

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution:</p> <p>Royal Holloway, University of London</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment:</p> <p>C19 - Business & Management Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study:</p> <p>Informing Regulation and Public Debate about UK Television Product Placement</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research on the effect of television product placement on young UK viewers has contributed to a change in UK policy, in that the Labour government reversed its opposition to product placement, and Ofcom changed its regulations. The research also contributed to the wider public debate on the topic by presenting evidence to dispel some of the myths and misinformation around the effects of product placement. The topic remains live even though the argument in favour of paid-for placement was accepted by Ofcom in 2011. The market has not developed as the industry hoped and Royal Holloway researchers continue to contribute their expertise to the industry discussion.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>This research was the first in the UK to examine television product placement - the promotional technique of featuring brands in the scene or script of TV entertainment - from the perspective of young viewers.</p> <p>Research by Hackley (who joined Royal Holloway in 2004) into product placement included supervision of a PhD study by Dr Amy Tiwsakul (now of Queen Mary, University of London), that formed the initial research. The thesis was completed at Royal Holloway (publication 4) in 2008, and Hackley acted as co-author on the early papers that reported the findings of the PhD study. He subsequently extended the initial study conceptually and empirically into policy related issues, and Hackley is lead author on the subsequent papers related to policy matters.</p> <p>At the time, there were very few studies of product placement focusing on television, and none based on UK TV. Research used interviews and discussion groups with young, UK-based TV viewers. The thematic analysis of transcripts articulated the experiential perspective of participants and hence resonated with the TV companies as the voice of the consumer. The research engaged with TV viewers in two countries, the UK and Thailand, but the impact resulted from the publication of the UK phase of the study.</p> <p>Previous research had focused largely on surveys of American audiences' attitudes to product placement in movies. This innovative study was able to articulate the positive views of UK TV viewers towards TV product placement, at a time when Parliament was set against allowing UK TV companies to earn revenue from it. At the time the research was undertaken, the possibility of changing Ofcom regulations to allow UK TV channels and programme makers to earn revenue from product placement was beginning to be discussed at ministerial level.</p> <p>Initial findings from this research were published before the completion of Tiwsakul's thesis in a</p>

paper in 2005 in *International Journal of Advertising* (publication 1). The research indicated that consumers felt entirely at ease with product placement provided it was done subtly and was consistent with the dramatic entertainment in terms of plot and genre coherence. Extensions of the research were subsequently published in three more papers (publications 2, 3 and 5, including one study on product placement ethics with ethics specialist Dr. Lutz Preuss (at Royal Holloway since 2002). A 2012 publication (6) illustrates the continuing salience of the topic as the implications of the new regulations play out in the industry.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Tiwsakul, R.A., Hackley, C. and Szmigin, I. (2005). Explicit, non-integrated product placement in British television programmes. *International Journal of Advertising*. 24 (1), 95-111
2. Tiwsakul, R.A. and Hackley, C. (2006). Young Thai and UK Consumers' Experiences of Television Product Placement- Engagement, Resistance and Objectification. In: Craig-Lees, M., Gregory, G. and Davis, T. *Borderless Consumption: Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research Volume 7*. 7th ed. Duluth MN: Association for Consumer Research. 371-376.
3. Hackley, C. and Tiwsakul, R.A. (2006). Entertainment Marketing and Experiential Consumption. *Journal of Marketing Communications*. 12 (1), 63-75.
4. Tiwsakul, R.A. (2008) *The meaning of 'Kod-sa-na-faeng': An interpretive exploration of consumers' experience of television programme product placement in the United Kingdom and Thailand*. PhD thesis, Royal Holloway University of London.
5. Hackley, C., Tiwsakul, R.A. and Preuss, L. (2008). An Ethical Evaluation of Product Placement - A Deceptive Practice?. *Business Ethics- A European Review*. 17 (2), 109-120.
6. Hackley, C. and Hackley (née Tiwsakul), R.A.. (2012). Unpaid product Placement: The Elephant in the Room in the UK's New Paid-For Product Placement Market. *International Journal of Advertising*. 31 (4), 703-718.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The impact has been two-fold. Firstly, the research constitutes a unique academic contribution to the public understanding of product placement in the context of policy debate informing the change in UK media (Ofcom) regulations in 2011 allowing, for the first time, UK television companies to profit from product placement. (Product placement in UK TV has been estimated to have the potential to be worth £30 million per annum to UK TV revenues.) Through contributions to national broadcast media discussions and references in international print media, the research has informed an evidence-based public debate about product placement. Secondly, there has been a direct contribution to the policy debate through published contributions to Westminster 'E-Forum' briefings and to the Ofcom consultations, alongside other policy comment that was picked up by trade and national media.

The initial research first came to public notice in 2006 when source 1 below was picked up by the ITV company (the UK's biggest commercial TV channel). It was the only UK academic study that was cited in ITV's 2006 response to the first UK Government consultation on product placement policy.

The prevailing view in government at that time was to leave the ban on paid-for product placement

in place, and the issue was consequently stalled for some time. The argument against allowing paid for product placement in UK TV, repeated by several ministers and supported by some audience lobby groups, was that TV companies profiting from product placement would result in a decline in the creative quality of UK TV programming. Branded placements would intrude into the programming in inappropriate and artificial ways, detracting from the creative quality of the entertainment. During 2008, Hackley argued in a policy meeting in Westminster that ministers' resistance to paid-for product placement was based on a profound misunderstanding of what it entailed. Some ministers thought TV drama would become nothing more than a promotional vehicle; Hackley argued that this fear was misconceived.

The research findings were then picked up by the national media, including the BBC Radio 4 consumer affairs programme *You and Yours* in November 2008 (source 2). BBC Radio 4's *You and Yours* is the leading national radio consumer affairs programme and regularly attracts an audience reach of 3 million per programme.

Subsequently, the debate continued with new consultations, against a backdrop of stubborn resistance from government ministers. Hackley was again invited to speak on the topic on *You and Yours* in early 2009, when the outcome of the consultation was imminent. In early 2009 the then Minister for Culture, Ben Bradshaw MP, announced that the ban would remain. In March 2009 Hackley wrote a direct critique of Bradshaw's position published in full on a popular marketing and media industry website called *UTalk Marketing* (source 3). Subsequently, in September 2009, Bradshaw's replacement as Media and Culture Secretary announced a U-turn. The Government would, in fact, rescind the ban, subject to the details being worked out through a further public consultation. The announcement took the industry by surprise, and there was no indication from government of what tipped the balance of policy opinion. It was clear that ITV had lobbied government, but Hackley's contributions appeared to be the only independent voice expressing positive views about the change.

The impact, in summary, achieved reach and significance beyond dissemination and/or engagement in the sense that the research was spontaneously adopted by users (media agencies such as New Media Group and consumer affairs journalists at the BBC and elsewhere) and taken on by media owners (ITV) to inform public understanding and policy debate on a topic of great topical importance to the UK TV industry, UK TV viewers, and UK government policy makers. The contribution was critical of publicly announced UK government policy - a policy which was later reversed, making the contribution notable for its critical impact.

The continuing influence of the research is reflected in invitations to comment on the topic in trade and general media. Examples include invited comment in the national press of Australia and the UK (sources 4, 6 and 10) and a story by a rights organisation detailing Hackley's part in the unfolding policy debate (source 5). Hackley has highlighted serious problems with the way the new market is functioning and the leading product placement agencies in the UK and Hollywood have cited his comments and research (sources 7 and 8) as have popular websites (source 9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Link to the ITV consultation document (2006) in which the first paper from the study Tiwsakul et al (2005) was the only cited UK research:

http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/consultations/product_placement/responses/itv_smg.

[pdf](#)

2. Link to Hackley live interview arguing in favour of allowing paid-for product placement on UK TV, BBC Radio 4 consumer affairs programme 'You and Yours', 7th November 2008, an early example of the research findings being picked up by the national media:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWalc5cUoP4&feature=youtu.be>
3. Link to advertising trade website, Utalk Marketing, which picked up an opinion piece Hackley wrote for a Royal Holloway PR and published it just after the initial policy declaration against allowing paid-for product placement on UK TV before the policy u-turn:
Hackley, 'Is Andy Burnham Right to Ban Product Placement on UK Television?' March 16 2009
<http://www.utalkmarketing.com/pages/Article.aspx?ArticleID=13378>
4. Link to Melbourne Age feature illustrating the spread of the influence of the research and the researchers as sources of insights into product placement July 21 2009:
<http://www.theage.com.au/business/transforming-the-future-of-advertising-20090720-dqu7.html>
5. Link to a 'rights organisation' website that quotes from Hackley's published comments in an article describing the evolution of the policy debate (July, 2010) 'Ofcom Delays product Placement' in Freshties a rights organisation website:
<http://www.freshties.com/index.php?action=blog&subaction=showpost&postID=3182>
6. Link to another live interview with Hackley on BBC Radio 4 'You and Yours' on product placement in films, February 11th 2011, illustrating the continuing impact of the researchers in the media as a source of product placement insights.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00f1336>
7. Link to New Media Group, the UK's oldest and largest product placement agency, that links Hackley's blog piece on the failure of the new regulations in November 2011:
<http://www.newmediagroup.co.uk/?p=777>
8. Link to a Hollywood placement agency's market report on the UK that cites one of the studies from the research, illustrating issues around the policy angle, in July 2012:
<http://hollywoodbranded.com/report-the-potential-effectiveness-of-product-placement-in-the-uk>
9. Link to popular web-based news site feature article citing the latest paper from the research on the dysfunctionality of the new market in November 2012;
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2012/11/16/product_placements/
10. Link to *Daily Mirror* story on product placement in *Superman - Man Of Steel* June 12th 2013 illustrating the continuing impact of the researchers as the go-to source for product placement insights/quotes:
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/lifestyle/going-out/film/superman-film-man-steel-rakes-1947071>