

GENDER DIFFERENCES ON ETHICALLY CHARGED PRODUCT PLACEMENTS: THE CASE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND WEAPONS

D.L.R. van der Waldt, L.D. Du Preez and S. Williams,
University of Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This study attempts to investigate how males and females aged 18 to 24 accept ethically charged products, in films shown in a cinema-type environment. The research was in the form of an exploratory study, which attempted to provide answers regarding this topic in a South African context, as previous research in this context is limited. The research was executed through the use of a questionnaire with 223 respondents were initially required to view a number scenes that were extracted from films that were targeted to this age group.

It was found that there is no statistically significant difference in the acceptability between male and female film attendees with regard to tobacco products, alcoholic beverage products in films. There is no difference in the acceptance of tobacco products and alcoholic beverages between males and females as the results show neutral opinions from both of these groups, therefore they may not be easily persuaded to buy the branded products advertised. However, the acceptance of weapons between males and females does show a significant difference as females have a more negative opinion than the neutral opinion of males.

This study can be a benchmark as it is one of the first studies conducted in South Africa regarding the perception of ethically charged product placements in film.

INTRODUCTION

It has been asserted that to get the advertising message across to audiences through the use of TV, becomes more difficult due to zipping and zapping, audience fragmentation and clutter (Gupta, Balasubramanian & Klassen, 2000:42). A contributing factor is the pervasive dislike of advertising on television. This encouraged advertisers and marketers to explore alternative or non-traditional media such as product placement in films and broadcast programmes. Nelson

& McLeod (2005: 12) affirm that product placements are a growing marketing communication technique. However, Russell (2002:314) cautions that product placement should be applied with care, because: "... consumers become increasingly sophisticated and sceptical about the ever commercialization of the consumer industry." Wiles & Danielova (2006:3) have another concern: "If the film contains mature themes, firms run the risk that their products may become associated with this content."

The overall objective of product placement is clearly described by D'Astous & Chartier (2000:31) who state that it is to increase consumer awareness resulting in a positive consumer preference and a higher probability of a purchase being made. Not all views are as positive towards product placements in film and broadcast programmes. Some critics refer to these messages as "hidden, but paid" or "masked communications" (Balasubramanian, 1994:14).

Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Kräuter (2000:45) compiled a list of similarities regarding advertising and product placement. First, some countries may vary in the products for which they restrict advertising such as alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Second, both advertising and product placement may be seen as intrusive; third, both elements may have similar ethical challenges, such as their promotion of ethically charged products and alleged use of deception. Finally, people may differ in their attitudes toward advertising and have a similar inclination toward product placement.

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Possible reasons to why marketers may prefer product placement over that of traditional advertising can be found in two main approaches. The Classical Conditioning Theory (Du Plessis & Rousseau 2003:92-93) suggests that a desired consumer response may occur when a product (conditional/primary stimulus) is repeatedly associated with a highly regarded celebrity (unconditional/secondary stimulus). For example, an actor who continually smokes Marlboro cigarettes in a film may encourage Marlboro smoking behaviour. Second, the Social Learning Theory (Du Plessis & Rousseau 2003:244-245) suggests that individuals learn by observing others, a process called vicarious learning. This process of learning combines watching, thinking and trial. When an actor depicts satisfaction from the consumption of a specific product within a film, the audience encounters "model" behaviours that may lead to desirable consequences, from the marketer's perspective. For example, a film attendee observes an actor in a film quenching his thirst by drinking Coca Cola, the next time the individual is thirsty he will remember this and purchase Coca Cola.

Acceptability of ethically charged products (in this case, tobacco, alcoholic beverages and weapons), may provoke higher concern among film attendees than that of other non-ethically charged products (soft drinks, make-up and clothing).

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

Little information exists in a South African context on ethically charged product placements and the perceptions of males and females with regards to tobacco, alcoholic beverages and weapons (See the following search engines on the World Wide Web: Emerald, EbscoHost,

Sabinet and Science Direct [Accessed: 30 August 2006]). Advertisers and marketers alike should be sensitive not to offend potential customers with increased recognition and recall of these placements in the minds of film attendees. Countries where legislation does not protect customers against exposure to ethically charged products are vulnerable. Concern is also expressed with regards to the effect this product category placements may have on children.

In an attempt to clarify the question how consumers feel (as a captive audience) to scenes where cigarettes, alcohol and weapons are portrayed, the following research question is pertinent: Is there a difference in the level of acceptability regarding ethically charged tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and weapons in films or broadcast programmes between males and females? These categories are based on those by the landmark studies of Gupta & Gould (1997) and Gould, Gupta & Grabner-Kräuter (2000). These products are looked at less favourably in terms of product placements in films than other products (Gould, Gupta & Grabner-Kräuter, 2000:43-44).

Acceptability of ethically charged products

Ethically charged products are products, which especially arouse ethical concern and differences across consumers regarding their marketing and consumption. Based on this it has been determined that alcoholic beverages, tobacco and weapons are labelled as ethically charged products (Gupta & Gould, 1997:38). Acceptability on the other hand is defined as a favourable reception, approval or tolerance of something (The South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 2004:5). Ethical concerns with product placements were voiced in the early 1990s. First, general ethical concerns about product placements was not labelled as advertisements and therefore were viewed as “hidden, but paid” messages resulting in an element of deception (Balasubramanian, 1994:2). Second, concern has been raised with regard to specific products. Cigarettes are an example where marketers deliberately advertise their brands in films. In retrospect this is seen as a way around the restrictive law that all cigarette advertising is prohibited (Balasubramanian, 1994:13). Alcoholic beverages and weapons also fit into the category of ethically charged products. These three product categories are the focal point of this research.

In one of the first research projects done regarding acceptability of product placements by Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993:2) it was found that most respondents did not object to product placements, but those who did take a stand, did so on the principle of ethics. Gupta and Gould (1997:38) investigated this result and concluded in their study that film attendees find placements less acceptable for ethically charged products (e.g. weapons, alcoholic beverages and tobacco) than that of other products. The level of acceptance tends to differ among males and females regarding the placement of products in film. Males tend to accept the appearance of ethically charged products in film more readily than females. The following hypotheses are put forward:

- H_1 : Male film attendees will more readily accept tobacco placements than female film attendees.
- H_2 : Male film attendees will more readily accept alcoholic beverage placements than female film attendees.
- H_3 : Male film attendees will more readily accept weapon placements than female film attendees.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Questionnaire

The validity of the Likert-type five point scales used in the questionnaire was measured through face and content validity. Face validity (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:260) was determined by the judgment of the researchers, who compiled the questionnaire with various scales, which logically appeared to accurately reflect what they were supposed to measure. Content validity (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:260) was measured by defining what exactly needed to be measured. In this study key components were identified through the hypotheses.

Reliability can be seen as the degree to which a measure provides consistent results and is a necessary contributor to validity but a reliable measure is not necessarily valid (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:236). The internal consistency of reliability, when items in the measurement scale all coincided with the same underlying construct, identified by Churchill's scale development process (Churchill, 1979:66) was measured by using Cronbach's alpha and corrected item-to-total correlations. The final questionnaire was pre-tested with 10 respondents. The respondents were selected from friends and acquaintances of the researchers who fell into the desired targeted age category. Adjustments were made to the final questionnaire before it was distributed. An open-ended question (McDaniel & Gates, 2001:295-296) that allowed the respondent to indicate how many times he/she had viewed a film in the last four weeks was posed with the intention of determining the frequency that the average respondent viewed films. The five point Likert scale consisted of seven statements for the respondents' general opinion with regards to film and product placements therein with the options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:253-254).

Cronbach alpha values had to be determined for the following scales in order to test the internal consistency reliability. No reverse scoring was necessary in these scales but one question in the scales measuring tobacco products and alcoholic beverages had to be removed to improve the value of Cronbach alpha. Scales with the Cronbach alpha values of higher than or equal to 0.7 were regarded as reliable. The results in Table 1 below shows the Cronbach alpha values for tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and weapons.

Table 1: Coefficient Alpha

Reliability Coefficients	
Alpha (tobacco)	0.76
Alpha (alcoholic beverages)	0.77
Alpha (weapons)	0.83

The Cronbach alpha values indicated acceptable internal consistency reliability above 0.7 for items measuring tobacco (0.76), alcoholic beverages (0.77) and weapons (0.83).

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The researchers aimed to determine certain qualitative data through the execution of this exploratory study. The respondents were shown 12 scenes on a film clip of well-known films that were released during 2005 on DVD. Once the clips had been viewed the respondents were requested to complete the questionnaires.

The use of film clips had been selected to help stimulate recall and recognition in the minds of the respondents, included in these scenes was examples of ethically charged as well as non-ethically charged products. Specific brands of products were viewed in these clips at different prominence and intensity levels so the researchers could test whether this affected the respondent's perception of product placements in film. The film clips were shown as a prerequisite as it aided in the successful completion of the questionnaires. One or more of the product options provided could be marked for each of the following film clips from the feature films: "Swordfish"; "Bend it like Beckham" and "Gone in 60 seconds".

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the differences in acceptability of tobacco products, alcoholic beverage products and weapons in film scenes between males and females.

Table 2: Differences in Perception of Placed Products

Tobacco products	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. The use of brand name tobacco products should be banned from PG and PG13 rated movies as kids watch such movies	223	3.52	1.25
2. Having tobacco products shown in movies increases my desire to smoke	223	2.17	1.38
3. Brand name tobacco products should only be used in R-rated movies (18 age restricted movies)	223	2.80	1.32
4. Scenes with kids smoking below the age of 18 should be banned in movies	223	3.76	1.31
Alcoholic beverage products			
5. The use of brand name alcoholic beverages should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below, as kids watch such movies	222	3.28	1.28
6. Having alcoholic beverages shown in movies increases my desire to drink	222	2.23	1.32
7. Brand name alcoholic beverages should only be used in R-rated movies (18 age restricted movies)	222	2.73	1.28
8. Scenes with drinking and driving should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below	222	3.61	1.28
Weapon products			
9. The use of weapons should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below, as kids watch such movies	222	1.86	1.12
10. Having weapons shown in movies increases my desire to be violent	222	3.80	1.14
11. Scenes with kids below the age of 18 handling weapons in movies should be minimal	221	3.55	1.24
12. Obscene effects from the use of weapons should be banned in PG13 rated movies and below	219	3.09	1.26

A mean score of 3.52 was recorded on the calculated which s question whether brand name tobacco products should be banned from Parental Guidance and PG 13 rated films. Question 2 showed a total of 223 respondents who answered the question of whether having tobacco products shown in movies increased their desire to smoke. From this a mean score of 2.17 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had a negative opinion towards this statement.

As seen from question 3 a total of 223 respondents answered the question of whether brand name tobacco products should only be used in R-rated movies (18 age restricted movies). A relatively negative to neutral opinion was calculated which indicated a mean score of 2.80.

Question 4 showed a total of 223 respondents who answered the question of whether scenes with children smoking below the age of 18 should be banned in movies. A mean score of 3.76 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had either no opinion or agreed to this statement. The 1.31 value of standard deviation reinforced this finding as the spread of respondents were relatively concentrated around these options.

As seen from question 5 a total of 222 respondents answered the question of whether the use of brand name alcoholic beverages should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below, as kids watch such movies. A relatively negative to neutral opinion was calculated which indicated a mean score of 3.28.

A total of 222 respondents answered question 6, which related to whether having alcoholic beverages shown in movies increased their desire to drink. From this a mean score of 2.23 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had a negative opinion to this statement. Question 7 showed a total of 222 respondents who answered the question of whether brand name alcoholic beverages should only be used in R-rated movies (18 age restricted movies). A mean score of 2.73 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had disagreed to this statement.

A total of 222 respondents answered question 8 which related to whether scenes with drinking and driving should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below. From this a mean score of 3.61 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had agreed to this statement.

Question 9 showed a total of 223 respondents who answered the question of whether the use of weapons should be banned from PG13 rated movies and below, as children watch such movies. From this a mean score of 1.86 was calculated which showed that the average respondent strongly disagreed to with this statement. As seen from question 10 a total of 223 respondents answered the question of whether having weapons shown in movies increased their desire to be violent. A relatively positive opinion was calculated which indicated a mean score of 3.80.

A total of 222 respondents answered question 11 which related to whether scenes with children below the age of 18 handling weapons in movies should be minimal. From this a mean score of 3.55 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had a more positive

opinion toward this statement. Question 12 showed a total of 219 respondents who answered the question of whether obscene effects from the use of weapons should be banned in PG13 rated movies and below. A mean score of 3.09 was calculated which showed that the average respondent had a more neutral opinion toward this statement.

Hypotheses Testing

H_1 : Male film attendees will more readily accept tobacco placements than female film attendees.

Table 3 below shows the comparison between males and females with regard to tobacco products.

Table 3: Group Statistics comparing gender and tobacco products

TOBACCO PRODUCTS	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Male	92	3.30	1.02
	Female	122	3.30	0.97

A total of 92 males and 122 females answered the questions surrounding their perception of tobacco products as a placement in film. An average score of 3.3 on a five-point item-scale was calculated for both male and female respondents and this therefore indicated that both groups had a more neutral opinion towards tobacco products found in film. The spread of female respondents' opinions were more concentrated around the neutral option than males as the standard deviations were .97 and 1.02 respectively.

The Two-sample t-test is based on specific distributional assumptions and if these assumptions are violated the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was considered as an alternative. The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used to test for underlying assumptions of whether the alternative non-parametric test would be used or not. The Two-sample t-test is based on two assumptions namely normality, which is where the variables are being compared, has a normal distribution in both groups, and equality of variances where the variances of the two groups are assumed to be equal.

Table 4 below shows the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney U test measuring gender and tobacco products

Tobacco products	
Mann-Whitney U	5535.00
Wilcoxon W	13038.00
Z	-0.17
p-value	0.86

The two-tailed p-value was calculated as 0.863, which is larger than the significance value of 0.05 on a 95% confidence level. The p-value of the Mann-Whitney U test was shown in the last row of the table above. This value of 0.863 needed to be converted to the appropriate

one-tailed p-value as this hypothesis is directional. This was calculated by using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 1 - (\text{two-tailed p-value} / 2) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 1 - (0.863 / 2) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 1 - (0.4315) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 \text{one-tailed p-value} &= 0.57
 \end{aligned}$$

Since the one-tailed p-value of 0.57 was not smaller than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis for H_1 cannot be rejected and therefore the findings of the Independent samples t-test were confirmed.

H_2 : Male film attendees will more readily accept alcoholic beverage placements than female film attendees.

The formulation of this alternative hypothesis stated that there was a difference between groups. As there was more of a difference between males than females in their acceptance of ethically charged alcoholic beverages, therefore it was defined as a one-tailed hypothesis. The table 5 below depicts a comparison of the acceptability of alcoholic beverages between males and females.

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Table 5: Group Statistics comparing gender and alcoholic beverages

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Male	92	3.26	1.04
	Female	122	3.35	0.97

A total of 92 males and 122 females answered the questions surrounding their perception of alcoholic beverages as a placement in film. An average score of 3.26 and 3.35 on a five-point item-scale was calculated for both male and female respondents respectively and this therefore indicated that both groups had a neutral opinion towards alcoholic beverages found in film. The spread of female respondents' opinions were more concentrated around the neutral option than males as the standard deviations were .97 and 1.04 respectively. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test should be used as both the assumptions for normality and equality were violated. The next two elements incorporated the results of both the one-tailed and two-tailed p-values. Table 6 shows the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 6: Mann-Whitney U test measuring gender and alcoholic beverages

Alcoholic beverages	
Mann-Whitney U	5330.50
Wilcoxon W	9608.50
Z	-0.63
P-value	0.53

The two-tailed p-value was calculated as 0.529 that is larger than the significance value of 0.05 on a 95% confidence level. The p-value of the Mann-Whitney U test was shown in the

last row of the table above. This value of 0.529 needed to be converted to the appropriate one-tailed p-value as this hypothesis is directional. This was calculated by using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 1 - (\text{two-tailed } p\text{-value} / 2) &= \text{one-tailed } p\text{-value} \\
 1 - (0.529 / 2) &= \text{one-tailed } p\text{-value} \\
 1 - (0.2645) &= \text{one-tailed } p\text{-value} \\
 \text{one-tailed } p\text{-value} &= 0.74
 \end{aligned}$$

Since the one-tailed p-value of 0.74 was not smaller than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis for H_2 cannot be rejected and therefore the findings of the independent samples t-test were confirmed.

H_3 : Male film attendees will more readily accept weapon placements than female film attendees.

The formulation of this alternative hypothesis stated that there was a difference between groups. As there was more of a difference between males than females in their acceptance of ethically charged weapons, therefore it was defined as a one-tailed hypothesis. Table 7 below depicts a comparison of the acceptability of weapons between males and females.

Table 7: Group statistics comparing gender with weapons

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
WEAPONS	Male	92	3.31	1.11
	Female	122	3.86	0.92

A total of 92 males and 122 females answered the questions surrounding their perception of weapons as a placement in film. An average score of 3.31 and 3.86 on a five-point item-scale was calculated for both male and female respondents respectively. This therefore indicated that males had a neutral opinion towards weapons found in film whereas females had a relatively positive opinion towards it. The spread of female respondents' opinions were more concentrated around the positive option (standard deviation = 0.92) than that of the males less intensive spread around the neutral option (standard deviation = 1.11).

Table 8 below shows the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 8: Mann-Whitney U test measuring gender and weapons

Weapons	
Mann-Whitney U	3987.50
Wilcoxon W	8265.50
Z	-3.64
P-value	0.00

The two-tailed p-value was calculated as 0.00 that is smaller than the significance value of 0.05 on a 95% confidence level. The p-value of the Mann-Whitney U test was shown in the

last row of the table above. This value of 0.00 needed to be converted to the appropriate one-tailed p-value as this hypothesis is directional. This was calculated by using the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 1 - (\text{two-tailed p-value} / 2) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 1 - (0.000 / 2) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 1 - (0) &= \text{one-tailed p-value} \\
 \text{one-tailed p-value} &= 1.00
 \end{aligned}$$

Since the one-tailed p-value of 1.00 was not smaller than the significance value of 0.05, the null hypothesis for H_3 cannot be rejected and therefore the findings of the independent samples t-test were confirmed.

LIMITATIONS

Data collection was restricted to students found at a tertiary institution in Pretoria in the age group of 18 to 24, which possibly introduced a level of bias that may not have been representative of the population. This study was also limited in the products shown in scenes of a subjectively compiled film clip as many more can be considered from numerous other films.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

New technologies, integrated marketing communications and social trends are likely to activate brand placement to evolve. To fully analyse these changes and implement marketing strategies thereof, benchmark studies are needed. As the respondents fell into the age category of 18 to 24, marketers cannot only rely on product placements in film and broadcast programmes as the main communication medium with the intention to increase sales. The impact of ethically charged product placements is influenced by the values, the acceptability and the trends of society at a given time. No statistically significant differences occurred with male and female perceptions of ethically charged products in the above results. This could be a result of the way in which society views tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and weapons. However, marketers and researchers can consider the following recommendations with regard to ethically charged product placements in future:

Wiles & Danielova (2006:4) explain the general need to investigate which film product placement strategies maximize shareholder value. Since ethically charged product placements in programmes evoke more emotional feelings in consumers it could easily impact more negatively on shareholder value. It is therefore imperative that this gap be addressed.

Source Watch (2006:2) states that brand names would be more acceptable where product placements are permissible. Full disclosure of brand names do not necessarily impact on consumers, as it is often in the background, small in size and the focus is primarily on the storyline and events in the scene. It is therefore recommended that disclosure should receive new attention by marketing researchers.

Product placement are not only restricted to film and broadcast programmes as the paramount communication vehicles. Technological advancements opened a window of opportunities for marketers. The accessibility of mobile communication vehicles with its accessibility to ethically charged product placements to these age groups need investigation. Cohen (2006:3) explains the “seamless integration” of a product into virtual mobile placements is extremely difficult. These technological advances pose new challenges to marketers and advertisers that necessitate investigation. Product placements are also not restricted to the visual media. Audio media also repeat brand names. The context in which the brand names are uttered could also influence the reputation of brand names.

Realism could be investigated to determine whether ethically charged product placements enhance the portrayal of every day life. This will also address the diminishing lines between entertainment and marketing, particularly as Russell (2002:315) states, harmful and regulated products. The European Television Without Frontiers Directive (TVWF) according to Schejter (2004:12) refers to this type of integrated marketing communication vehicle as “surreptitious” advertising. Tobacco products, alcoholic beverages and weapons were randomly selected as products placed in film and broadcast programmes. Medical products such as personal hygiene products and contraceptives could impact differently on males and females. It is recommended that product categories be analysed in future.

The possible impact of branded entertainment (“Where an entire television show is sponsored as part of a marketing campaign for a product” Source Watch, 2007:1) on the South African consumer market needs to be investigated.

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