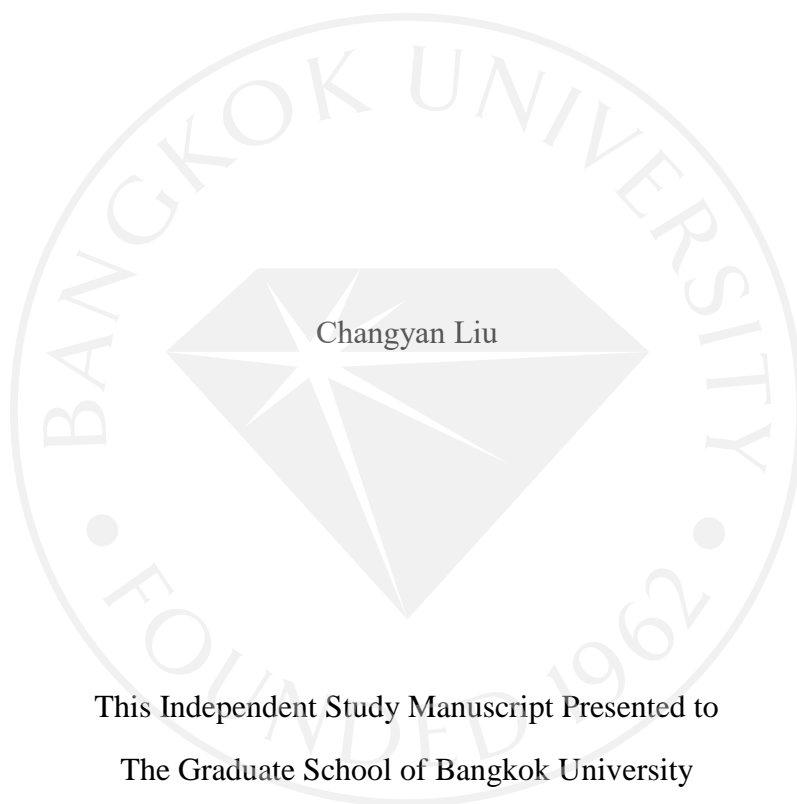


PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN CHINESE VARIETY SHOW : A CASE STUDY OF BACK
TO FIELDS



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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of product placement in the Chinese variety show, back to the Fields to explore the implementation of this disguised form of advertising in China. It investigated how different types and levels of product placement, and product category were applied in this show. Using the content analysis method, this study adopted the purposive sampling to take 20 episodes of the Back to Fields from the first season to the third season during 2017 and 2019 as samples according to the broadcast order. Descriptive statistics in terms of frequency and percentage reveal that scene placement and shallow placement were the most frequently type and level used for this show. Among ten product categories, food and beverage were placed the most, followed by communication and IT services, and transportation. These findings not only provide strategic implications for marketers and advertising practitioners in China, but also serve as a reference for the development and innovation of the advertising industry.

Keywords: Chinese Variety Show, Back to the Fields, Product Placement, Advertising

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Finally, the moment has come, when four seasons have been spent. This independent study is a period on this learning journey, and there are numerous people who have supported and helped me to get here. I don't know how to express my sincere gratitude.

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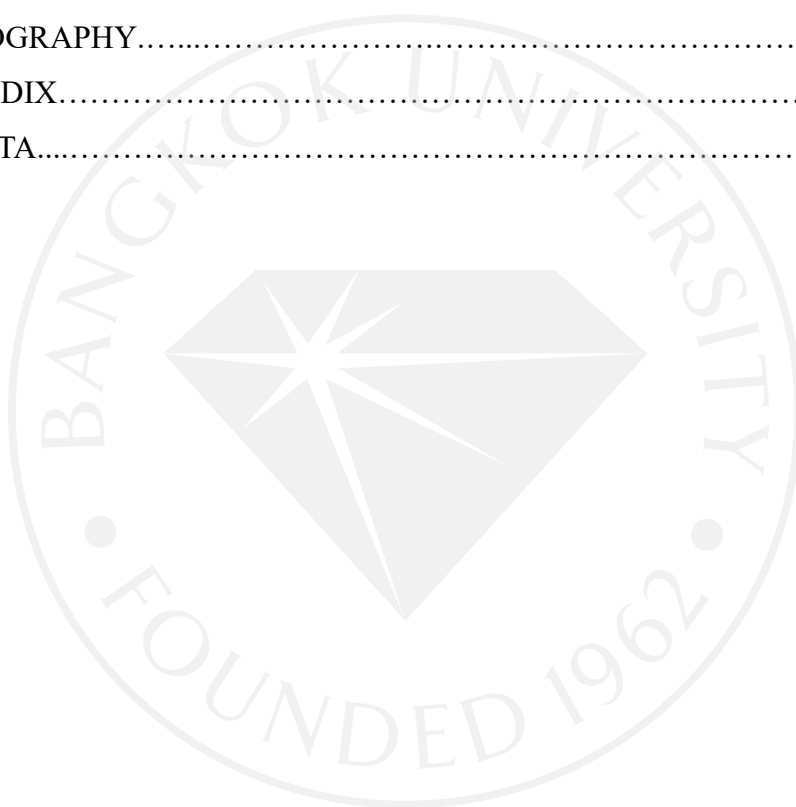
Changyan Liu

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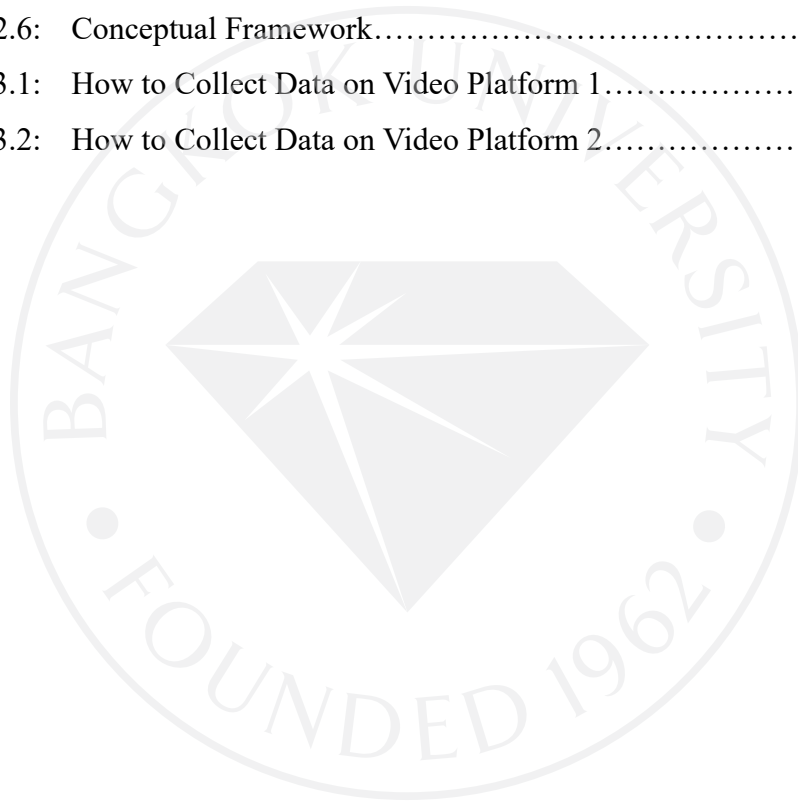


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of six sections : rationale and problem statement, objectives of study, scope of study, research questions, significance of study, and definition of terms. It aims to give readers a better understanding of the product placement in Chinese variety show, back to Fields. This chapter contains some basic concepts and the development history of Chinese advertising and product placement. Describing development of advertising and product placement in China helps readers to understand background and significance of this research.

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

The media in China is continuously evolving and the media market is becoming highly competitive. The audience is getting more and more information and having more choices of products. Advertising is also becoming more diverse as the media landscape changes, and the quality of television advertising is improving.

1.1.1 Advertising in China

According to relevant papers, advertising is a foreign word, which is generally believed to have originated from the Latin Word Adventure (Zhang, & Li, 2011, p. 7). Advertising in China originated from commodity trading at the end of society, when people began to advertise during the exchange process. Advertising in its infancy was an unconscious propaganda and communication activity arising from the process of commodity exchange, and this behavior gradually became a means for people to consciously market and advertise their goods (Zhao, 2008).

The advertising industry has the attributes of cultural industry, occupies a large proportion in the cultural industry, and is a pillar industry in the cultural industry. Zhang and Li (2011, p. 7) found that "since the reopening of China's advertising market in 1979, China's advertising industry has grown rapidly and becomes one of the fastest growing industries in China, From 2006 to 2009 with an average growth rate of 30.8%, 27.7%, 24.8% and 24.3%, consecutively"

However, as the media continues to expand, advertising is not regulated; the market begins to be chaotic. Viewers begin to suffer from fatigue, and traditional

advertising revenues are on a downward trend. In the new media environment, television advertising is becoming more and more abundant (Zhao, 2008). Traditional TV ads are no longer able to meet the needs of viewers; the profits brought by advertising are declining. Viewers' resenting attitude towards advertising has been developed, and advertisers have started to look for new directions (An, 2019).

After the advertising frenzy, the introduction of relevant policies in the Chinese market has shortened the advertising time to some extent, and the copyright fees for traditional TV variety shows are getting higher. Therefore, individual advertisers are beginning to seek new advertising channels (Zhao, 2008). With the development of the media industry in China, the current saturation of the traditional advertising is high and advertisers have limited choices. Therefore, placing products in media content which is technically called "product placement," and full media are beginning to be sought after by advertisers and TV programs are becoming a good platform and choice (Wang, 2001).

1.1.2 Advertising in Chinese Variety Shows

Currently, advertising is present in every part of our lives. Advertising has proven that it can have an impact on a huge market, and more advertisers in the industry are considering the impact of advertising. Product placement" has become the choice of most products in China (An, 2019). Many businesses are also making product placement their first choice. Incorporating advertisements into scenes around the audience makes it easier for users to accept the brand.

The first product placement appeared in the 1951 movie "The African Queen". Through the reenactment of scenes, it makes the audience remember the advertised product and the advertised brand deeply, thus achieving the purpose of spreading the brand message and image. Due to its hidden nature, it is also known as soft advertising and hidden advertising (Guo, 2007).

Placement advertising is a new type of textual expression and marketing method that deeply grafted advertising text and movie text. Under the market economy environment of capital operation and consumerism, product placement has taken root and developed rapidly in various film and television works such as movies, TV dramas and variety shows (Zhang & Li, 2019). Product placement is frequently used in American reality TV shows. In Fox's reality show American Idol, various

products are skillfully placed in its content. In China, this type of advertising has quickly become a new dynamic in the advertising market since the advent of product placement in the Chinese market in 1992 (Mao & Gan, 2011).

As product placement continues to permeate various film and television content, advertisers have found that variety shows are best for their entertainment properties and the integration of media content with advertising content. Accordingly, variety shows are also the media content type with the largest advertising market and the most intensive product placement in film and television productions (Zhang & Li, 2019).

Data from 2018 show that there were more than 140 TV variety shows, in which more than 600 brand advertisements were placed, with an average of about five advertising brands per show (He, 2021). Variety programming has a diverse genre. As one of the matrixed and systematic communication channels, advertising placements are varied and diverse. Therefore, product placement in variety shows has huge development potential and high brand communication prices (An, 2019). The advertising market size of China's variety shows in 2009 was nearly 22 billion yuan, an increase of 16.12% and 10.15% year-on-year (An, 2019).

In the first half of 2009, the market number of variety shows in China reached 546, including a total of 84 reality shows. The market size accounted for almost half of the entire variety show market, and the number of brands choosing to advertise exceeded 50% (Nine Meta Data, 2019). Compared with traditional TV programs, variety shows have wider coverage and more diverse target audience levels in the communication process, making them a new way for advertisers to place advertisements. Product placement in variety shows is not only harsher and fails to achieve the expected effect, but also changes the viewing experience of the audience.

How to innovate product placement advertising in a reasonable way has become an important task (Zhu, 2019). In today's media environment, how to effectively strike the balance between advertising and content in TV variety programs, and to reasonably express the demands of a TV commercial is a problem that producers must face and solve.

1.1.3 Advertising in Back to Fields

Back to Fields is a large variety show launched by Hunan TV and one of the typical representatives of Chinese variety shows. Back to Fields has rapidly increased in attention after its broadcast in 2017 and has become a typical case of success in the development of Chinese variety shows and has been welcomed by the Chinese market. It has provided new opportunities for product placement and is favored by many advertisers.

Back to Fields is an excellent example of television advertising in the form of product placement, and the products featured in the program have been well received by viewers, with the use of placement advertising being copied by other programs. Not only is it a commercial success, but also a cultural success, realizing the common gain of profit and spirit, which has rarely happened in the history of Chinese variety shows. The variety show has been built into a large IP, and the subsequent shows have received a lot of audience attention. It is an important process to understand the TV advertisements to balance the relationship between corporate advertisements, "slow variety shows" and consumers, and to solve the problems of product placement.

The advertisement for the Back to Fields TV variety show is considered to be an excellent example of product placement on TV program. Although the traces of advertising can be felt, the advertising and life are artistically handled, so that the audience can feel the joy of life when they are in the environment of advertising placement, which satisfies the viewers' spiritual needs and then meets the requirements of brand promotion (Li, 2016).

TV variety shows are market products in pursuit of profit and cannot be separated from corporate advertising placement, which tend to interrupt consumers' total viewing experience, change the leisurely atmosphere in the programs, and trigger negative emotions of consumers (Guo, 2007).

With the development of the economy, society and media, consumers have begun to have a different view of product placement, which usually generates bad feedback. Interestingly, Chinese audiences have a good opinion of the many advertisements in Back to Fields (He, 2021). However, previous studies reveal that most researchers who studied this variety show started from observing the content of the program, investigating the production of the program, and editing the footage for

research, without further understanding of the program's advertisements. To fill the gap of research in this area, this paper examines the advertising part of the program in detail through the method of content analysis by analyzing and discussing the specific ways in which product placement are presented in programs. As a communication researcher, studying the product placement in *Back to Fields* is worth as it is an excellent case study that will enable advertisers to think more deeply about the practical use of advertising.

1.2 Objectives of Study

This study aims to achieve the following three research objectives:

1.2.1 To examine how Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, uses product placement in terms of placement type.

1.2.2 To examine how Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, uses product placement in terms of placement degree.

1.2.3 To examine how Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, uses product placement in terms of product category.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study adopts a quantitative approach, using quantitative content analysis to examine how products are advertised in the Chinese television variety show *Back to the Fields*. In particular, it aims to specifically quantify and analyze their program content in the form of product placement. The scope of the study includes the first to the third season of the variety show, which aired on Hunan TV between January 15, 2017 and July 19, 2019, for a total of 43 episodes.

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following three research questions.

RQ#1: How does Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, use product placement in terms of placement type?

RQ#2: How does Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, use product placement in terms of placement degree?

RQ#3: How does Chinese TV variety show, Back to Fields, use product placement in terms of product category?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In the current cultural and entertainment environment, the message of the brand is strategically integrated into the communication content. Product placement is expected to influence consumer behavior for a product or service. Findings from the case study of advertising types and modes of product placement in this successful TV variety show can enhance the sustainable development of future advertising. In particular, findings of this study will benefit the following groups:

As for TV producers, the findings of this paper can provide insights for relevant variety show producers to create the program content that is not only entertaining, but also making products or services desirable by Chinese audiences.

In addition, findings of this study will enable advertising practitioners to provide better advertising practices for variety show both in the Chinese market and in other Asian markets that share similar cultural values.

Finally, findings of this study will promote the joint efforts of advertising brands and the media producers to find a good balance of product placement and media content. This good balance will result in sustainable development of product placement in a variety of media content such as film, music video, and online game.

1.6 Definition of Terms

This section provides an operational definition of the following terms:

1.6.1 Variety shows

Variety shows refer to TV shows that are spread through the media of TV and participated by the public. They are characterized by aesthetics, entertainment, appreciation, and fun (Tian, 2012). The program conveys entertainment and joy to the audience through various art forms. With the development of the media, variety show is no longer limited to traditional TV platforms. Variety show can also be broadcasted on mobile terminal platform and television. It is a comprehensive, interactive, and entertaining TV program. The study mainly refers to Chinese variety show called Back to Fields.

1.6.2 Product Placement

Product placement in media content refers to the placement of advertisements into media content through various artistic means. The product or service and its brand name, trademark, and other information are hidden in the media content (Li, 2016). Using media content such as variety shows as a carrier, the representative symbols and contents of the products and services are combined with the plot, dialogues, and props of the variety show.

Product placement makes full use of the audience's dependence on and obedience to the use of the main character, prompting the audience to shift from watching to buy. With the increasing frequency of product placement in film and television works, and the increasing profits gained by enterprises through product placement, product placement have become an important form of advertising (Guo, 2007).

1.6.3 Type of product placement

Product placement can be classified according to both degree and mode. In terms of the placement mode, product placement can be categorized into five types : 1) props, 2) dialogue, 3) plot, 4) scenes, and 5) role (Wang, 2012).

1) Props : Products or services appear as props in movies, TV dramas, and variety shows, and are often used. It is the most often mode chosen by advertisers.

2) Dialogue : Showing brand connotation and products through lines and dialogues. This mode makes it easy to get the audience's empathy.

3) Plot : A plot is intentionally designed for the product. The product is the main character, the character goes to the brand store to buy the particular product, or the product becomes the key to drive the story and promote the product.

4) Scene : Producers arrange the items that can show the product or brand information in the location where audiences can often see. For example, the logo in front of the interview microphone.

5) Role : The product or brand does not become a prop in product placement, but a role. The product or brand can become the topic and interact with the surrounding environment.

1.6.4 Level of Product Placement

In terms of the placement degree, product placement can be divided into three levels: 1) shallow, 2) medium, and 3) deep (Wang, Han, Lisa, Ji & Hsin, 2009).

1) Shallow level: The information of the product is simply placed in the scene, and the product information can be clearly seen, but there is no interaction and the audience does not remember deeply.

2) Medium level: The characters in the scene use the advertised product and mention the brand in the dialogue and use, promoting the characteristics of the brand.

3) Deep level: The product is perfectly integrated with the scene, and the scene characters and the product create a tacit understanding. The product becomes the link that must be used to drive the development of the story, and the audience clearly understands the excellence of the product and the message conveyed by the brand, and develops a good feeling for the product.

1.6.5 Product Category

This concept refers to various types of products placed in the media content. In this study, it is divided into 10 categories: 1) Communication services, 2) transportation, 3) food and beverage, 4) network services, 5) real estate, 6) financial services, 7) daily necessities, 8) electrical appliances, 9) cosmetics, and 10) retail services (Jiang & Wu, 2021).

1.6.6 Advertising Message

This study refers to the content of the advertisement that a branding company desire to communicate to the advertising audience. It is the conceptual message that is delivered to the audience through the advertising medium (He, 2021).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature on product placement in terms of type and level of product placement. It includes a review of past research on product placement and related theories. The review leads to the development of conceptual framework which provides a basis for quantitative analysis of product placement in the Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*.

2.1 Review of Previous Studies

2.1.1 Product Placement

The research on product placement is mainly conducted from the perspective of communication and advertising. It mainly includes the development of TV advertising the form of product placement, empirical studies as well as the effectiveness and evaluation of the composition of TV product placement.

Product placement is an advertising model that emerged after continuous experiments for the media and the market. Product placement refers to the process of incorporating brand product promotion into television programs to influence the program viewers in an invisible and unnoticeable way (Guo, 2007). Xue (2007) believes that product placement is the integration of iconic symbols of products and brands into the communication media for the purpose of promoting the products. Meanwhile, Tsai, Wen-Ko & Liu (2007) argue that while traditional advertising aims to attract viewers' attention to promote a product, product placement conveys the intended message in a way that minimizes distractions.

Wu (2010) found that product placement could be used in various media to make the audience mandatory to receive publicity and bring great benefits to the brand and company. With the help of the star effect, product placement reduces the cost and risk of advertising and attracts the audience to imitate consumption. Finally, product placement can be widely disseminated and the duration of advertising is long. Product placement will follow the development of the information age and become a new form of advertising, which has the advantage of surpassing traditional advertising,

and its excellent communication effect and commercial value are recognized by advertising researchers.

Guo (2013) claims that product placement can be traced globally back to the appearance of branded cars in early 20th century comedy movies, and the earliest documented product placement is the 1951 film *The African Queen*, which featured the characteristic gin fizz logo. Product placement has been used repeatedly in movies ever since. Product placement has successfully become the marketing technique of choice in television advertising campaigns.

With the widespread use of product placement, researchers have begun to evaluate product placement negatively and look for solutions. Sangita (2021) argues that with the rapid development of product placement in recent years. Brand corporations make excessive use of advertising to increase economic efficiency. These corporations neglect the quality of program production, which seriously interferes with viewers' appreciation and causes resentment, and in turn affecting the ratings and satisfaction of programs.

Based on Wang (2022), product placement has been accepted by viewers. It has gradually replaced traditional TV commercials as the mainstream of the advertising industry, and advertising has become an important source of funding in the process of making film and television productions. However, the integration of advertisements into program content has also created some problems. The development of the media has also made it easier for viewers to give feedback, and bad opinions can affect the program and then the negative publicity effect of advertisements. In addition, some excessive product placement content has affected the viewing experience of the audience and needs to be further improved. The reasons for the formation are diverse, and it is important to learn from good product placement cases so that we can learn how to improve the use of product placement.

2.1.1.1 Type of Product Placement

There are many different categories of product placement, and researchers have classified different categories at different times as new forms of product placement have emerged as a result of development and media advances.

Wang (2012) founds that Hollywood classic films contain a variety of product placement. According to Wang (2012), Hollywood movie product placement is classified into five types:

1) Prop placement: this type refers to the representative brand symbols as props, direct brand message. It is the most common way of placement. For example, James Bond uses various products in his movie *Specter*.

2) Scene placement: this type refers to the integration of products and brand symbols into the movie environment as part of the story, which is readily accepted by the audience. For example, in the Chinese movie *Dolla Rising*, chewing gum appears several times. It makes the audience feel that the heroine likes chewing gum.

3) Plot placement: this type refers to the brand or product is not just in a life scene or character dialogue, but becomes the reason and thread of the story. In some movies, the plot revolves around a cell phone, which is a product that needs to be publicized.

4) Dialogue placement: this type refers to putting a particular brand in the dialogue of the movie. In the movie "*Forrest Gump*," it involves uses of simple language mentioning the brand of soda, which reaped a lot of market sales through the advertisement in the movie.

5) Role placement: this type refers to putting a particular brand as a main character in the media. For example, the brothers in "*Haier Brothers*" are the main characters of the movie, which deepens people's understanding of the Haier brand. Figure 2.1 - Figure 2.5 present an example of the five types of product placement.

Figure 2.1: Prop placement in TV drama, Dearly Loved



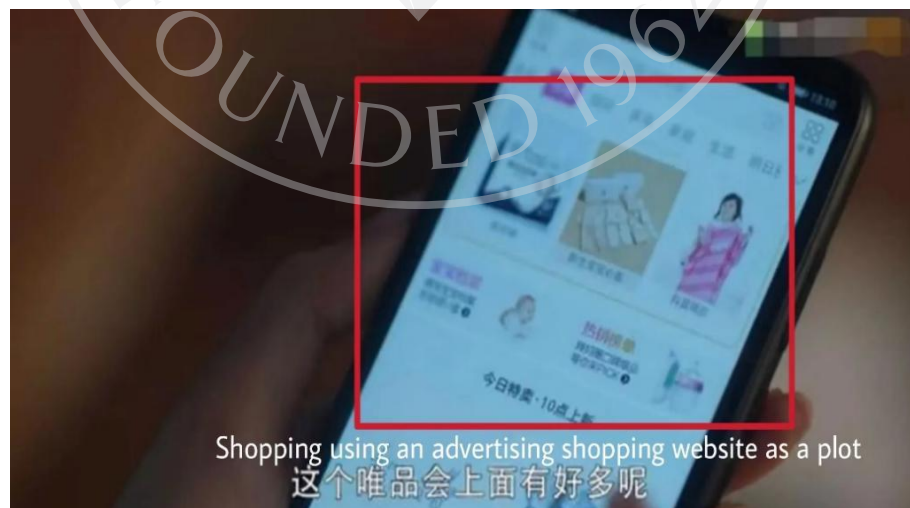
Source: Iqiyi. (2008a). *Tencent broadcast website: Dearly loved*. Retrieved from https://www.iqiyi.com/v_19rs007kqc.html?vfm=2008_aldbd&fv=p_02_01.

Figure 2.2: Scene placement in TV drama, Dear Guest House



Source: MangoTV. (2023). *Official video player website: Dear guest house.*
Retrieved from <https://www.mgtv.com/b/332059/7417803.html?cxid=95kqkw8n6>.

Figure 2.3: Plot placement in TV drama, Ode to Joy



Source: LeTV Video. (2018). *Official video player website: Ode to Joy.* Retrieved from https://www.le.com/ptv/vplay/29394106.html?ch=baidu_ffdsj&from=baiduso&site=baidu_all.

Figure 2.4: Dialogue placement in TV drama, Awkward Mom



Source: Ixigua. (2020). *Official video player website: Awkward Mom*. Retrieved from https://www.ixigua.com/6785109234167054862?utm_source=baidu_lvideo&wid.

Figure 2.5: Role placement in TV show, The Amazing Orcs



Source: Iqiyi. (2008b). *Official video player website: The Amazing Orcs*. Retrieved from https://www.iqiyi.com/v_19rrfm7ovo.html?vfm=2008_aldbd&fv=p_02_01.

Tu (2009) believes product placement started with dialogue placement and plot placement. From movies and TV, newspapers and magazines to the Internet and mobile phones, both forms and contents of expression are constantly changing and developing. The gradual diversification of new media has enriched the media involved in product placement, and the combination of film and television and product placement has become a popular mode of operation. Emerging media represented by the Internet and mobile communication provide more excellent choices for product placement and support for the future development of product placement types.

Chen and Zhao (2021) assert that advertising should be a combination of commercialism and artistry and an important part of social culture. Cultural placement is the concept of a culture built around product communication by advertising as a response to social consumer behavior. Cultural product placement is the best kind of advertising, where consumers are attracted to and accordingly buy the product in its cultural context. This is an important way to promote culture. With an inner curiosity about cultural content, people become interested in products and brands, and when faced with the same product, they tend to choose a product with a cultural context. In the process of getting the message, the viewer is already aware of the culture being transmitted.

Various studies on product placement in movies have been conducted by domestic and foreign academics to arrive at representative concepts. Product placement in films can be considered a conscious effort by advertisers to expose recognizable information about their goods and services in films in order to achieve commercial benefits (Li, 2021).

Most of the product placement used in Hollywood films is plot placement, with a strong focus on integrating the brand naturally into the plot structure of the film, with few deliberate and direct product placements. The researcher examined 37 films with placement advertising in the Chinese market since the new century, and the least used placement method is plot placement, with 7%, and the most used is prop placement (43%) and scene placement (38%). When brand placement conflicts with movie scenes and plots, it will inevitably cause the audience to resent and destroy their attitude and memory of the brand. Advertisements in movies often appear in the

form of "hard" and do not fit perfectly with the movie itself, resulting in the general dissatisfaction of consumers who choose the right and correct type of products to have excellent advertising effects (He & Li, 2015).

Product placement must attract audiences through the storyline, character image, and environmental atmosphere, etc. Different types of films have different choices of advertising placement, and small-budget commercial films have become the main target of product placement choices. The placement of props and scenes is compatible with the narrative setting of the film, which will not make audiences feel "disconnected" from the film, but also make them accept the product's message very naturally. Advertising placement in films should consider whether the content of the advertisement is in line with the nature of the film media, the fit between the product itself and the content and artistic expression of the film, and seek strategies for personalized product placement in different types of films, with different genres applicable to different types of films (Xi, 2021).

Prop plot placement is a kind of placement method that can easily influence the viewers' perception by using relevant commodity props and combining them with the storyline of TV series, with a display time of 5~10 seconds and a high number of appearances. Since 2017, product placement with props has become popular all over the Internet. Now there are more props in the form of product placement, and viewers generally accept this form. If this form of product placement can be used skillfully and efficiently, it can directly transform the plot into sales, increase the awareness of the advertised brand, and win the audience's approval (Li, 2021).

With the development of product placement in movies, media practitioners have discovered that product placement can also work in television programs. It was in television series and movie dramas that placement advertising really took off. The average TV insertion ad is priced by the second, and the shift to product placement may have several times more time, more screen time, and lower prices. Product placement has gained popularity on Chinese TV platforms, especially after the release of a policy restricting advertising in the Chinese market. The number of product placement in TV dramas has shown a dramatic increase, and even advertisers are using modern brand symbols directly in dramas with ancient settings (Peng & Liao, 2015).

No matter the way of advertising placement or the characteristics of the product, it should be linked to the development of the plot and the positioning of the product and the audience. Placement is not an independent commercial film, and generally does not occupy a specific advertising time slot, although its purpose is also to carry out the promotion and marketing of goods or brands, product placement, and TV drama and TV programs are a whole. Simple product placement can no longer adapt to the current audience and market. Advertising will certainly bring more pleasant enjoyment to audiences in a more flexible and natural way, promoting the joint development of products and TV programs (Wu, 2020).

Due to the contradiction between the advertiser's demand for benefits and the aesthetic requirements of the audience for film and television dramas, product placement takes the form of inserted advertisements. However, the characters and texts break the image of characters set in the film and television drama, and even affect the integrity of the film and television drama. Film and TV drama producers need to screen the placement products and should have a setting for the placed products at the early stage of production that is in line with the content of the film and TV drama. Different types need to be used in TV dramas according to different needs, among which props, as well as scene placement, are the most frequently used types (Chen, 2020).

2.1.1.2 Level of Product Placement

Although low-level simple product placement can increase the exposure of the placed brand, it tends to interfere with the audience's processing of normal video content information, thus reducing the audience's evaluation of the placed brand. On the other hand, although high-level product placement can effectively prevent audiences from stimulating resistance to advertising messages, overly implicit product placement is often overlooked by audiences, which reduces audiences' brand memory and advertising effectiveness. The cognitive, affective, and behavioral response processes of audiences to different levels of product placement may be influenced by individual cognitive demand differences. Further research is needed. Product placement salience has a positive effect on brand memory and a negative effect on brand attitude and purchase intention (Ye, Guo, Li & Hu, 2021). The length and moderate repetition of placement advertisements can positively affect the audience's

memory, but too much-repeated exposure can instead reduce the audience's memory level. The degree of product placement is divided into three stages, which are shallow medium and high (Wang, Han, Wortman, Jeong & Ting, 2009).

Viewers watching product placement will first have a general perception of the advertised brand or product before they have further internalized, digested, and made feedback on the product. As the degree of product placement increases, consumers' attitudes towards the brand of placement advertising are further enhanced. That is, when the brand is more relevant to the plot, consumers will process the brand information in the placement ad more positively and develop a better attitude toward the brand. Placement ads need to be selected with attention to the degree of product placement and need to consider the relevance of the placement ads to the plot so that the brand can be better integrated with the program itself (Zhou & Wang, 2014).

When a placement ad is exposed, the audience will select the media content and the ad, and if sufficient attention resources cannot be allocated, the placement ad will not be processed effectively and no memory will be formed. The findings of the study show that significant placement features have better competitiveness, which is fully consistent with the findings of traditional studies, but for brands that are relatively unknown to the audience, more prominent placement with a combination of depth and shallowness is recommended. Familiar brands can be placed with a deeper degree of prominence to subconsciously influence viewers' choices. The producer must master the degree of product placement, otherwise, it will lead to the audience's negative attitude towards the placed brand.

2.1.1.3 Product Category of Product Placement

Researcher Mei (2012) views category as the classification of goods, and a sub-category represents a consumer need. And the famous research company, AC Nielsen, considers the category as a product category that consumers perceive based on consumer needs and buying behavior. Advertising categories are classified according to consumer needs, and the industry distribution of advertisers and advertising categories reflects some qualities of different media that attract advertisers. It can provide an important reference for us to investigate the competition and integration of media. The diversification of transaction scenarios also makes more businesses from online to offline in various industries become advertisers. The wide

participation of enterprises from different industries and scales in advertising makes the advertising industry more and more diverse. Product placement can provide advertisers with more targeted services in addition to exploring more personalized solutions. Spending on product placement is increasing for different types of products.

IAB makes advertisers into 20 broad industries. In the U.S. advertising market, the IAB classifies advertisers into the following broad categories based on the North American Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) manual: consumer-related, computer products, financial services, telecommunications, media, etc. In the Chinese market, the IAB reports that the category criteria used in China are derived from the SIC manual. The main categories are retail, automotive, entertainment, consumer packaged goods, leisure travel, computer products, financial services, communication services, medical services, and media. The product categories in the Chinese market have been merged and modified according to the national environment and foreign advertising classifications. The traditional advertising categories basically maintain the composition of the top ten categories of makeup, business services, beverages, food, pharmaceuticals, transportation, entertainment and leisure, real estate, liquor, and post and telecommunications (Dou, 2014).

In the 2020 China Advertising Illustrated, advertising products are divided into communication services, transportation, food and beverage, network services, real estate, financial services, daily necessities, electrical appliances, cosmetics, and retail services, which is more in line with the ever-changing advertising industry as technology advances. Various products have been increasing their input index through product placement to enhance consumers' impressions of brands and products and to promote consumers' purchase conversion. Each medium appeals to a specific audience, and the audience chooses the medium based on the content on it or its fulfillment of a certain function. The change in the category distribution of product placement can be considered as a change in the attractiveness of product placement to advertisers in different industries (Jiang & Wu, 2021).

2.1.2 Product Placement in Chinese Media

The product placement in Chinese media is nearly 50 years later than in the West (Tu, 2009), but after recognizing the huge potential of product placement in China, researchers began to study it, primarily in terms of its communication effects

and its development in the media sector, and think about product placement after its rapid development. In 2003, China issued the "Radio and Television Advertising Broadcast Management Method," which reduced the length of traditional advertisements. Xi (2021) proposes that in the new era of market-oriented economy and growing prosperity of consumer culture, advertising has evolved from simple symbolic placement of goods in the 1980s to commercial advertising collaboration in the 1990s. With brands such as China Mobile and Canon appearing in the movie "A World Without Thieves" (2004) generated 40 million RMB in advertising revenue, product placement was familiarized as a new advertising method in China.

Product placement is more responsive to the changing needs and demands of audiences, and in recent years' product placement has been widely used in Chinese media, and has also been incredibly profitable. Tu (2009) states that the product placement market in China is constantly developing, with more and more types of media for product advertising and more product categories. The way product placement works has been changing non-stop, and an industrial chain of product placement is gradually forming.

Guo (2013) pointed out after the first China TV-Variety and Entertainment Programmed Market Report (2006 - 2007) released by the Sofre Research that the output value of place able advertising in China's TV variety and entertainment program advertising market was as high as about 1 billion yuan in just one year. Product placement has become a critical source of income for television media, it can be recognized that about 70% of the local Chinese audience does not reject product placement in film and television, and this product placement is full of market potential worthy of in-depth study. According to CTR Media information, the value of product placement in China has reached almost one billion yuan, and TV variety shows are taking the Chinese media advertising market by storm (Zhou, 2005). The popularity of variety shows in the Chinese market has shifted the attention of advertisers from traditional TV advertising to product placement in variety shows. Although this type of advertising does not expand the advertising market, it brings new experiences to the audience. Product placement in variety shows allows the advertisement to be presented to the audience in a variety of formats to achieve the best communication effect (He, 2021).

With the development of variety shows, product placement in famous variety shows has become popular. The product placement in the variety show, back to Fields, is efficient and can satisfy the advertising demands. Nevertheless, there are still problems in other Chinese variety shows, as the Chinese advertising market lacks emotional communication with the audience, and the product placement is rigid and problematic in terms of merging scenes (Zhou, 2005).

The development of product placement in the Chinese media needs a sustainable future. Advertising practitioners should combine the reality, start from the characteristics of the two industries, from the existing experience, and from the analysis of case programs to seek different types of product placement strategies, so that product placement can better achieve its promotional function while conforming to the norms of artistic creation, and make valuable advertisements that are representative of the times (Xi, 2021).

2.1.3 TV Reality Show

Reality TV is generally referred to as "Reality TV" or "Reality Show", and research on reality TV has been conducted in the fields of communication, sociology, psychology, narrative, political economy, feminism, and more. These studies involve theories and research methods from a variety of fields, including communication, sociology, psychology, narrative, political economy, and feminism. The PBS documentary "An American Family," which aired in 1973, is considered to be the first television program to have the basic elements of reality television. The True Man Show, an American film released in 1998, made the term "reality TV" popular (Zhang, 2021).

With the deepening of market economy, mass media are also included in the market competition system, and in order to attract more viewers and gain more economic benefits, and in response to the trend of the experience economy, TV workers began to use TV as a stage, use programs as props, and focus on the audience to create many experiential TV festivals that can make audiences participate and are worthy of their memories, the most representative of which is reality TV. Excellent reality shows are extremely dramatic and appealing to the audience, but unlike general virtual drama, it has only rules, no script, and the program presents only a record of real events (Miao, & Wang, 2014).

According to different classification criteria, reality TV shows can be divided into many format categories. However, it can be seen from these formats that they have some common characteristics: they are TV programs with the main broadcasting platform of television or online TV; the flow of the program is in a prescribed situation with a pre-given purpose; and the people involved in the program should have active or passive participation behaviors and be able to follow specific rules to complete the flow of the program (He, 2019).

Television reality shows are rapidly expanding worldwide with a wide variety of creative ideas that have led to the expansion of the genre of reality shows. TV reality shows strive to be authentic, but as a type of variety show, the level of post-production artistic processing also affects the quality of the show to some extent in order to attract the audience (Zhang, 2014).

Reality TV shows have rapidly become a case for imitation by TV stations around the world and have also sparked a global wave of reality TV shows. TV reality shows have the obvious characteristics of consumer culture, only in which all the behaviors that appear are everyday life, but are to be shown in the form of entertainment in the festival. Successful reality TV festivals can become a social entertainment experience, forming a social carnival for the masses (Wang, & Xu, 2010).

2.1.4 TV Reality Show in China

Initially, Chinese reality television programs operated in a single-mode, emphasizing the main position of the program and obtaining financial security through hard advertising. With the development of reality TV shows, which both renewed the TV program format and brought new advertising business opportunities, product placement began to be used throughout the program by establishing the audience's main status and continuously improving the added value of the program (Zhang, 2021). Reality TV programs can attract a huge audience to the development of reality TV programs, whether introduced or created, and it is believed that there is still a lot of room for its creation and survival in the Chinese TV market (Feng, 2014).

According to Chinese scholars, "reality TV as a TV program is a true record and artistic processing of the competitive behavior of voluntary participants in a prescribed situation and for a pre-determined purpose and in accordance with specific

rules. Chinese reality TV shows have matured and improved in course of exploration and have become one of the major TV genres now active on TV screens. Since 2003, reality TV has developed rapidly in the Chinese market and has begun to create local reality shows that suit the Chinese audience. 2005 saw the rapid development of reality TV shows in China, with the performance talent show genre becoming the most popular genre and the reality TV shows of the talent show borrowing foreign models and adding audience voting and other aspects to set off the craze of reality TV shows. Chinese reality TV shows are still imperfect, and there is still a big gap in terms of creative ability, production level, etc. compared with European and American shows, but they have won the recognition and love of viewers as a promising type of program (Zhang, 2014).

The macro-level research on the cultural context and future development of reality TV in China is much more than the micro-level research on the characteristics, format, and hosts of reality TV. There is a single research approach and fewer cases of empirical studies. The study of provincial TV reality shows is the top priority of domestic reality TV show research, and it should be said that the focus of the study is consistent with the current development of domestic reality TV shows. The key question in the development of reality TV shows in China lies in how provincial TV reality shows will develop in the future (Yang, 2013).

In 2005, the advertising of variety and entertainment programs in China reached 23 billion RMB, accounting for 12.6% of all TV advertising. So far, variety and entertainment programs have become the main platform for product placement in China. The best technique of product placement is to effectively communicate without the viewers' awareness so that they are aware of the presence of advertisements while watching the program but are not offended by them. Without disturbing the plot and emotional flow of the program, viewers form and increase their awareness of the brand while watching the program, and eventually reach their love for the brand (Lin, 2016).

Reality TV shows have a wide range of prospects and should be further explored. The rise of reality TV shows in China is certain, and reality TV shows have adapted to the development of consumer culture, where immaterial forms of goods occupy an increasingly important place in consumption. Reality TV shows have a

huge market space and high ratings bring lucrative advertising profits and commercial funding. Reality TV shows are closely related to the development of experiential culture, and with economic development, people generate a need for entertainment and experiences (Hu, 2022).

2.2 Review of Related Theory

This study involves one powerful theory, Persuasion Theory. Knowledge on persuasion was proposed by Friestad and Wright (1994). Persuasion is an effective way to cause attitude change in people, through a certain way to interfere with the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience, to achieve a way to change the attitudes and behaviors of the target users.

Liu Xia (2020) argues that persuasion is a change in the target audience's attitude when receiving those messages that affect their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors include two outcomes, namely, a change in attitude and no change in attitude, and the factors that affect the change in the target user's attitude are more complex. What the persuader says or does when he persuades, the message is a more important factor, and many advertising slogans are persuasive messages. Another point is that the persuasion process must be spread in a certain context, so the persuasion process is inevitably influenced by the persuasion environment.

Zhang (2008) proposes that research on the practical application of persuasion theory consists of two main categories: first, applying persuasion theory to media campaigns such as advertisements and talk shows; second, applying persuasion theory to the field of education. Applying persuasion theory to media propaganda can be applied to advertising planning, thus increasing the persuasive communication effect of advertising.

The persuasive model suggests that a highly visible placement can stimulate consumers' persuasive knowledge about the purpose of brand placement. When confronted with persuasive messages over a long period of time, viewers gradually accumulate the knowledge to recognize and respond to persuasive messages, and when confronted with similar persuasive messages again, they will resist them accordingly. Viewers who like the program to a high degree will change this message into an act of the advertiser who wants to interrupt the consumer's experience, thus

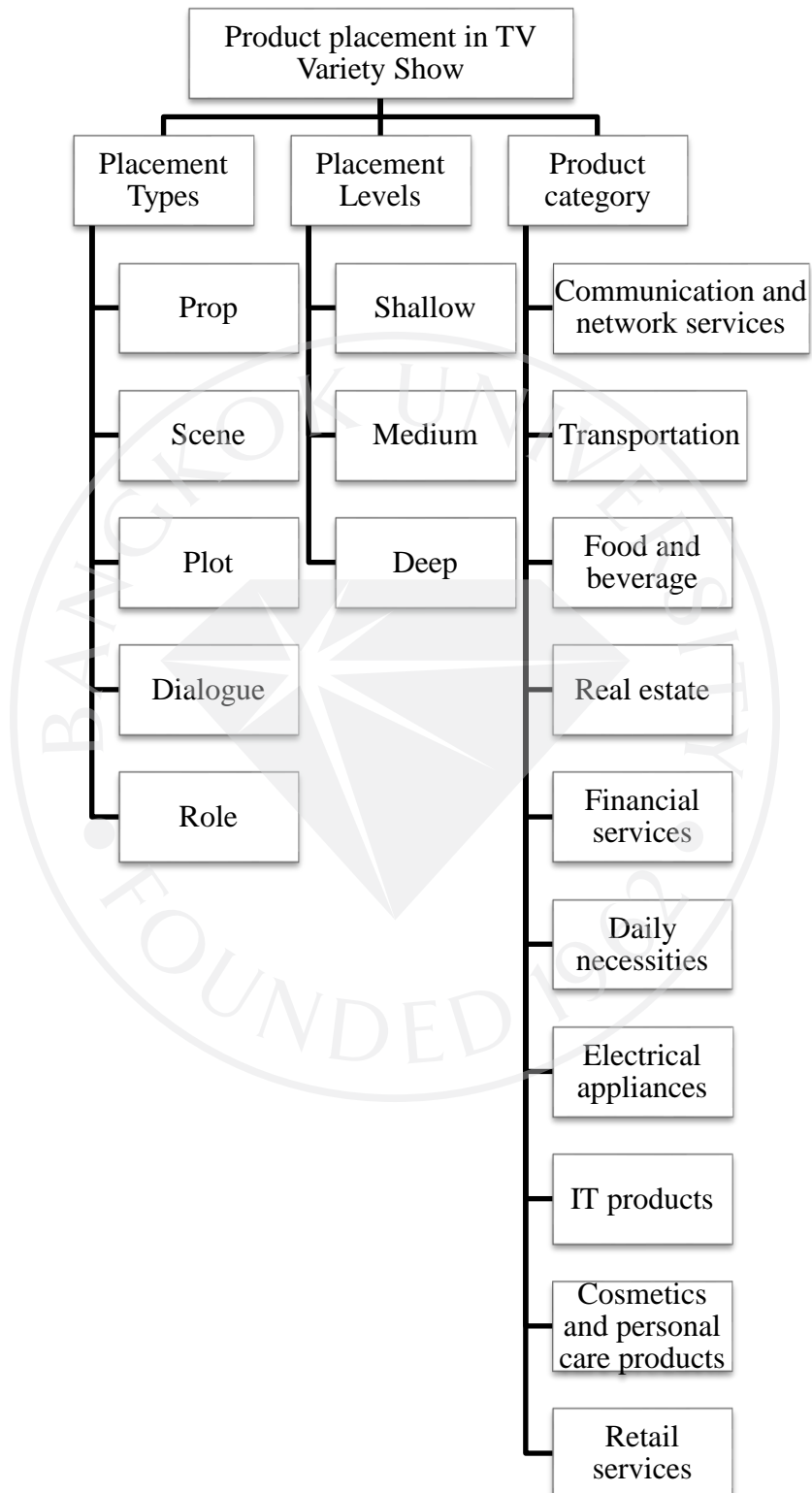
stimulating the audience's negative attitude toward the brand. The product placement is a way to increase the audience's attention to the product placement, stimulate the audience's knowledge of cognitive persuasion and negative attitudinal persuasion, and thus reduce the audience's willingness to buy the placed brand, so it is necessary to use the right way of advertising persuasion. Based on the level of cognitive demand of the main audience groups, the films to be placed in product placement are selected (Ye, 2021).

The rational appeal is based on the rational motivation of the audience and uses the real and accurate product or service information itself and logical persuasion to change or strengthen the cognition of the target audience and lead them to agree with the advertisement (Hu, 2022). Emotional appeals are related to basic emotions and evoke audience empathy through emotions or values, thus establishing a positive connection between emotions and brands. The effectiveness of different appeal methods depends on the specific situation, and a full understanding of the target audience is a prerequisite for effective persuasion. It is difficult to distinguish between the persuasive content of an ad and the persuasive technique itself, as the persuasive content is the vehicle through which the technique is used. Advertising persuasion techniques are a comprehensive strategy based on a combination of various factors such as the characteristics of the product, the characteristics of the communication, the characteristics of the media, and the characteristics of the target of persuasion. In the advertising content, whether to directly express the point of advertising persuasion to the audience is basically determined by the characteristics of the audience's population in terms of product placement. Direct persuasion can make the viewpoint in the advertising content more distinct, and the audience can easily understand the intention and position of the advertising subject (Liu, 2019)

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The literature review of past studies and relevant theories leads to the development of the following conceptual framework. It was used as a framework for analyzing the product placement in Chinese TV reality show, *Back to Fields*.

Figure 2.6: Conceptual Framework



2.4 Conclusion

The total research on product placement in variety show has not emerged for a long time and the research results are not enriching. By summarizing and analyzing past literature, it is found that studies on product placement theory are mostly based on Western cases. Asian researchers have focused their attention on Western markets and followed Western cases to explore them, and early cases were from the West, and fewer were conducted for Asian cases. After the development of Asian media markets, researchers began to conduct studies, but there are still fewer localized product placement studies compared to the West. In terms of content, most cases of product placement research are movies and TV series, and less research has been conducted on advertising in TV programs, both in the West and in Asia (China), and even less research has been conducted on advertising in variety shows, where research has focused on program content and production. At a stage when the ratings of variety shows are rising, research on the use of product placement in variety shows is of high value and fills the gap in Asian research on advertising placement in variety shows. It is a new perspective that studies of case shows have fewer advertising research sections and are holistic in their analysis. Most studies do not include product placement as a detailed entry point.

Product placement in variety shows has research and practical significance as a current advertising method with a large market in Chinese media. Among them, variety shows have become the main item that product companies are willing to invest in advertising. TV as a medium has good product recommendation ability, and it is worthwhile for researchers to study this medium in depth to gain experience for future use of product placement in variety shows, and it can answer questions raised about how product placement was successfully used in variety shows in China.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology of the dissertation and includes five sections: research design, population and sample selection, research instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis. It also discusses the validity and reliability of this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research method to obtain data related to product placement using content analysis. Quantitative research method is a type of sociological research method that allows for the quantification of data. It is possible to conduct a deeper study through the changing pattern of data, which will not be changed by personal thoughts. It guarantees an objective analysis of product placement in the Chinese variety.

Content analysis is a research method that provides an objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content. The use of content analysis in this study has the advantage of ensuring the objectivity and science of communication research from a methodological point of view, as some questions can be answered by scientific research. Selecting content analysis by creating research units and coding them is a positive attempt to study advertising placement.

This study was coded by means of content analysis, and the coding scheme was based on theories from past studies. By obtaining the types and frequencies of product placement appearances in the broadcast content of the variety show *Back to Fields* from season 1 to season 3, the data was used as a guide to analyze the use of product placement in variety shows and to answer the questions and objectives of the study. The researcher hopes to find out how the Chinese variety shows *Back to Fields* advertises with product placement through research analysis and to get some product placement that will be of some help to future advertising practitioners.

3.2 Population and Sample Selection

This study takes product placement as an object to analyze its use in Chinese variety shows, so it is important to select the correct media. For the selection of media objects, the Back to Fields program was selected as the source of the sample for this study. The program is a variety show broadcast in China by Hunan TV. First of all, Hunan TV is one of the most popular TV channels in China, which is widely distributed and authoritative. Also, the Korean version of the program has a large audience base in the Chinese market and has a certain influence. Finally, the TV variety show has received excellent Chinese variety show market share and ratings since its broadcast and has positive reviews and feedback on China's largest film and TV review website. The audience and the media have received excellent reviews, and the way the ads appear in the variety show has become a topic of discussion among viewers. In terms of advertising revenue, the Chinese variety show Back to Fields has generated more than RMB 100 million in earnings. This show started in 2017 and ended in 2022.

The selected timing of this study is from 2017 to 2019. These two years were selected due to the following reasons. Firstly, since 2017, Chinese variety shows have become increasingly competitive in the market, and so advertising in the show increased. This is the period from inception to development, and from here it is more representative and meaningful timing for studying product placement. Secondly, the Chinese variety shows Back to Fields also appeared in the advertising market from 2017, and the three seasons broadcast from 2017-2019 are also the most popular among the market and viewers of that Chinese variety show series, and studying its advertising has more research significance. Although the time span is not long, patterns and characteristics can be summarized after scientific design and analysis.

In terms of sampling method, this study adopts the purposive sampling method to take 20 episodes of the Chinese variety show Back to Fields from the first season to the third season of the program from January 15, 2017, to July 2019 as samples of the product placement, and selects 20 episodes purposefully as the source of product placement according to the broadcast order. The total number of episodes is 73. A purposeful approach to the study allows a more frequencies of product

placement to Chinese television variety shows. Each product placement in these 73 samples was used as a sampling unit.

The commercials broadcasted on the Chinese TV variety show Back to Fields have been verified by the market and audited by Chinese advertising, the purposive sampling helps the researcher to effectively get access to the samples and analyze the patterns of product placement.

As variety shows have certain pattern and template, purposeful sampling from the beginning, middle and ending of the program can allow the researcher to identify the pattern of product placement in Chinese TV variety shows, and facilitate data analysis. This gives us a clear picture of how various products were placed in Back to Fields. Table 3.1 presents 20 samples of this study, including six episodes from Season 1, seven episodes from Season 2, and seven episodes from Season 3.

Table 3.1: Samples of Chinese TV variety show Back to Fields

NO	Season	Back to Fields - Episode Title	Broadcast Date
1	Season 1	We are all good kids	January 15, 2017
2		It's nice to be young	January 22, 2017
3		Your classmates	February 12, 2017
4		The law of survival in the world of entertainment	March 19, 2017
5		Years of Friendship	April 9, 2017
6		No need for sad endings	April 16, 2017
7	Season 2	How long have you not washed your hair	April 20, 2018
8		Slowly you have grown up	April 28, 2018
9		Today the chef is not working	May 18, 2018
10		See you later not a youngster	June 1, 2018

(Continued)

Table 3.1 (Continued): Samples of Chinese TV variety show Back to Fields

NO	Season	Back to Fields - Episode Title	Broadcast Date
11	Season 2	Seeing rainbows with you	June 15, 2018
12		Finally waiting for you	June 30, 2018
13		We are all afraid of being alone	July 6, 2018
14	Season 3	It's changed. It hasn't changed.	April 26, 2019
15		I didn't want to have a birthday	May 1, 2019
16		On or off	May 10, 2019
17		We love you	June 7, 2019
18		Life's destiny	June 21, 2019
19		Old Friends	July 12, 2019
20		We are together	July 19, 2019

3.3 Research Instrument

This study focuses on product placement in Chinese variety shows. In terms of category construction and coding, the coding in this study mainly starts from the classification of product placement, taking each product placement advertisement as a unit, and forms a preliminary list of coding categories based on the theoretical results of existing product placement research, after going through the summary analysis of research literature. According to the literature review, it can be found that many researchers have the same view on the classification of product placement. Based on the need to consider the correlation between the codes, this study mainly coded the product placement categories based on the studies of Wang (2012) and Chen & Zhao (2021). The first dimension is the level of concealment and the second dimension is the variety of product placement.

As for the type of product placement : there are five types-prop placement, scene placement, plot placement, dialogue placement, and role placement (Wang, 2012).

As for the level of product placement: there are three levels-shallow, medium, and deep (Wang et al., 2009).

As for the product category of product placement: there are 10 categories -- communication and network services, transportation, food and beverage, real estate, financial services, daily necessities, electrical appliances, IT products, cosmetics and personal care products, and retail services (Jiang & Wu, 2021).

Based on the previous literature review, coding scheme was produced as follows.

Table 3.2: Coding Scheme

Items / NO.	Dimension	Category	Definition of Meaning
1	Type of product placement	1.1 Prop placement	The representative brand symbols as props, direct brand message
		1.2 Scene placement	Integrate product information into the scene as part of the scene
		1.3 Plots placement	The product becomes part of the promotion of the plot
		1.4 Dialogue placement	The product appears in the dialogue that appears in the program to introduce and promote the product
		1.5 Role placement	Product-related characters appear in the program for the purpose of promoting the product

(Continued)

Table 3.2 (Continued): Coding Scheme

Items / NO.	Dimension	Category	Definition of Meaning
2	Level of Product placement	2.1 Shallow	Simply put in the scene, see the product information but no interaction.
		2.2 Medium	The brand is mentioned in conversations and usage.
		2.3 Deep	The product is perfectly integrated with the scene, and the audience clearly understands the product and develops a good feeling.
3	Product Category of Product Placement	3.1 Communication and network services	Telephone communication services and Internet communication services
		3.2 Transportation	All car-related categories, including sales/purchase of vehicles and parts repair
		3.3 Food and beverage	A variety of finished products for human consumption and liquids made by processing suitable for human consumption.
		3.4 Real estate	Real estate sales, real estate related services and products
		3.5 Financial services	Financial services
		3.6 Daily necessities	Consumables needed for daily life

(Continued)

Table 3.2 (Continued): Coding Scheme

Items / NO.	Dimension	Category	Definition of Meaning
3	Product Category of Product Placement	3.7 Electrical appliances	Air conditioners, electric fans, dishwashers, dryers, refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens, rice cookers, televisions, radios, etc.
		3.8 IT products	Computers and software, communication equipment, scientific instruments
		3.9 Cosmetics and personal care products	Cosmetics and personal care products
		3.10 Retail services	Department stores, supermarkets, discount stores, convenience stores, shopping centers

3.4 Instrument Pretest

To ensure the scientific validity of the results of the content analysis, the reliability of the coding sheet was instrumentally predicted here to demonstrate that the research instrument was able to support the research objectives and questions. A random sample (30%) of product placements from example season 1 to season 3 of Back to Fields program content was investigated. For reliability, the Cohen Kappa coefficient was selected as a reliability indicator to test the coding sheet in this study, and the software SPSS was used to analyze the consistency of the coding results of two coders, who were selected from among graduate students of the same program at Bangkok University, who had received some training in coding. The Cohen Kappa coefficient of the coding form in this study was higher than 0.8, indicating that the

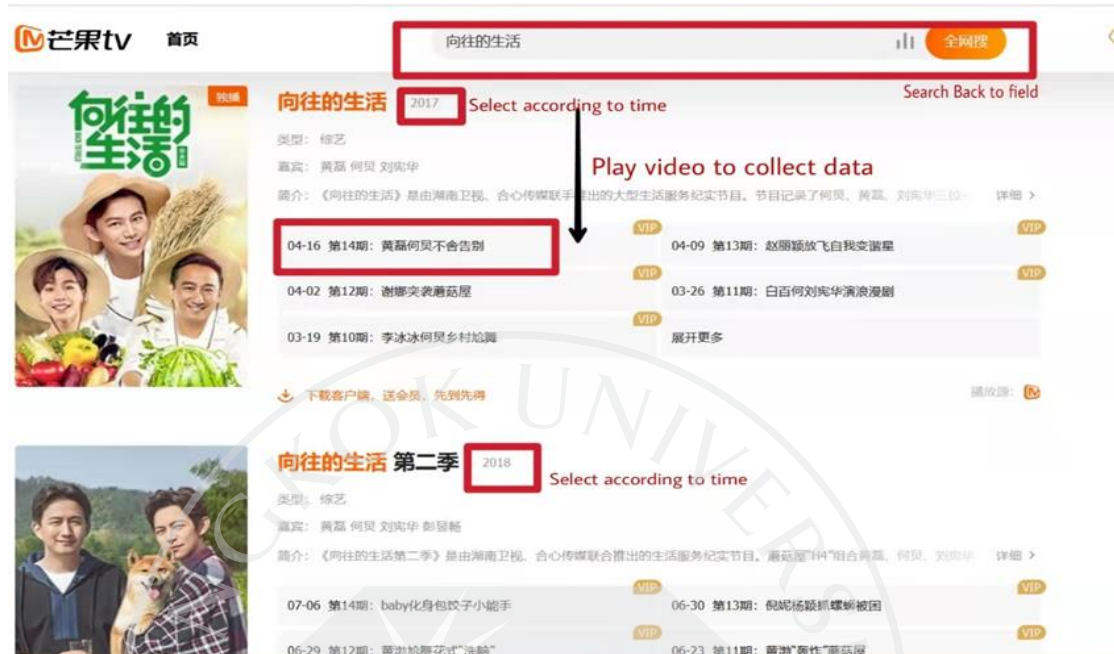
coding results had good reliability. In terms of validity, sample acquisition ensured good external validity by limiting the official broadcast platform of the video; the coding scheme was based on enabling two coders, after training, to unify the same coding rules and complete the coding task independently to ensure the validity of the coding results.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The first phase was to select the study sample acquisition channels. A purposeful collection of product placement ads appearing in Back to Fields was conducted with a range of January 15, 2017, to July 2019. The product placement sample was subjected to data statistics and in-depth content analysis. The specific steps were to conduct a search through the official broadcast platform of the variety show, Hunan TV's designated video broadcast website, for the collection of sample data.

The second stage was to collect the number and type of product placement ads appearing in the Chinese variety show Back to Fields according to the proposed coding scheme and record the data in Excel software for further analysis.

Figure 3.1: How to Collect Data on Video Platform 1



Source: Hunan Happy Sunshine Interactive Entertainment Media Co., Ltd. (2022).

Hunan TV official video website. Retrieved from https://so.mgtv.com/so?k=向往的生活&lastp=ch_home.

Figure 3.2: How to Collect Data on Video Platform 2



Source: Hunan Happy Sunshine Interactive Entertainment Media Co., Ltd. (2022).
Hunan TV official video website. Retrieved from https://so.mgtv.com/so?k=向往的生活&lastp=ch_home.

3.6 Data Analysis

This paper focuses on the study of product placement in the Chinese variety back to the field. According to the above coding principles, the researcher recorded the data results of product placement in Excel software and then performed content analysis calculations through Excel. After reviewing the research objectives and questions for the collected data, the coding results were analyzed based on coding to ensure the scientific nature of the data results obtained. First, summarize the meaning behind the data and the conclusions used to solve the problem and analyze the product placement in Chinese variety shows. The frequency of different types of product placement in each episode of the broadcast content was collected, and the distribution of the data was calculated through bar charts to depict the number and percentage. Second, the product placement was classified according to the coding scheme and the desired promotional effect of the selected product placement was analyzed.

Third, the meaning behind the data was summarized to answer the research questions for reflection.

3.7 Reliability of the Study

To ensure the reliability of the study, the product placements chosen for this study were derived from commercials already aired by the variety show "Back to the Field". Each advertisement was approved by the Chinese Radio and Television Administration. On the other hand, the reliability of this study was considered based on Perreault & Leigh (1989) coding reliability. The mean value of interceder reliability is greater than 0.8 and can be considered reliable.

3.8 Validity of the Study

In terms of validity, to ensure the validity of this study, the coding framework was developed based on the literature on advertising placement reviewed and analyzed in Chapter 2 with reference to the studies by Wang (2012) and Chen & Zhao (2021), and part of the data analysis process was guided by this conceptual framework. Therefore, this study has construct validity.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of a quantitative analysis of product placement advertising for the first to third seasons of the Chinese variety show *Back to Fields*, employing the number, type, and product category of product placement as a conceptual framework. The researcher collected and analyzed the data through Excel. The findings are based on the proposed research questions and are presented in this chapter divided into the following sections.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Sampled Data

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in terms of frequency and percentage. The analysis results reveal number of product placement, types of product placement, degree of product placement, and product categories of product placement. A total of 20 episodes of Chinese variety shows were selected as a sample for this study, and a total of 432 product placements were collected. Table 4.1 summarizes and analyzes the number of product placements in each of the 20 episodes of the program, which met the needs of the researchers.

The data analyses reveal the number and percentage of product placement numbers. The highest number of product placement was in the program that aired on June 1, 2018, where 30 product placements appeared, accounting for 8.10%. The lowest was the program that aired on April 20, 2018, with 7 occurrences of product placement, or 1.62%. See details in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of Product Placements in *Back to Fields*

No.	Episode Title	Broadcast Date	Frequency (n = 432)	Percentage (100%)
1	We are all good kids	2017-01-15	14	3.24%
2	It's nice to be young	2017-01-22	22	5.09%

(Continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued): Frequency and Percentage of Product Placements in Back to Fields

No.	Episode Title	Broadcast Date	Frequency (n = 432)	Percentage (100%)
3	Your classmates	2017-02-12	20	4.63%
4	The law of survival in the world of entertainment	2017-03-19	18	4.17%
5	Years of Friendship	2017-04-09	20	4.63%
6	No need for sad endings	2017-04-16	21	4.86%
7	How long have you not washed your hair	2018-04-20	7	1.62%
8	Slowly you have grown up	2018-04-28	16	3.70%
9	Today the chef is not working	2018-05-18	18	4.17%
10	See you later not a youngster	2018-06-01	30	6.94%
11	Seeing rainbows with you	2018-06-15	33	7.64%
12	Finally waiting for you	2018-06-30	35	8.10%
13	We are all afraid of being alone	2018-07-06	24	5.56%
14	It's changed. It hasn't changed.	2019-04-26	17	3.94%
15	I didn't want to have a birthday	2019-05-01	30	6.94%
16	On or off	2019-05-10	20	4.63%
17	We love you	2019-06-07	16	3.70%
18	Life's destiny	2019-06-21	20	4.63%
19	Old Friends	2019-07-12	31	7.18%
20	We are together	2019-07-19	20	4.63%

4.2 Findings for Research Questions

Data analyses yield the answers for the following questions:

4.2.1 Findings of Research Question # 1

RQ#1: How does Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, use product placement in terms of placement type? The analysis results reveal that there are four rather than five types of product placement.

As for the analysis results about the number and percentage of product placement types, prop placement appears 88 times (20.75%), the scene placement appears 253 times (59.67%), plot placement appears 28 times (6.60%), the dialogue placement appears 55 times (12.97%), and the role placement appears 0 times (0.00%). Among them, the scene placement appeared with the highest frequency, accounting for 59.67%, and the role placement did not appear, accounting for 0.00%. See details in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Frequency and Percentage of Product Placements Types in *Back to Fields*

No.	Types of product placement	Frequency (n = 432)	Percentage (100%)
1	Prop	88	20.75%
2	Scene	253	59.67%
3	Plots	28	6.60%
4	Dialogue	55	12.97%
5	Role	0	0.00%

4.2.2 Findings of Research Question # 2

RQ#2: How does Chinese TV variety show, *Back to Fields*, use product placement in terms of placement degree? The results of the analysis showed that three different levels of product placement were used, with the shallow level having the highest number of product placements.

The results of the analysis of the number and proportion of the degree of product placement show that the shallow sub-product placement appears the most and the deep sub-product placement appears the least. There were 296 shallow-level

product placements (68.52%), 134 mid-level product placements (31.02%), and 2 deep-level product placement product placements (0.46%). See details in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Frequency and Percentage of Product Placement Degree in Back to Fields

No.	Degree of product placement	Frequency (n = 432)	Percentage (100%)
1	Shallow	296	68.52%
2	Medium	134	31.02%
3	Deep	2	0.46%

4.2.3 Findings of Research Question # 3

RQ#3: How does Chinese TV variety show, Back to Fields, use product placement in terms of product category? The results of the analysis show that seven product categories appear for product placement.

As for the total number and proportion of product placements for the relevant product categories, food and beverage product placements appeared a total of 321 times (74.31%), including 39 times (9.03%) for communication and network services, 34 times (7.87%) for transportation, 15 times (3.47%) for IT products, 13 times (3.01%) for electrical appliances, 7 times (1.62%) for daily necessities (0.69%), and cosmetics and personal care products (0.69%).

In addition, three product categories, namely real estate, financial services, and retail service did not appear in the product placement. Among them, the food category is the most popular, accounting for 74.31%. See details in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Frequency and Percentage of Product Categories in Back to Fields

No.	Product Categories of Product Placement	Frequency (n=432)	Percentage (100%)
1	Communication and network services	39	9.03%
2	Transportation	34	7.87%
3	Food and beverage	321	74.31%
4	Real estate	0	0.00%
5	Financial services	0	0.00%
6	Daily necessities	7	1.62%
7	Electrical appliances	13	3.01%
8	IT products	15	3.47%
9	Cosmetics and personal care products	3	0.69%
10	Retail service	0	0.00%

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of this study. It includes a summary of the results, discussion, limitations, suggestions for future research and suggestions for further application regarding product placement.

5.1 Summary of Findings

With the enrichment of advertising formats, product placement can promote the synchronization of consumers' thinking with the program in the content of the program, making consumers more receptive to corporate advertising messages and achieving better communication and corporate publicity effects. Back to Fields, as the leading Chinese variety show, has mature and varied advertising placement methods and can be representative of the case applying product placement in Chinese variety shows.

A content analysis of 20 episodes of the Chinese variety show, Back to Fields was conducted to generate understanding about Back to Fields' product placement. It can be divided into 3 parts.

1) Number of product placement

The data obtained from chapter 4 show that product placement appeared 432 times in 20 episodes of the variety show, with an average of 21.6 times in one episode. It is obvious that product placement becomes a frequent form of advertising in the program.

2) The degree of product placement

In terms of degree, the results reveal that Chinese variety show, Back to Fields mostly used shallow-level product placement, with a low percentage of medium-level and deep-level product placement, and preferred simple-level product placement to promote products or services.

3) Product categories of product placement

According to the results of the content analysis, the products featured in the Chinese variety show, Back to Fields are all related to everyday life, with the most food products being featured.

5.2 Discussions

It was found that product placement is ubiquitous in the Back to Fields variety show. On Chinese program review website, customers gave back to the Field seasons 1 to 3 a rating of 7 or more out of 10. The reviews show a good acceptance of the product placement (He, 2021). These findings are consistent with those of several studies by He, and Li (2015) and Tu (2009), showing that the use of product placement has been common in entertainment media content, especially the Hollywood films. This phenomenon can be explained by the study by Nebenzahl and Secunda (1993) showed that viewers prefer product placement to traditional advertising. They were more willing to receive information from the film as they watched it, including information about the commercial products that accompanied the film (Guo, 2012).

5.2.1 Number of Product Placement

The first point to be discussed is the number of product placements, which is very important. The descriptive statistics yield that number of product placement in Back to Fields increased in the second season and then decreased in the third season. Producer of this program seem to be aware that too many ads can affect the effectiveness of the ads. When dealing with corporate advertisers, program producers need to consider the moderation of their numbers. Although the ability to have generous sponsorship funds is certainly beneficial to the quality of the program's production, it also decreases the duration of the program content due to an increased number of product placements. With the advancement of media, customers have become faster in accessing information and communication. Consumers' ability to recognize advertisement in the form of product placement has greatly increased, and the format of product placement continues to advance. Finding the right amount and method will enhance the effectiveness of product placement for the TV programs.

5.2.2 Types of Product Placement

In terms of the type of placement, the following four intriguing aspects are discussed as followings:

Firstly, it was found that there was a clear preference for the types used in the variety show Back to Fields. The scene placement reaches 59.67%, prop placement

accounts for 20.75%, and the dialogue placement accounts for 12.97%. Plot placement only accounts for 6.6% and there was no use of role placement.

Gao (2013) found that pure scene placement is highly prevalent in films, such as the display of specific products and brand logos in films, which can be described as a type of scene marketing. Portraying lovely images brought by the product to customers and provoking them to yearn for a certain scenario is an effective means to stimulate customers' desire to buy and to achieve the marketing objective with a dialogue of the mind and the experience of life scenarios (Wen, 2016). This resonates with the audience, which in turn drives their desire to buy the product placed inside, and is closely related to the scenario. It is also the simplest product placement method that does not interfere with the storyline or changes in the variety show and is not easily offensive to the audience. As the show has strong ratings and is watchable, viewers play the video over and over on the network, and those ad placement details are slowly picked up by clients. Scene placement can then slowly influence customers to buy the brand.

Back to Fields is a variety show that is very popular among all major TV and video websites. It is the most appropriate variety show for product placement because it allows for restoring real-life scenes and is closer to real life. The content involves all aspects of people's daily life such as clothing, food, housing, and transportation. Previous findings are consistent with the study by Chen and Zhao (2021) and Li (2021) found that product placement concealed in the scenes of variety shows can be accepted by the audience, thus resulting in the desirable advertising effect, without affecting the content of the program and achieving certain effects.

Real-life scenes are more likely to seamlessly integrate the actual use value of the product with the content of the program and visualize the basic information of the product, making the product placement more than just the dissemination of the traditional product advertising. In the program, scene placement is a kind of product placement that is simple and does not require interaction with the content of the program, in which the high frequency of product placement will deepen the memory of the audience and the audience starts to recall the product. On the other hand, simple scene placement will not affect the progress and plot of the program, and the program

product is simpler than other kinds and degrees, which can also gain a good support from advertisers.

Product placement should be greatly integrated with the medium in which it is placed. Gaining audience recognition through prop placement and dialogue placement is a more common placement method used by brands to subconsciously influence consumers by integrating the product into the content of the program (Wang & Hou, 2019).

Some of the advertisements placed in the program do not appear with the product's own image and name and logo, but are piggybacked on through similar, related scenes. Props have an instantaneous association effect, stimulating consumers' associations and memories of the brand and product. Each episode of the program has a different theme and plot, and the commercials are consciously produced to combine the characteristics of the brand with the props in the program. This reduces viewer resistance to product placement.

From the results of this content analysis, the Back to Fields closely matches product placement with program content, linking variety show product placement with real-life product promotion to maximize the effect of advertising. On the flip side, excessive care for the product and not the content of the program may lead to problems such as low suitability of product placement to the program, obvious traces of commercialization, and disruption of the media rhythm due to an excessive product placed in the content.

5.2.3 Level of Product Placement

Early research on the level of product placement can be considered at two extremes, and the reason for this result is that these studies failed to recognize the complex and multidimensional nature of product placement. It is commonly assumed that product placements are all similar, ignoring the fact that different levels of placement and the closeness of the product-content connection can affect the effectiveness of the placement (Wang, 2018).

With high fusion consistency, deeper level of placement produces better brand attitudes than implicit placement (Ferguson & Burkhalter, 2015). It has also been argued from a repetition perspective that repetitive shallow product placement negatively affects brand attitudes while repetitive deep placement does not.

There is a huge difference in placement costs between shallow and deep placements, and companies unilaterally often pursue deep placements for better placement results. There was resistance from programming and viewers, as well as higher marketing costs, but the placement was unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference compared to the less costly simple placement (Wang, 2018). There is a contradiction about the level of product placement, that is, the product placement is too obvious to attract the audience's attention, but at the same time, it is also easy to cause the audience to resent. When the placement is not obvious, the audience is not aware of it at all, and the expected effect was not achieved. Therefore, the degree of product placement is highly critical, not only to keep viewers from rejecting, but also to keep ads from being placed without the awareness of the trace. Decide the level of product placement should be based on the specific product.

Regarding the level of product placement, the deep level of product placement in the program all appears in the final part of the program. Deep-level product placement can deepen the connection between the program and the product and enable the audience to give good feedback to the product. The deep level is also the most difficult. Choosing the shallow and medium levels for multiple uses can also make the audience remember the promoted products.

5.2.4 Product Categories of Product Placement

Acceptability was lower for controversial products cigarettes and alcohol than for other products. Although people are receptive to placed advertisements, they have different perceptions of the products in which they are placed.

They had different levels of recognition of different categories of placed products, as well as significantly different levels of influence by these advertisements. The most acceptable items were cars, cameras, electronics, sunglasses, charity, and healthcare products (Yang, He, Zhang & Yang, 2013).

Back to Fields is a show where members prepare food for guests and showcase the lives of the characters in the show. The products placed in the program are very practical and easy for the audience to associate with, and the appearance of food in the picture will not cause the audience to resent the product category. Most of the other categories will appear as props and between lines, hoping that the program staff to let the audience understand the merits of the product and deepen the

impression. Program producers choose the brands that meet the positioning of the program and develop the corresponding product placement strategy. In order to achieve the best results of advertising, the program will be advertised based on precise positioning, and the audience receiving various types of advertisements will fit with the audience watching the program to a certain extent, to better grasp the preferences of the audience.

We can think of different product categories and different choices when it comes to product placement. In product placement, different placement types and different product category combinations match their advertising effectiveness. In product placement, different placement association types and product category combinations convey different messages, resulting in different audience attitudes (Wu, 2020).

5.2.5 Relevant Theories

Numerous studies in the field of advertising persuasion have shown that advertising not only evokes consumer perceptions and attitudes about the ad and the product but also inspires consumers to act. Product advertising should try to evoke the consumer to process the ad message in depth (Wang & Liang, 2002). Therefore, to better persuade consumers, product placement should be created with key information about the product and with the sufficient appeal. The goal of product placement is to persuade the audience to accept the message that the brand wants to convey in the advertisement.

Consumers watching *Back to Fields* tend to be persuaded by the advertisers. Product placement content is mostly placed throughout the program. These advertisements act only on the viewers' sub-consciousness; their attention is focused on the program, and they receive the relevant information from the ads. Psychological studies have also shown that the process of collecting and processing product information is influenced by the level of audience engagement while watching the commercial (Wang & Liang, 2002). If the audience is more engaged in watching the program, they will be more active in acquiring and processing the product information contained in it.

According to the persuasion theory, the attitude of the audience towards the medium can be transferred to the advertising within the medium. Advertisers who

choose media with higher favor ability will have better persuasive effects in their ads (Xu, 2008). Back to Fields itself has its own fan base and has several guests who come on the show in each episode. Most of them are popular celebrities who act as mediators in influencing consumer buying intentions. The level of trust in celebrities can make viewers feel positive, and trust in what people are using and the products placed in the show will have an impact on consumers. The audience is likely to be influenced by what other people have used. This is an active purchase by consumers, and the effect of advertising is stronger and last longer.

During the variety show, the audience's interest is focused on the reactions and conversations of the guests. The presence of the merchandise does not distract the viewers' attention but also makes them more aware of the attributes of the merchandise. At the same time, due to the presence of deceptive marketing, combined with the increasing amount of current corporate advertising, consumers are becoming more difficult to be persuaded and more sensitive to the intent of corporate advertising. According to the warning of the persuasion context, some audiences are more sensitive to the product, which has an impact on the effectiveness of the products placed in the media. Therefore, when choosing product placement, Back to Fields normally uses product placement in a way that does not affect the content of the program and does not give viewers an early warning about the advertising intent, which will then affect their attitude toward the brand.

According to the persuasion theory, advertising can be considered a form of persuasion. The ideal goal is for the ad to successfully persuade the consumer to buy the product based on the full application of persuasion theory. Persuasion can be better since the product will better fit into the general context in which the ad is placed, avoid distracting the viewer, and not cause the viewer to feel antipathy.

5.3 Limitations

This study has some specificity in the variety of programs selected. There are some limitations with the applicability of the findings. Firstly, it has a flaw in sample selection as it chose purposive sampling instead of simple random sampling, which can quickly find the target-related content, but may contain selection bias.

Secondly, due to the limitation of research time, the product placement advertisement focused on the single case, Back to Fields. As the analysis is still relatively simple, relationship between type of placement, degree of placement, and product category cannot be examined.

Finally, there was no mapping of the number of placement in the show and the actual sales of the products placed in the show, application of this study's findings to product marketing is quite limited.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could lead to more applicable conclusions if they are conducted on broader and more diverse cases. Future research should explore the use of product placement more comprehensively in different genres of entertainment content such as film versus TV program. Future researchers could compare different countries for studies of the same type of variety show, or conduct product placement studies of different variety shows in the same country. This would allow a larger sample of studies to be obtained, making the findings higher generalizability. In addition, future studies may compare use of product placement of a particular country in different types of TV program such as drama program, reality show, variety show, news show. It would be interesting to use a quantitative research design to find the relationship between placement type, level of placement, and product category.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Application

Here are a few suggestions for optimizing placement, which it hopes will serve as a reference for media producers, advertisers, government agencies that regulate advertising, and typical consumers. Back to Fields is one of the most popular Chinese variety shows, and its commerciality is worth learning from the advertising industry. Each episode of the show has a different theme and plot, and the ads were produced with a conscious effort to combine the characteristics of the brand with the plot environment of the show. Media producers must make sure that their viewers will not resist to the products placed in their programs.

Placement targets with good image and product fit have a positive impact on brand attitudes (Liu, 2019). Advertisers need to consider the conditions of placement

when choosing to do product placement. The product placement should be linked to the media content in such a way that makes sense with the product. From a branding perspective, the brand and product being promoted are known and all that needs to be considered is the degree to which it is matched with a specific type of placement. The right combination according to the content and product of placement will lead to the desired effect.

On the government side, many countries have introduced policies and regulations to regulate the use of product placement. Product placement should be legalized, institutionalized, and binding, enabling the entire advertising industry to benefit while safeguarding the legitimate rights of consumers and, as far as possible, the satisfaction of advertisers, media producers, and viewers.

As for implementation for consumers, product placement should be aware of the possible influences of product placement on their target consumers. At the same time, customers need to give the right feedback when they receive advertising messages. Customers establish a certain sense of vigilance, but they do not need to be overly vigilant and thus generate negative emotions. Good product placement does not only bring negative emotions and resistance to the audience, but also achieves unexpected communication effects. Customer feedback on excessive product placement and incorrect advertising can contribute to the positive development of the advertising industry and likewise monitor the improvement of programming issues. This will greatly increase the incentive for customers to participate in product placement feedback and form complete monitoring set with multiple parties involved. Ensure optimal product placement.

Starting with the consumers themselves, it is possible to develop critical thinking about advertising and to question the truthfulness of advertising. With right awareness of product placement practices in the current media content, consumers would have an ability to control their own consumption behavior, and to prevent harmful consequences from advertising.

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Back to Fields Introduction

Back to Fields is a variety show presented by Hunan TV and Hershey Media, which premieres every Friday on Hunan TV and airs every Saturday on Mango TV's website. Each episode features guests who are entertained by the hosts, who must find ways to entertain them and meet their food requirements. The members of the show live a rustic and natural life using traditional Chinese household items. If there is an additional demand for the items, the members need to exchange their labor for the items the members want.

The background of the program is that busy city life brings stress and impatience to people, and the survey shows that nearly 40.4% of people want to get away from the hustle and bustle, avoid the crowd, and aspire to move from the city to the countryside, to breathe the natural air and find their inner voice. This is the original intention of the program Back to Fields (Li,2021). The program makes guests return to life in the fields to tell simple, uncomplicated truths. For example, to cherish the value of a meal to tell some Chinese culture and stories.

Back to Fields is a show in which the stars' strengths and weaknesses are exposed in this show, cooking, doing farm work, including chatting at the dinner table, constantly subconsciously exposing their personalities and habits. (Luo, 2021)

Figure 1: Back to Fields Logo



Back to Fields Producer:

First of all, let's take a look at the two main producers of the show, Hershey Media and Hunan TV. Hershey Media is a variety show production service provider. The company specializes in variety shows and has produced several popular programs. Hunan South TV is a comprehensive TV channel under Hunan Radio and Television and Mango Media Limited, which started broadcasting on January 1, 1997. It won the 2010 award for the top ten most influential provincial satellite channels in China. One is a domestic platform for quality content output of variety shows, and the other masters the capital market, taking the lead in capturing market share in the era when variety shows are everywhere, and broadcasting programs with high ratings.

In the development of entertainment programs, Hunan TV attaches importance to the proper introduction of humanistic elements, and the variety shows broadcast usually have humanistic values, which can not only relieve and release the pressure in people's hearts but also transmit positive energy to a certain extent, change the bad social climate, etc., which can leave a deep impression in the hearts of viewers and make the programs viable. (Jiang & Liang, 2022)

Back to Fields Director:

The show's production team consists of renowned directors and a variety of production teams. Two directors, one of whom is Zhengyu Wang, used to be the publicity director of Zhejiang TV, another prominent Chinese station. Director of the Year Award at the 2017 China Variety Summit Crafts Gala. The other is Gezhou Chen, who has experience producing several variety shows and has produced many of the country's top-rated variety shows.

Figure 2: Back to Fields Program Director



There are five members of the regular show, one host, three actors, and one singer. With a combination of two middle-aged people and three youthful people, the roles are chosen so that all age groups of fans can be covered. He Giong is a famous Chinese male host. Huang Lei is a famous Chinese actor and director. Liu Xianhua (Henry), singer. Zhang Yixing (Lay) singer. Zhang Zifeng is a famous Chinese actress. Peng Yu Chang, is a famous mainland Chinese actor. The members changed once, from singer Henry to singer LAY.

The design of this number of people is in line with the structure of a traditional Chinese family. The combination of several hosts together restores the mundane yet entertaining life of a traditional family, allowing viewers to capture a glimpse of their own family of origin from the show, thus bringing them closer to the show (Li, 2021). The guests in each episode also fit the theme of the show, as most of the invited guests are familiar friends of the house owners, and the guests visit as relatives or friends so that the interaction between the characters is shown in a realistic and natural state, enhancing the audience's sense of immersion. The interaction between the characters is shown in a real and natural way, which enhances the sense of immersion of the audience.

In total, the program team built more than 60 fixed camera locations to complement the mobile filming, presenting viewers with abundant and natural scenes of idyllic life and reducing the traces of the program team's deliberate guidance of the program's content (Du, 2019). The careful location selection, meticulous pre-survey, and adequate preparation for filming are more likely to elicit emotional resonance from viewers.

Market Comments:

Back to Fields program production details are even better, from the selection and copy writing planning of all the advertising goods for the entire program to the post-processing related to each item, flora, fauna, and objects are done in a vivid and fascinating way, amplifying the characteristics of the subtle items (Du, 2019).

By April 2021, Back to Fields had gained 4.41 million followers through its official Weibo account, attracting a large number of fans to forward, comment, and pay attention. Back to Fields has gained a good reputation and popularity. Among them, the first three seasons of CSM maintained the top three ratings in China (Li, 2021). Back to Fields can bring the audience a relaxed and peaceful viewing experience, showing the most real side of life. As a landmark variety show, Back to Fields has experienced and witnessed the development history of Chinese variety shows.

Figure 3: Back to Fields Poster



Figure 4: Back to Fields Poster



Figure 5: Back to Fields members fishing together



Figure 6: Back to Fields member cooking with original kitchenware



Figure 7: Back to Fields members and guests rowing together

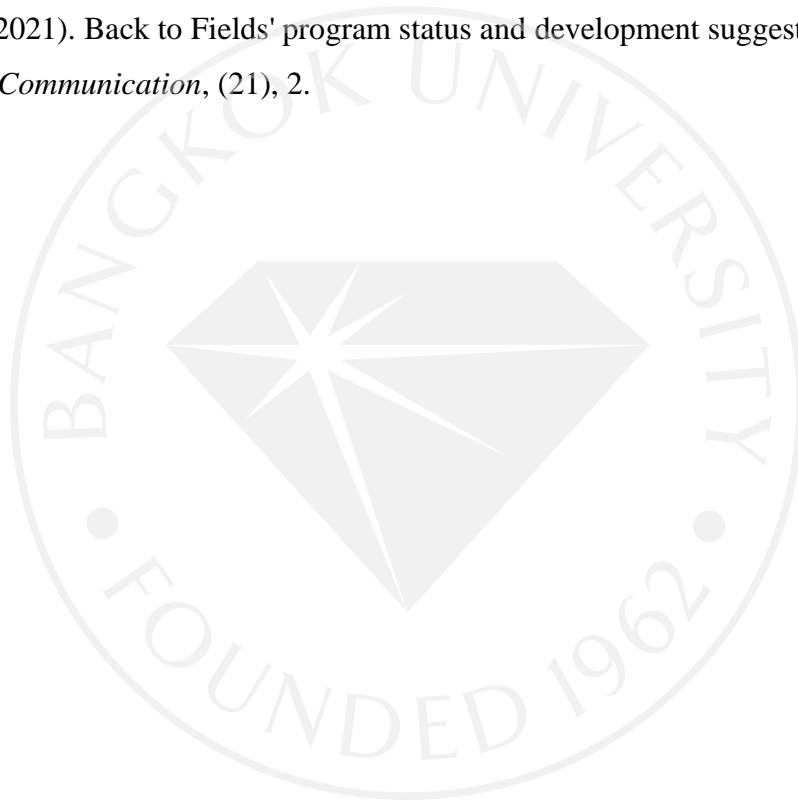


Figure 8: Back to Fields recording environments



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