**Abstract**

Product placement is the marketing practice of placing products or brands in films and TV programmes etc. in order to persuade consumers to buying the placed products. A previous study shows that young consumers tend to have a more positive attitude towards the use of this marketing practise than older consumers do. As product placement is becoming increasingly widespread, it was chosen to investigate how Danish consumers feel about being exposed to subtle promotional messages in form of product placement and whether there is an attitudinal difference between young consumers and 50+ consumers. The research question in this thesis is: “What are the Danish consumers’ attitude towards product placement, and are there any age related differences?”

The literary framework in this thesis consists of a mixture of ethics theories, previous consumer studies and theory on consumer behaviour. From this literature, it was possible to extract the following six elements that seemed to affect the acceptability of product placement: the obtrusive nature of product placement, the fact that the sponsorship is concealed, the placed product, the target group, the genre in which it is placed and the age of the respondents. These elements became the basis for the interview guide and subsequently for the analysis. The data for this thesis consists of six qualitative interviews: three interviews with young consumers and three interviews with consumers over the age of 50.

Through the analysis of the interviews, it was found that there are no noteworthy differences between the two interviewee groups in terms of their attitude towards the use of product placement, as all the interviewees generally have a positive attitude towards product placement. The interviewees also generally agree that product placement is not appropriate to use for harmful products, to target at children or other vulnerable groups or to use in genres such as the news. Despite of the interviewees’ ability to identify vulnerable target groups, the interviewees distance themselves from these groups.

The two interviewee groups differ in their perceived state of legislative consumer protection and views on the need for disclosures about the use of product placements. The 50+ interviewees think that they are not protected by the law and that it is a good idea to warn the consumer about the use of product placement, whereas the young interviewees group think that product placement is illegal and they are less keen on the idea of displaying disclosures.

The interviewees’ positive attitude towards product placement might open up for an even more widespread use of product placement, however, it should be customised to the target group as the young and older interviewees disagree on the need for disclosures. The lack of knowledge about consumer protection and the interviewees’ reluctance to identify themselves with people who are affected by product placement, could mean that the consumers are left vulnerable and furthermore that they may not want to take any steps towards improving the consumer protection.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the interviewees, who kindly agreed to participate in my thesis. I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor Helle Dalsgaard Pedersen for her constructive and timely feedback. Without you the creation of this thesis would not have been possible.

// Lene

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# Introduction

In 1965, a typical consumer could remember 34% of the TV commercials that he or she had seen. In 1990, that number had dropped to 8%, and a later study indicates that the number has decreased even further (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 45). These numbers are not surprising as the number of TV commercials has increased. However, new technologies such as TiVo make it possible to skip commercials. According to Jeff Gaspin, former president of NBC Universal Television Group, the shift in programme control from programmer to consumers is the most drastic change in the media business in recent years. The combination of commercial saturation and new commercial-skipping technologies has created a need for companies to find alternatives to the traditional TV commercials. One of these alternatives is product placement (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 49), which is the practice of placing products or brands in films, TV and radio programmes etc. (Karrh, 1998, p. 33). The use of product placement in films is almost as old as the production of film itself, however, the genre has changed over the years (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 50). The Lumière brothers, who were among the first film producers, displayed Sunlight soap in their first short films, and the use of product placement became more widespread in the 1930s, and in 1932 White Owl Cigars paid $250.000 to have Paul Mini smoke their cigars in the film Scarface. Since then, several examples of product placements has been seen in film such as E.T, to Top Guns, James Bond etc. (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 51). The use of product placement has been widespread in films for a long time, but Leslie Moonves, chairman for CBS Corporation, has predicted that product placement will soon appear in 75% of all primetime TV programmes that are not live. If this prediction proves to be correct, it will blur the line between advertising and creative content even further than it already is (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 53). The increase in the use of product placement has led to the research of the topic from several perspectives, such as its effect on brand recognition and changes in consumer behaviour (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 36) (Russel, 2002). Furthermore, the increase in the use of product placement has also led to legislative initiatives in some countries (Ofcom) (Retsinformation, 2013), but how do the consumers feel about the exposure to product placement, and why?

## Delimitation

As mentioned above, product placement has been researched for efficiency, however, it has also been researched how acceptable consumers find various aspects of product placement, such as the placed product (Brennan, Rosenberger III, & Hementera, 2004) (Gupta & Gould, 1997) or the possibility of using disclosures (Boerman, Tutaj, & Reijmersdal, 2013). Several of these studies of consumers’ attitudes towards various aspects of product placement have used students as respondents (Gupta & Gould, 1997) (Brennan, Rosenberger III, & Hementera, 2004) (Boerman, Tutaj, & Reijmersdal, 2013) (Karrh, 1998, p. 38), which might be problematic if their attitudes differ from other groups’ attitudes. Karrh questions whether the young students’ positive attitude towards the use of product placement is shared by other parts of the population (Karrh, 1998, p. 38), and the following might suggest that it is not. In a study of British consumers, it was found that consumers between the age of 18 and 34 have the most positive attitude towards the use of product placement and conversely that consumers over the age of 50 have the most negative attitude towards product placement (Brand Republic, 2011). When researching the Danish consumers’ attitude towards product placement, it will therefore also be investigated if there are age-related differences. In order to discover any age related differences it was chosen to focus on the two most opposite groups that the British research revealed, and the interviewees for this research will therefore be selected to fit into the two age categories: 18 to 34 and 50+ respectively.

This thesis will therefore qualitatively investigate Danish consumers’ attitudes towards product placement and whether there is an attitude difference between young consumers between the ages of 18 and 34 and consumers over the age of 50. In order to clarify the aim of this thesis as well as providing a guideline for the research process, the following research question was formulated:

## Research Question

What are the Danish consumers’ attitude towards product placement, and are there any age related differences?

# Methodology

This section will account for the paradigm, which the research was conducted under. Furthermore, it will account for the data, the validity of the research and the ethical considerations surrounding this research. Finally, it will outline the research structure.

## Paradigm

The term paradigm has been defined in various ways (Olsen and Pedersen 2011, 157) (Guba, 1990, p. 17) (Bryman, 2004, p. 542). Guba argues that a paradigm is “*(…) a basic set of beliefs that guide action (…)*” (Guba, 1990, p. 17), whereas Bryman defines a paradigm as a cluster of beliefs that dictate what can be researched and how it can be researched (Bryman, 2004, p. 542). Paradigms can be distinguished from each other based on their perspective on the following the interconnected aspects: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba, 1990, p. 18). The division of paradigms vary (Olsen and Pedersen 2011, 164) (Bryman, 2008, p. 593) , however, Guba distinguishes between the following four paradigms: positivism, post positivism, critical theory and constructivism (Guba, 1990, p. 19). In the terminology of Guba, this research is conducted under a constructivist paradigm, which will be described below.

### Ontology

Ontology is concerned with “*(...) the nature (...) of reality*” ( (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Constructivists hold a relativist position to ontology, which means that multiple realities exist and that they are socially constructed (Guba, 1990, p. 27). The position to ontology is the basis of what reality is, and as such it has a great impact on the research as it dictates what can be researched. As this thesis is conducted under a relativist position to ontology, the purpose of the research is not to find the absolute truth about product placement, as this does not exist, but rather to discover the interviewees’ different understandings of what it means to be exposed to product placement.

### Epistemology

Epistemology is deals with “*(...) the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)*” (Guba, 1990, p. 18). The position to epistemology thereby determines what can be known and what is considered acceptable knowledge within a discipline (Bryman, 2012, p. 27). Constructivists hold a subjectivist position to epistemology, which means that research findings are a creation between the researched individual and the inquirer (Guba, 1990, p. 27). The subjectivist position to epistemology in this thesis is seen in the data collection, which took form of qualitative interviews. E.g. the interviews were not standardised as the researcher acknowledges that the interviews are created in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and that objectivity is therefore not a criterion. The criteria for producing acceptable knowledge under a constructivist paradigm will be discussed further in section 2.2.4.

### Methodology

Methodology is concerned with how the researcher should “*(...) go about finding out knowledge*” (Guba, 1990, p. 18). Constructivists hold a hermeneutic and dialectic position to methodology, which means that the meaning is revised hermeneutically and compared dialectically, with the purpose of finding a construction, on which there is consensus (Guba, 1990, p. 27). Hermeneutic interpretation is often illustrated by a circle or a spiral, which symbolises the continuous back-and-forth interpretation process between the parts and the whole, in which the reader gains a deeper understanding of a text. In the hermeneutical circle, the reader has a pre-understanding of a text, which affects the interpretation of the individual parts, which then affects the understanding of the text as a whole and so forth. In practice, the interpretation process continues until a reasonable interpretation, without internal contradictions, has been reached (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 210). The classical hermeneutics dealt with actual texts, however, the concept of “text” has been extended to include discourse and actions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 50). The hermeneutic interpretation process is also seen in this study: the first draft of the research question represented the researcher’s pre-understanding of the topic, but as more knowledge was acquired through examining literature of the topic, the pre-understanding changed and thus leads to a new pre-understanding. The interpretation process was also present in the interviews, where the interviewer continuously gained a deeper understanding of the interviewees’ feelings regarding product placement throughout the interviews and in the subsequent analysis of them. The conclusion of this report can be seen as the end of the spiral, where a reasonable interpretation has been reached.

## Data

This section describes the data that was used for this research including how the data was collected, how the interviews were transcribed and translated, how the data was analysed and how the quality of the research is assessed.

The data in this study consists of the transcriptions of six interviews. There are several research methods within the field of social research (Bryman, 2004, p. 27). However, for this research it was chosen to use semi-structured interviews because it allowed for qualitative research of topics that have already been established to have relevance for the consumers’ attitude towards product placement, as well as for new structures and topics to emerge (Bryman, 2012, p. 247).

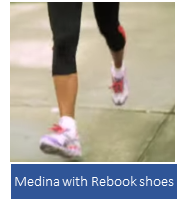
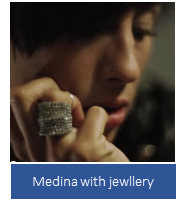
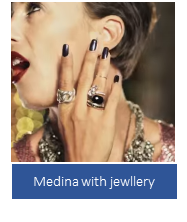
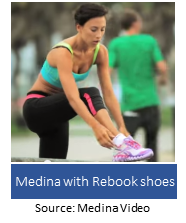
### Interviews

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Interviewee name | Age | Gender | Occupation | Interview length |
| 18-34 consumers |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Trent | 18 | Male | Carpenter/High school student | 17:26 |
| 2. Scott | 24 | Male | College student in business | 16:11 + 02:55 |
| 3. Sandy | 26 | Female | College student in literature | 1:09:00 |
| 50+ consumers |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Ellen | 60 | Female | Child minder | 16:15 |
| 6. Vance | 67 | Male | Self-employed | 17:26 |
| 7. Abby | 67 | Female | Retired secretary | 13:58 |

In common interview studies the number of interviews tends to be around 5 to 25 interviews, depending on the time and resources available (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 113). The risk of making too many interviews is that they will not be analysed thoroughly enough, whereas the risk of having too few interviews is that the results are not generalizable to a wider population (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 113). As the purpose of this research is not to make generalizations, the number of interviewees can be relatively limited compared to studies aimed at producing statistics. According to Brinkman and Kvale, the lower limit for the number of interviewees in comparative studies is three from each group (ibid). It was therefore chosen to conduct six interviews: three interviews with young consumers between the ages of 18 to 34 and three interviews with consumers over the age of 50. It was chosen to find the interviewees through the interviewer’s network because it was assumed that if the interviewee knew or had met the interviewer prior to the interview, the interviewee would feel safer and thus be able to talk openly and honestly about the topic.

In order to create a safe and comfortable environment for the interviewees, each interview started with a casual conversation about the interviewee and a general introduction to the purpose of the research, which was not recorded. The length of the opening conversations lasted for approximately 20 minutes each, and the recorded part of the interviews last from 14 minutes to 1 hour and 9 minutes. Due to practical considerations, such as the need for a reasonable sound environment, the interviews were all conducted at private homes. Some of the interviews were conducted at the interviewer’s home, while others were conducted at the interviewees’ homes, or the home of a mutual friend, depending on interviewee convenience and preference. Even though the report is in English, all the interviews were conducted in Danish as this is the native language of the interviewees, and they would thereby not be restricted by language barriers. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide (see app 1) as a point of departure. The interview guide was created based on the literature discussed in chapter three.

At the beginning of each, interview a clip from Medina’s music video to the song Addiction was showed, in order to give the interviewee a better understanding of product placement, and in order for the interviewee to have an example to use throughout the rest interview. It was chosen to use Medina’s music video because some products have a dominant role in the video, and furthermore because it was estimated that the interviewees were likely to know her and the products that were displayed in the video, which was important for the recognition of the placed products and thus the ability for the interviewee to use it as an example during the rest of the interview. It was not possible to confirm whether or not there has been a quid pro quo agreement regarding the display of the products, however, from the viewer’s perspective there no visible difference between product placement and product sponsoring. This will be explained further in section 3.1. In the video, the singer wears Rebook running shoes and jewellery from Kranz and Ziegler, which receive an unnatural amount of focus in the camera shots. The below pictures are shots from the video, where the products were displayed, and they illustrate, what the interviewees saw in the video clip during the interview.



### Transcription

The interviews have been transcribed, which means that the oral conversation have been converted to a written text (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 206). In the process of translation of oral statements to written text, some alteration has been made, in order to make the text more fluent and understandable, while staying as close to the original oral statement as possible. In this process¨, it was decided not to include the interviewees’ repetition of words or the interviewer’s small encouraging comments, such as “yes”, while the interviewee was talking. In cases, where the interviewee has stressed syllables the following character: “**’**” has been used to show, which syllable was stressed. Only statements that were considered important to the analysis has been transcribed, and it therefore is to be expected that some text has been omitted between some of the sections. The transcripts are structured in the following way: the time states when in the interview the statement was made, and the letters before each statement indicate who said what. In order for the reader to be able to see, which interviewee said what, the statements in the analysis has been referenced by interviewee name and time of statement such as “Sandy 03:08”. The transcriptions are included as appendix 2 to appendix 7. The audio file for the last interview, which was with Scott, does not contain any sound, and the interviewer therefore wrote down his answers to the questions in the interview guide, which are included as appendix 8. Furthermore, the interviewee agreed to participate in a short re-interview regarding a couple of the themes that he had brought up during the interview. The data included in the appendix for Scot therefore consists of the interviewers notes regarding his answers as well as a transcript from the re-interview. In order to make the analysis as readable as possible, the references to the second interview with Scott follow the above-mentioned structure, whereas the notes from the first interview will be referenced the following way “Scott notes”. All the interviews have been included as audio files on the CD at the back of this thesis.

As the interviews were conducted in Danish and the report is in English, the quotes that are used in the report have been translated to English by the researcher. In the translation from Danish to English, the focus has been on conveying the original meaning of the statement, while making the statements understandable in English. Idioms, the order of the words etc. might therefore differ between the original Danish statements and translated English quotes.

### Analysis

There are several methods for analysing interviews (Rasmussen, Østergaard, & Beckmann, 2006, p. 109). The methods used in this research are categorisation and interpretation. Firstly, the interview fragments were grouped into meaningful categories, which provided an overview of the transcripts. These categories can be based on theory or they can emerge during the analysis (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 225). Both category selection methods were used in this research as some categories were based on the literature in chapter three, while other categories emerged during the analysis as a result of the interviewees’ statements. When the interview sections had been categorised, they underwent a meaning interpretation, in which the statements were subject to a critical interpretation, which means that they were analysed beyond what was said directly (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 230). As seen in the analysis section, meaning interpretation leads to text expansion (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 230).

### Criteria

Traditionally, the quality of research has been assessed based on its reliability, validity and generalizability. Reliability is concerned with the consistency and stability of measures (Bryman, 2004, p. 70) (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 245). As this research is constructed under a constructivist paradigm, it is acknowledged that the interviews are created between the interviewer and the interviewee and the results might therefore not be the same in another context, thus leading to a low degree of reliability. Validity is concerned with whether the measure of a concept really measures that concept (Bryman, 2004, p. 72) (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 246). According to Kvale, qualitative research is strictly speaking invalid when it does not result is measurements (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 246), however, other methods of securing validity will be discussed below. Generalizability is concerned with whether the results of the research can be projected to a wider population than the researched individuals (Bryman, 2004, p. 76). As with much other qualitative research, it is not possible to generalize the finding of this research to a wider population as the number of interviews is low and because they have not been selected in order to match the population (Bryman, 2004, p. 284).

Qualitative research has generally been criticised in relation to the above criterion e.g. because they are difficult to replicate and hard to generalise (Bryman, 2004, p. 284). It can be argued that this critique of qualitative data is somewhat unjustified because it is based on a positivist paradigm, whereas qualitative research is often conducted under a constructivist paradigm. The problem of using positivist standards for constructivist research is that there is a fundamental difference in the understanding of what reality and acceptable knowledge is (Guba, 1990, p. 20) . Some qualitative researchers have distanced themselves from the criteria of validity, reliability and generalizability as they find them oppressing positivist concepts that hinder creative qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 244). Some researchers therefore argue that qualitative research should be assessed on different criteria than those of quantitative research (Bryman, 2004, p. 273) (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 244).

An alternative to the positivist criteria is Guba and Lincoln, who propose two other criteria for assessing the quality of qualitative research: trustworthiness and authenticity, which both consists of a number of sub-criteria. Trustworthiness is comprised of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman, 2004, p. 273). Credibility parallels to internal validity, and it can be ensured through respondent validation, which will be discussed in the below section about research ethics. Transferability is concerned with whether the results are generalizable to a wider population or a different context. Researchers can accommodate this criterion by making a thick description of the culture, which will allow others to judge the transferability of the results to other contexts. This will be commented on in the following section. Dependability is a parallel to reliability, and it argues that researchers should adopt an auditing approach, where peers would acts as auditors to establish whether proper procedures have been followed. Auditing has not become a widespread method of enhancing the quality of qualitative possibly because the large quantities of data in qualitative research make it a very demanding task for the auditors. For this reason, this research has not been audited by peers. Confirmability parallels to objectivity, where the researcher should not allow personal values to affect the research. This will also be commented on in the following section. In addition to trustworthiness, Guba and Lincoln propose that research should meet the criterion of authenticity, which is comprised of the following five sub-criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity. These authenticity criteria generally deals with whether the research creates a better understanding of the researched individuals’ own situation or other’s situation, and whether the research helps the individuals to change their situation. The authenticity criterion has not become widespread within social research (Bryman, 2004, p. 276), however, some of the elements will be commented on in the section 2.3 about research ethics.

The resistance of using positivist criteria is also supported by Rasmussen et al, who argue that these criteria cannot be used to assess the quality of qualitative research (Rasmussen, Østergaard, & Beckmann, 2006, p. 117). However, Rasmussen et al argue that the researcher must compensate for the lack of rules, by making the research as transparent as possible. The transparency should apply to all parts of the research process, which will allow the reader to assess the quality of the research for themselves (Rasmussen, Østergaard, & Beckmann, 2006, p. 117). According to Bryman, this approach is increasingly being used by qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2008, p. 392). The transparency in this research is secured by disclosing how the interviewees were found, how the interviews were conducted, how they were transcribed and how they were analysed. Furthermore the interview guide, transcripts and audio files are enclosed in this report.

## Research Ethics

The following section comments on the ethical considerations that came up during the process of creating of this thesis. According to Brinkmann and Kvale, ethics should be considered at all stages of the research from choosing a topic to reporting the results (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 81). Before interviews are conducted, the interviewer should obtain informed consent, which entails giving the potential interviewee as much information as needed to make an informed decision such as the overall purpose of the research as well as possible positive or negative aspects of participating (Bryman, 2004, p. 511) (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 89). Brinkmann and Kvale furthermore state that informed consent also entails that the interviewee is informed of his/her right to withdraw from the interview at any point (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 89). In this study, all the interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any point. They were also informed about the use if cover names in the thesis and that their statements would be used directly in the report. The interview situation can also bring up ethical issues such as stress during the interview or changes in the interviewee’s self-image (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 81), however, this was not deemed critical as product placement is not a sensitive or taboo issue. Once the interviews have been conducted, it is important to be loyal to the interviewee’s original statements when transforming an oral interview into written text (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010, p. 442). In this research it was chosen to stay as close to the original oral statement, while transforming it into meaningful written text. Furthermore, loyalty is secured through the transparency of describing how the interviews were transcribed (see section 2.2.2). It is the researcher’s ethical responsibility to ensure that the results are as verified as possible, and one way of doing so is to present the interviewees with the transcription and analysis of their statements (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 81). However, this procedure might hinder critical analysis as the interviewees can have an interest in being portrayed on a positive way (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010, p. 442). Due to this concern, the analysis has not been verified by the interviewees, however, ongoing verification took place trough out the interviews by asking clarifying follow-up questions. Ethics should also be considered, when reporting the results of the study, where the researcher should consider, which consequences, if any, the report might have for the interviewees or the groups or institutions that they represent (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009, p. 81). In this research it is assessed that the reporting of the results are unlikely to have any negative consequences for the interviewees or the groups that they represent. However, for precautionary reasons it was chosen to blur the identities of the interviewees by presenting their statements under cover names.

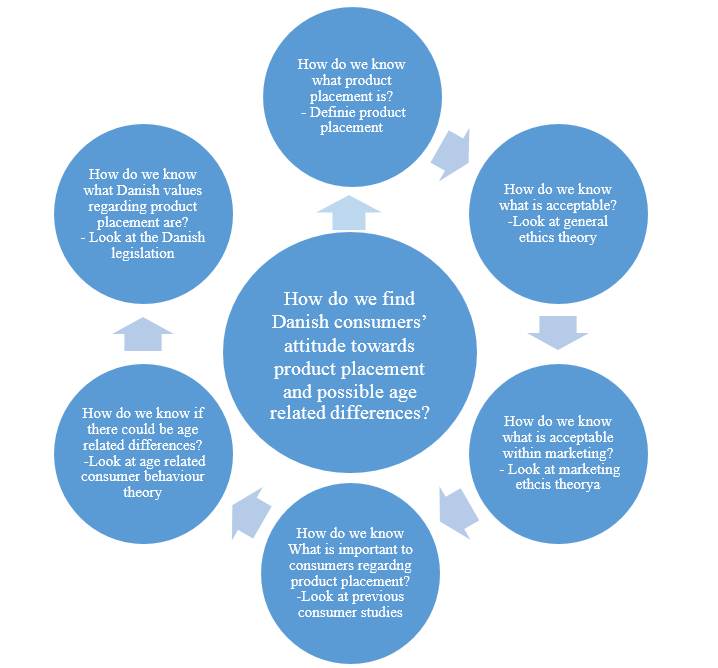
## Research Structure

The research is structured as illustrated in the model below: first a literature section that seeks to create a foundation for understanding the consumers’ attitude towards product placement by defining product placement, describing two ethics theories and a specific marketing ethics theory, investigating what previous consumer studies have found about product placement, describing age-related consumer behaviour and finally the describing the legislation surrounding the Danish consumers, as this might be an expression of cultural values. An interview guide was then created based on the literature. This was followed by the primary data collection, which took form of six qualitative interviews that each took their start based on the interview guide. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed based on the elements from the literature section as well as elements that emerged during the interviews. Finally, the conclusion sums up the results from the analysis.

# Literature

In order to form a theoretical foundation for understanding what the Danish consumers might focus on in their assessment of product placement and whether there might be any age related differences, it was chosen to examine the following aspects: how product placement is defined; general ethics theory; marketing related ethics theory; foreign consumer studies regarding product placement; age related consumer behaviour theory and finally Danish legislation regarding product placement.

General normative ethics theories will provide a framework for understanding what ethical assessments can be based on. In order to gain more specific knowledge about product placement from an ethical point of view, a marketing ethics theory will also be examined. The examination of other consumers is included because it could provide important insights into consumer attitudes that might also fit in a Danish context. This chapter also contains a section that seeks to examine some of the fundamental differences between young consumers and older consumers, which can assist in the research of possible attitude differences between the two groups. The examination of Danish legislation is included because it might indicate, what is considered acceptable or unacceptable with regard to product placement in the Danish society. The examination of these aspects should result in some focus areas that can be brought up during the interviews. The structure of the literature chapter as well as the aforementioned reason for including each section is illustrated in the following model.

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## Product Placement

The following section contains a discussion of how the term product placement is defined, which will result in a definition that is appropriate for this thesis.

When creating contemporary entertainment programmes, contemporary brands and products often appears as part of the programme, however, sometimes these brand appearances serve promotional purposes, when their appearance is the result of a monetary agreement between the brand and the producer. Product placement is considered a hybrid message as it combines the programme content with promotional messages. According to Karrh, the persuasion power of hybrid messages are better than traditional commercial messages because the viewer finds the source of the message credible and they thereby do not have their guard up (Karrh, 1998, p. 32). These paid brand appearances are called “product placements” or “brand placements”, and have been defined in various ways over the years (Karrh, 1998, p. 31). Balasubramanian defines Product placement as “*[...] a paid product message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie (or television program)*” (Balasubramanian 1994, 31). This definition has been criticised for only focusing on visual genres and not including audio (Karrh, 1998, p. 33), and furthermore this definition only includes “branded products”. The genre and what is displayed are expanded slightly in Steortz’s definition, where product placement is defined as “*[…] the inclusion of a brand name product package, signage, or other trademark merchandise within a motion picture, television show, or music video*” (Steortz 1987, p. 22 in (Karrh, 1998, p. 32)). This definition has, however, been criticised for not focusing on the paid nature of the placements (Karrh, 1998, p. 33). The focus on the paid nature of some placements is supported by the Danish legislation, in which there is a distinction between product placement and product sponsoring. Product placement is defined as the inclusion of a product, service or trademark in a programme based on a monetary agreement or any other quid pro quo agreement between the product company and the producer. Conversely, situations where a company sponsors a product that is included in a programme without having a monetary agreement with the producer it is considered product sponsoring (Retsinformation, 2013). The paid nature of product placement is also supported by Karrh, who defines product placement as “*[…] the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming*” (Karrh, 1998, p. 33).

As this thesis will use a film clip as the point of departure for the interviews, the focus will be on visual genres such as TV-programmes and films. Furthermore, as the purpose of the thesis is to investigate the acceptability of product placement, and some ethics theories focus on the intent of actions, the paid nature of product placements is also an important aspect. For the purpose of this thesis the term product placement is therefore defined as:

*The marketing practice of including products or brand identifiers in TV-programmes or films based on a monetary agreement or any other quid pro quo agreement between the product company and the film/TV producer.*

## Ethics Theories

The following section describes and discusses two streams of ethics theories. According to Hunt and Vitell, most normative ethics theories can be defined as either deontological or consequentialist (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). The fundamental difference between these two theoretical streams is that deontological theories focus on the righteousness of actions, whereas teleological, or consequentialist, theories focus on the consequences of the actions, which will be elaborated in the following sub-sections. Both of these two streams have several sub-streams, however, the following sections will seek to explain the two concepts by highlighting the most dominant sub-streams or theories. These theories will then be discussed in a product placement context in order to give a theoretical foundation for understanding the subsequent sections that deems certain aspects of product placement acceptable or unacceptable. They will furthermore be employed in the analysis to investigate how the interviewees assess the ethicality of product placement.

### Deontology

Deontology focuses on the righteousness of the behaviour, and has been characterised by rules such as “*doing unto others as you would have them do unto you*” (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). Deontologists believe that some actions are intrinsically right or wrong regardless of the positive or negative consequences they generate (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 521). One of the most prominent persons within deontology is Immanuel Kant (Macdonald and Beck-Dudley 1994) (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 521). Kant operates with the term “the categorical imperative”, which is an ultimate moral standard that tells us only to act in a way that could be made a universal rule without any contradictions (Shafer-Ladau, 2007), or as Kant phrased it: “*Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law*” (Kant 1959, 39 cited in Secker 1999, 45). In order to determine whether an act is ethically permissible, one must therefore conduct a thought experiment to assess whether the maxim could be made a universal law without any contradictions (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 522). A maxim is a principle of action, in which one states what to do and why to do it (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 521). According to Horn, Schonecker and Baron, one can conduct the logics test by formulating a maxim and then transforming it into a universal rule using the following two forms: “*If/ whenever \_\_\_\_I will\_\_\_\_ in order to\_\_\_\_*” (Horn, Schonecker and Baron 2008, 162) and “*Of necessity, if / whenever \_\_\_\_ everyone will\_\_\_\_ in order to\_\_\_\_”* (Horn, Schonecker and Baron 2008, 162). When the universal rule has been formulated, it must be checked if the rule is subject to any contradictions. If the maxim can turned into a universal rule without any contradictions, the act is ethically permissible, however, if the universal rule holds any contradictions, the act is not ethically permissible (Horn, Schonecker and Baron 2008, 162). Kant also operates with the term “the principle of humanity”, which states that humans must always be treated as an end and never as the means (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 522).

#### Deontological Discussion of Product Placement

According to Kant, one should only act in a way that could be made a universal law. In order to determine whether the use of product placement is permissible or not, a Kantian thought experiment will now be conducted. The product placement maxim is created using the aforementioned form and is therefore formulated the following way: *If/ whenever I want to sell a product I will use product placement in order to persuade consumers to buy my product*. When turning the maxim into a universal rule it becomes: *Of necessity, if / whenever people want to sell a product everyone will use product placement in order to persuade consumers to buy their products.*  In this test, the universal rule holds a contradiction: If everyone used product placement to persuade the consumers into buying their products, it would not work as the consumers would be equally persuaded by all the companies, and thus no company would have a competitive advantage over the other. As the maxim could not be turned into a universal rule without any contradictions, the act of using product placement is ethically impermissible from a Kantian deontological perspective. From this perspective, any marketing efforts aiming at persuading people to purchase their product might considered unethical. As advertising is generally accepted in the western part of the world, one might argue that deontology is not ideal in assessing marketing ethics. This example highlights the difference between normative and descriptive ethics. Normative ethics seeks to set up rules that would create the best society possible, whereas descriptive ethics seeks to describe what people actually consider right or wrong (Pierce, 1998, p. 15).

### Consequentialism

Utilitarianism is the most prominent and well-developed form of consequentialism, and can be divided further into rule utilitarianism and act utilitarianism (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 453). As rule utilitarianism has been criticised for being irrational (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 454), it was chosen to focus on act utilitarianism in this thesis. The goal of act utilitarianism is to create a situation of the greatest possible happiness and the least possible misery, by acting in a way that is expected to maximise happiness or minimise pain (ibid). Both happiness and pain are quite broadly defined as anything that makes a situation better or worse. Utilitarians do not believe that actions are good or bad in themselves, and the ethicality of an action thereby depends only on its expected consequences (ibid). Ethical behaviour is therefore to choose the action that brings more good or less pain than any other alternative (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). One of the leading theorists within utilitarianism is John Stuart Mill (Sher, 2012, p. 237), who operates with the term “greatest happiness principle”, which states that one should promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Pierce, 1998, p. 61). Mill states that the agent should not promote his or her own happiness but the happiness of all the people who are affected by the action (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 457).

#### Utilitarian Discussion of Product Placement

When deciding whether or not to use product placement from a utilitarian perspective, one must consider the possible alternatives and compare their consequences. An alternative could be to use traditional commercials, which would also seek to create profits for the company. Product placement might be considered more manipulative than regular commercials because the viewer might be unaware of its persuasive nature. Manipulation might seem unethical, but for some product or services such as gym memberships, vitamins or third world aid, it might have positive consequences for the manipulated individual or a society. Furthermore, the use of product placement might bring less pain than regular commercials in form of viewer annoyance. However, with harmful products such as tobacco or drugs, the positive financial aspects and the increased viewer pleasure could be outweighed by negative health aspects, which affect both the individual and potentially the wider society. From this perspective, one could argue that the use of product placement is generally an ethical practise compared to regular commercials. However, as utilitarianism focus on consequences, the acceptability of product placement depends greatly on the promoted product as this has great impact on the consequences.

### Discussion

These two theoretical streams differ from each other fundamental ways, which will now be summarised. As seen in the above descriptions of deontology and utilitarianism respectively, the most fundamental difference between the two is whether the focus is on the action itself or whether it is on its consequences. This means that within deontology an action can be considered ethical even though it creates a negative outcome, and within act utilitarianism, actions such as lying, are considered ethical if they create a positive outcome. Another difference between deontology and utilitarianism is the question of whether the end justifies the means. From a utilitarian perspective the answer to that question would be yes as utilitarians strive for the outcome that creates the greatest good for the greatest number of people. One might therefore argue that within utilitarianism the end does justify the means. This is in contrast to deontology, where it is believed that there are certain ways that humans must never be treated regardless of the consequences.

Utilitarianism has been criticised for being so focused on maximising the general happiness that some situations would demand a violation of basic moral convictions such as the believe that human lives are sacred and thus should never be compromised (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 456). Similarly, deontology has been criticised for being too strict about the duty to follow the rules even when complying with a rule might harm, what the rule was created to protect (Shafer-Ladau, 2007, p. 524). Both streams of theories thereby seem to be criticised of not taking common-sense or fundamental values into account, however, that might be the consequence of making an ethical guideline that should apply to all possible situations and contexts. The critique of the theories does not affect its use in this research, as the purpose is not to evaluate whether the ethical approach is rational but rather to gain insight into the way the interviewees assess the ethicality of product placement.

A previous study has indicated that some consumers are somewhat reluctant to use the terms “ethical” and “unethical” as they are not a part of their everyday vocabulary (Buhl & Olesen, 2012). The terms ethical and unethical will therefore not be used in the interviews for this research, but instead the terms acceptable and unacceptable will be employed.

This section has described some general ethics theories and discussed them in a product placement context. The following section will describe a more specific ethics theory within marketing and how it relates to product placement.

## Marketing Ethics

In order to see product placement from a more marketing related ethics perspective, the following section describes a marketing ethics theory by Nebenzahl and Jaffe called the Ethical Dimensions of Advertising Executions, which contains a model that seeks to determine the ethicality of the way that marketing messages are being presented. This ethicality assessment tool was chosen over other marketing related ethics theories because rather than focusing on the content of promotional messages, it focuses on the way a promotional message is presented, which is the main focus of this thesis.

In the model, the Ethical Dimensions of Advertising Executions, the ethical assessment of the way a message is presented is based on the level of disguise and obtrusiveness of the message. Disguise deals with “*[…] the degree of source concealment […]*” (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998, p. 809), while obtrusiveness deals with “*[...] the degree to which the message is secondary to more salient communication […]*” (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998, p. 809). The two dimensional model consists of an x-axis, which represents the level of obtrusiveness and a y-axis, which represents the level of disguise (see the model at the end of this section). The model is divided into four quadrants, where messages placed in quadrant 1 are ethical, and messages that are placed in quadrants 2, 3 and 4 are of questionable ethics, 4 being the most severe as this is high in both obtrusiveness and disguise (ibid). The level of disguise can be measured by a consumer survey or through a content analysis. If conducting a consumer survey the, the respondent should be exposed to the message, and after that be asked to identify the sponsor. The percentage of those who fail to identify the correct sponsor constitutes the level of disguise. The other option is to assess the disguise through a content analysis, using a scale that ranges from a situation where the source is completely concealed to a situation where it is clearly stated that the content is sponsored and the sponsor is identified. The level of obtrusiveness is measured by the difference between unaided recall and recognition using the following formula: obtrusiveness = recall percent/ recognition percent (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998, p. 812).

The model thereby argues that it is unethical, when the source of the message is being concealed and when it is being presented in a context, where it is background to more attention-grabbing information. According to the article, product placement is placed in quadrant four, and it is thereby among the most unethical way of presenting commercial messages (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998, p. 810). When it comes to product placement these two dimensions, disguise and obtrusiveness, are often interconnected: if the product is incorporated into the program in a “natural” way, where it does not stand out or receives an unreasonable amount attention, then it is background to more salient information (the content of the program) and it is concealed that its appearance is actually a paid message. On the other hand, if the product receives an unreasonable amount of attention in form of too long camera shots, then it is arguable that it no longer background to more salient information and it would most likely be clear to some consumers that the appearance of the product is paid for, whereby the source would be revealed. Making product placement less disguised and less obtrusive would make it more ethical according to Nebenzahl and Jaffe’s model, however, it might not make it more ethical from a consumer perspective as it might seem disturbing, which will be discussed in section 3.4.1.

The article was published in 1998, which might be a problem with regard to the measurement of disguise. The consumers might be more well-informed about product placement today than they were in the late 90ties, and it might therefor be easier for them to spot, when product placement occurs even when it is not stated clearly. Using the consumer survey is therefore likely to deem product placement more ethical than the content analysis. Whether the increase in consumer awareness makes the practice of product placement more ethical or not depends on the theoretical frame of reference within ethics. Even though this model might be a helpful tool in assessing the ethicality of commercial messages, it can be argued that the simplicity of the model as well as the quantification of ethics are somewhat problematic. This critique does, however, not affect its use in the context of this thesis, as it will only be used as a conversational starting point to discover what the interviewees think of product placement.

This section has given a suggestion to how to assess the ethicality of product placement. The following section describes how some consumers have actually assessed various aspects of product placement.

## Consumer Studies Concerning Product Placement

The following sub-sections examine previous studies of various aspects of consumers’ attitude towards product placement. The results of the studies may not be directly transferable to a Danish context, however, these studies of foreign consumers might indicate what aspects that could affect the Danish consumers’ attitude towards product placement.

### Disclosure

In a Dutch study, a group of college students were shown a movie clip, where some were informed of the use of product placement before, during and after the product placement occurred respectively. Overall the students found the disclosure useless and irritating. 74% of the respondents answered that disclosures for product placement should never be provided, and out of the respondents who did want a disclosure 88% stated that the appropriate timing for disclosure was at the beginning of the movie (Boerman, Tutaj, & Reijmersdal, 2013, p. 137). The lack of interest in disclosure among the respondents might be connected to their relatively young age. A study of British consumers showed that the consumers between the ages of 18 and 34 have the most positive attitude towards the use of product placement, whereas the consumers who are over 50 years old have a more negative attitude towards product placement (Brand Republic, 2011). According to the Dutch study, the students who were exposed to a disclosure during the product placement were more likely to be able to recall or recognise the products that had been placed (Boerman, Tutaj, & Reijmersdal, 2013, p. 127). According to Lindstrom, the consumers’ ability to recall a product is the most relevant and reliable way of measuring an advertising’s effectiveness on the consumers’ future buying behaviour (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 55). Even though the disclosure led to a higher percentage of recall and recognition, it can be argued that it does not necessarily mean that it is more effective because consumers can change behaviour based on subconscious messages: In a study two scientists exposed a group of people to an image of either a smiling or a frowning face for 16 milliseconds. The flash of the image was so brief that the test subjects could not consciously register the image or identify the feeling that they had been exposed to, however, the flash of the image was enough to change their behaviour. The test subjects who had been exposed to the image of a smiling face were willing to pay twice as much for their soda as the test subjects who had been exposed to the image of the frowning face (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 77). Based on this it can be argued that consumers can change their behaviour even though they do not know or are unable to remember what stimuli they have been exposed to. Furthermore, Lindstrom argues that consumers are more vulnerable for commercial influence when they do not have their guard up e.g. in situations, where they do not realise that they are being influenced (Lindstrøm, 2008, p. 84). Based on this it can be argued that being exposed to product placement might have a behavioural effect even if the consumer does not recall seeing that product in a given programme.

### Product

Some products are deemed more acceptable to use in product placement than other products. In a study of American college students, the students were asked to assess the acceptability of 13 different products in product placement on a three-point scale. As the Gupta and Gold had expected, the three least acceptable products were guns, tobacco and alcohol, whereas the three most acceptable products to use for product placement were soft drinks, automobiles and healthy consumer products. Automobiles and healthy consumer products were categorised as the least controversial and harmful products, and were thereby expected to be among to most acceptable products, but the soft drinks were categorised as having a potential health risk along with fatty foods and race cars, which makes it somewhat surprising that it was deemed the most acceptable product for product placement (Gupta & Gould, 1997).

The study was later replicated in an Australian context with Australian college students. The Australian study also showed that guns, tobacco and alcohol were among the least acceptable products to use for product placement. The most acceptable products, however, varied between the American and the Australian study. The most acceptable products for the Australian students were healthy consumer products, cars, sunglasses and surfing equipment (Brennan, Rosenberger III, & Hementera, 2004).

The difference between the results of the original American study and the replicated Australian study might indicate that it is culture specific which products are considered neutral or good. The results of these two studies might therefore be hard to transfer to other cultures or across time. E.g. if soft drinks are the most acceptable product to use in product placement because the respondents finds it harmless, it might not transfer directly to a Danish context, where soft drinks might be seen as unhealthy. It is therefore questionable if the Danish consumers will assess the products in the same way as the respondents in these two studies, however, the studies clearly shows that consumers find some products more acceptable for product placement than others. The fact that the acceptability of various products depends on culture is indicated by the differing results in the two studies. However, it can also be seen in the researchers’ categorisation of neutral and ethically charged products. The researchers in both studies use the same categorisations, however, in a Danish or Scandinavian context, researchers might not find evidence to support the categorisation of cars as a semi-neutral product because of its potential risk to human lives and the environment. This brings up another issue with the studies: as these are quantitative studies, they do not indicate why some products are deemed more acceptable than others are. This is problematic as it can lead to misinterpretations such as the fact that the products that are deemed unacceptable for product placement are the products that are considered the most harmful and vice versa. This assumption might be true in many cases, however, it is also possible that a culture finds a product potentially harmful but still acceptable due to tradition or culture, such as the surfing equipment in the Australian study. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of this study only allowed the student to evaluate the pre-defined products, which means that products that were not mentioned in the study might be considered more acceptable or unacceptable than the products in the study.

### Genre

According to a YouGov online survey, British consumers find some genres more appropriate for product placement than others. The respondents found product placement most appropriate for British soaps, films, drama and home/garden improvement programmes. Conversely, the genre that was deemed most inappropriate for product placement was news: national news, world news and local news. These three sub-categories of news were followed by documentaries and wildlife programmes. The survey does not state why some genres are more appropriate for product placement than others, but it might be connected with the fact that one third of the respondents found that the integrity of a programme is negatively affected by using product placements (Brand Republic, 2011). Whether the results transfers to a Danish context is uncertain, however , it indicates that consumers might generally find product placement more suitable for some genres than for others. The respondents’ answers were restricted by the pre-defined genres in the survey, which could mean that other genres are considered more acceptable or less acceptable than the ones in this study.

### Target group

A previous study of young Danish consumers indicated that the target group of the product placement was also of importance in the assessment of the acceptability of product placement. The study indicated that some interviewees found it unacceptable to use product placement targeted at children as they were deemed impressionable and in some cases somewhat unacceptable to target the elderly as they might not fully understand the concept of product placement. However, there were differing views on the importance of the target group (Buhl & Olesen, 2012).

It has now been described what consumers in previous studies have said about various aspects concerning product placement. The next section is going to describe how age affects consumer behaviour and discuss how this might relate to product placement.

## Age and Consumer Behaviour

Besides from investigating how the interviewees feel about product placement, this study will also investigate whether there are any age related attitudinal differences. As mentioned in the delimitation, the two are groups that will be examined in this thesis are young consumer between the ages of 18 and 34 and consumers over the age of 50. According to Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, the consumers’ age affect their behaviour and values e.g. with regard to how they think and feel about marketing activities (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013, p. 115). According to Hofstede, both men and women tend to get more feminine values as they get older. Masculine values focus on confidence, competitiveness and challenges, whereas feminine values focus on security, caring for others and having human relations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2006, p. 133). According to Hofstede, this means that young people generally have more technical interests, whereas older people tend to focus more on social aspects and human interaction (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2006, p. 142). When it comes to the connection between consumer behaviour and age, both life phases and generations can be considered. These will therefore be described in the following with focus on the age of the two interviewee groups.

Lindberg argues that life phases affect the consumers’ attitudes, lifestyle and interests (Lindberg, 2009, p. 173). Life phases can be divided in various ways, but a simple division would divide the course of a life into the following six phases: childhood, teenagers, young people, parents, seniors and old age (Lindberg, 2009, p. 174). The young consumers’ spending tends to be fashion and recreation oriented, which shift when they reach the parenthood stage and thus need to spend money on children-related products. Then when the children move out of the home, the spending tends to go back towards recreational purposes (Blythe, 2008, s. 245). This might indicate that consumers are able to focus more on themselves at the beginning of their lives and then again after the children move out.

Another aspect of age is generations or age cohorts, which are groups of people who have grown up during the same period, and therefore share values and cultural norms as a result of having the same experiences and memories. These shared experiences and values then transform into similar consumer preferences (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 502). Arnould, Price & Zinkhan distinguish between the following generations: millennials, generation y, generation x, baby boomers, war babies, depression era and GI generation (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 502). In accordance with the respondent groups of this research only the following three age cohorts will be described: millennials, generation Y and baby boomers.

Millennials are born in from 1995 to today and they are therefore between the age of 0 and 19 today, whereas Generation Y is born from 1977 to 1994, which mean that they are between the age of 20 and 37 (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 502). Both of these generations grew up with computers and access to the internet (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013, p. 125), which is probably why none of them are impressed by new technologies (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 506). Millennials are not easily manipulated by advertising and that their understanding of advertisements might even be better than their parents’ (Andersen, 2011, p. 59). The group has conflicting feelings towards TV-commercials: they both love and hate them (ibid). These two young generations of consumers are independent self-reliant, innovative and curious (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013, p. 127).

Baby boomers is the name of the large generation that was born in the post-war period after the Second World War, more specifically from 1946 to 1964 (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 503). This means that the baby boomers are 50 to 68 years old today. This generation is generally considered self-centred, individualistic, suspicious of authorities and focused on the present (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013, p. 121). In contrast to younger generations, the baby boomers did not have access to computers or related technologies as they grew up (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013, p. 125).

This descriptions of consumer behaviour and values might help understand why some consumers act in a certain way, however, Blythe argue that age segmentation is too simplistic to predict consumer behaviour (Blythe, 2008, s. 369).

### Discussion

The above description of age related consumer behaviour might indicate that young consumers have a more positive attitude towards the use of product placement compared to consumers over the age of 50. This assessment is based on the above assumption that young consumers competitive, which could mean that they are more likely to focus on the positive financial gains of using product placement. Conversely, consumers over the age of 50 could have a less positive attitude towards product placement because they might be inclined to focus more on the negative consequences it can have for humans rather than the financial gains. Compared to younger generations, the baby boomers’ lack of exposure to the technology, might also make them more reluctant in adapting new technologies.

The above description of consumer values and behaviour and the subsequent discussion is only meant as a frame of reference or a foundation for understanding possible behavioural patterns. The author of this thesis believes that all humans are individuals, and that they thereby are free to behave in any way they see fit, and the researcher will therefore keep an open mind about the interviewees’ individuality without blindly categorising them based on the above.

It has now been described how certain consumer groups behave and which values they might have. The next section is going to describe the product placement legislation surrounding the Danish consumers, as this might be an expression of the consumers’ values regarding product placement.

## Legislation

The following two subsections describe the legislation surrounding product placement in the UK and Denmark respectively. Both British and Danish legislation have been included as they both affect the Danish TV viewers, who are the focus of this research. The legislation that effect the Danish consumers have been included to set the stage regarding the current situation for Danish consumers but also because it is assumed that the legislation is an expression of cultural values. It is therefore expected that the legislative focus points indicates what the Danish consumers are concerned with.

### British Legislation

In order to protect consumers from disguised advertising such as product placement, some western countries have regulated its use through legislation. In the UK, TV channels are obliged to inform the consumers if product placement is used during a programme by displaying the product placement logo at the beginning of the programme as well as after every commercial break and at the end of the programme. This rule applies to all programs that are shown on an Ofcom licenced TV channel including broadcasts outside the UK (Ofcom). An example of an Ofcom licensed TV channel that is broadcasted outside the UK is TV3 Denmark (Ofcom, 2014), which is therefore obliged to use the product placement logo in various reality shows such as Paradise Hotel. A previous study has indicated that some Danish consumers do not know what the product placement logo means, whereby the intention to informing the consumer is lost (Buhl & Olesen, 2012).

### Danish Legislation

The Danish legislation concerning product placement has changed over the years: at first it was illegal to use product placement because it was considered disguised advertising, which is illegal. Then it became legal to use product placement, but in 2013 the law was changed, making the use of product placement in Danish TV productions illegal again (Kreativitet og Kommunikation, 2013). The legislative changes bring attention to the complexity of the ethicality and acceptability of the use of product placement. The Danish laws and regulations concerning product placement, which are valid today, are described in the following.

According to §4 in the Danish Marketing Act, advertising must be presented in a manner, where it will be perceived as advertising regardless of its form and the media through which it is presented (Retsinformation, 2013). This can be problematic with product placement as it appears within the content of the programme, however, according to the Danish Consumer Ombudsman’s guidelines, this can be solved by stating the sponsorship in the credits at the beginning or of a film (Forbrugerombudsmanden, 2011). However, this solution is restricted by the genre in which product placement is used. The law distinguishes between news programmes, entertaining TV programmes and films, and product placement is not allowed in news programmes (Retsinformation, 2013). The use of product placement in TV programmes is not allowed either, however, programmes that are foreign-produced are exempt from this rule (Retsinformation, 2013). In practice that means that Danish consumers are being exposed to product placement through films and foreign-produced TV-programmes, but not in Danish-produced TV-programmes. It might be hard for the average Danish consumer to distinguish between Danish and foreign-produced TV programmes as the latter might also seem Danish. An example is the channel, TV3, which might seem Danish to some consumers as the content is either in Danish or has Danish subtitles, like other Danish TV channels such as the DR channels. However, the fact is that TV3 is owned by a multinational company, and broadcasted from London (MTG). This means that TV series that might be considered Danish from a consumer perspective, such as Paradise Hotel with Danish contestants, can actually contain product placement because it is foreign-produced. The blurred lines between Danish and foreign produced TV-programmes is problematic if the consumer thinks the he/she is being shielded from product placement when watching Danish TV-programmes, but fail to recognise that some “Danish” programmes are actually foreign produced and thus allowed to contain product placement. In this situation the consumer might be unaware of the commercial message and might therefore not have his/her guard up.

In addition to the genre restrictions, the placed product must not play an unnecessarily dominant role in the program, and it is not legal to use product placement to promote prescriptive medicines or tobacco due to the tobacco act (Retsinformation, 2013). Furthermore, the law offers extended protection to vulnerable groups, when it comes to marketing. In §8 in the Danish Marketing Act, it is stated that advertising, which is targeted at children and young people, must be designed in a way that pay regard to their natural naivety and lack of experience and critical sense which makes them easily impressionable. According to the Consumer Ombudsman, the use of product placement targeted at children and young people is not in accordance with §8 even if the sponsorship is mentioned in the credits because children and young people are unlikely to read the credits and because the youngest part of the group is unable to read (Forbrugerombudsmanden, 2011). Furthermore, advertising for children and young people must not contain alcohol (Retsinformation, 2013).

From the above it is seen that the Danish laws concerning product placement focus on disguise, target group, genre and product. More specifically it is deemed unacceptable to disguise the fact of sponsorship; to target groups that are considered vulnerable, which in this case is children and young people; to use product placement in Danish-produced TV programmes and to promote harmful products.

## Discussion

Based on the above, there are several aspects that affect the assessment of product placement’s acceptability. From the above examination, it has been possible to extract the following six recurring elements: disguise, obtrusiveness, target group, product, genre and age of the respondents. These elements will now be discussed.

### Disguise

According to Nebenzahl and Jaffe, it is unethical to disguise the fact of sponsorship because it violates the consumer’s right to know. The negative view on disguise is supported by both British and Danish legislation, who have chosen to make it mandatory to use the product placement logo or by mentioning it in the credits respectively. On the other hand, some consumers find the disclosures annoying, which could be considered unethical from a utilitarian perspective if it diminishes viewer pleasure and thus creates “pain”. One can therefore argue that disguising the fact of sponsorship is unethical, but disclosing the sponsorship in an dominant way can also be considered unacceptable.

### Obtrusiveness

According to Nebenzahl and Jaffe, it is unethical for commercial messages to be presented in a way that is unobtrusive because the consumer might be more impressionable or easier manipulated, when they are unaware of the persuasive nature of the message and thereby do not have their guard up. Obtrusiveness is measured by the number of people who are able to recall the product or brand. As the aforementioned Dutch study showed that disclosures affect the ability to recall and recognise the placed products, the use of disclosures affects both the disguise and the obtrusiveness of the product placement. As the disclosures affected the viewer pleasure negatively, one might argue that it is unacceptable for commercial messages to be too obtrusive or too dominant. The question is then how the “right” amount of obtrusiveness is measured and who should assess it.

### Target group

Children are protected from product placement under the Danish legislation, which indicates that it is considered unacceptable to use product placement targeted at children. As children’s critical sense might not be fully developed, it does make sense to shield them from advertising messages that they do not fully grasp. However, young people are also protected under the Danish law, even though Andersen argues that young people have a better understanding of marketing then adults. From this perspective it might seem somewhat irrational that the group who might have the best understanding of advertising is protected from product placement under the Danish legislation, when elderly people, who might not understand the concept, are not protected. However, a key difference between young and old people might be that young people are more impressionable than the elderly are.

### Product

Some products are deemed more acceptable for product placement than others. However, the products that are deemed acceptable or unacceptable seem to depend on culture. Generally, one could argue that products that are considered harmful are unacceptable to use in product placement, however, what is characterised as harmful products depend on the culture. Due to culture or tradition, some products might be deemed acceptable despite their potential harm.

### Genre

Some genres are deemed more acceptable for product placement than others are. There seem to be consensus about the fact that product placement is unacceptable in news programmes as this was found in a study of UK consumers as well as in the Danish legislation. At the other end of the spectrum, the respondents of the study stated that product placement is most appropriate in genres such as dramas and film, which is also partly supported by the Danish legislation, which states that product placement is allowed in foreign produced TV programmes and films.

### Age of Respondents

The age of the respondents might have an effect on the perceived acceptability of the use of product placement. Both the age cohort and the life phase can affect the consumers’ behaviour, and according to the discussion in section 3.5.1, it is possible that the mature consumers have a more negative attitude towards product placement than the young consumers. This is also supported by the British study that found that respondents aged 18 to 34 had a more positive attitude towards product placement than the respondents over the age of 50.

# Analysis

This chapter consists of an analysis the conducted interviews based on the elements that were found in the literature as well as elements that emerged during the interviews and the subsequent analysis process. These themes are reflected in the subheadings of this chapter. It was found that some of the interviewees have a different definition of ethics and product placement respectvely than the sources in the literature chapter, which formed the foundation for this thesis. As this might affect the rest of the analysis, the differing frames of references are the first theme that will be investigated. This is followed by brief section that sets the scene by presenting the interviewees knowledge of product placement and their ability to recognise it. This is followed by the largest part of the analysis, which deals with the interviewees overall attitude towards product placement, and several subsections that deals with various elements that affects the attitude towards product placement. The last part of the analysis investigates the interviewees approach to ethics. Some quotes have been included more than once in the analysis e.g. if the same statement has been used in two different sections of the analysis to highlight two different aspects.

## Frame of Reference

The following two subsections investigate the fact that some of the interviewees seem to have a slightly different understanding of the connection between ethics and acceptability and the term product placement respectively than the literature that was chosen for this project.

### Ethicality and Acceptability

As mentioned in section 3.2.3, it was chosen to use the terms “acceptable” and “unacceptable” in the interviews instead of the terms “ethical” and “unethical” because a previous study had shown that consumers were unwilling to use those words as they seemed unfamiliar to them. The terms “acceptable” and “ethical” and “unacceptable” and “unethical” were therefore used synonymously. From this point of view, it seems contradictory that one of the interviewees deems the use of cigarettes in product placement unethical, and yet indicates that it is acceptable because the lack of cigarettes in certain movies will seem unrealistic: “*Ethically, it is obviously wrong to portray somebody as fucking cool, and then he has a cigarette in his mouth all the time because then it becomes popular, but then again it is unrealistic to portray somebody, like you know, Johnny Cash, in a movie without a cigarette in his mouth*” (Sandy 39:16). This example shows that there might be differing frames of references regarding ethicality and acceptability. The underlying assumption in this research was that ethics were consistent with acceptability or at least connected. This understanding is not shared by the interviewee, who finds the use of tobacco in product placement unethical and yet acceptable. The perception that actions can be wrong and yet acceptable is also seen in another interviewee, who says: “*The fact that product placement is manipulating does not change the fact that it is okay*” (Scott 02:28). As the word “manipulating” has negative connotations, the statement indicates that he finds product placement to be somewhat wrong, and yet “okay”, which has been interpreted as acceptable.

This divergence in the frame of reference is problematic as it can potentially lead to misinterpretations. The interviewees’ seemingly contradictory statements might be evidence of conflicting ethical methods of assessing ethicality: From a deontological point of view it seems unethical to encourage unhealthy behaviour, however from a utilitarian perspective the diminished viewer pleasure might make the use of tobacco in product placement the ethical choice. Based on this, it is possible that the consumers use the term ethical to describe aspects regarding deontology, whereas the term acceptable is used about aspects regarding utilitarianism. Another possibility is that the interviewees have a zone of acceptability between the two anti-poles, ethical and unethical, which would be in contrast to the ethics theories, where an action is either ethical or unethical. As the interpretation of their understanding of ethics and acceptability has not been verified and because differing frames of references can lead to misinterpretations, the consumers’ understanding of acceptability and ethics should be investigated further. Furthermore, it should also be investigated whether this possible understanding of acceptability is held by Danish consumers in general or only by young Danish consumers.

### The term product placement

Another example of differing frames of reference is regarding the term product placement. Several of the interviewees mention celebrities, who wear products, which indicate that they might consider this “product placement”, despite the fact that a description of product placement was given at the beginning of the interview. The inclusion of this phenomenon into the term “product placement” does makes sense semantically as the products are placed on the celebrity, however, within marketing this is known as celebrity endorsement. One might therefore expect that some of the answers do not only concern the use of product placement but also the use of celebrity endorsement. It is assessed that the interviewees’ overall attitude towards product placement has not been affected by the fact that some of the interviewees slightly broader interpretation of the term product placement than literature. However, the differing interpretations of the term product placement might have affected the interviewees’ perception of message credibility in commercials compared to message credibility in product placement as the examples given include celebrities or well-known characters. The analysis of the interviewees’ attitude towards message trustworthiness in commercials and message trustworthiness in product placement thereby only says something about situations, where the product is used by a celebrity or a well-known character. It was chosen to include these statements in the analysis because there might only be fine line or no difference at all between celebrity endorsement and product placement in programmes where a well-known character or celebrity uses a placed product. In further studies, one might therefore choose to give the interviewees an example of product placement that does not contain a celebrity.

Another aspect of the term product placement that at least one of the interviewees has a different understanding of is the fact that companies pay the film producers to have their products displayed, which is the key difference between product placement and product sponsoring. This aspect was deemed important because of its manipulative nature. Also, the monetary aspect is important because it can change the power balance between the product company and the film producer and can thereby affect the artistic liberty and film/ character integrity. Furthermore, from a deontological perspective the monetary agreement might indicate a manipulative intent behind the action.

Sandy says: “*[…] about gardening programmes and stuff like that: flowers do not come out of nowhere. They have to go out and get them somewhere, and financially they got to come from somewhere, and well you cannot afford to go out and buy all those things. So in that way, that is just how the world works*” (Sandy 48:56). This statement indicates that the interviewee thinks that the programme had to use some products and that there is no harm in having a company sponsor the products. In this example there does not seem to be a monetary agreement between the flower company and the producer to display the products for money. This could indicate that the interviewee thinks that product placement is not based on a monetary agreement, however, the same interviewee later mentions money, in connection to character integrity: “*[…] for example with James bond it is completely absurd to change it like that [from drinking Martini to drinking Heineken] due to sponsor money because it is based on a book and previous movies*” (Sandy 06:28). By mentioning “sponsor money”, she indicates that this example of product placement does include a monetary agreement between the product company and the producer. The fact the interviewee gives these two examples during an interview about product placement indicates that her interpretation of the term “product placement” includes both situations, where a company donate products to a producer as well as situations, where there is a monetary agreement between the company and the producer to display the product, which in this thesis have been described as product sponsoring and product placement respectively. The lack differentiation between product placement and product sponsoring might have resulted in a more positive attitude than if the focus was just on product placement because the manipulative intent is less obvious in product sponsoring than with product placement.

## Knowledge about Product Placement

This section sets the scene by presenting some basic information about the interviewees’ knowledge of the term “product placement”, and their ability to recognise product placement in a clip from a music video.

At the beginning of each interview, the interviewee is asked if he/she has heard the term “product placement” before, and if so what he/she understands by the word. Two of the interviewees state that they know the term (Sandy: 01:44, Scott: notes), of which only one of the interviewees is able to give a fairly adequate description of the term product placement (Sandy: 01:44). However, all of the interviewees are able to identify at least one of the two products that were placed in the music video that they were shown: half of the interviewees only mention one of the products (Sandy 03:30, Abby 02:02, Vance 01:50), whereas the other half of the interviewees mention both of the products (Ellen 02:13, Trent 02:14, Scott: notes). Both groups agree that they are able to recognise the use of product placement because of the way that Medina places her hands and feet in the video and because the product becomes the centre of the camera shot. When asked how she is able to tell that those products have been used for product placement, Sandy says: “*I would say the way she places her hands. Where you analytically focus extremely on one certain body part where these jewellery appear and almost becomes the centre of the take*” (Sandy 03:53). This is supported by Ellen, who is able to identify the products because “*[…] they kind of zoom in on the way she places her hand and foot. […] You are aware of the fact that it has been done to show the product*” (Ellen 02:43). The interviewees’ ability to notice the placed products might, however, be due to the research context, where the concept of product placement had been discussed prior to the film clip, for as one of the interviewees remarks: “*[…] at first glance at a film clip like that, you would not immediately notice it*” (Trent 02:14). This is supported by another interviewee, who says: “*You cannot see it at first glance, but it becomes conspicuous when she lifts and ties her shoes several times*” (Abby 02:55).

## Attitude towards Product Placement

This part of the analysis investigates the interviewees’ attitude towards product placement and whether they prefer traditional commercials or product placement. Furthermore, this section contains several sub-section that investigates the interviewees’ attitude towards specific elements of product placement including its disguised and obtrusive nature, the effect of the sender and medium, the product category and the target group. The last subsection of this part of the analysis deals with the fact that some of the interviewees also assess product placement from other perspectives than the consumer perspective.

### Overall attitude

After the concept of product placement has been described and the interviewee has seen the clip from Medina’s music video, each of the interviewees are asked if the use of product placement is acceptable. With statement such as “*Yes, I think so*” (Sandy 07:44) and “*I actually think it is fine*” (Abby 03:12), most the interviewees state that they generally find it acceptable for companies to use product placement (Trent 03:22, Sandy 07:44, Scott: notes, Vance: 02:30, Abby 03:12). The only interviewee who do not state that it is okay to use product placement is Ellen from the 50+ group, who says: “*Actually, it is kind of like misleading the consumer a little because it is a music video*” (Ellen 03:35). Even though she voices a concern for the consumers’ right to know that they are being influenced, she does not have a strong negative attitude towards it. The word “actually” is used to indicate the subsequent part of the sentence is relatively surprising or in contrast to what is to be expected. This might indicate that the interviewee either thinks that product placement is acceptable or that she finds it likely that other people find product placement acceptable. Furthermore, the qualifiers “kind of” and “a little” tone down the negativity of her statement. The statement therefore indicates that she has a neutral attitude towards product placement or just finds it slightly unacceptable. The statement might also indicate that she finds the use of product placement somewhat acceptable and somewhat wrong at the same time, which was mentioned in section 4.1.1.

The fact that most of the interviewees have a positive attitude towards product placement is somewhat in contrast to the literature-based discussion on consumer behaviour in section 3.5.1, which predicted that the young consumers would have a more positive attitude towards product placement than the older interviewees. The positive attitude towards product placement might pave the way for an even more widespread use of product placement including age groups such as the 50+ consumers.

Some of the interviewees seem to accept the use of product placement because they feel that it is not going to change anyway, which is seen in the following statement from 50+ interviewee, Vance: “*Well, it is probably something that you have to accept, because that is probably the way that they will promote their products from now on […]. I think that we will see more and more of these things*” (Vance 02:30). This perspective is also seen in the following statement from the young interviewee, Sandy: “*[…] So in that way, that is just how the world works*” (Sandy 48:56). The fact that these interviewees have chosen to accept he use of product placement may be a coping strategy for dealing with a situation that they feel that they are unable to change, however, this should be investigated further.

Some interviewees find product placement a good alternative to traditional commercials, which will be discussed in the following section about the interviewees’ choice of preference between product placement and traditional commercials.

### Product Placement and Commercials

The interviewees generally have a positive attitude towards companies’ use of product placement in order to promote their products. However, as one might consider the use of product placement an alternative to the traditional or regular commercial, this section investigates whether the interviewees prefer one over the other and why.

Most of the interviewees prefer product placement to traditional commercials due to an expected increase in viewer pleasure. Scott prefers product placement because they do not interrupt the programme and disturb the content (Scott: notes). The annoyance with commercials is supported by Abby from the 50+ group who says: “*I think I would actually rather [see promotions] briefly in the programs instead of watching commercials ‘all ‘the ‘*time” (Abby 09:47). The pronunciation emphasis on the words “all the time” underlines how fed up she is with having to watch regular commercials. The emphasis is even stronger in her Danish statement “’he-‘le ‘ti-‘den”, where she stresses each syllable in the two words. The tiredness of commercials is also seen with Trent, who says that his choice of preference “*[…] depends on how many [products] that is included in a film clip because it should not ruin it by being filled up like commercials*” (Trent 13:04).

Another interviewee who finds product placement a good alternative to traditional commercials is Vance, from the 50+ group, who says: “*It is marketed in a way that is also entertaining. You are entertained while watching the commercial. I think that is smart*” (Vance 15:03). This view is contrasted by Sandy, from the young group who says: “*I think that you should be able to sort it out, if you do not want it. I do not want entertainment programs becoming the new commercials. You must be able to turn it off and say “I do not want commercials”*” (Sandy 49:40). The problem of not being able to escape promotional messages in form of product placement, is also commented on by Ellen from the 50+ group (Ellen 11:51), which will be discussed in the next section of the analysis.

There are thereby no noteworthy differences between the two groups, when it comes to preferring commercials over product placement and vice versa. Most of the interviewees state that they prefer product placement over commercials because they are less annoying and more entertaining than traditional commercials. The interviewees who prefer commercials over product placement, seem to do so because of the obtrusive nature of product placement, which will be elaborated on in the following section.

### Disguise and Obtrusiveness

According to Nebenzahl and Jaffe, product placement is an unethical marketing practise as it is both disguised and obtrusive. This section therefore investigates the interviewees focus on the disguised and obtrusive nature of product placement.

Only one of the interviewees comments directly on the lack of information about sponsorship. That interviewee is Ellen from the 50+ group, who says: “*Actually, it is kind of like misleading the consumer a little because it is a music video*” (Ellen 03:35). She thereby indicates that it is misleading to have a paid promotional message in the music video because the consumer would not expect to be exposed to a promotional message in the middle of a music video. Several interviewees also mention that the manipulative nature of product placement, which is elaborated further on in section 4.4.1 of the analysis.

For some of the interviewees in the 50+ group, the obtrusiveness of product placement is a problem because it is impossible to escape without also escaping the primary content. Ellen says: “*Of course I am affected by [regular commercials], but in those situations I can get up and leave. You do not leave because [product placement] is on, but when there is a block of commercials, I can choose to go or to see it. I cannot do that if it is in the middle of a movie*” (Ellen 11:51). Ellen thereby acknowledges that she is affected by both types of advertising, but that product placement is unescapable if she wants to watch the primary content, which would be the story of the movie. The focus on obtrusiveness is also seen in another interviewee, who says: “*I actually think it is a good idea [to show the P-logo] because then it is up to the consumers if they want to spend time on it*” (Vance 06:33). In this statement, he is saying that by informing the consumer of the use of product placement in a programme, the consumer has the option to change the channel if they do not want to be exposed to it. He thereby recognises the obtrusive nature of product placement, and proposing that the use of the P-logo can solve the problem as it will allow the consumer to change the channel and thus avoid exposure to product placement. The desire to be able to control, when she is being exposed to promotional messages is also commented on by one of the young interviewees, who say: “*I think that you should be able to sort it out, if you do not want it. […] You must be able to turn it off and say “I do not want commercials”*” (Sandy 49:40). These three consumers thereby seem to dislike the fact that it is not possible to escape the promotional messages without also escaping the movie or programme, which is in line with Nebenzahl and Jaffe’s objections to product placement. The negative attitude towards these aspects of product placement could affect the companies’ use of this marketing practise negatively, however, as the interviewees generally have a positive attitude towards product placement despite its disguised and obtrusive nature, it is unlikely that there will be a decrease in the use of product placement. The possibility of making product placement less disguised through the use of disclosures will be discussed in section 4.3.6.3 of the analysis.

### Sender and Medium

This section investigates whether some genres are deemed more appropriate for product placement than others and why. Furthermore, this section also investigates the perceived trustworthiness of promotional messages in product placement.

#### Genre

Some of the interviewees found it hard to identify any genres, where it would be unacceptable to use product placement in, and the interviewer therefore asked directly if it was acceptable to use product placement in the news. Based on the British survey that was mentioned in section 3.4.1, it was expected that the interviewees would find it unacceptable or inappropriate to use product placement on the news. The attitudes towards the use of product placement vary greatly among the Danish interviewees, ranging from acceptable to completely unacceptable.

During a conversation about whether product placement should be allowed in the news in form of the newsreader wearing clothes with visible logos, the 50+ interviewee Abby says: “*It would not bother me. I would be willing to accept that*” (Abby 09:39). The positive attitude towards product placement in news programmes is shared by Scott from the young group, who thinks that it is acceptable to use product placement in all genres, and he points out that they probably already do it in Aftenshowet, which is a Danish programme that deals with topics of current interest. Some of the interviewees do not think that product placement should be used in news programmes. One of these interviews is Ellen from the 50 + group, who says: “*I do not think that you should be allowed to [place products] in the news*”. The moderate negative attitude towards product placement in news programmes is shared by Vance, who also uses the qualifier “I do not think” to make his statement weaker: “*I do not think that you should encode promotions into the news because that is not what you expect when you turn on the TV […]*” (Vance 11:18). The interviewee who expresses strongest feelings towards the use of product placement in the news is Sandy from the young group, who says: “*Well, in the news it is completely crazy. You can never place anything. The news are supposed to portray reality. You must never ever place a product on anybody that is on the news*” (Sandy 44:03).

The views on the appropriateness of using product placement in the news thereby vary greatly between the interviewees. However, there does not seem to be any age related pattern in the interviewees’ assessment of product placement and genre appropriateness. The fact that the interviewees in this research, unlike the British respondents, were not able to identify any genres that were unacceptable for product placement along with the fact that only some of the interviewees found it unacceptable in the news, might open up for the use of product placement in other genres than just movies and entertainment programmes.

#### Trustworthiness

When asked if it would be more effective to promote products through product placement than through regular commercials Trent says: “*Yes it would because it is idols and people you look up to that show it, so in a way it becomes a little more attractive. Also because when you see Medina and you go “wow that is the shoes that she is wearing, they are col and I would like to buy some”, there is more attitude in that rather than having somebody running around saying “that Cillit Bang is just really good” while the lips say something else than the sound, right. It is definitely a little more trustworthy than normally*” (Trent 04:11). In this quote Trent compares the clip from the Medina music video to a dubbed commercial for Cillit Bang that has been on showed in Denmark. Based on the statement “*It is definitely a little more trustworthy than normally”* it seems that Trent finds product placement more trustworthy than regular commercials. However, as he compares product placement in a Medina music video to a Vanish commercial that does not contain a celebrity, it is not clear whether he finds product placement more trustworthy than commercials in cases with non-celebrity product placement. He later mentions that Rolex watches are interesting because they are worn by James Bond, which shows that the idol presenting the product does not have to be a real person, but can in fact just be a movie character.

The trustworthiness of product placement and commercials is also commented on by Scott, who says: “*I think that product placement is more trustworthy than commercials because […] it is in our consciousness that a commercial is on then regardless of what it shows, it was created to sell us something. But when it is a singer, or an actor or somebody else that wears a product then this person creates value for the product because the brand value that e.g. Medina has also gives value to the product. So if people want to be like Medina, well then they might be more likely to buy what she is wearing rather than listening to what some commercial or radio spot has to say*” (Scott: 00:35). In this statement Scott indicates that when a consumer sees a commercial he or she knows that its purpose is to persuade you into buying something, and you therefore have your guards up, and conversely, that when a person you look up to vouches for something by wearing it, you think that the message is trustworthy and you thereby do not have your guards up. However, as Scott also uses Medina as an example it is problematic to assess, whether he is talking about product placement in general, product placement with celebrities or celebrity endorsement.

The above analysis indicates that some of the young interviewees find product placement more trustworthy than traditional commercials. However, it is unclear whether product placement is also considered more trustworthy than commercials in non-celebrity contexts and conversely whether celebrity endorsement makes the message trustworthy in all situations including commercials. It could therefore be investigated whether product placement is also considered more trustworthy than regular commercials in non-celebrity contexts. However, in practise this distinction might be irrelevant as product placement is often used in a context, where the viewer knows, or to some degree will get to know, the actor or his/her character.

### Product

This section investigates whether the interviewees find some products more acceptable to use for product placement than others and why that is.

All the interviewees seem to agree that it is wrong to use alcohol and tobacco in product placement (Sandy 39:16 Ellen 10:14, Vance 10:30, Abby 08:06, Trent 15:32, Scott: notes). Ellen elaborates: “*Situations where is can be dangerous for the consumer to use the product, I don’t think that it should be allowed to use it as part of a movie of as part of a music video*” (Ellen: 10:14). The focus on the products harmfulness is also commented on by Vance, who says: “*Tobacco and alcohol are probably not a good idea […] because you can argue that they are harmful drugs*” (Vance 10:30). Sandy, who is one of the young interviewees agree that it is wrong to use cigarettes in product placement, however, the following statement seems to indicate that she is willing to accept it because of character integrity and thus viewer pleasure: “*Ethically, it is obviously wrong to portray somebody as fucking cool, and then he has a cigarette in his mouth all the time because then it becomes popular, but then again it is unrealistic to portray somebody, like you know, Johnny Cash, in a movie without a cigarette in his mouth*” (Sandy 39:16). The conflict between something being wrong and yet acceptable will was commented on in section 4.1.1 of the analysis.

Trent from the young consumer group distinguish between certain types of products: “*I think that stuff like alcohol should not be promoted as something good, or tobacco for that matter, but shoes and clothes will not hurt anybody*” (Trent 15:32). The idea that it is fine to promote shoes and clothes through product placement is in direct contrast to the position of Ellen, from the 50+ group, who worry that the promotion of products such as the jewellery and shoes in the music video can create overconsumption: “*[…] it is after all things that can create overconsumption. As such it is not stuff that you need in your everyday life*” (Ellen: 09:34). Not only are some products considered unacceptable to use in advertising because of their potential harmfulness to consumers, but the product must also fit into the content of the programme, where it displayed, which is seen in the following statement: *“[…] like Dr. Phil where it would look stupid if he promotes something, like cigarettes right, if he has just had some body with a smoking addiction [on the show]. That would not be so trustworthy […]*” (Trent 12:19)

Both groups thereby find it wrong to use tobacco and alcohol for product placement. Two of the 50+ interviewees state that it is wrong due to its negative health consequences, while one of the young interviewees find it wrong and yet is willing to accept it. Furthermore, the product should also have some connection to the content of the programme as lack thereof will seem untrustworthy. The dislike of promoting alcohol and tobacco is in line with the findings of Gupta and Gold and later with findings of Brennan, Rosenberger and Hementera. It could be researched whether the preference for promoting products such as sofdrinks or surfing equiptment is also the case in a Danish context.

### Target group

This section of the analysis investigates the interviewees’ position to product placement targeted at various groups. Furthermore, this section contains three subsections that deal with the interviewees’ disassociation to weak target groups, their understanding of the legitimacy of product placement and finally their attitude towards the P-logo.

Most of the interviewees agree that it is unacceptable to use product placement targeted at children because they are easily influenced. This view is clearly stated by Ellen, who thinks that “*There must definitely be an age limit for when you can start to use commercials regarding using it in children’s programmes and stuff like that because I think it is wrong […] because they are easily influenced*” (Ellen 08:58). In the Danish statement the comparative form of the word “easy” was used, and it is thereby assumed that she means that are easily influenced compared to adults. This view is shared by Abby, who is also a 50+ consumer: “*They are influenced by stuff like that. Of course, we are too, but we can filter it out. Children cannot really do that*” (Abby 07:16). Children are thereby deemed less able to filter out promotional messages than adults are. However, one of the interviewees also comment on the children’s ability to recognise promotional messages: “*I think that children will notice [product placement] faster and also teenagers [compared to the elderly] […]”* (Trent 09:55). One might therefore argue that children are generally easily influenced, however, they are able to recognise that they are being influenced by companies and therefore able to have their guards up.

Another group that came up during some of the interviews is the elderly. Trent from the young group says: “*The elderly might have a slower understanding of it [compared to children and teenagers].* (Trent 09:55). This view on old people is somewhat contrasted by another interviewee from the young group who states: “*I do not think that old people are stupid […]. I think that we [young people] are far more impressionable [than old people] in a lot of ways*” (Sandy 32:35). As such one might argue that the elderly are generally not easily influenced but that they might be less likely to recognise that they are being influenced by companies and thus might not have their guards up.

Besides from the age groups, one of the interviewees also mentions another group that she finds vulnerable: “*It is obvious that if you show product placement TV for mongols […] they will be easy to trick. […] it is not to mention mongols, it might as well be children. It is more that you are in a mind-set, where you are impressionable*” (Sandy 1:03:25). In this statement, she equates children with people who have intellectual disabilities, as groups that are unacceptable to target through product placement because they are impressionable. One could therefore imagine that it would be considered unacceptable to use product placement on channels or in programmes that are targeted at either children or people with intellectual disabilities.

There is thereby a general consensus among the interviewees that it is unacceptable to use product placement targeted at children as they are more impressionable than adults. Furthermore, one of the interviewees mention people with intellectual disabilities as a group that should also not be targeted with product placement as she also finds this group impressionable. One of the young interviewees mention that it might also be problematic to use product placement targeted at the elderly, not because they are impressionable but because it might be harder for them to recognise when they are being influenced. As discussed in literature section 3.7.3 it can be argued that it is unacceptable to target people at both ends of the age scale: young people are able to recognise the product placement, but they are easily influenced, and the elderly are not easily influenced, but it might be difficult for them to recognise the product placement and thus have their guards up.

#### Dissociation to people who are affected

Several of the interviewees distance themselves from people who are unable to recognise product placement and from people who are affected by product placement. Some of the interviewees distance themselves very directly and others in more subtle ways.

One of the interviewees who directly disassociate herself from people who are affected by product placement, is Sandy from the young group, who says: “*I think that I naively put myself above people who allow themselves to be affected. Where in reality I think that I believe everything I see without noticing it, and I think that both children and adults do, and that you always have*” (Sandy 29:08). In this statement the interviewee directly states that she puts herself above people who are affected by product placement. Then she acknowledges that she is affected by product placement without being fully aware of it, but then in order not to look bad she finishes by saying that everybody are affected by it. When she says that she puts herself above “people who allow themselves to be affected”, she creates two groups: the people who let themselves be affected and those who do not. The first group is an undesired group to be in, which is seen in the fact that she puts herself above them, while the second group, which she places herself in, is positive to be a part of. However, the word “naively” indicates that she knows that the division or her placement in the positive group is somewhat unrealistic. In the first part of her statement she associate herself, with the positive group, but then when she acknowledges that she is also affected, she dissolve the groups by saying that everybody is affected, and she thereby never associate herself with the negative group. In other words she distances herself from people who are affected by product placement, but then accepts that she is affected too, at which point she no longer distinguish between people who let themselves be affected and people who are not affected, but argue that everybody is affected.

Another interviewee who also separates herself from people who are unable to recognise that they are being exposed to product placement, is 50+ interviewee Ellen, who says: *“Surely it is clear to me, but you could imagine that some people would just say “well, she looks young, and that it what they are showing”*” (Ellen 03:08). By using the pronoun “me”, she clearly states that she is able to recognise the product placement, whereas she uses “some people” about the group of people who cannot see that they are exposed to product placement, which is a group that she separates herself from. This is also seen with Abby from the 50+ groups, who says: “*They are influenced by stuff like that. Of course, we are too, but we can filter it out. Children cannot really do that*” (Abby 07:16). In this statement she distinguishes between children who are influenced by product placement and adults who “can filter it out”. Abby admits that her own group is affected too, but then says “but we can filter it out”, which to some extent neutralises the admission that they are affected. It is interesting that Abby states that she can filter it out, when she is among the interviewees who only mention one of the placed products in the music video. It is debatable whether or not it is possible for her to filter something out that she may not be able to recognise in the first place. However, she does not claim to be able to recognise product placement as she only comments on her ability to filter it out. This situation it thereby somewhat reminiscent of the discussion about the elderly as a target group, where it was found that old consumers are able filter out promotional messages, but they may not always be able to recognise them and may thereby be unable filter them out in those situations.

Other interviewees do not directly state that they are separate from the people who are affected by product placement, but they indicate it though their choice of words. An example of this is Scott, who says: “*So what I meant was that people have to learn to think for themselves rather than just accepting what they are shown and told regardless of whether it is product placement or other everyday stuff*” (Scott: 00:35). Scott uses the word “people” rather than the pronoun “we”, which would have included himself, which indicates that he does not consider himself a part of the group who has to “learn to think for themselves”.

In the previous section of the analysis, it was investigated if there were any groups that were deemed unfit for product placement. In line with the disassociation to weak groups that is described in this section, none of the interviewees mention themselves or the groups that they belong to as weak: the 50+ interviewees mention children as a vulnerable target group, and conversely Trent, who is 18, highlights teenagers’ ability to recognise product placement, and the elderly’s lack of ability to recognise it.

Both the young and the 50+ interviewees thereby try to distance themselves from people who are unable to recognise product placement and from people who are affected by product placement. There might be several reasons for the disassociation, but one explanation might be that the interviewees do not want to come across as unintelligent or naive in the interview situation. Another possibility might be that each interviewee does not want to admit to himself/herself that he/she is not able to recognise product placement or that he/she is easily influenced, which might be a defence mechanism to protect his/her self-image and self-esteem. Naturally, there is also the possibility that some of the interviewees genuinely feel that they are not affected by product placement. As research indicate that people are generally affected by product placement, it is problematic if the consumers are unable or unwilling to acknowledge their own vulnerability as this will prevent them from taking the necessary steps to ensure consumer protection.

#### Legal/illegal

The interviewees do not know whether the use of product placement is legal or illegal in Denmark, but the 50+ interviewees generally think that it is legal, while the young interviewees think that it is illegal. However, all the interviewees think that it should be legal.

None of the interviewees are sure whether product placement is legal or illegal, which is seen in the following quotes, where some of the interviewees directly state that they do not know: “*I do not know if it is, but I bet it is not*” (Sandy 57:12), while other show their lack of certainty through their use of qualifiers such as “I think” in “*Well I think it is*” (Ellen 14:33). Two of the 50+ interviewees think that it is legal to use product placement in Denmark (Ellen 14:33, Vance 15:20), while the last interviewee from this group says that she does not know whether she thinks it is legal or illegal (Abby 11:45). One of the 50+ interviewees states that she does not think that product placement is legal, but in the interview she also states that she can recognise product placement and she later indicates that she can filter it out (Ellen 03:08, 08:58). This is interesting because one would imagine that the illegality of product placement would mean that she has not been exposed to it, and thus do not actually now whether she can recognise or filter it out. However, as Scott points out, he thinks that it is illegal to use product placement in Denmark, but that programmes such as Aftenshowet do it anyway (Scott notes). Another option is that the interviewee comments on her ability to filter it out as a hypothetical situation based on the film clip that she showed at the beginning of the interview, or that her abilities are based on experiences with other types of advertising. In contrast to the 50+ interviewees, none of the young consumers think that it is legal (Sandy: 57:12, Trent: 14:44, Scott, notes).

The interviewees all state directly or indirectly that the use of product placement should be legal in Denmark (Sandy 57:12, Ellen 14:33, Vance 15:20, Abby 11:45, Trent: 15:11, Scott: notes). However, two of the young interviewees and one of the 50+ interviewees are more hesitant than the other interviewees regarding the legality of product placement. When asked if she thinks it should be legal to use product placement in Denmark, Ellen says: “*I think that it should be controlled*” (Ellen 14:33), which indicates that she thinks that it should be legal, but that its use should be regulated. The young consumers Trent and Sandy, also state that they think that is should legal in Denmark, however they both seem somewhat ambivalent: “*Yes, there just has to be a fine line. Yes and no*” (Trent 15:11) and “*I think it should be [legal] to the extent that it maintains the original message, but I also understand that we need media without hidden agendas, so I think it is hard*” (Sandy 57:12).

The young interviewees thereby seem to think that they are protected from product placement by the Danish law, whereas the 50+ interviewees do not think that they are protected by the law. All the interviewees think that it should be legal to use product placement in Denmark, however, some of the young interviewees might be slightly more ambivalent or cautious about making product placement legal compared to the 50+ interviewees. The difference in perceived legal protection between the two groups might also partially explain the two groups’ different view on the need for consumer warnings in form of the P-logo, which will be described in the section below.

#### P-logo

The following section investigates the interviewees’ attitude towards the idea of using the P-logo in Denmark to make the viewers aware of the use of product placement in various TV programmes.

The interviewees have varying attitudes about the idea of using the P-logo in programmes to warn consumers. However, there seem to be a pattern that the young interviewees have a negative or neutral attitude towards the idea of using the P-logo (Sandy 22:35, Trent 08:16, Scott notes), whereas the older interviewees thinks that it is a god idea (Ellen 06:24, Vance 06:33, Abby 05:39). The interviewee with the strongest feelings about the use of the P-logo is Sandy from the young group, who thinks that the use of the P-logo “*[…] is a completely ridiculous idea*” (Sandy 22:35). By using the qualifier “completely” and the word “ridiculous”, which has negative connotations, she highlights how absurd she finds the idea of using the P-logo. It is interesting that she feel so strongly about not wanting to use the P-logo, when she is one of the interviewees who only spotted one of the product placements in the video clip (Sandy 03:30) and thereby might be able to benefit from the P-logo. Sandy later comments on why using the P-logo seems redundant to her: “*It is probably because I feel that I can protect myself from those things and that is probably a big fat lie*” (Sandy 22:35). This seemingly insightful comment shows that she tells herself and possibly others that she is not affected by product placement, but that she probably is. However, the argument for not using the P-logo is that she thinks that she can protect herself, and the fact that this confession does not change her mind about the use of the P-logo, might indicate that she does in fact believe in the “big fat lie” that she can protect herself despite her insightful comment. The two other young interviewees might also have an indifferent or somewhat negative attitude towards the idea of using the P-logo because they feel that they are not affected by product placement. Another possible reason for the attitudinal difference between the two groups could be that the young interviewees are constantly exposed to promotional messages and thus do not see the need for disclosure in this context as they are not warned of promotional messages in the other contexts. This might be an over simplification as the 50+ interviewees are also exposed to promotional messages on the internet, but the young interviewees might spend more time on the internet, as well as using other websites than the 50+ interviewees, however, this should be researched further. The overexposure to persuasive messages will be commented on in connection to the analysis of the interviewees’ ethical approach to product placement in section 4.4.1.

The interviewees seem to agree that if the P-logo should be used in Danish programmes, it should appear at the beginning of the show rather than when the product is being displayed in order to prevent a decrease in viewer pleasure. Ellen from the 50+ group thinks it is a good idea to warn the consumer by displaying the P-logo, and with regard to the timing of the logo she would “*[…] prefer that it was shown at the beginning*” (Ellen 06:45). She does not want the P-logo to be shown during the programme *“[…] because then you would look for what it is that they are promoting rather than watching the movie*” (Ellen 06:45). The fact that she thinks that the P-logo is a good idea, but also states that she does not want to be disturbed during the movie, shows that both consumer protection and viewer pleasure are important to her. The preference for the P-logo to appear at the beginning of the show can thereby be seen as a compromise between consumer protection and viewer pleasure. The negative attitude towards showing the logo during the programme is also supported by Trent from the young group, who says: “*I believe that it [showing the logo during the programme] would disturb the programme*” (Trent 09:32).

As discussed in section 3.4.1, it can be debated whether it is favourable or not for the company of the consumer recognise the product placement. It can be argued that the promotional message is most effective when the product placement is not noticed because the consumers will not have their guards up. On the other hand, some argue that the consumers’ ability to remember the product after the programme is the most efficient way of predicting their purchasing behaviour. These conflicting views on what is most favourable for the company and consumer respectively, makes it problematic to interpret the following statement by an interviewee, who was being asked if the use of the P-logo is a good idea to implement in Denmark: “*You kind of get your guards up, but at the same time it is also a good idea because you also notice it more*” (Trent 08:16). The interpretational question in this context is whether it is seen from the consumers’ perspective or the companies’ perspective, when he describes it as “a good thing” that the consumers notice the product more. Hence, whether it is good for the consumers because they get their guard up when they notice the product placement, and thus becomes less impressionable, or whether it is good for the companies because the consumers notice their products more. In the sentence he separates the two main clauses with the word “but” rather than having used the word “and”, which indicates that he finds the two sentences separate or unconnected. Based on this, it is assumed that he sees it from the companies’ perspective, when he describes it as a “good thing” that the consumer notices the product more. The qualifier “kind of” limit the strength of the claim that the consumers have their guard up when they are shown the P-logo. This statement therefore indicates that he believes that the P-logo only affects the consumers to get their guards up to a certain degree and furthermore that using the logo will actually help the companies in promoting their products because the consumers will focus more on the products. However, he does not indicate that it is a negative thing that the companies use the logo to make the consumers notice their products more. The view that the P-logo would help the companies promote their products as the consumers would pay more attention to the products, is contrasted by Sandy from the young group, who states that “*[…] the concept of product placement would lose its effect […] if it was pointed out*” (Sandy 22:35). The two conflicting perspectives on the effectiveness of product placement when the consumer notices the products that is discussed in literature section 3.4.1 is thereby also present among the interviewees.

Based on the above, it can be argued that the 50+ interviewees are in favour of using the P-logo to make the consumers aware of the use of product placement. This is in contrast to the research of Boerman, Tutaj and Reijmersdal, who found that most of their respondents were against the use of disclosures. However, as discussed in section 3.4.1, this might be connected to the age of their young respondents, which is somewhat in line with this research, where the young interviewees are less keen on the use of the P-logo than the 50+ interviewees. Furthermore, they found that the respondents who prefer disclosures, prefer that they are displayed at the beginning of the programme rather than during the programme, which is in accordance with the findings from these interviews. The differing peferences for disclosures and their placement could be employed by companies, who should costomise their use of product pacement to their target group. Furthermore, it was also found that the young consumers disagree on whether it would be beneficial for companies to have the logo displayed. The two groups’ attitudes towards the P-logo might also be connected to whether think that they are protected from product placement under the Danish legislation as the 50+ interviewees, who do not think that they are protected from product placement by the law, all like the idea of using the P-logo to warn the consumers, whereas the young interviewees, who think that they are protected from product placement under the Danish legislation, do not see the need for the P-logo.

##### Consumer responsibility

Some of the interviewees also comment on the consumers’ ability and responsibility to filter out promotional messages. Rather than just banning product placement, Sandy thinks consumers should be acknowledged for their ability to filter out promotional messages: “*I think is also about giving the consumer some credit about our ability to filter it out*” (Sandy 48:56). This might be an expression of a desire for consumer empowerment rather than consumer protection. Here she states that the consumers should be acknowledged for their ability to filter out promotional messages, but elsewhere in the interview she mentions that children and people with learning disabilities are easily influenced by product placement (Sandy 1:03:25). If this should not be interpreted as conflicting, one must assume that she discounts children and people with learning disabilities, when she talks about consumers. However, it might also be an expression of the ambivalence that she has displayed throughout the interview of moving back and forth between admitting that everybody, including herself, are affected by product placement, and then stating that she is above people who are affected, or even as here that consumers should generally be recognised for their ability filter it out. These contradictory comments might be an expression of an internal conflict of knowing that she is affected by product placement, but on the other hand not wanting to admit her vulnerability or weakness. Another possibility is that her statements about being affected were primarily or partially made to seem insightful during the interview.

The notion of consumer capability and responsibility is also mentioned by Scott, who believes that the consumers should be able to think for themselves: “*Product placement is manipulating, but a lot of other aspects in life are too, because whether you watch TV, do your grocery shopping or talk to you family there will always be some form of manipulation. So what I meant was that people have to learn to think for themselves rather than just accepting what they are shown and told regardless of whether it is product placement or other everyday stuff*” (Scott: 00:35) and he later continues to say: “*You have to critical of what you see and hear*” (Scott 02:28). Through these two statements he places the responsibility, or at least some of it, with the consumer rather than with the companies or the legislators, who should protect them. The statements of these two interviewees might indicate that the young interviewees focus more on the consumers’ abilities and responsibilities over the consumers’ protection compared to the 50+ interviewees.

The combination that the 50+ interviewees like the idea of consumer protection in form of the P-logo, which the young interviewees were less keen on, along with the fact that some of the young interviewees focus on the consumers responsibility to protect themselves, is in accordance with Hofstede’s idea that young people focus on themselves and competition whereas older people focus on the helping and protecting other people. However, this view is contested by the fact the Vagn, who is the oldest interviewee, is the one who focus most on the companies’ right to advertise, which will be elaborated on under the following section.

### Perspective

This section is divided into two subsections, where the first section deals with the fact that some of the interviewees assess product placement, not only from their own perspective as consumers, but also from the perspective of companies. The second section deals with the fact that some of the interviewees’ perspectives seem to be highly connected to their profession.

#### Company Perspective

Some of the interviewees do not only consider how they or other consumers are affected by product placement, but also how the companies would be affected of the rules for product placement changes. Vance is the interviewee who displays the greatest concern for the companies’ investments and advertising options regarding product placement, which will be elaborated further on in the next section. The concern for the companies is also seen in some of the other interviewees. In the following statement Trent shows concern for both the consumer’s viewer pleasure and the companies’ desire to display their products: “*The manufacturers also want it to be noticeable, so it should be displayed it as much as possible, within the fine line where it does not turn into a commercial*” (Trent: 06:15).

Sandy shows concern for the companies’ effect of product placement when she says: “*I think that the concept of product placement would lose its effect and its legitimacy if it was pointed out*” (Sandy 22:35). If the premise is that it is good for the consumers if they are not affected and conversely that it is good for the companies if they are able to affect people to buying their products, then it is somewhat surprising that the interviewee, who is also a consumer, would show concern for the companies’ ability to affect the consumers subconsciously. However, the seemingly great concern for the companies might be due to the fact that she does not feel that she is affected by product placement and furthermore that she dislikes the idea of the P-logo for viewer pleasure reasons and thus only uses the company perspective as another argument support her claim that the P-logo is unnecessary.

#### Profession and Perspective

Among some of the interviewees, there is a connection between their occupation and their perspective on product placement. Among the interviewees whose perspective is connected to their occupation is Sandy. Sandy is taking a degree in literature, which is seen in her great concern for artistic license and character integrity. Her concern for character integrity is seen in the following statement about James Bond, where the words “completely absurd” underlines how strongly she feels about it: “*[…] for example with James bond it is completely absurd to change it like that [from drinking Martini to drinking Heineken] due to sponsor money because it is based on a book and previous movies*” (Sandy 06:28). This perspective is seen again later in the interview, where she states that product placement is not acceptable, when it changes the original content: “*If the book says so and so, and then it is changed because of a sponsor agreement, then it becomes too much*” (Sandy 07:44).

Vance is self-employed, which is seen in the fact that he shows great concern for the companies and their return of investment rather than for the messages that he was exposed to as a consumer: “*Well, one can understand that those who spend a lot of money on advertising want something that catches on with the public because after all it is an extraordinary amount of money that is spend on advertising*” (Vance: 08:25). Later when Vance is asked if it is acceptable to use product placement in home improvement programs, he focus on the companies’ equal right to promote their products rather than focusing on the fact that he, as a consumer, is being affected by product placement: “*I think, that those [companies] who want to spend money on it should be allowed to spend money on it. But it should not be reserved for that one product, others who have the same product that has the same qualities should also have the option [to have their products placed] if they wanted to spend money on it*” (Vance: 12:50). Vance’s answers thereby indicate that his perspective on product placement is sometimes as an entrepreneur rather than as a consumer.

The connection between profession and perspective is also seen with Scott, who is a business student. His business focus is seen in his focus on branding in the following statement: “*[…] when it is a singer, or an actor or somebody else that wears a product then this person creates value for the product because the brand value that e.g. Medina has also gives value to the product*” (Scott: 00:35).

Based on the above analysis, it is clear that for some of the interviewees there is a strong connection between their profession and their perspective on product placement. As such one can argue that the interviewees are not only consumers but can also be literature enthusiasts, entrepreneurs and businessmen, which is reflected in their perspective and attitude towards product placement.

### Sub-conclusion

The interviewees generally have a positive attitude towards product placement. However, there are several aspects that can affect the acceptability in specific contexts such as the placed product, the genre in which it appears and the group at which it is targeted. Despite of their ability to identify weak target groups, all the interviewees distance themselves from people who are affected by product placement.

## Approach to Ethics

This section investigates the interviewees’ approach to ethics by looking for deontological and utilitarian markers respectively. Despite of the disassociation between the terms ethical and acceptable in section 4.1.1, consumers’ ethical perspective might indicate what they are willing or unwilling to accept. This information can be interesting to companies, who want to avoid overstepping the consumers’ ethical boundaries as well as legislators, who want to ensure that the consumers are protected in accordance with the public sentiment. In this research it will be investigated whether the interviewees have a deontological or utilitarian approach to ethics as they express a fundamental division in ethics theory: the focus on action or the focus on consequences. This was supposed to be determined in two ways: by analysing their statements for focus on the manipulative aspect of product placement compared to its possible consequences, but also by asking them directly whether they had based their assessment of product placement on principles or on the possible consequences of the act. The direct question became redundant in the interviews as the question is not relevant in situations, where the interviewee is positive towards product placement. As product placement is unethical from a deontological perspective and both positive and negative arguments can be made from a utilitarian perspective, the ethical perspective can only be asked about directly if the interviewees find product placement unethical. On the other hand, the interviewees’ positive attitude towards product placement might be interpreted as an expression of a utilitarian approach to ethics.

However, it was still chosen to examine the interviewees’ arguments for deontological and utilitarian markers by analysing the interviewees’ statements about manipulation and viewer pleasure respectively as these two areas are likely to reveal deontological and utilitarian arguments respectively. The underlying premise for the analysis is thereby that if the interviewee focuses on the action itself such as its manipulative nature, then it is an expression of a deontological approach to ethics, whereas if the interviewees focus on the consequences of the action, such as the effect on viewer pleasure, then it is an expression of a utilitarian approach to ethics.

### Deontology

As discussed in literature section 3.2.1, deontologists believe that some actions are wrong regardless of their consequences. The interviewees’ focus on the manipulative nature of product placement might therefore be a deontological marker. Several of the interviewees mention that product placement is manipulative (Trent 13:52, Sandy 3852, Scott 00:35), and one of them also states that it is deceiving (Ellen 03:35), which might be indicative of a deontological approach to ethics. When the interviewees state that product placement is manipulative and deceptive, without mentioning its consequences, it might indicate that they feel that it is unethical to be manipulative or deceptive regardless of its consequences. This would indicate a focus on the action rather than on the possible consequences, and it can thereby be interpreted as an expression of a deontological approach to ethics. From a utilitarian perspective the act of manipulating somebody into doing something would not be unethical in itself, and the interviewees could therefore have chosen a more neutral word such as “influence” to describe the action. As such one could argue that the interviewees’ decision to use the word “manipulative” rather than “influence” indicates a deontological approach to ethics.

Sandy and Scott from the young group both seem to think that it is okay to try to affect consumers through product placement because everybody is already being affected by everybody else any way. Sandy formulates it this way: “*Well, back then it was just the Beatles, who were wearing something. They had long hair and suddenly everybody else had long hair. I do not think that it is dangerous, and I do not think that product placement is either*” (Sandy 28:26). Scott takes the same perspective when he says: “*Product placement is manipulating, but a lot of other aspects in life are too, because whether you watch TV, do your grocery shopping or talk to you family there will always be some form of manipulation.*” (Scott: 00:35). The two young interviewees thereby seem to accept the persuasive or manipulating nature of product placement because they expect to be influenced and manipulated from all sides, and as such they might not find themselves particularly affected by product placement. Their argument that product placement is acceptable because everybody else is already trying to affect them, has some resemblance of a reversed version of the Kantian thought experiment that stated that product placement was unethical because its maxim would be self-contradictory: If everybody manipulate consumers into doing something, then it is of no effect as the consumers will be manipulated equally in each direction and thus remain at status quo. The two interviewees seem to feel that they have crossed that line in reality, and that they are now on the other side, where it is not unethical to try to manipulate people because everybody else is already doing it and the manipulation will therefore be pointless any way. As the interviewees’ experienced reality is that the state of total manipulation has already been reached to some degree, the interviewees do not have the same starting point as Kant in his thought experiment. As such one might argue that the thought experiment is not a useful way of accessing the ethicality or acceptability of product placement for these interviewees as their starting point for the experiment is reversed and that the experiment would thereby not be meaningful to them.

### Utilitarianism

The interviewees are generally quite concerned with viewer pleasure. One of the interviewees, who is concerned about viewer pleasure is Ellen, from the 50+ group, who says: *“[…] I think it is annoying that sometimes when you are watching a movie then suddenly it changes to commercials in the middle of the movie* (Ellen 06:45). In this quote the interviewee states that the commercial breaks are annoying, which indicates a decrease in viewer pleasure. The annoyance with commercials is supported by Abby from the 50+ group, who says: “*I think I would actually rather [see promotions] briefly in the programs instead of watching commercials ‘all ‘the ‘*time” (Abby 09:47). As seen in these quotes, some of the interviewees are annoyed by traditional commercials, which in the utilitarian terminology would be considered viewer “pain”. From a utilitarian perspective it would therefore be considered the most ethical choice to promote products through product placement rather than through commercials as this will create more good in form of increased viewer pleasure and less pain in form of decrease in annoyance. However, there are also aspects of using product placement that can be annoying to viewers and thus create pain.

Another concern for viewer pleasure is voiced by Trent, who is concerned about the number of placements during a movie: “*It would be annoying to watch a movie where somebody comes in every other minutes and promotes something. That would ruin the movie*” (Trent 06:38). This statement indicates that too many product placements in a movie would also create pain in form of annoyance, and one could therefore argue that using product placement is not more ethical than using traditional commercials, unless the placements are kept to a minimum. Furthermore, the product should be incorporated naturally and with respect for character integrity in order not to disturb the content of the programme and thus create pain in form of annoyance or decrease in viewer pleasure, which is seen in the following statement: “*It has to be incorporated in a natural and realistic way and with some sort of integrity*” (Sandy 15:31)

When Ellen argues that the P-logo should not be showed during the movie, her argument is based on the predicted consequences: “*[Showing the P-logo during the movie] will also be an interruption like that because then you would look for what it is that they are promoting rather than watching the movie*” (Ellen 06:45). She thereby focuses on the consequences of showing the P-logo during the movie, which would be that she would focus on the placed product rather than enjoying the movie, by which she indicates that it would create a decrease in viewer pleasure. The focus on consequences rather than the action itself could indicate a utilitarian approach to ethics. However, she might have a self-centred motive: during the interview she clearly states that she can recognise product placement but that some other people cannot (Ellen 03:08). So when she states that the P-logo should only be displayed at the beginning of the programme, and not when the product placement occurs, her own viewer pleasure seem to outweigh the concern for other people’s inability to recognise product placement. This is in contrast to utilitarianism, where the focus should be on creating the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Even though the interviewees may not be aware of it, some of them displaying a utilitarian way of assessing the ethicality of product placement, when they argue that product placement is better or worse than traditional commercials because of its consequences. They do not use the words ethical or unethical as these terms might not be a part of their everyday vocabulary, however, “ethical” and “unethical” equates to when the interviewees argue that something is better or worse than something else because within utilitarianism the ethical choice is to choose the action that is better than its alternatives.

As discussed in section 3.2.3, it can be argued that the end justify the means within utilitarianism. One might therefore argue that it is a utilitarian marker, when one of the interviewees state that it is wrong to display smoking as cool because it will encourage people to smoke, but that she prefers it in some cases because it is character appropriate (Sandy 39:16). It can be argued that the end justifies the means for this interviewee, where the end goal is a good movie that has character integrity and the means are to show the main character smoking. However, there seem to one fundamental difference between the utilitarian approach and the interviewees: the beneficiary. Within utilitarianism an action should create the greatest good for the greatest number of people, whereas the interviewees seem to have a more narrow or self-centred focus, when she discounts the possible health risks that smoking might have to the people who will feel encouraged to smoke. It thereby seems that the interviewee has created her own rules for assessing product placement, where the concern for character integrity and thus viewer pleasure outweighs the concern for the public’s potential health consequences. In this case it is important to note that she does not mention that it is okay to show smoking because it will help tobacco companies sell their cigarettes but that it is about viewer pleasure in form of character integrity. One must therefore expect that she only finds it okay to use cigarettes in product placement, when it is vital to the movie character.

### Sub-conclusion

The interviewees seem to be dominated by a utilitarian approach to assessing the ethicality of product placement, which is seen in the fact that most of the interviewees base their arguments on the consequences of using or not using product placement. However, some of the interviewees also display some deontological considerations, which was seen in the fact the some of the interviewees found it somewhat wrong or unethical to use product placement due to its manipulative nature. There does not seem to be any noteworthy differences between the two groups in terms of having a deontological or utilitarian approach to ethics. It must therefore be concluded that the interviewees and the ethics literature have differing frames of reference, when it comes to ethics but that the interviewees have both deontological and utilitarian concerns even though that the latter is dominating in their assessment of product placement.

The fact that the interviewees seem to have both a deontological and a utilitarian approach to ethics might be problematic because there are situations, such as when assessing the ethicality of product placement, when the two approaches will have conflicting views on the topic. The conflicting views might have implications for the individual and the wider society respectively as it might be hard for the individual, who has to make an ethical decision, but possibly also to the larger society if in each conflicting situation the individual chooses the approach that seem to benefit the individual himself/herself the most. In such cases picking and choosing between two conflicting ethical approaches might create an unethical outcome. The reason for the picking and choosing might be that the interviewees’ reality is complex and context specific, which the theories are not, and the interviewees might therefore feel that they have to pick and choose the ethical elements in order for it to fit into their reality.

Even though the interviewees display both deontological and utilitarian concerns, they differ from both ethical streams by focusing on themselves rather than society as a whole. The difference in beneficiary between the ethics theories and the interviewees highlight a fundamental difference between normative and descriptive ethics: the first is designed to create the best society possible whereas the latter describes how people actually feel or behave.

# Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the interviewees had limited knowledge of the term product placement prior to the interview but that they were all able to recognise the use of product placement to some extent. The interviewees all have a relatively positive attitude towards the use of product placement, however, several context specific elements can affect the acceptability of product placement. In addition to the generally positive attitude towards product placement, most of the interviewees prefer it over traditional commercials because of an expected increase in viewer pleasure in form of entertainment and less disturbances of films and programmes. However, some of the interviewees prefer commercials over product placement because of the lack of ability to turn product placement of, which is also connected to the fact that some of the interviewees find product placement to be an obtrusive and disguised form of advertising. There is a general consensus among the interviewees about the fact that it is unacceptable to promote harmful products, such as alcohol and tobacco, through product placement, and furthermore that some groups are more acceptable to target through product placement than other groups. Even though young people or children might be more likely to recognise the use of product placement, the interviewees find it unacceptable to target them because they are easily influenced, and conversely it is indicated that it is unacceptable to target old people because of their possible lack of ability to recognise product placement even though they are not easily influenced. Despite of their ability to point out weak groups, all the interviewees distance themselves from people who are unable to recognise product placement and from people who are affected by it, which might be a defence mechanism to preserve a positive self-image. When it comes to the perceived legal protection and the perceived need for consumer warnings in form of the P-logo, the two age groups disagree. The young consumers believe that they are fully or partially protected from product placement under the Danish legislation and do not see the need for consumer warnings in form of the P-logo, whereas the 50+ interviewees, on the other hand, do not think that they are protected from product placement under the Danish legislation and thus all agreed that the use of the P-logo was a good way of warning the consumer. In addition to some age related differences between the interviewees, it was found that for some of the interviewees there was a strong connection between the interviewee’s occupation and their perspective on product placement.

In their assessment of product placement, the interviewees display utilitarian and to some extent also deontological concerns, however, they differ from both ethical streams by also displaying self-centred concerns.

## Implications

Even though the findings of this research are not generalizable to a wider population, they might indicate some implications for both consumers and companies.

For consumers, the lack of acknowledgement about their own inabilities to recognise and filter out product placement could prevent them from taking any steps towards increasing consumer protection, when it comes to product placement. Furthermore, it might be problematic if Danish consumers do not know whether or not that they are protected from product placement under the Danish legislation, or even worse that some of them think that they are protected from product placement, when they are only partially protected.

For companies, the results of this research could indicate that there are great possibilities for using product placement or similar new types of advertising to both young consumers and consumers over the age of 50 as both interviewee groups find the marketing practise acceptable despite its somewhat deceptive nature. However, companies should keep the two groups’ preferences in mind, when it comes to disclosure: the 50+ consumers prefer to be warned of product placement, whereas the young consumers may prefer not to be disturbed by disclosures. Furthermore, companies should keep in mind that harmful products and weak target groups are considered unacceptable for product placement.

## Further Research

There are several aspects regarding product placement that should be researched further. One of the elements from this research that should be researched further is how consumers assess acceptability and how this is connected to ethics. It should also be investigated further how consumers interpret the term product placement and how the interpretation of the term relates to the perceived acceptability of product placement. Another question that could be researched further is whether the acceptance of product placement is a coping strategy for dealing with a situation that seems unchangeable. As concerns for character integrity and artistic expression was brought up during the interviews for this research, it might also be interesting to see it from another perspective by investigating the power balance between product company and film producer and hence the artistic expression with product placement and product sponsoring respectively. There are also other product placement related aspects that could also be investigated, including situations where e.g. municipalities pay film producers to tape their film in a certain venue, which one could refer to as “place placing”.

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