBM	Apple	Sony

SwissAir	Virgin	Lufthansa	Air Singapore	British Airways
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VW Polo	Fiat Panda	Honda Jazz	Toyota Yaris	Ford Ka

L'Oréal	Max Factor	Rimmel	No. 17	Avon

Mobile Phones

Nokia	Sony Ericson	LG	Siemens	Motorola
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Watches

Rolex	Tag Heuer	Movado	Omega	Breitling
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Which brands, if any, did you notice in the film?

The placebo and latterly dropped question was:

Nike Umbro	Adidas	Kappa	Admiral
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S.M.3. Pilot Questionnaire Brand Preference Results.

Brands featured in the film are shaded, total respondent recall responses given in figures.

Lager	Heineken 13	Sol 2	Fosters 8	Cobra 1	Carling 4	Not stated 4
Vodka	Vladivar 2	Absolut 3	Ikon 0	Finlandia 1	Smirnoff 14	12
Laptops / PCs	Dell 7	Eee 0	IBM 0	Apple 8	Sony 9	8
Flights	Swiss Air 0	Virgin 3	Lufthansa 4	Air Singapore 2	B.A. 14	9
Cars	VW Polo 16	Fiat Panda 0	Honda Jazz 1	Toyota Yaris 5	Ford Ka 4	6
Cosmetics	L'Oréal 14	Max Factor 2	Rimmel 0	No. 17 0	Avon 0	16
Mobile Phones	Nokia 14	SonyEricsson 7	LG 4	Siemens 0	Motorola 1	6
Watches	Rolex 11	TAGHeuer 4	Movado 0	Omega 7	Breitling 0	10

S.M.4. The Interview.

[Section One].

[Film

Date

].

(Gender: Occupation:

Age group).

1. What type of film viewer would you describe yourself as? (i.e. film expert, film buff, film fan, casual viewer, 'take it or leave it', other?).
2. In a typical month how many films do you watch:
 - a) At the cinema? (How often do you go to the cinema if less than monthly?)
 - b) On TV?
 - c) Rented or downloaded?
 - d) Bought on DVD / Blu Ray?
3. How many of the films you buy or rent have you already seen at the cinema? (Ascertain split between bought and rented).
4. Have you ever watched a particular film because of:
 - a). actor/s featured Y / N
 - b). the director's reputation Y / N
 - c). recommendation from a friend or colleague Y / N
 - d). film reviews (discuss options) Y / N
 - e). film promotion/marketing/advertising Y / N
(such as: magazine article, newspaper article, TV advert, radio advert, chat show appearance, media event, FB, Twitter, Film magazine, etc).
 - f). other? (E.g. as a News item etc?).
(Expand and discuss each answer).
5. Name three of your favourite films?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)

6. Tell me what can you remember about these films?

	No. of Actors	* Plot	* Setting	* Scenes	* Dialogue	*Songs/ Music	* Emotion	* Costumes	Other
Film 1									
Film 2									
Film 3									

For actors, how many can you name? [Thesis note: Out of ten (ten being with complete recall and level of detail)].

[Rate / quantify level of detail on each, i.e. how much of the plot is recalled or is it all vague?).

Comments:

7. Name four of your favourite (male or female) actors?

1)

2)

3)

4).

(Expand and discuss reasons for choices).

8. Including details of their private lives how much do you feel you know about these actors as individuals?

Nothing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Everything

1) :

2) :

3) :

4) :

Examples?

How do you know this information?

Section Two, part one. [Attitudes towards Marketing Communications in general to later benchmark against attitudes towards product placement in particular, see below].

1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree.

[For each ask for detail and examples, not just the rating].

[Expand / discuss].

In general:

9. I find advertising/marketing distracting. 1-2-3-4-5

[Why do you say that...?].

10. I find advertising/marketing objectionable. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

11. I sometimes find advertising/marketing informative. 1-2-3-4-5

12. I sometimes find advertising/marketing enjoyable. 1-2-3-4-5

13. I think that advertising/marketing is unethical / amoral. 1-2-3-4-5

14. Is there anything else you would like to mention about advertising?

(Section Two, part two). [Answers to be discussed and expanded upon].

Promotions within films:

15. If I saw a branded product in a movie I enjoyed I would be more likely to buy it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
16. I would be more likely to buy a product that I saw promoted by an actor I liked. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
17. Do you associate any actors with any particular brands?
Examples:
18. If yes to the above, what are your thoughts/opinions about these promotions? (Good? Attractive? Poor? Cheap? Classy? Cheesy? Romantic? Exciting? Inspiring?).
19. Can you think of any 'actor promoted' products you've bought inspired (at least in part) by an actor's endorsement?
20. Do you associate any actors with any particular brand?
(Prompt sheet with named actors to be shown after free recall).
21. For the associations and brands that you have recalled, what are your opinions about the actor and products/brands?

[Section Three: discussion of the particular film viewed within the last 24 hours].

22. Can you name any of the actors featured? If so, who?
23. Can you name the director and any members of the production crew? If so, who?
24. In terms of genre / type how would you classify the film?
Examples: Action / Thriller / Adventure / Drama / Comedy / Romance.
25. In total, including this viewing, how many times have you seen this film?
26. For overall enjoyment how would you rate out of ten? (10 being the highest / best rating). [Expand / discuss].
27. How likely are you to recommend this film to others?

Not At All / Maybe / Probably / Definitely Why so?

28. Are you likely to buy, rent or download this film? Yes / No / Maybe. Why so?

[Section Four] Discuss product placement as a marketing tool and then:

29. Do you feel that product placement is an acceptable marketing technique? [Expand / discuss].
30. Which branded products, if any, did you notice in the film? Namely:-
31. If yes, give details on placement (where / how / if used/ if in dialogue / as a plot device / who used it etc).
32. [Show list of placed products]. These products were shown in the film; can you recall any of them you haven't already mentioned? - (use placebos?).
33. Have you ever visited the USA? (Times) 0 1 2 3 4 5 Five +
34. Did you watch the film alone or in company? (If in company, how many?).
35. Are there any other issues you would like to discuss or comment upon?

S.M.5. **Actor Prompt Sheet.**

Kiera Knightley. Leonardo DiCaprio.

Will Smith. Tom Cruise.

Nicole Kidman. Julie Walters.

Orlando Bloom. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Matthew Fox. Jamie Foxx.

Penelope Cruz. Helen Mirren.

Pierce Brosnan. Meryl Streep.

Johnny Depp. Gemma Arterton.

Ewan MacGregor. George Clooney.

Uma Thurman. Renée Zellweger.

[This list was compiled to include a range of actors including those who were, or had been, heavily involved in marketing campaigns. Interviewees were also asked if they recalled any actor/product/brand associations with people not on the list].

S.M.6. Favourite Actors.

Actors have one nomination each except where

Bacall Lauren		Firth Colin	3	Spacey Kevin	
Baker Stanley		Ford Henry	2	Stewart James	5
Barrymore Drew		Foster Jodie		Stiller Ben	2
Bergman Ingrid		Fox James		Kilmer Val	
Binoche Juliet		Freeman Morgan	6	Livesey Roger	
Blanchet Cate		Granger Stewart		Malkovich John	
Bloom Orlando	2	Gosling Ryan		McAoy James	
Bogart Humphrey		Grant Hugh	3	McDormand Frances	
Bridges Jeff	3	Griffiths Rachel		Mirren Helen	
Broadbent Jim		Guinness Alec		Mitchum Robert	
Brosnan Pierce		Hanks Tom	6	Monroe Marilyn	
Bullock Sandra	2	Heigl Katherine	2	Murray Bill	
Buscemi Steve		Hepburn Audrey		Neeson Liam	
Cage Nicholas	3	Heston Charlton		Newman Paul	2
Caine Michael		Hoffman Phillip S		Nicholson Jack	
Campbell Bruce		Hopkins Anthony			
Carey Jim		Jackman Hugh		Pacino Al	
Clooney George	2	Jackson Samuel L		Peck Gregory	
Cooper Bradley		Jolie Angelina		Stamp Terrence	
Connery Sean		Keaton Buster		Streep Meryl	
Costner Kevin		Kidman Nicole		Strong Mark	
Craig Daniel				Swinton Tilda	
Crowe Russell		Kietel Harvey		Thompson Emma	
Cruise Tom	3	Pitt Brad	3	Vaughn Vince	
Cusack John		Portman Natalie		Walters Julie	
Damon Matt		Redford Robert		Waltz Christopher	
Dench Judi		Redgrave Vanessa		Washington Denzel	
		Reeves Keanu	2	Weisz Rachel	
DeNiro Robert	7	Rickman Alan		Willis Bruce	
Depp Johnny	5	Roberts Julia		Winslett Kate	
DiCaprio Leonardo	5	Rourke Mickey		Witherspoon Reece	
Downey Jr Robert	2	Sandler Adam			
Ecclestone Christopher		Schwarzenegger Arnold	2		
Ferrell Will		Smith Will	3		

S.M.7. Interviewees' Favourite Films.
One nomination each except where indicated.

Lord of the Rings (3)	The Color Purple	Pirates of the Caribbean
Star Wars (3)	Little Miss Sunshine	Enemy of the State
The Matrix (3)	Philadelphia	Groundhog Day
Mamma Mia (3)	Dial M for Murder	The Last Samurai
Once upon a Time in the West (2)	Much Ado About Nothing	Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas
Casablanca (2)	Home Alone	Big Fish
27 Dresses (2)	Aliens	Double Indemnity
Mary Poppins (2)	National Treasure	12 Angry Men
The Shawshank Redemption (2)	The Hudsucker Proxy	Before Sunrise Before Sunset
It's a Wonderful Life (2)	Tomb Raider	The Italian Job (1969)
North by North West	Cool Runnings	Jurassic Park
Some Like it Hot	Terminator	Robin Hood (1991)
24 Hour Party People	Terminator 2	Contact
Thelma and Louise	The Terminal	Big
Catch Me If You Can	Fargo	Life is Sweet
Down by Law	101 Reykjavik	Wicker Man (1973)
Educating Rita	Snatch	The Mask
Duel	The Beach	Sound of Music
Titanic	A Few Good Men	To Kill a Mockingbird
The Other Boleyn Girl	Rebecca	The Hours
Stranger Than Fiction	Blade Runner	Iron Man
The Godfather Part II	Brief Encounter	The King's Speech
Last of the Mohicans	A Few Good Men	Once Were Warriors
Bridges of Madison County	Brother Where Art Thou?	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Pan's Labyrinth	A Brilliant Mind	Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

UP	Chronicles of Narnia	Sex and the City
Beauty and the Beast	Kill Bill	Green Mile
Ben Hur	Celebrations	Life of Brian
L'argent	Christmas Vacation	Dead Poets Society
Clockwork Orange	Higher Learning	Raiders of the Lost Ark
Pulp Fiction	Sherlock Jr.	Strictly Ballroom
Final Destination III	Duel	Goodfellas
Field of Dreams	Office Space	High Fidelity
V for Vendetta	Forrest Gump	The Shining
Catfish	Barton Fink	Gone With the Wind
The Maltese Falcon	Wizard of Oz	Buffalo 66
Se7en	Usual Suspects	Back to the Future
Ghost Busters	X Men 1 st Class	Hot Fuzz
Arthur (1981)	Pretty Woman	

Year shown when there is more than one film of the same name.

S.M.8. **Viewer Film Consumption.**

	Monthlytotal	TV Films	Rent / downloads	Bought	Borrowed	Cinema visits per annum
Total	328	186.5	48	47	11	275
Average	7.0	4.0	1.02	1.00	0.43	5.9
Range	0.3 - 30	0 - 28	0 - 5	0 - 5	0 - 6	0 - 50
SD	5.30	4.58	1.29	1.30	0.96	9.39

The interviewees in this stage two research had a range of viewing habits and consumption patterns. At the time of the research, viewing via television channels was the most popular method of consumption.

Table S.M.9. Film Rating by Title and Genre.

Film Title	Research Average	IMDb*	Amazon‡ Average	Film Average
Romance Films	Out of 10:			
<i>The Switch</i>	7	5.9	7.6	6.8
<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	6.4	6.3	7.6	6.8
<i>Morning Glory</i>	7	6.5	7.2	6.9
Genre Average	6.8	6.2	7.5	
Comedy Films				
<i>Little Fockers</i>	5	5.3	6.2	5.5
<i>The Other Guys</i>	7.7	6.6	7.2	7.2
<i>Grown Ups</i>	5.8	5.8	8	6.5
Genre Average	6.2	5.9	7.1	
Drama Films				
<i>The Social Network</i>	7.6	8.0	7.2	7.6
<i>The Mechanic</i>	5.6	6.5	6.6	6.2
<i>The Town</i>	6.9	7.6	7.8	7.4
Genre Average	6.7	7.4	6.9	

* For IMDb and Amazon.com both as at 28th January 2014.

‡ Amazon uses a 'Five Stars' rating, these have been doubled for ease of comparison. The Amazon rating is based on people who have bought the film while the IMDb average is open for ratings by any individual who is registered as a site user, this may skew the results as one group who have purchased the film and may be seeking to justify the expenditure while the second group might contain people who have not seen the film but have an opinion they want to express nonetheless.

S.M. 10. **Three Measures of Film Popularity.**

	Research Average		Combined Amazon and IMBD Average		Film Rank by Box Office Receipts	Gross*
1	<i>The Other Guys</i>	1	<i>The Social Network</i>	1	<i>Little Fockers</i>	\$311m
2	<i>The Social Network</i>	2	<i>The Town</i>	2	<i>Grown Ups</i>	\$162m
3	<i>The Switch</i>	3	<i>The Other Guys</i>	3	<i>The Other Guys</i>	\$120m
4	<i>Morning Glory</i>	4	<i>Morning Glory</i>	4	<i>The Social Network</i>	\$97m
5	<i>The Town</i>	5	<i>The Switch</i>	5	<i>The Town</i>	\$92m
6	<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	6	<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	6	<i>Letters to Juliet</i>	\$53m
7	<i>The Mechanic</i>	7	<i>Grown Ups</i>	7	<i>The Mechanic</i>	\$51m
8	<i>Grown Ups</i>	8	<i>The Mechanic</i>	8	<i>Morning Glory</i>	\$31m
9	<i>Little Fockers</i>	9	<i>Little Fockers</i>	9	<i>The Switch</i>	\$27.8m

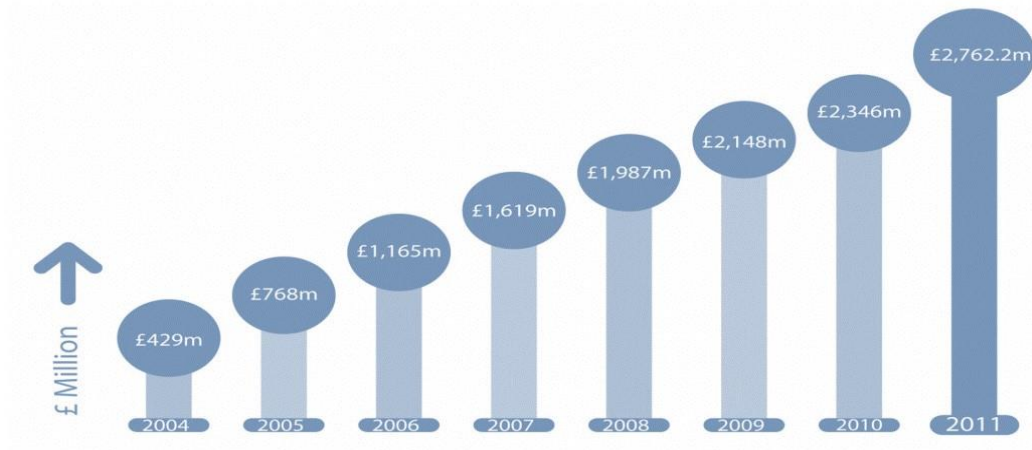
*IMDb Pro Gross figures, 31 January 2012.

S.M.11. Pilot Questionnaire Brand Preference Results.

Brands featured in the film are shaded, total respondent recall responses given in figures.

Lager	Heineken 13	Sol 2	Fosters 8	Cobra 1	Carling 4	Not stated 4
Vodka	Vladivar 2	Absolut 3	Ikon 0	Finlandia 1	Smirnoff 14	12
Laptops/ PCs	Dell 7	Eee 0	IBM 0	Apple 8	Sony 9	8
Flights	Swiss Air 0	Virgin 3	Lufthansa 4	Air Singapore 2	B.A. 14	9
Cars	VW Polo 16	Fiat Panda 0	Honda Jazz 1	Toyota Yaris 5	Ford Ka 4	6
Cosmetics	L'Oréal 14	Max Factor 2	Rimmel 0	No. 17 0	Avon 0	16
Mobile Phones	Nokia 14	SonyEricsson 7	LG 4	Siemens 0	Motorola 1	6
Watches	Rolex 11	TAGHeuer 4	Movado 0	Omega 7	Breitling 0	10

S.M.12. Digital Marketing Spend 2004 to 2011.



Source: I.A.B. / PwC Online Adspend 2011(March 2012).

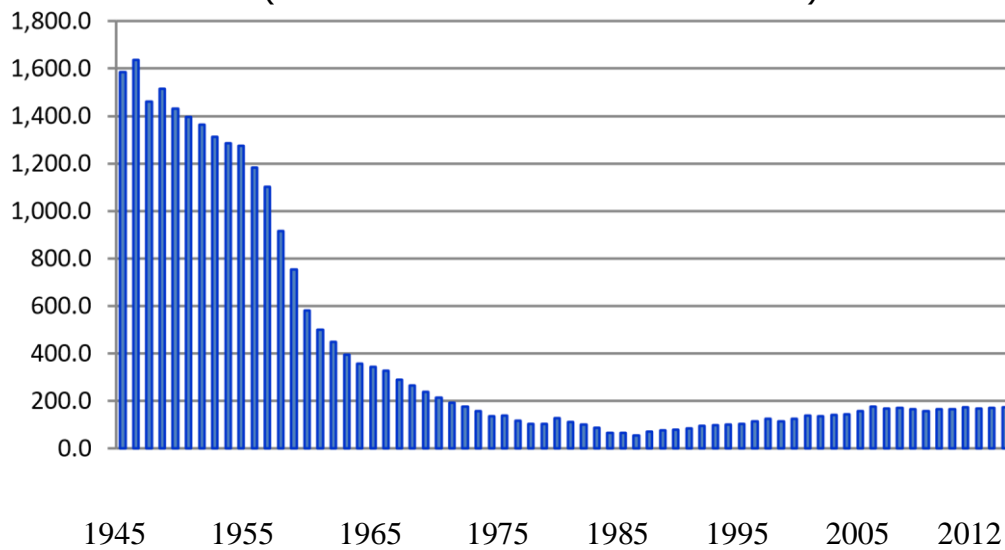
S.M.13. Advertising Share and Growth in the UK 2011.

Market Share by Sector	Year on Year Growth by Sector
•Internet 28%	•Internet +16.8%
•TV 26%	•TV +2.3%
•Press Display 16%	•Press Display -5.9%
•Direct Mail 10%	•Direct Mail +1.0%
•Press Classified 7%	•Press Classified -13.5%
•Outdoor 5%	•Outdoor +0.7%
•Directories 3%	•Directories -3.6%
•Radio 3%	•Radio +1.9%
•Cinema 1%	•Cinema -5.5%

Source: I.A.B. / PwC, April 2012.

S.M.14. UK Cinema Attendance 1945 to 2012.

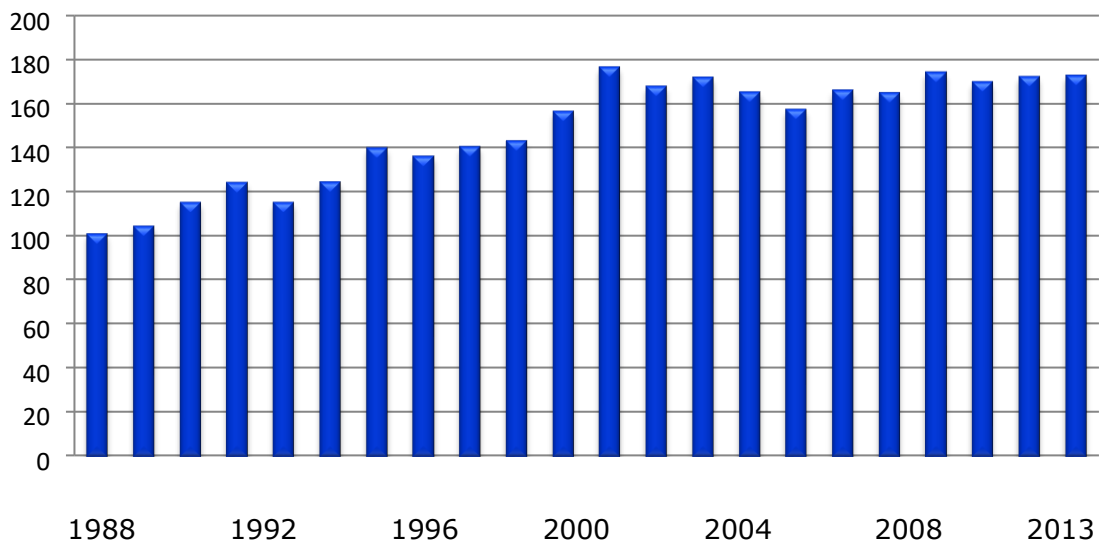
(Box Office Admissions in millions).



Source: Film Distributor's Association (2013).

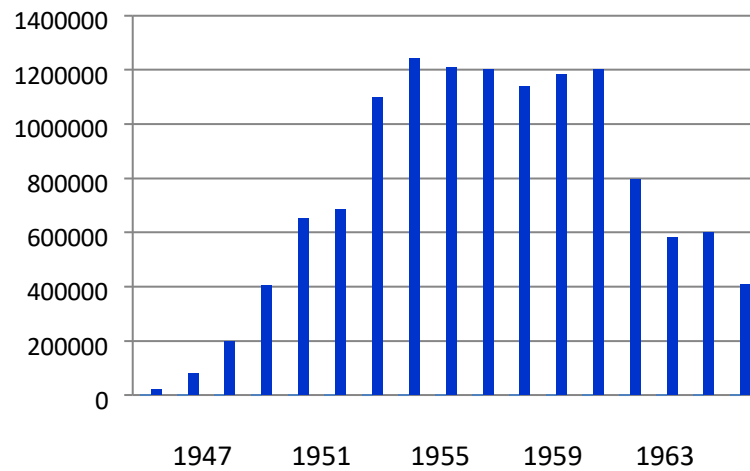
S.M.15. UK Cinema attendance 1988 to 2013

(Box Office Admissions in millions).



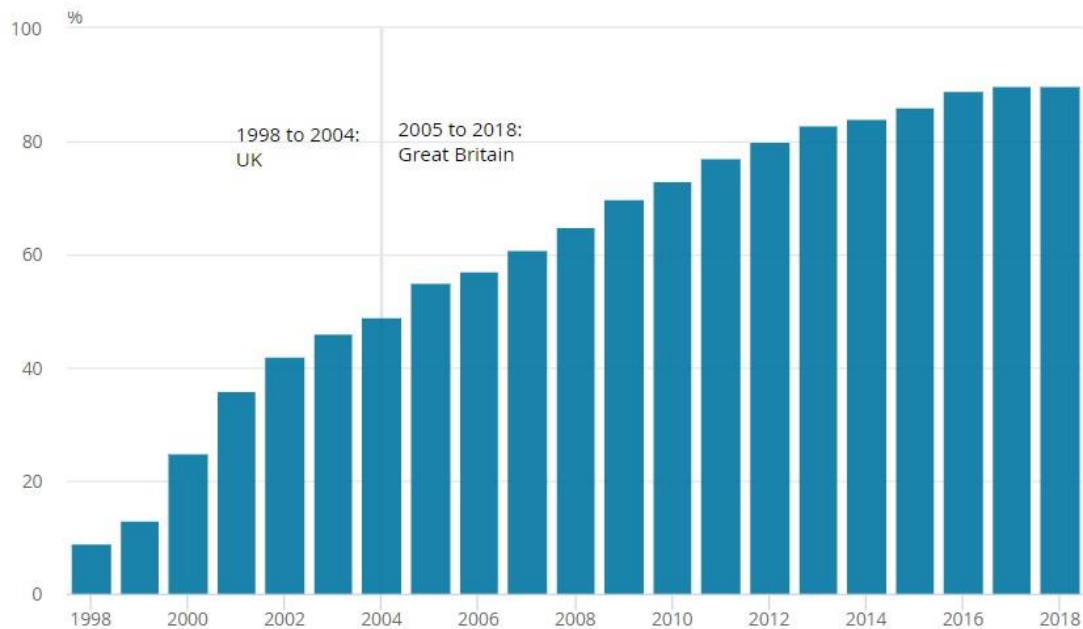
Source: Film Distributor's Association (2013).

S.M.16. New Television Licenses Issued 1947- 1963.

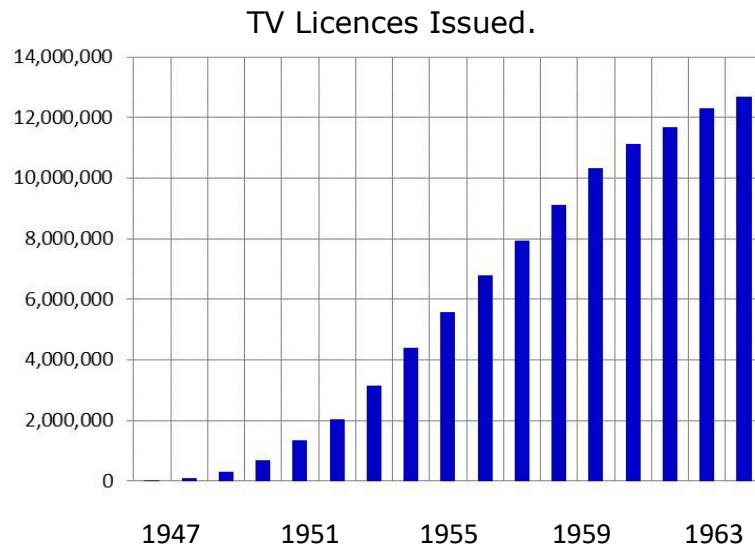


S.M.17. Growth of Households with Internet Access, 1998 – 2018, and the Accumulated of Television Licences Issued 1947 – 1963.

G.B. Households Internet Access (%), 1998–2018.



Office of National Statistics (2018).



The Annual Abstract of Statistics (2012).

S.M.18. Land Rover-Jaguar, Range Rover and *Spectre* supporting back-end marketing.



Left, Bond actor Dave Bautista, aka Mr Hinx, with the Jaguar C-X75. Right, Naomi Harris, aka Miss Money Penny, with the Jaguar C-X75. Left, the Range Rover-Land Rover-Jaguar-*Spectre* stand at the Dubai Motor Show in 2015, back end marketing communications. Right, a *Spectre* (2015) screenshot showing Range Rover and Land Rover products.

S.M.19. Manet's 1882 product placement.

Presented in plain sight since 1882, Edouard Manet's '*A Bar at Folies Bergere*'. Reflecting the reality of the scene, or perhaps an artistic product placement, two distinctive bottles of Bass Pale Ale. This stunning picture is on display in London's Courtauld Institute of Art. Product placement? Or reflecting the world as seen, branded products and all.

