NADIA I. SABOUR

Product placement in Finland: A practitioner perspective

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an exploratory study conducted among Finnish professionals in the field of product placement. It contributes to two research areas, namely those pertaining to professionals' perceptions of product placement and product placement activities in the Finnish context, which have not yet been studied abundantly. The main objective is to evaluate the state and level of development of the Finnish product placement field. The industry life cycle concept is used to help in the evaluation.

Eleven thematically organized semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen Finnish professionals, to wit corporate marketers, communications and advertising agency representatives as well as television and film media representatives, and qualitative thematic analysis was used to process the data.

The study found that the overall attitudes of the Finnish television and film media representatives toward cooperation with companies seem to be relatively approving and companies seem to be on the lookout for new ways to communicate with consumers. It also became evident that the product placement process is more often initiated by the producer than the company side. This passiveness was explained by, for instance, the lack of product placement culture in Finnish companies and their relative conservativeness in terms of marketing communication. In Finland there is no full-blown, high stakes product placement industry in the American sense of the word with placement agents and organized bodies. The chosen industry life cycle indicators suggest that the Finnish product placement field could be in the early stages of its life cycle. Product placement can be an interesting marketing communications tool for companies to consider in Finland so long as the possible drawbacks are foreseen and kept in check. From a competitive advantage viewpoint, product placement could be a valuable

NADIA I. SABOUR, M.Sc. (Econ), Researcher
University of Jyväskylä • School of Business and Economics • e-mail: nadia.sabour@econ.jyu.fi

addition to the marketing communications mix but it is more the use of all the different communications tools holistically that is capable of generating competitive advantage rather than any single tool by itself.

Key words: *product placement field, level of development, industry life cycle, Finland, professionals, interviews, corporations, communications agencies, advertising agencies, film medium, television medium*

1. INTRODUCTION

As commercial influence attempts continue to proliferate, consumers are reaching the point of saturation, perhaps even immunity to advertising (Cappo 2003). They circumvent advertisements by zipping and zapping (Olney et al. 1991), which is nowadays made even easier by new gadgets such as personal video recorders that allow consumers to decide when they receive promotional messages (Fetto 2000). Since modern-day audiences are increasingly marketing-savvy and fragmented (Economist 2005), companies have acknowledged the need to develop their marketing communications which have consequently taken on new forms and occupied novel channels. One of these less conventional options in the mix is product placement which is considered to be a tool that offers marketers cost effectiveness and precision (Nelson 2003).

The concept of product placement, also referred to as brand placement (Karrh 1998), is used to describe the intentional, and sometimes paid for, embedding of a brand name, a branded product or service in an otherwise non-commercial context within various media vehicles for promotional purposes (Sabour 2004). Placements take on various forms and can be categorized in several ways: real and virtual (Gupta et al. 2000); visual, spoken and usage (Turcotte 1995); visual screen (creative or on-set), auditory script (varying by context, frequency and emphasis) and plot with visual and verbal elements (low to high brand-plot link) (Russell 1998).

Using different product placement types and consequently the varying levels of brand prominence have an impact on message effectiveness (e.g., Avery and Ferraro 2000; Brennan et al. 1999; d'Astous and Chartier 2000; Gupta and Lord 1998), which for one explains their different price tags (Devaney 2002; McCarthy 1994). In addition to stylistic variations, product placement is also present in various media vehicles. These include movies, television programs, music videos, songs, radio programs, video games, plays and novels (Gupta and Lord 1998).

Product placements are hybrid messages which combine the focal advantages of advertising and publicity, giving marketers certain control over the format and content of the promotional message while the source appears independent and credible (Balasubramanian 1994). The underlying idea behind product placement is to reach consumers at a time when they are not actively scanning for and winnowing out marketing messages, but are in a sense "off guard", and thereby maximize the promotional and persuasive effect of the message (Balasubramanian 1994; McCarty 2004; Solomon and Englis 1994).

Product placement can offer marketers wide and repeated exposure, ability to capture attentive audiences and low CPM (cost per thousand) (Belch and Belch 2001). Another important aspect is the non-promotional character of the message, which allows the communication to be done naturally and non-aggressively, which possibly increases its impact (Balasubramanian 1994; Draaisma 1999; Solomon and Englis 1994). In addition, it could be argued that product placement is an intriguing possibility to simultaneously conduct product advertising (functional/utilitarian aspects) through, for example usage placements and image advertising (symbolic/image aspects) through possible associations between the brand and the context in which the brand is embedded (e.g., characteristics of the endorser and the production).

The main aim of this practice is to increase consumer awareness of the placed brands as well as to have a positive effect on brand preferences and buying intentions (d'Astous and Chartier 2000). Research has shown that product placement can influence brand awareness, attitudes and purchase intent (Morton and Friedman 2002). As consumers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable and promotion-saturated, the more subtle and hybrid forms of communication, such as product placement, are likely to gain even more ground in marketers' communications mixes.

Research in the field of product placement has centered around five themes (Karrh 1998): (1) tests of product placement effectiveness (e.g., memory, attitude change), (2) studies of consumers' attitudes toward product placement, (3) qualitative inquiries into the meaning of placements to consumers, (4) studies of brand inclusions in different media contexts (i.e., content analyses) and (5) research on practitioners' views on product placement. Not that many academic studies deal with issues related to the views and conceptions of product placement professionals. The majority of studies focus on the perspective of consumers. Among the relatively few studies to explore the practitioner perspective are Pardun and McKee (1999), Karrh et al. (2003), Sherman (2004), Russell and Belch (2005), and Lehu (2005).

Pardun and McKee (1999) study the role of the public relations firm in the practice of product placement through a survey of public relations firms. They address topics such as knowledge and experience with placements, attitudes toward product placement and compare their results to the results of a similar survey of advertising agencies (Pardun and McKee 1996, cited in Pardun and McKee 1999). Karrh et al. (2003) take a longitudinal, comparative approach by examining the evolution of practitioners' beliefs and views on the importance of executional factors in placements, brand characteristics contributing to placement effectiveness, measurement of placement effectiveness and beliefs about product placement itself. The results of this survey of corporate marketing professionals, movie studio representatives, placement agents and other practitioners are compared to the results of a similar survey of practitioners (Karrh 1995, cited in Karrh et al. 2003).

Sherman (2004) focuses on outlining a model of successful product integration based on interviews with Australian advertising/media agencies and commercial television stations. Russell and Belch (2005) report on qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with informants from North America representing the key players in the placement field (i.e., studios/production houses, agencies, marketers and others such as research firms). Their objective is to understand the industry structure, role of product placement as a communications tool and how placements are evaluated. Finally, Lehu (2005) uses email interviews to explore Anglo-Saxon (US, Canada and UK) professionals' views on the existence of a hierarchy of efficiency criteria for placements and the ideal steps to take in the placement process to ensure an optimal placement.

Furthermore, there appears to be a limited body of academic research concerning product placement activities in the Finnish context. The earlier studies conducted in Finland mainly represent basic-level research in the form of Master's graduate theses. Some of the exceptions are Sabour (2006), Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006a), Kortti (2006) and Grönqvist (2007). The studies by Sabour (2006) and the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006a) explore how Finnish consumers are disposed toward product placement. The results indicate that consumer sentiment is rather neutral or positive than negative.

Kortti (2006) presents a review of the product placement practice from the Finnish and the American perspectives. The main argument of the historically-oriented paper is that product placement is not a completely new phenomenon in Finland but rather that it has its roots in the past; examples can be found in films from the 1930s and in programs from the 1950s–1960s, the early years of Finnish television. Grönqvist (2007) sets out to study the responsibleness of the Finnish television industry with the focus being on the practice of product placement. 15 interviews with Finnish executives from television channels and production houses revealed that ethical behavior was considered synonymous with respecting the law, product placement was not regarded as particularly problematic or harmful and it was emphasized that content is the first priority. It seems that product placement has attracted attention and become an interesting area of study in Finland only within recent years.[1]

This paper reports on an exploratory study conducted among Finnish professionals in the field of product placement. This research, therefore, contributes to two research areas, namely

1 Product placement turned into a hot topic in Finland after the airing of a few television series. These were the Finnish version of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" (in spring 2005) with explicit brand inclusions and the Finnish "Big Brother" (in fall 2005). The former, in particular, elicited public commentary on the practice (Kortti 2005; Ojajärvi 2005; Snellman 2005; Söderman 2005), with some being less approving in tone (Antikainen 2005; Kajava 2005). In addition, regulatory bodies such as the Finnish Consumer Agency & Consumer Ombudsman, the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (FICORA) and the Council for Mass Media in Finland engaged in exploring whether these programs contain surreptitious advertising which is banned by the Act on Television and Radio Operations (Kallionpää 2005; Näveri 2005; Virtanen 2005). In the case of "Big Brother" the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006b) reprimanded the broadcaster for surreptitious advertising and similarly the Council for Mass Media in Finland (2006) came to the decision that the broadcaster did not adhere to good journalistic practice.

those pertaining to professionals' perceptions of product placement and Finnish product placement activities, which have not yet been studied abundantly. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the state and level of development of the Finnish product placement field.

This objective is approached by firstly reviewing the context of Finnish placement activities and secondly gauging professionals' views on the practice and interest in the opportunities product placement as a marketing communications tool (or form of collaboration) may have to offer for them. The industry life cycle concept (see e.g. McGahan et al. 2004) is used to help in the evaluation of the state and level of development of the field. Based on this evaluation the paper also touches upon whether product placement could be a communications tool that can act as a supporting element in gaining competitive advantage in the Finnish marketplace. This study looks at the Finnish product placement field from the perspectives of different professionals, namely those identified by Karrh et al. (2003) as the key actors in the field. These are corporate marketing executives, placement agents (or communications agents) and studio representatives (or media representatives).

Having knowledge of the state and level of development of the field is important scientifically because it helps direct future research efforts to issues which are interesting and pertinent at each different stage of development. Encouraging new research efforts is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of product placement and its potential in Finland, as it has not been extensively studied. For practitioners this knowledge is useful in assessing, from their perspective, what are, on the one hand, the potential pitfalls and, on the other, the potential gains associated with product placement practices in Finland. It is also clear that understanding the current state of the product placement field in Finland and the issues affecting it is necessary for the development of the field.

The study focuses on the television and film media because they both involve moving pictures and are therefore especially intriguing for product placement. Secondly, since product placement is believed to be a relatively new phenomenon in Finland, it is justifiable to focus on these two media. Some of the older sources (see e.g. Balasubramanian 1994; Sandler and Secunda 1993) refer to product placement as a function related to movies and television programs, which suggests that these media have been particularly central to the practice.

2. INDUSTRY LIFE CYCLE

The industry life cycle is a four-stage model that depicts the typical evolution of industries starting from the introduction stage and continuing through the growth and maturity stages to the decline stage, like product life cycles (Grimm et al. 2005). Hill and Jones (2007) put forth a model with five stages: embryonic, growth, shakeout, mature and decline. However, they point out that the model presents the life cycle in a generalized form but different industries can vary in their evolution. The 1970s' product life cycle literature served as a basis for the industry life cycle model which is now "conventional wisdom in business" (McGahan et al. 2004).

McGahan et al. (2004) explain that the life cycle of industries begins with a "period of fragmentation" where different operations models are tested and finally a "dominant model" emerges which boosts the volume of sales. They continue that the emergence of a dominant model leads the industry to a "shakeout" phase where many companies that are not operating with the dominant model have to exit. They note that when the sales volume growth eventually starts to weaken, the mature phase begins and as the sales volume starts to decrease, the industry reaches the decline phase.

Different life cycle stages are characterized by slightly different conditions as regards the potential for growth, structure of the industry and competition (Strebel 1987). Following this line of thinking, König and Stephan (2006) list what they call a "set of indicators and structural parameters to define and describe the individual stages". Their list includes the following indicators: size of market/demand, size of production, growth rates, number of competitors, market entry rate, survival rate, concentration ratio, types and degree of innovation and dominant design. These issues will be returned to later on in the text.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

As this research aims at evaluating the state and level of development of the Finnish product placement field, the informant groups chosen for the study are analogous to the product placement parties identified by Karrh et al. (2003). These three key actors in the field are corporate marketing executives, placement agents (or communications agents) and studio representatives (or media representatives). The empirical data of this exploratory qualitative study consists of eleven thematically organized semi-structured interviews conducted with the aforementioned professionals (three with company representatives from two corporations, four with communications planners and four with media representatives). In three of the eleven interviews there were two participants which means that a total of fourteen people were interviewed.

The potential informants were contacted by email mainly during spring 2004 and asked to take part in this research without offering any incentives for participation. The interviews were conducted at the workplaces of the informants except for two phone interviews with company representatives. They were all conducted by the author in Finnish and audiotaped. They were then transcribed verbatim by research assistants and the transcripts were subsequently checked and necessary amendments/corrections made by the author.

Interviews were chosen as the method of data collection for several reasons: the expected small size of the Finnish product placement market (Snellman 2003), the possibility of a low response rate in a mail survey sent to busy professionals and the nature of the research subject, that is to say there does not exist a lot of preliminary knowledge concerning the subject (see Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2000). More specifically, thematically organized semi-structured interviews were chosen, although it must be noted that some interviewees felt more comfortable with question-answer type interaction whereas others preferred sharing their experiences and knowledge in a freer manner. This approach allowed for a flexible research setting; structuring the interviews sufficiently without limiting the answers of the interviewees or the emergence of new issues during the interviews.

Thematically organized interview guides (Lindlof 1995) or topic guides (Seale 2000) were constructed from potential issues, themes and questions to discuss. Two guides were tailored to be used in the interviews: one for company representatives and communications planners and another for media representatives because the former were believed to emphasize the interests of the company whereas the latter the quality of their productions and programs. These guides included topics such as the history of product placement, the process of placing brands and products, product placement activities/use of product placement, the advantages and disadvantages of product placement, the effectiveness of product placement and its measurement, the ethical aspects and regulation of product placement and the future of product placement.

Since this study explores the Finnish product placement field from the perspective of professionals, the choice of expert interviews was evident. Those professionals that were thought to be able to provide useful and interesting information for the study were initially contacted. The profiles of the final participants are briefly described in Table 1.

In this study the interview data is treated as a resource rather than as a topic (Seale 2000). The study takes thus a realist approach (Silverman 2005) or a factist perspective (Alasuutari 1996). In consequence, the truthfulness and trustworthiness of interviewees' accounts should be assessed. In this study the risk of such a bias is very small for the following reasons. Firstly, those experts initially contacted for interviewing had a chance to refuse participating. Consequently, those most uncomfortable and unwilling to take part and discuss the research subject (i.e., those who could feel the need to give incomplete or even slightly misleading information) very likely opted out at this early stage. Secondly, some of the experts that chose to participate were willing to share confidential information, others gave concrete examples identifying brands by name and one interviewee even felt comfortable admitting to not knowing about the regulations and laws concerning product placement in Finland. These facts indicate that an atmosphere of trust and openness was established during the interviews, which increases the level of trustworthiness of the data.

TABLE 1. The interviewed Finnish professionals

Company representatives (3 interviews, 3 interviewees)	Communications agents (4 interviews, 6 interviewees)	Media representatives (4 interviews, 5 interviewees)
	General characteristics of companies	
■ Strong market presence and familiarity to consumers as well as financial potential with regard to product placement activities ■ Experience of cooperation relationships with production houses	■ Different perspectives (diversity in terms of portfolios, familiarity with product placement and size) ■ Portfolios: both advertising and communications agencies as product placement is a hybrid of advertising and publicity ■ Familiarity with product placement practices: communications agencies list product placement as one of their services on their web pages ■ Size: both smaller agencies and a larger agency	■ Two media represented: both television and motion pictures ■ Strong presence within their respective fields (TV: main commercial nationwide analogous television channels in Finland (Ministry of Transport and Communications 2005); Films: production companies with movies among the most watched domestic motion pictures (Finnish Film Foundation 2003a) and also TV programs in their portfolios)
COMPANY A: Global actor, market leader in Finland ■ I#1 (M, tel)[1]: director (marketing) ■ I#2 (M, tel): manager (digital content)	COMPANY C: Smaller communications agency (communications consulting and PR), part of the International Public Relations Network (IPRN) ■ I#4 (F): consultant ■ I#5 (F): publicist	COMPANY G: Nationwide commercial television channel ■ I#10 (M): manager (marketing) ■ I#11 (F): producer (domestic programs)
COMPANY B: Domestic actor, market leader chain in Finland ■ I#3 (M): director	COMPANY D: Smaller communications agency (PR and communications consultancy) ■ I#6 (F): managing director ■ I#7 (F): consultant	COMPANY H: Nationwide commercial television channel ■ I#12 (M): director (domestic programs)
[1] "I" for interviewee, "M" for male, "F" for female and "tel" for telephone interview.	COMPANY E: Smaller, full service advertising agency ■ I#8 (F): managing director	COMPANY I: Production unit (films and television programs), part of a bigger movie production concern (as an auxiliary firm-name) ■ I#13 (M): producer
	COMPANY F: Larger advertising agency, part of a worldwide advertising agency network ■ I#9 (M): account director	COMPANY J: Production house (films and television programs) ■ I#14 (M): producer (marketing)

Furthermore, to adapt the four categories put forth by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) to this study, as regards internal validity (accurate representation of some reality), effort has been made to describe the research process in detail, thus giving the conclusions a context; as to external validity (related to comparability or generalization of findings), the larger context of Finnish product placement activities and the interviewees have been presented, thus providing a framework for understanding the characteristics of this particular research setting; with respect to external reliability (replicability of findings in another study), both previously mentioned issues, that is description of both the research process and context, contribute to it, and lastly, as for internal reliability (consensus about meanings and conclusions within the study), verbatim excerpts from the interviews have been provided to illustrate certain points, thus allowing readers to judge whether the interpretations seem plausible.

Qualitative thematic analysis was chosen as the method of processing the interview data. This type of analysis was deemed suitable firstly because the interviews were conducted in a thematically organized manner and secondly because it was believed to facilitate identifying the most interesting and central tenets of product placement with regard to the objectives of this study.

In the following section the industry life cycle model presented earlier will be used as a conceptual aid to help structure the analysis and discussion. The state and level of development of the field are evaluated by examining issues connected to certain indicators of the industry life cycle stages. The original indicators of the life cycle model are not applied as such to this study because the character of the research subject (i.e., the product placement field) is different from the character of, for instance, the manufacturing industries. Therefore, the life cycle stage indicators used in the analysis are adapted to this study. This means that they are not used as a set of readily applicable quantitative measures but rather as thematic frames that indicate which issues should be looked at in order to evaluate the state and level of development of the Finnish product placement field. For instance, by gauging the use of product placement by companies we can assess the size of the market/demand. Thus, the issues discussed in the next section are founded on these indicators as outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2. The industry life cycle stage indicators used in this study

Indicator	Issues analyzed	Heading in the findings section
(1) Size of market/demand (total volume of the market)	**Companies' (interest in and) use of product placement**	**Perspectives of the key actors of the field on product placement**
(2) Size of production (total output produced)	**Television stations' and production houses' (i.e., media representatives') (interest in and) use of product placement**	**Perspectives of the key actors of the field on product placement**
(3) Dominant design (number of competing product/process design concepts)	**Commonly shared, agreed upon definitions, established process model (involved parties and their operations models, payments), default design of business/clear rules of the game**	**Concept of product placement** **Product placement process**
(4) Growth rates (change in market volume/number of units produced over time)	**Expected direction of development in the product placement field**	**Future of product placement**

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The context: Finnish setting for product placement

This part describes the context of Finnish placement activities because it is important in understanding the findings. After this introductory overview of the Finnish setting, the subsequent parts will deal with the data and findings.

It would seem logical that the interest and motivation of companies to use product placement as a marketing communications tool in Finland depends on calculations of needed input and expected output. In other words, the main question marketers are likely to be interested in is whether there are enough benefits to be gained for their business through the use of product placement. There are no straightforward answers to this question as there are many factors that can be seen to affect the suitability and usefulness of utilizing product placement as a means of communication in a particular company (see Figure 1).

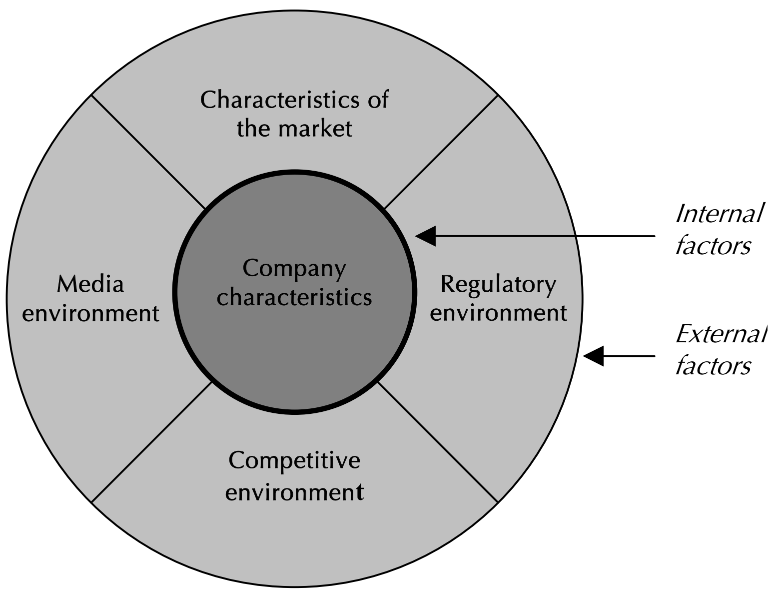

FIGURE 1. Issues possibly influencing product placement decisions

These factors can be divided into **internal**, company-controlled issues (e.g., available financial resources, communications objectives, chosen target groups) and **external** issues comprising of elements in the operational environment of the company. The latter, external factors, which are focused upon here, are related to the (1) characteristics of the market (e.g., consumers' awareness, views and acceptance of product placement), (2) media environment (e.g., media vehicles available for product placement and their characteristics), (3) competitive environment (e.g., competitors' interest in and potential for product placement activities, level of actual product placement usage among rivals and investments in marketing communications) and (4) regulatory environment (e.g., laws on marketing, advertising and different media operations). These issues are important as companies are not likely to be interested or motivated to take part in product placement activities in Finland unless there exists a suitable setting (external factors) for product placement. In the following a few general remarks are made regarding these factors which make up the Finnish setting for product placement.

Characteristics of the market

The first external factor, the characteristics of the market, is difficult to evaluate because there does not exist much academic research on the product placement awareness and attitudes of Finnish consumers. However, Sabour (2006) found that the general attitudes of 479 Finnish university students toward product placement were more likely to be neutral or positive than negative (18% of respondents). In a similar manner, the Finnish respondents in a study conducted by an independent research firm for the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006a) were rather positively than negatively disposed to product placement.

It is also worth mentioning that a study commissioned by the National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005a) to gauge the attitudes of the Finnish public toward advertising found that three in four Finns regard it positively. These results are interesting and relevant in the context of product placement because the connection between attitudes toward advertising in general and attitudes toward product placement has interested product placement researchers (see Brennan et al. 2004; Gould et al. 2000; Gupta et al. 2000; Nelson et al. 2004; Sung and de Gregorio 2005). Most of these previous studies found a positive connection between advertising-related and placement-related attitudes. One could, therefore, hypothesize based on the favorable results of the aforementioned advertising study as well that the overall placement-related attitudes of Finnish consumers are more positive than negative.

Media environment

Concerning the second factor, the media environment, this study focuses especially on the television and motion picture sectors, which are described in brief in the following.

Television broadcasting industry

At the time of writing, there are four main nationwide analogous television channels broadcasting in Finland (Ministry of Transport and Communications 2005). Of these channels, two are stateowned public service channels with financing drawn from license fees collected from Finns owning a television set and fees from commercial channels (Statistics Finland 2005). The other two are private channels whose financing is based on selling broadcasting time to commercial messages.

The public service channels operate under the Act on Yleisradio Oy, which prohibits them from broadcasting advertising or producing sponsored programs (YLE 2004). Furthermore, a separate set of provisions accepted in spring 2005 and applied to the operations of the public service channels explicitly states that placing products in programs with promotional intent (product placement) is forbidden (YLE 2005). The commercial channels, on the other hand, are highly dependent on the cash flows created by companies through their purchase of advertising time. In this respect product placement could well be used in programs broadcast on these private channels. In addition, the two commercial channels would seem to have a great deal to offer companies placement-wise thanks to their relative popularity, fair reach as well as suitable program content (see Aslama and Wallenius 2005; Finnpanel 2005; MTV 2004).

Motion picture industry

According to a report published by the Ministry of Education (2005), approximately 25 production companies produce movies as professional business. If the motion picture industries of Finland and the United States, which can be considered a prime example of a country with developed product placement practices, are compared, there is a vast difference in size between the two. The number of feature films produced per year, the number of cinema admissions per capita per year and the production costs of feature films are all on a significantly higher level in the US (see European Audiovisual Observatory 2004; Finnish Film Foundation 2003b; MEDIA Salles 2004).

Finnish motion pictures are funded primarily through financing at the own risk of the producer, advance sales of the film as well as subsidies, and in Finland the financing of films is scant when compared with other Western countries (Hemilä 2004). This type of financial situation could imply that Finnish film producers might well be interested in cooperating with companies to get extra funding for their projects and therefore well disposed toward product placement activities.

Competitive environment

As for the third external factor, the competitive environment, there are many important issues to take into account, such as whether competitors use, have interest in or potential for product placement. These questions are likely to affect any given company’s possibility of differentiating itself positively and strongly by, for instance, pioneering in the field and thereby gaining first-mover advantage. As the answers to these questions are highly case-specific and thus need to be considered in the context of each company individually, the following discussion will briefly describe the Finnish trends in marketing communication on a more general level.

As regards the marketing communications expenditures, based on the studies by the National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005b) and the Association of Finnish Advertisers (2005), it seems that there is a steady, more positive than negative development trend in the investments made in marketing communications. This could imply that at least Finnish marketers might afford to allocate some of these financial resources to less traditional marketing communications tools such as product placement should they be willing to do so. A closer look at the study commissioned by the National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005b) gives a clearer idea of how Finnish marketers act communications-wise.

Based on the division of marketing communications expenditures by category and the tools with the biggest shares, it seems that at least the domestic marketers rely quite heavily on the familiar and safe, not to say traditional, marketing communications tools which utilize media vehicles and message formats they and the public are accustomed to. In this regard it seems likely that convincing those companies who are investing their money to allocate more to the less conventional methods of communication such as product placement does take time and effort. On the other hand, the uptrend of some newer communications tools (e.g., Internet advertising) which have a shorter track record, and are therefore probably regarded as riskier, implies that these domestic marketers are not completely conservative and unwilling to diversify their communications repertoire into less explored fields.

Regulatory environment

Finally, in relation to the fourth factor it can be said that in Finland the legislative and regulatory standing of product placement has been a subject of debate and cause of confusion because it has not been clear where the line between forbidden and allowed stands. In fact, according to Grönqvist (2004), the term product placement or its equivalent is not used in Finnish legislation and consequently the Act on Television and Radio Operations does not directly ban the practice. The law imposes restrictions on the sponsorship of programs as well as prohibits unidentifiable and surreptitious advertising (i.e., advertisements have to be clearly separated from other broadcasts and placing brands and products in television/radio programs with commercial intent is forbidden with the exception of cases where they are necessary for the execution of the program) (Grönqvist 2004).

In an attempt to clarify the rules, the Finnish Consumer Agency & Consumer Ombudsman (2007) drew up guidelines pertaining to product placement on television. These guidelines make reference to the Consumer Protection Act and the Act on Television and Radio Operations. As for movies, Grönqvist (2004) notes that placements featuring alcohol and tobacco brands are under scrutiny (see Helsingin Sanomat 2003a; 2003b and National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health 2003 for an example) but otherwise there are no laws similar to those pertaining to the television medium to regulate advertising embedded in films. The European Commission finalized the revision of its "Television without Frontiers" directive meant to modernize the Commission's policy with regard to audiovisual services at the end of 2007 (European Communities 2008). The reformed directive, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), explicitly addresses product placement regulation, among other things, and has to be implemented by the Member States no later than 19 December 2009 (see AVMSD 2007).

Perspectives of the key actors of the field on product placement

In this part the focus is on the interviewed companies, television stations and film production houses, and their relationship to product placement (see Table 1 and Appendix A for more detailed descriptions). The two main parties influencing the fate of product placement are marketers who either consider product placement to have potential or not and producers who either are or are not receptive to this form of collaboration. The advertising and communications agencies' role in the end is to serve their clients according to their clients' wishes.

Companies

In the first of the two Finnish corporations, product placement is an important part of the overall marketing strategy. The company focuses on global placements but also local placements are used if target group reach is acceptable in relation to the cost. Even though placements are done locally in Finland on a small scale, the emphasis is on placements with global visibility which also reach Finnish consumers. The second company, a chain consisting of retailer-led stores, is not actively engaged in product placement but has been among the pioneers in teaming up with Finnish movie productions by tie-in agreements. As the competitors all sell the same branded products, product placement is not considered to necessarily be the best means of achieving the main goals of the company. Tapping into the overall themes of the productions has been deemed more important to build the company brand.

As the two companies seem to have quite different relationships to product placement, it is interesting to consider the possible causes of this variance, especially from the viewpoint of the non-participant. The reason for the second company's disinclination to embrace product placement appears to be closely linked to the lack of its own branded products. Hence, it can be said that the skeptical attitude toward using product placement is based on a rather one-sided conception of the practice as something that focuses merely on placing actual products. In effect, product placement or more appropriately brand placement (Karrh 1998) can include, for instance, the embedding of brand and company names in addition to concrete products (d'Astous and Chartier

2000). On the other hand, the challenges posed by obscured brand identifiers in the context of product placement have received attention (Ferraro and Avery 2000; Petersen 2001) and since the brand in this particular company's case is connected to the distribution channel (i.e., chain of stores) rather than any individual product or service, this may in fact be a pertinent issue to consider and a factor which offers further explanation to the less enthusiastic stance as regards product placement.

Another interesting point is the fact that the second company believes that it has played an important role of patron as regards Finnish cinema and culture. This could be interpreted in the light of the company's area of operation which is domestic as opposed to the first company whose operations extend beyond the home market. In consequence, the domestically-operating company is likely to focus on partnering with Finnish productions and thus may regard profiling itself as a benefactor of Finnish culture as a valuable way to differentiate itself from competitors.

Since Finnish cinema is relatively small-scale measured by the number of films produced annually (European Audiovisual Observatory 2004) and the scarcity of financial resources (Hemilä 2004), the benevolent and philanthropic guise of sponsorship (McAllister 1996) appears more credible in the domestically-operating company's case than it presumably would in the case of the first company who as a global player focuses on international productions with high visibility. In other words, for the globally-operating company to proclaim itself a patron under the "sponsorship of cultural productions" label in the hope of eliciting goodwill could seem artificial if the beneficiaries are production houses and productions that in actual fact are already thriving financially.

Television stations

It is noteworthy that neither of the television companies actually produces its own programs, the news being virtually the only exception, as those activities have been outsourced. Therefore, the process of including brands in programs involves three parties, namely television stations, production companies and corporate marketers.

Both television stations seem to have certain reservations about product placement, the first emphasizing first and foremost the possible loss of advertising-related earnings, whereas the second focusing more on artistic and regulatory issues. In a similar way as their American counterparts have internal guidelines which place restrictions on brand cameos (Karrh 1998), both of these companies reserve the right to influence the brand appearances in their programs. Even though their attitude toward the practice may seem stringent on the surface, in practice both of these stations give brands airtime as it provides a means of offsetting production costs and is also reasonable from the perspective of creating verisimilitude. In fact, the aforementioned two aspects (i.e., financial support and enhancement of realism) seem to be focal considerations as they have also received attention in previous research (Ferraro and Avery 2000; Grönqvist 2007; Karrh

1998). Nevertheless, Finnish television industry professionals place value on content and its quality (Grönqvist 2007).

Film production houses

There are clearly some issues where congruence exists between the two production houses although there are also some points of divergence. On the one hand, they both have a positive attitude toward establishing cooperation relationships with companies for product placement and joint promotion. Secondly, in both cases the main reason for embracing corporate participation pertains to the support it provides for the financing of the project, which is an often cited motive (Gupta et al. 2000; Karrh 1998; Karrh et al. 2003). On the other hand, it is evident that these production houses function on slightly different levels when it comes to collaborating with companies.

Firstly, the second production house's approach is more centralized and consistent, which is similar to that of American studios which have their own product placement units (DeLorme et al. 2000; Karrh et al. 2003), whereas in the case of the first the process is less coherent with varying participants, ranging from the "above-the-line" to "below-the-line" parties (Karrh 1998, p. 36), depending on the project. Secondly, the second production house is more inclined to please its partners as it approves making modifications to the movie, whereas the first appears to value artistic integrity very highly. This discrepancy points out a broader issue, to wit the balancing act between culture and commercialism. This issue has generated diverse commentary, others arguing for the coexistence of marketing and culture (Hoivala 2003), whereas others protesting against excessive commercialism and culture which is the product of a "commodified imagination" (Wenner 2004, p. 127). In fact, Karrh et al. (2003, p. 145) report in their study of practitioners' views that the respondents strongly agreed with the statement "placements can lead to trade-offs between the financial and creative sides of movie making".

In conclusion, the overall attitudes of the Finnish television and film media representatives toward cooperation with companies seem to be relatively approving as they have both financial and artistic aspects to consider, both of which are likewise mentioned by Russell and Belch (2005). Interestingly, these two themes have also come up in qualitative consumer studies. In their inquiry which focuses on how moviegoers interpret brands in films, DeLorme and Reid (1999) found that viewers appreciate the realism brands bring to movies and dislike the use of generic props. In addition, viewers feel that brands give them information about the characters in the movie as well as make it possible for them to relate to these characters. In a similar study conducted in the UK, O'Reilly et al. (2005) discovered that in addition to valuing movie realism, which brands enhance, many moviegoers are able to comprehend that product placement is needed in the financing of films.

In the present study, despite the fact that emphasis was placed on giving priority to the content of the production and concern expressed over the possible loss of advertising revenue and regulations, in practice product placement is a means to an end, a way to operate. As for companies, they seem to be on the lookout for new ways to communicate with consumers but in the end it is the chosen target group that determines which marketing communications tools are best suited for getting the message across: *"(…) as we have a target audience for each message, we then have to define on that basis which are the best channels to deliver this message to this target audience. And that way we end up using placements for some messages and for some not. And it is because of that target group and how it can be reached.* **I#1**[2]*"* The representative of the other company commented in a similar vein: *"We want to approach the young target groups, that is these 15–30-year-olds, in a new way and our solution to this is that taking part in domestic, Finnish cinema is a good thing.* **I#3***"*

On the other hand, there appears to be an interesting contrast between the open-minded approach of the two interviewed corporations and the mainstream behavior of Finnish companies as seen by the other interviewees. It became evident during the interviews that the product placement process is more often initiated by the producer than the company side. As one film producer put it: *"(…) for companies to approach us is as rare as hitting the jackpot.* **I#13***"* This passiveness was explained by reasons such as the lack of product placement culture in Finnish companies, their inability to discern the possibilities and potential of product placement as well as their relative conservativeness in terms of marketing communication, the latter argument being supported by the findings of the National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005b).

As regards the conservativeness of companies, touching upon issues brought up by Russell and Belch (2005) such as the great importance of trust in the placement business and the cautiousness demonstrated by less experienced companies in relation to placements, a producer explained: *"(…) what I have spoken about with many marketing people is the fact that they put 1 000 000 euros into TV campaigning without blinking an eye but those 10 000 euros for a movie is 'never!' because things are always done the way one is accustomed to doing and this kind of movie thing is still to that extent new that if you have not done it before, then doing it for the first time, the threshold to it, is really big. When you are able to break the ice once and handle it well, then it is a lot easier. And now we are still kind of in that situation now perhaps, when this has been done for maybe five, ten years in a way…this has become active this matter (…). (…) we are still doing that ice-breaking work that there is. (...) These are long processes, building that trust takes a long time (...).* **I#13***"*

2 See Table 1.

The previously mentioned trend of the producer side more often being the initiating party would imply that product placement is not an active part of the marketing communications mix in Finnish companies, if included in it at all. A film production house representative noted: *"(…) it is unfortunate at this stage that you do have to seek quite innovatively to find the kinds of partners that will become involved (…).* **I#14***"* The other producer shared this view: *"Unlike in America, where big firms have their own units that deal solely with product placement (…). In Finland they do certainly not act like that, but rather in Finland they take care of their own shoe manufacturing or their own shirt manufacturing and then are a bit amazed: 'ah, now came this proposition, they want us to come in on some movie', that is the way it works.* **I#13***"*

The advertising professional with experience from the movie sector commented: *"Always when movie making begins in Finland, it starts from the foundation (...) and then, when it has already been taken far enough, only then they start to think: 'well, this is the kind of story that this type of thing could fit in this.' And then they ask: 'we start shooting in three weeks, will you come in on this?'* **I#9***"* Due to this somewhat ad hoc nature of these activities, it seems implausible that product placement would be strongly tied to the marketing strategy or taken into account in the integrated marketing communications (IMC) plan. This can be regarded as a sign of product placement not being a routine and purposeful practice in Finland. Although, Russell and Belch (2005, p. 81) discovered that even in the North American market "[i]n instances when product placements occur as stand-alones, strategic goal setting rarely drives decisions, leaving instead a more shotgun-oriented approach" and in many cases the objectives for product placement were not set in a formal manner.

The question arises as to what could possibly be the cause of the aforementioned inconsistency between the interviewed Finnish companies and those in the mainstream? It is possible that the two companies' market leader positions may have an influence on their mentality in two ways: firstly, their marketing budgets may be more substantial, thus possibly reducing the perceived financial risk associated with these types of ventures and secondly, their level of visibility in the marketplace may be higher, thus possibly increasing the perceived profits. In discussing the dynamics of the product placement industry, Russell and Belch (2005) suggest that companies may gain power, for instance, by virtue of their size and market leader position as those companies tend to have strong brand images. Furthermore, they note that big companies benefit from instant brand recognition as well as have financial power compared to their smaller counterparts.

Concept of product placement

The interviewees gave a multifaceted account of what in their view constitutes product placement. Some of the definitions put forward by the Finnish professionals included activities which are rarely referred to in connection with the practice (e.g., trade fairs) which is often defined as "the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming" (Karrh 1998, p. 33). In addition to this, there were also contrasting views on whether placing products in the hands of actual people counts as product placement. All these could be interpreted as signs of the practice still being to some extent unestablished and new, in an evolving phase. This impression of Finnish product placement activities not being highly developed is strengthened by the fact that movies and television were the placement media mentioned most often in the interviews. Even though these very same vehicles have historically (1974–2004) been the two media to attract the largest shares of product placement spending in the US market, implying that they are the most established, one could even say most traditional placement vehicles, it is worth noting that the US market has developed so that other media (e.g., videogames and the Internet) have steadily gained ground and thus play an increasing role in the practice (PQ Media 2005). In line with the aforementioned, Grönqvist (2007) states in her study that professionals from the television industry have various understandings of the concept of product placement.

Product placement process

As for the actual process of placing brands and finding corporate partners, in the first production company four different possibilities are identified: the producer him/herself contacts the company directly; there is a person at the production company who is in charge of handling product placement opportunities; an agency providing communications services can work as an agent on commission or dealing with companies is left to set designers and prop masters. Analyzing the script to see what kinds of products can be included in the production and after that approaching suitable companies to put a collaboration proposition to them is considered to be the ideal case. However, in practice the lack of resources can lead to delegating the task of contacting companies to prop masters and set designers, which happens rarely in Hollywood (Karrh 1998).

In the second production company, on the other hand, the process of product placement seems to be more similar to that of American studios, although more small-scale. In the same way as American studios have product placement departments (Karrh et al. 2003), the production house has its own producer in charge of marketing. Furthermore, in line with what the other producer regarded as ideal, the producer dissects the script and is in the front line when companies are approached. Even though this process is more organized than that of the first production house, it is still the production company who is in the position of "buyer" in the sense that it is trying to find corporate partners, whereas in the US specialized agencies representing marketers look for suitable placement opportunities and approach the producer side (Gupta and Lord 1998; see also Russell and Belch 2005 for more on the placement process). As regards the television medium, the process appears to be rather fixed with three parties participating, namely the television station, production house and the company.

In addition, three out of the four interviewed agencies working in communications, to wit the other advertising agency and both communications agencies, have had some experiences of functioning as middlemen in the placement process. This lends support to Pardun and McKee's (1999) notion that both advertising and public relations agencies can have a role in the process. It is worth noting, though, that both communications agencies touched upon the sporadic nature of their role as intermediaries. At the other agency selling a client product placement is very random. As for the other, it is a service among others as it is not actually a separate service, and production companies are not dealt with that much. Similarly, according to an advertising agency interviewee, production houses usually approach companies directly.

Furthermore, as for Finnish product placement agencies, there was more or less a consensus among the four agencies that they are non-existent. It was noted by one film production house representative that certain large advertising agencies have subsidiaries specializing in, for instance, events where product placement plays a small role. For his part, Kortti (2006) mentions a Finnish advertising production company called 7th Heaven Productions which offers services linked to product placement (see www.7th.fi). Interestingly, in their review of the industry in North America, Russell and Belch (2005) note that even though the placement process may only include two parties, that is the company and the studio, the importance of product placement agencies has grown as placement activities have proliferated.

As to the types of placement arrangements, in the case of television money should not change hands between the company and production house, which implies the dominance of some sort of barter arrangements which means trading products and/or services for a presence in the program content. Grönqvist (2007) notes in her study that barter placements are numerous, although the representatives of television channels and production companies state that visibility in the program is not guaranteed. In the film medium the situation is somewhat parallel. According to a producer, in a recent production most brand appearances were the result of barter deals with only one involving a fee. The other producer commented in a similar vein that the general way to use product placement in Finland is to cut costs by, for example borrowing certain items for shoots, yet pointing out that nowadays there are occasions when companies pay for it, though the amounts are moderate. In addition, an advertising agency representative with experience of the film industry estimated that the share of paid arrangements is small. In contrast, interviewees at the other agencies suggested that production companies do have price tags for brand cameos, even though the placements organized by, for instance, one of the communications agencies have not involved payments.

It can, therefore, be said that the Finnish situation concerning placement deals bears some resemblance to the American situation, yet being at the same time quite different. Firstly, as seems to be the case in Finland, the biggest slice (64%) of product placement spending in the US went to barter placements in 2004 but, unlike what appears to be prevalent in Finland, paid placements also constituted a significant 29% share of the US market (PQ Media 2005). Secondly, if payments are made in Finland, the fees do not appear to be extremely substantial, as one producer pointed out, whereas in the US the cost of a placement can be anywhere between $25 000 and $225 000 (Gupta and Lord 1998) or even range from $500 000 to several million depending on the promotional activities connected to it (Goldsmith and Mintz 2004).

All in all, the above-mentioned facts strengthen the earlier impression that the practice of product placement is still in the process of taking shape in Finland. There seem to be no highly established practices or any "default option" as regards the process of product placement as other production companies function in a more and others in a less systematic manner and there appears to be no widespread use of mediating agencies. It is rather evident that in Finland there is no full-blown, high stakes product placement industry in the American sense of the word with placement agents and organized bodies such as the Entertainment Resources & Marketing Association, ERMA (Karrh et al. 2003).

Future of product placement

As regards the interviewees' views concerning the future of product placement as a marketing communications tool, there were two points of view with rather equal support. The first was more optimistic, whereas the second had certain reservations about the future of the practice. Those envisioning growth and development, to wit both companies, two professionals in advertising and communications, and one television representative, based their views on the need for new channels of communication and some saw it as a supporting element in the marketing communications mix.

On the other hand, those with a more skeptical outlook on the future, to wit the other two communications professionals and both film production house representatives, mentioned that product placement can grow but slowly and it requires certain changes in attitudes. It was also pointed out by some that product placement is not likely to become extremely big business. A film producer explained: *"(…) I do not believe that we will ever on a large scale get to the kind of situation where a Finnish production company could make different trademarks compete, the way it is done in America, that you take offers from Mercedes and Audi and BMW and then just based on which is the best offer, you choose which car Tom Cruise will drive in the upcoming movie.* **I#13***"* In a similar manner, Grönqvist (2007) found that the television industry professionals are unconvinced of the considerable growth of the product placement market.

Interestingly, the former, more positive view on the future of product placement seems to be more prevalent in the US. In Pardun and McKee's (1999) study public relations professionals agreed (more than advertising professionals) that product placement will receive more investments, the use of placements in films and by agencies will increase and more clients will ask for placements. In the same way, practitioners in the Karrh et al. (2003) study agreed quite strongly that product placement is likely to increase in the future. In line with this, it is in fact estimated that product placement spending will continue to grow in the US and reach $6.94 billion in 2009 (PQ Media 2005). Russell and Belch (2005, p. 90) conclude that the evolution of the North American industry is fast even though it is in its "early growth stages" with the best *modus operandi* yet to be found.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Level of development of the Finnish product placement field

The state and level of development of the Finnish product placement field are evaluated in the following by reviewing the findings through certain industry life cycle indicators.

Size of market/demand / use of product placement by companies
Size of production / use of product placement by television stations and production houses
Based on the previous discussion, the size of the market/demand appears to be relatively small. The size of production is proportional to the size of demand in the product placement field because placements are the result of cooperation and agreement between producers and companies. In other words, if few companies are active with regard to product placement (i.e., the demand for cooperation is weak), television programs and movies can only feature few product placements (i.e., the production of placements is low). Therefore, as the demand does not seem to be very substantial, the size of production is not likely to be considerable either, even though Finnish television and film media representatives would be ready to cooperate with companies.

Dominant design / established model of business
Considering the different views on how to define product placement, variance in the placement process, absence of placement agencies and dominance of barter placements, the Finnish product placement field appears to be still taking shape. In this regard it seems that a dominant design or model has not yet emerged.

Growth rates / expected direction of development in the ppl field
As regards growth rates in the product placement field, there appears to be a possibility of growth. On the one hand, new ways to reach consumers are needed but on the other hand, some attitude changes are called for.

The aforementioned indicators suggest that the Finnish product placement field could be in the early stages of its life cycle. At the beginning of the life cycle, that is in the introduction, embryonic or fragmentation stage, the size of the market is small and there is no dominant design (König and Stephan 2006). The industry is in the initial phases of its development and growth is slow (Hill and Jones 2007).

What could possibly explain this? Taking the marketers' perspective, three factors could be considered central, of which the first pertains more to the internal characteristics of the company, whereas the two others to external issues, namely the regulatory and the media environment (see Figure 1).

Firstly, if Finnish companies are indeed slightly dormant when it comes to product placement, the other actors in the field (i.e., production houses and agencies providing communications services) may not feel that there are sufficient incentives to develop the practice further to make it more systematic and organized. This, in turn, can diminish the willingness of potential companies to explore the possibilities of product placement as they may wish for more certainty in the form of clear rules and established practices, thus creating a vicious circle.

Secondly, it is likely that the ambiguities related to the Finnish legislation pertaining to product placement, as discussed earlier, have created uncertainty among marketers, possibly making them reserved toward this form of marketing communication. Thirdly, there seem to be some restricting factors associated with the media vehicles available for product placement. In other words, the reach of Finnish films is limited, both domestically and internationally, with this same condition likely to apply in part to television productions. An advertising agency representative commented: *"(…) in Finland a domestic movie attracting 300 000 viewers gets on the list of that year's ten best or most watched. And you get…well, I will not even speak about money, but the same number surely a hundred times cheaper one night on television with one spot advertisement. And this is…I know that this is terribly black-and-white thinking but unfortunately this is how it goes (…).* **I#9***"* It should be pointed out, though, that films reach more viewers when they are released on sale, made available through video/DVD rentals and eventually aired on television.

As for getting overseas visibility, a film producer remarked: *"(…) Finnish cinema is not international…there is no such reason that, say some company that would want to strongly brand itself abroad, then why would it start supporting Finnish films because traditionally Finnish cinema is not visible abroad (…).* **I#13***"* This view is corroborated by the fact that only one Finnish movie is cited among the top 20 Nordic films by admissions in Europe and the US between years 1996 and 2003 (European Audiovisual Observatory 2004). Moreover, the comment appears to be accurate as regards the approach adopted by one of the interviewed companies with a global market area as the company focuses on placements that get visibility worldwide.

In the next section some concluding remarks will be made based on the issues covered in the previous parts as to whether product placement could be a supporting element in gaining competitive advantage in Finland.

Implications for marketers

There seem to be many factors that give companies encouragement to use product placement in Finland, though there are also some potential pitfalls that need to be acknowledged. These are presented next, starting with the opportunities. Firstly, companies that rise to the occasion and embrace product placement now can be among the pioneers in the Finnish field as marketing communications investments are still largely allocated to conventional tools such as advertising in newspapers, direct mail advertising and television advertising. In the same vein, Russell and Belch (2005) point out something possibly applicable to Finland as well about the importance of personal relationships between the different actors in the field (i.e., companies, agencies and studios). They state that those companies and agencies that got into the business early on and were able to build those relationships, are the ones who are now most active and successful.

Secondly, companies that take on a more active or even proactive role in looking for product placement opportunities instead of settling for a passive or reactive role, where the producer side takes the initiative, are likely to have plenty of choice. This is because the television and film media are relatively open to cooperation with companies and the competition for placement opportunities appears to be minor, if there is any, as the bulk of Finnish marketers have apparently not yet awoken to the possibilities of the practice.

Thirdly, as the prospect of product placement clutter seems quite remote in Finland, the likelihood of consumer irritation ought to be smaller if placements are done discreetly and with good taste, thus giving marketers the opportunity to make a stronger impact. Lastly, as the Finnish product placement field is still taking shape and barter arrangements appear to be common, companies who are willing to engage in these activities are able to do so at low cost.

On the other hand, there are certain issues to take into consideration. Firstly, the very same fact that the practice of product placement is not yet well established also implies that there may be a bigger risk of the placement process being less controlled from both the company and the producer side. Marketers may act on an ad hoc basis without setting clear goals or being committed to measuring their attainment, thus rendering these activities less purposeful in regard to the overall objectives of the company and producers may in some cases use their discretion as concerns the actual execution of the placement if agreements are verbal, made between some company representative and crew member, and money does not change hands.

In addition, Finnish productions get limited visibility abroad and are therefore best suited for placements aimed at Finnish audiences. Finally, the laws and regulations governing product placement are still being outlined and detailed which means that companies interested in product placement activities in Finland should acknowledge and avoid the risk of “crossing the line”.

All in all, product placement can be an interesting marketing communications tool for companies to consider in Finland if the possible drawbacks are foreseen and kept in check. From a competitive advantage viewpoint, product placement could be a valuable addition to the marketing communications mix but it is more the use of all the different tools holistically that is capable of generating competitive advantage rather than any single tool by itself. Karrh et al. (2003, p. 144) found that practitioners believe that a placement would be very effective if “the brand is supported with other promotion and advertising”. The issues of integrated marketing communication and the possible synergy benefits are important and they have received attention in previous product placement research (DeLorme and Reid 1999). As Russell and Belch (2005) state, placements need to be a part of both the communications strategy and the media plan.

In conclusion, as consumers are becoming more and more elusive, marketers are forced to reassess the ways they communicate with their target audiences, and from this perspective product placement can be regarded as a useful tool in the communications mix. It may have certain weaknesses compared to other communications tools but they too have their own shortcomings. Therefore, adopting an IMC perspective on a strategic level is focal as it allows different tools to complement each other so that the weaknesses of some are balanced by the strengths of others and furthermore, it places emphasis on customer-oriented communication, that is delivering messages that are coherent from the audience’s perspective rather than being such merely from the perspective of the company (Kitchen et al. 2004).

Limitations and avenues for future research

Concerning the limitations of this study, it must be noted that drawing absolute conclusions based on interviews conducted with informants that were not sampled randomly and a limited number of interviews does face certain problems. However, as for the restrictions of the sample, this study set out to exploratively evaluate the state and level of development of product placement activities in Finland from the perspective of professionals. In other words, taking into account that the interviewees are professionals who have extensive know-how in their respective fields, it is reasonable to say that their placement-related views and assessments carry weight. Furthermore, as the main objective of this study was not to provide final or exhaustive answers but rather to function as a preliminary inquiry, the findings can be considered as an interesting glimpse into a topical phenomenon that merits further investigation.

Future studies could approach Finnish product placement activities, for instance, from the point of view of consumers. Understanding consumers’ attitudes toward product placement is essential in evaluating the potential of this alternative communications tool in Finland. These attitudes are important also from the regulatory perspective as public sentiment should be taken into consideration in the legislative process.

Another interesting research area could be the effects and effectiveness of product placement in Finland. There is a need for studies that focus on explicit memory/cognitive level effects (e.g., brand recall and recognition) as well as implicit memory/affective and conative level effects (e.g., brand attitude, brand preference, brand choice, purchase intention). The findings can help better evaluate how to incorporate product placement into the integrated marketing communications mix.

Finally, content analyses (e.g., evaluating the quantity and quality of brand appearances in different media) and practitioner studies (e.g., analyzing the stage of development and dynamics of the Finnish product placement field) have their own importance. Staying up to date about the evolution of the practice in Finland has implications for public policy and ensures that the results of consumer-oriented studies are interpreted in their proper context. ■

REFERENCES

ALASUUTARI, PERTTI (1996), *Researching culture: Qualitative method and cultural studies*, reprint, London: Sage Publications.

ANTIKAINEN, JARKKO (2005), "Sananvapauskin on ostettavissa," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 6, A5.

ASLAMA, MINNA and JAANA WALLENIUS (2005), *Suomalainen tv-tarjonta 2004*, Publications of the Ministry of Transport and Communications 47/2005, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mintc.fi/oliver/upl656-Julkaisuja%2047_2005.pdf

Association of Finnish Advertisers (2005), "Mainosbarometri 2006," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mainostajat.fi/mliitto/sivut/Mainosbarometri2006.pdf

AVERY, ROSEMARY J. and ROSELLINA FERRARO (2000), "Verisimilitude or advertising? Brand appearances on prime-time television," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 34 (Winter), 217–244.

AVMSD (2007), *Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council*, Official Journal of the European Union, L 332/27, 18.12.2007, accessed January 23, 2008. Available at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_332/l_33220071218en00270045.pdf

BALASUBRAMANIAN, SIVA K. (1994), "Beyond advertising and publicity: Hybrid messages and public policy issues," *Journal of Advertising*, 23 (December), 29–46.

BELCH, GEORGE E. and MICHAEL A. BELCH (2001), *Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective*, 5th edition, New York: Irwin/McGraw-Hill.

BRENNAN, IAN, KHALID M. DUBAS and LAURIE A. BABIN (1999), "The influence of product-placement type & exposure time on product-placement recognition," *International Journal of Advertising*, 18 (3), 323–337.

BRENNAN, STACEY, PHILIP J. ROSENBERGER III and VERONICA HEMENTERA (2004), "Product placements in movies: An Australian consumer perspective on their ethicality and acceptability," *Marketing Bulletin*, 15 (May), accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://marketing-bulletin.massey.ac.nz/browse.asp?vid=15

CAPPO, JOE (2003), *The future of advertising: New media, new clients, new consumers in the post-television age*, Chicago: McGraw-Hill.

Council for Mass Media in Finland (2006), "Julkisen sanan neuvoston langettava päätös piilomainontaa koskevassa asiassa," accessed August 11, 2006. Available at http://jsn.fi/paatos.asp?sivuid=3557B/MTV/05

d'ASTOUS, ALAIN and FRANCIS CHARTIER (2000), "A study of factors affecting consumer evaluations and memory of product placements in movies," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 22 (Fall), 31–40.

DELORME, DENISE E. and LEONARD N. REID (1999), "Moviegoers' experiences and interpretations of brands in films revisited," *Journal of Advertising*, 28 (Summer), 71–95.

DELORME, DENISE E., CLAUDIA MENNICKEN and HANS-JOERG ALEFF (2000), "A cross-cultural comparison of consumers' perceptions and evaluations of brand placement in motion pictures," *2000 American Marketing Association (AMA) Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings*, 11, 27–34.

DEVANEY, POLLY (2002), "Tonight's main feature – a two-hour cigarette ad," *Marketing Week*, 25 (June), 30–31.

DRAAISMA, MURIEL (1999), "Part of the action: Product placement can boost brand awareness, but not everyone buys into it," *Marketing Magazine*, 104 (December), 26.

Economist (2005), "Target practice," *Economist*, 375 (April), 13–15.

European Audiovisual Observatory (2004), *focus 2004: World Film Market Trends*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.obs.coe.int/online_publication/reports/focus2004.pdf

European Communities (2008), "TVWF Modernisation," accessed January 23, 2008. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/tvwf/modernisation/index_en.htm

FERRARO, ROSELLINA and ROSEMARY J. AVERY (2000), "Brand appearances on prime-time television," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 22 (Fall), 1–15.

FETTO, JOHN (2000), "Advertising-on-demand: In the 21st century, new technologies will drive a new type of marketing," *American Demographics*, 22 (December), 35–38.

Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006a), *Katsojien suhtautuminen tv-ohjelmien tuotesijoitteluun*, Publications of the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (FICORA) 10/2006, accessed May 30, 2007. Available at http://www.ficora.fi/attachments/suomi_A_L/5kyCH4kWW/Files/CurrentFile/Kansi1vrs2.pdf

Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (2006b), *Päätös televisio- ja radiotoimintalain rikkomisesta*, accessed August 11, 2006. Available at http://www.ficora.fi/suomi/document/Big Brother SubTV.pdf

Finnish Consumer Agency & Consumer Ombudsman (2007), "Television tuotesijoittelun periaatteet," accessed May 23, 2007. Available at http://www.kuluttajavirasto.fi/user_nf/default.asp?site=34&tmf=6476&lmf=6535&id=18834&mode=readdoc

Finnish Film Foundation (2003a), "Kotimaiset katsojatilastot 1995–2003," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.ses.fi/dokumentit/kotim95-03.pdf

Finnish Film Foundation (2003b), "Pitkien elokuvien saama tuotantotuki," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.ses.fi/dokumentit/pitkat.pdf

Finnpanel (2005), "TV:n katseluosuudet minuuteista Tammi-Joulukuussa 2004," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.finnpanel.fi/tulokset/tv/vuosi/viimeisin/minuutit.html

GOLDSMITH, CHARLES and JESSICA MINTZ (2004), "Dubbing in product plugs: How 'Spider-Man 2' made Dr Pepper a star in the U.S. and Mirinda a star overseas," *Wall Street Journal (Eastern edition)*, 244 (December), B.1.

GOULD, STEPHEN J., POLA B. GUPTA and SONJA GRABNER-KRÄUTER (2000), "Product placements in movies: A cross-cultural analysis of Austrian, French and American consumers' attitudes toward this emerging, international promotional medium," *Journal of Advertising*, 29 (Winter), 41–58.

GRIMM, CURTIS M., HUN LEE and KEN G. SMITH (2005), *Strategy as action: Competitive dynamics and competitive advantage*, New York: Oxford University Press.

GRÖNQVIST, LAURA (2004), *Brändisijoittelu suomalaisissa televisio-ohjelmissa*, Master's Thesis, University of Helsinki. Publications of the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority (FICORA) 5/2004, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.ficora.fi/suomi/document/brandisijoittelu.pdf

GRÖNQVIST, LAURA (2007), *Brändisijoittelun vastuullisuus: Suomalaisten televisioalan johtajien näkökulmia televisiotuotannon kaupallistumiseen*, FFRC-ePublications 6/2007, accessed February 12, 2008. Available at http://www.tukkk.fi/tutu/Julkaisut/e_julkaisut/ejulkaisuja_6_2007.pdf

GUPTA, POLA B. and KENNETH R. LORD (1998), "Product placement in movies: The effect of prominence and mode on audience recall," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 20 (Spring), 47–59.

GUPTA, POLA B., SIVA K. BALASUBRAMANIAN and MICHAEL L. KLASSEN (2000), "Viewers' evaluations of product placements in movies: Public policy issues and managerial implications," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 22 (Fall), 41–52.

Helsingin Sanomat (2003a), "Inquiry into cigarette and alcohol images in new film *Raid*," *Helsingin Sanomat International edition*, January 24, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www2.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20030124IE7

Helsingin Sanomat (2003b), "*Raid* producer receives official reprimand for cigarette and alcohol images," *Helsingin Sanomat International edition*, January 29, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www2.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20030129IE4

HEMILÄ, HANNA (2004), *Karikot ja menestystarinat kansainvälisissä elokuva-alan yhteistyöhankkeissa*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.ses.fi/dokumentit/karikot ja menestys.pdf

HILL, CHARLES W. L. and GARETH R. JONES (2007), *Strategic management: An integrated approach*, 7th edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

HIRSJÄRVI, SIRKKA and HELENA HURME (2000), *Tutkimushaastattelu: teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

HOIVALA, HARRI (2003), "Kulttuurin markkinointi ja tuotteistaminen – kamppailu markkinoinnin oikeutuksesta," in *Kulttuuribusiness*, Niinikoski, M.-L. and Sibelius, K., eds., Vantaa: WSOY, 73–83.

KAJAVA, JUKKA (2005), "Alas mentiin kuin lehmän häntä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 1, D11.

KALLIONPÄÄ, KATRI (2005), "Suomessa tuotesijoittelu on arkipäivää," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 14, B10.

KARRH, JAMES A. (1998), "Brand placement: A review," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 20 (Fall), 31–49.

KARRH, JAMES A., KATHY BRITTAIN MCKEE and CAROL J. PARDUN (2003), "Practitioners' evolving views on product placement effectiveness," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43 (June), 138–149.

KITCHEN, PHILIP J., JOANNE BRIGNELL, TAO LI and GRAHAM SPICKETT JONES (2004), "The emergence of IMC: A theoretical perspective," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44 (March), 19–30.

KORTTI, JUKKA (2005), "Tuotesijoittelu muuttaa tv-mainontaa," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 14, A5.

KORTTI, JUKKA (2006), "Tarkkana brändien kanssa – taas: Lisääntyvä tuotesijoittelu osana postmodernia markkinoituvaa mediaa," *Tiedotustutkimus*, 29 (2), 91–103.

KÖNIG, RAINA and MICHAEL STEPHAN (2006), "Market take-off in systemic industries: The early industry life cycle stage in the mobile payment industry," *DRUID-DIME Winter 2006 PhD Conference Proceedings*, accessed June 1, 2007. Available at http://www.druid.dk/uploads/tx_picturedb/dw2006–1690.pdf

LeCOMPTE, MARGARET D. and JUDITH PREISSLE GOETZ (1982), "Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research," *Review of Educational Research*, 52 (Spring), 31–60.

LEHU, JEAN-MARC (2005), "Le placement de produits au cinéma: Hiérarchie des critères d'utilisation ou hiérarchie des étapes? Une étude exploratoire qualitative auprès d'agents professionnels anglo-saxons," *4th International Congress Marketing Trends Proceedings*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.escp-eap.net/conferences/marketing/2005_cp/Materiali/Paper/Fr/LEHU.pdf

LINDLOF, THOMAS R. (1995), *Qualitative communication research methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

McALLISTER, MATTHEW P. (1996), *The commercialization of American culture: New advertising, control and democracy*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

McCARTHY, MICHAEL (1994), "Studios place, show and win: Product placement grows up," *Brandweek*, 35 (March), 30–31.

McCARTY, JOHN A. (2004), "Product placement: The nature of the practice and potential avenues of inquiry," in *The psychology of entertainment media: Blurring the lines between entertainment and persuasion*, Shrum, L. J., ed., Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 45–61.

McGAHAN, ANITA M., NICHOLAS ARGYRES and JOEL A. C. BAUM (2004), "Introduction: Context, technology and strategy: Forging new perspectives on the industry life cycle," in *Business strategy over the industry lifecycle – Advances in strategic management, Volume 21*, Baum, J. A. C. and McGahan, A. M., eds., Oxford: Elsevier, accessed August 7, 2007. Available at http://www.rotman.utoronto.ca/~baum/v21_intro.html

MEDIA Salles (2004), "European Cinema Yearbook 2004 – advance edition: Annual frequency per capita," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mediasalles.it/ybk04/adv/Frequenz.pdf

Ministry of Education (2005), *Audiovisuaalisen politiikan linjat*, Publications of the Ministry of Education 2005:8, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.minedu.fi/julkaisut/kulttuuri/2005/opm08/opm08.pdf

Ministry of Transport and Communications (2005), "Television broadcasting," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mintc.fi/scripts/cgiip.exe/WService=lvm/cm/pub/showdoc.p?docid=2411&menuid=409

MORTON, CYNTHIA R. and MEREDITH FRIEDMAN (2002), "'I saw it in the movies': Exploring the link between product placement beliefs and reported usage behavior," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 24 (Fall), 33–40.

MTV (2004), *MTV Oy:n Tutkimusesite 2004*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://spotti.mtv3.fi/jutut/liitteet/116.pdf

National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005a), "Yleisön suhtautuminen mainontaan 2005," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mainostajat.fi/mliitto/sivut/YSM2005lehdtied.pdf

National Advertising Advisory Committee (2005b), "Mainonnan määrä 2004," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.mainostajat.fi/mliitto/sivut/mainmaara2004tied.pdf

National Product Control Agency for Welfare and Health (2003), "Elokuvan *Raid* tuotesijoittelu on mainontasäännösten vastaista," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.sttv.fi/ylo/042003.htm

NELSON, MICHELLE R. (2003), "When brands are stars – Exploring consumer response to product placements," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 30 (1), 204.

NELSON, MICHELLE R., HEEJO KEUM and RONALD A. YAROS (2004), "Advertainment or adcreep? Game players' attitudes toward advertising and product placements in computer games," *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 5 (Fall), accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://jiad.org/vol5/no1/nelson/index.htm

NÄVERI, TUOMAS (2005), "Viestintävirasto tutkii Big Brotheria," *Ilta-Sanomat*, September 23, 3.

OJAJÄRVI, MIINA (2005), "Piilomainonta on kiellettyä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 11, A5.

OLNEY, THOMAS J., MORRIS B. HOLBROOK and RAJEEV BATRA (1991), "Consumer responses to advertising: The effects of ad content, emotions, and attitude toward the ad on viewing time," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (March), 440–453.

O'REILLY, DARAGH, RACHEL CRIPPS, EFSTATHIA KAZANI, RESHMA PATEL and ANGELIKI ZARRA (2005), "Interpretation of product placement by UK movie-goers: A qualitative study," *34th European Marketing Academy (EMAC) Conference Proceedings CD*, paper no. 172.

PARDUN, CAROL J. and KATHY BRITTAIN MCKEE (1999), "Product placements as public relations: An exploratory study of the role of the public relations firm," *Public Relations Review*, 25 (Winter), 481–493.

PETERSEN, ANDREA (2001), "If product's invisible, can it be placed? Getting a big Hollywood break can be tough – especially for cellphone service providers," *Wall Street Journal (Eastern edition)*, 237 (April), C.1.

PQ Media (2005), *Product placement spending in media 2005: Executive summary*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.pqmedia.com/ppsm2005-es.pdf

RUSSELL, CRISTEL A. (1998), "Toward a framework of product placement: Theoretical propositions," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 25 (1), 357–362.

RUSSELL, CRISTEL ANTONIA and MICHAEL BELCH (2005), "A managerial investigation into the product placement industry," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 45 (March), 73–92.

SABOUR, NADIA I. (2004), "Product placement in context: Building brands in the postmodern era," in *Aspects of globalisation, regionalisation and business*, Salavrakos, I.-D., ed., Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research, 363–383.

SABOUR, NADIA (2006), "Kuinka nuoret suomalaiskuluttajat suhtautuvat tuotesijoitteluun?," *Finnish Journal of Business Economics*, 55 (2), 227–230.

SANDLER, DENNIS M. and EUGENE SECUNDA (1993), "Blurred boundaries – where does editorial end and advertising begin?," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 33 (May/June), 73–80.

SEALE, CLIVE (2000), "Qualitative interviewing," in *Researching society and culture*, Seale, C., ed., reprint, London: Sage Publications, 202–216.

SHERMAN, CLAIRE (2004), "Product integration in television: An Australian industry perspective," *Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC 2004) Conference Proceedings*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://130.195.95.71:8081/WWW/ANZMAC2004/CDsite/papers/Sherman1.PDF

SILVERMAN, DAVID (2005), *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*, 2nd edition, London: Sage Publications.

SNELLMAN, SASKA (2003), "A movie can be the best commercial," *Helsingin Sanomat International edition*, February 4, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www2.helsinginsanomat.fi/english/archive/news.asp?id=20030204IE2

SNELLMAN, SASKA (2005), "Kuka valitsee tv-sarjan tuotteet?," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 17, D7.

SOLOMON, MICHAEL R. and BASIL G. ENGLIS (1994), "The big picture: Product complementarity and integrated communications," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 34 (January/February), 57–63.

Statistics Finland (2005), "Nationwide television channels 2005 (February)," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.stat.fi/til/jvie/2005/jvie_2005_2005-04-27_tau_001.xls

STREBEL, PAUL (1987), "Organizing for innovation over an industry cycle," *Strategic Management Journal*, 8 (March/April), 117–124.

SUNG, YONGJUN and FEDERICO de GREGORIO (2005), "New brand worlds: A comparison of college student attitudes toward brand placements in four media," *2005 American Marketing Association (AMA) Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings*, 16, 26–27, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://ecommerce.ama.org/wintered/AMA_05%20(D)/PDFs/AMA2005.pdf

SÖDERMAN, JACOB (2005), "Piilomainonta ei ole hyväksyttävää," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 8, A5.

TURCOTTE, SAMUEL (1995), *Gimme a Bud! The feature film product placement industry*, Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://advertising.utexas.edu/research/papers/Turcotte/index.html

VIRTANEN, LEENA (2005), "Tuotteet tunkevat tv-ohjelmiin," *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 23, C1.

WENNER, LAWRENCE A. (2004), "On the ethics of product placement in media entertainment," in *Handbook of product placement in the mass media: New strategies in marketing theory, practice, trends, and ethics*, Galician, M.-L., ed., Binghamton: Best Business Books, 101–132.

YLE (2004), "Act on Yleisradio Oy," accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.yle.fi/fbc/actyle.shtml

YLE (2005), *Ohjelmatoiminnan säännöstö*, accessed December 20, 2005. Available at http://www.yle.fi/yleista/kuvat/ots2005.pdf

APPENDIX A

COMPANY A profile
▪ operates globally; market leader in its field in Finland ▪ history with product placement dates back to the mid-1990s; now the practice is an important part of the overall marketing strategy ▪ placements used mainly in four media vehicles: motion pictures, television series, music videos and games ▪ important in choosing the productions: harmony with company values, exclusion of controversial (i.e., insulting, racist, violent) content, good brand-fit, possibility of a subtle and natural placement ▪ concentrates on global placements in cooperation with its placement agencies and various production houses based abroad ▪ also uses local placements if considered worthwhile based on the input-output ratio (i.e., price versus target group reach) ▪ in the Finnish market, uses product placement locally on a small scale but the main focus is on placements which get global visibility and thus also reach Finnish consumers ▪ two placement types are in use: the first one merely includes the integration of the brand into the content, whereas the second involves explicit tie-in/cross promotion to complement the brand's appearance in the production ▪ main aims regarding product placement activities are related to brand visibility and brand image

COMPANY B profile
▪ market leader chain in its field in Finland; chain consists of retailer-led stores, the brand is global ▪ not actively engaged in product placement but has been among the pioneers in teaming up with Finnish movie productions by tie-in promotion agreements ▪ has also been included in the actual content of two movies it sponsored; has not used those as the basis for further action as tapping into the overall theme of the movie considered more important ▪ its competitors all sell the same branded products, thus disbelief in *"product placement per se being the blissful thing* I#3*"* as the main goal is to build the company brand, i.e. the chain brand ▪ important in choosing the productions to cooperate with: exclusion of projects that would weaken or put the brand in a questionable light

COMPANY G profile
▪ attitude toward product placement rather paradoxical: *"It is absolutely forbidden but in practice it is in part a way to operate. (…) We do not have prices for it. We do not sell it but we know of its existence.* I#10*"* ▪ allowing product placement would mean sabotaging its own commercial interests, i.e. jeopardize advertising revenue because marketers whose brands are embedded in programs could be less inclined to invest in spot advertising, program sponsorship and infomercials ▪ acts as a controller and keeps an eye on brand visibility with the authority to stop airing a program and to conduct precensorship of content ▪ contracts with production houses include a clause banning product placement; if breached, the producer has to compensate for lost advertising time ▪ nevertheless, cooperation between companies and production houses does exist; stations have limited resources to fund programs and programs would be unrealistic with no products in them ▪ brands do appear in programs produced for the station but so that the station and the production company are up-to-date

COMPANY H profile
▪ very similar overall take on product placement as its competitor, yet for slightly different reasons ▪ the reasons are linked to artistic and regulatory aspects of product placement: content comes first and regulations state that a commercial party may not affect the content of a program ▪ however, products can be procured from companies to maintain production budgets reasonable ▪ brands, as part of real life, can be shown (not overly prominently) if they are integral to the program ▪ brands are featured in the station's programs with station involvement in and control over the process

COMPANY I profile
▪ thinks along the same lines as the other company about corporate involvement: product placement and joint marketing efforts are a natural part of the movie making process ▪ no one focuses on making cooperation agreements (the production unit has one full-time employee, all others are hired depending on each project) ▪ process of looking for collaborators is less orderly and controlled: the producer may deal with companies or it is left to set designers, prop masters, other crew members or, for instance, the production house's communications agency who works on it on commission ▪ main incentive are financial concerns (i.e., diminishing the financial risk), although this type of support only constitutes slightly over 10% of the production budget ▪ wishes to keep its integrity, thus unwilling to give scripts to companies for reading or influence the production in that way; the company has a more artistic orientation

COMPANY J profile
▪ keen on collaborating with corporate marketers, whether in the form of product placement or promotional cooperation ▪ includes a staff member whose responsibility it is to look for partners and market the movies ▪ aim is to make comprehensive marketing agreements with companies instead of mere product placements; compensation for placements is modest and companies appearing in just one scene will not help market the movie ▪ main motivation for seeking corporate sidekicks is related to financial aspects (i.e., support for production budget), thus promotional support by companies considered more important ▪ gives scripts confidentially to marketers, writes brands into scenes and adapts scenes to better accommodate brand insertions; the company has a strongly commercial orientation ▪ artistic aspects are also taken into account: the movie is given priority over placements