Selling Solutions: Brand and Product Placements within Teen Magazines

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499/SOC 490)

by

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Abstract

Previous research has indicated that brand and product placements are becoming more prevalent in television and film. Little research has been done on brand and product placement within text media. This study was conducted to determine how prevalent brand and product placements are within magazines geared towards teenage girls. The study looks at two popular teen lifestyle magazines, Seventeen and Cosmo Girl. Continuing research indicates that the number of brand and product placements far outweigh the number of behavioral suggestions, with a heavy emphasis on appearance. Solutions to problems are addressed more with product suggestions rather than behavioral modifications. The influence of the media on teenagers is omnipresent and brand and product placements can aid in cultivating a more materialistic teenage population in which the first solution to a problem is usually to buy something.
**Selling Solutions: Brand and Product Placements within Teen Magazines**

*Consumerism*

What does it mean to be American? One common answer to this question is that being American is synonymous with being a consumer. In fact, many new immigrants believe that the key to being Americanized is based in consumption; that name brand clothing and popular music will open the door to American culture (Lee & Vaught, 2003). This begins what Jacobs (1988, p. 26) calls the "bottomless pit syndrome" because as fashions change rapidly, consumers must continually purchase more in order to stay on top of the trends. This leads to the expression of wealth and status through consumption. As the fashions change rapidly, only those who have the money to purchase the newest fashions are perceived as being wealthy. As Veblen discussed, this turns into conspicuous consumptions in which the mere act of consuming products determines your social status (Veblen, 1979).

We can also see the American culture of consumption in the way social time is spent. In fact, much of the social activities in which Americans, and American women in particular, participate directly involve some sort of consumption. Over three quarters of all mall business is women and these women, usually teenagers, feel heavy social pressure to consume items, especially clothing and other popular cultural items (Jacobs, 1988).

Teens especially fall victim to this consumerist attitude (Jacobs, 1988; Schor, 2004). It is common for children in the United States to feel that their clothes and brands play a part in their identity and social status (Schor, 2004). American kids have more brand affinity than any other children across the world (Schor, 2004). In a study conducted by Nickelodeon, the average ten year old has memorized between 300 and 400 brands and of those children between the ages of eight and 14, "92% of the requests made to their parents are brand specific" (Schor, 2004, p. 25).
There is reason to believe that these brand requests are being met. Kids are gaining greater influence over household purchases in what is called “kidfluence” (Clark, McClelland & Oh, 1999).

This is particularly important because the teen years are crucial in identity development. Erikson describes adolescence as a time in which a person experiences a life crisis in which the person must choose and establish a personal identity and an identity to present to the world (Atwater, 1992). People are constantly managing how others perceive them in an effort build and solidify their identities (Jacobs, 1988; Goffman, 1959). As consumerism becomes more prevalent in society and is presented as a cultural value in the media, people may rely more heavily on social props, or the things they buy, to present their image of the self to the audience with less and less emphasis being placed on behavioral impression management (Goffman, 1959; Jacobs, 1988). In this way, the identity is developed through the acquisition of things rather than the acquisition of skills, characteristics, and behaviors. Teens are encouraged to focus on their bodies as their identities and to enhance their bodies through the purchase of things. Essentially, this means that identities are bought or consumed and not built or constructed (Lee & Vaught, 2003). The media and advertising industries create an idealized world in which there are no flaws, physical or social (Kilbourne, 2003; Lee & Vaught, 2003).

**Media**

The media target teens in a unique way. Teens are pursuing autonomy and seek out power for themselves and that pursuit of autonomy evolves into an anti-adult sentiment (Schor, 2004). Teens do not want to seek advice from their parents on certain issues, including those involving identity development, so they go to the media, and magazines in particular, to find the answers to their questions (Carpenter, 1991; Smith, 1995). While early in childhood parents are
believed to be the primary source of socialization for their children, during adolescence the media play a larger role in socialization. Teens spend more time consuming media, over 14 hours a week, than having actual household conversations, just over a half an hour a week. The amount of time spent consuming media is less than that spent sleeping, just over 71 hours per week, and those spent in school, almost 27 hours per week (Schor, 2004). The media serve as a type of higher scale peer pressure for teens (Kilbourne, 2003).

Not only are teens consuming massive amounts of media, they are receiving messages about the kind of person they should be during a crucial time of identity development. Adolescents are inexperienced and therefore easily persuaded consumers; it is that which makes them so desirable a market to advertisers (Kilbourne, 2003). The media are also using age compression, targeting younger kids with messages designed for older kids, which is making children grow and mature much faster (Schor, 2004). Teen magazines expose readers to important road signs along the way in adolescence and teach these young readers how to develop according to cultural ideals (Carpenter, 1998; McRobbie, 1991). These magazines teach young women how to create their own identity and social space in many aspects of their lives; these "social spaces" include but are not limited to those created while interacting with their peers. The magazines also teach young girls how to present themselves during these interactions (Carpenter, 1998; McRobbie, 1991).

Most teen magazines focus heavily on appearance based topics like beauty and fashion, and social based topics like romance and entertainment (Carpenter, 1998; McRobbie, 1991). Because of this, the messages young women received are limited and generally homogeneous (Carpenter, 1998; Evans et al., 1991). Because these magazines focus heavily on appearance and social interaction (i.e. romance), they keep teen girls focused on these aspects of their own lives
and create vulnerability in their readers. From this vulnerability, the magazines come in with answers to the readers’ questions and advertisers take advantage of this advisory role (Kilbourne, 2003). Some teens have expressed a distaste for the obvious ways that magazines take advantage of their insecurities so magazines have had to become even more covert with their methods of consumerist influence (Cuello, Danglemaier, Faschi, Shi & De Jesus, 2006). Because the magazine is seen as a teacher, the advice given to the reader (in the form of product placements) is seen as having the intention of helping the reader reach his or her goals rather than simply selling products. Because the reader intentionally learns from the magazine, and trusts the source to not take advantage of him or her, product placement in magazines could be even more influential than product placements in other types of media (i.e. film and television). People learn how to solve problems from magazines and with product placements and other covert advertisements they learn to solve their problems through purchasing products.

This type of problem solving is not just dangerous to identity development but also to financial security later in life because of the growing amount of spending and debt. According to the International Monetary Fund, in the last decade consumer spending in the U.S. has increased by 3.6 per cent annually. However, this increased spending has a higher cost than the ticketed price. Americans are accumulating record debts. In fact, over the past six quarters American consumers have been spending more money than they are bringing in (Stokes, 2007). Not only do people seek out how to solve their own problems and learn that the solution is to buy something, they are also told daily about what is missing in their lives; and because access to what we want is easier now than ever because of superstores that satiate our every desire 24 hours a day, we are not given enough time between exposure to the advertisement and
availability of the product to actually question if it is something we really need or can afford (Despontin, 2006).

Many advertising and media companies have decided to work together in a 360 approach, which makes entertainment and advertising almost indistinguishable. The media companies, who know their consumers best, help to design the advertising messages contained in their product, be it magazine or television shows, and the lines between media corporation and advertising company are being blurred (Haley, 2006; Rothenberg, 2001). While the people behind the magazines insist that they are simply giving the readers what they want, it is also understood that the primary goal of magazines is to make money through selling advertising space (Carpenter, 1998; McRobbie, 1991; Pierce, 1990; Kilbourne, 2003). In these ways, during a crucial period of identity development, young girls are taught to focus on their physical and social worth and are also exposed to consumerist methods to enhancing those aspects of the self triggered by the images seen in and messages received from popular culture transmitters like magazines (Lee & Vaught, 2003; Kilbourne, 2003).

Magazines, and media in general, are important because they are representative of our most general and basic cultural values and how we perceive reality. They also teach young people how to interact and function in society. Because of the dependence on advertising to make a profit, teens are taught to focus first on purchasing products as solutions to physical and social problems and issues and there is less focus on changing one’s behavior to solve those problems even though that may not be an accurate or effective problem solving model. The idea being taught is that if you have the brand, you will be perceived as embodying what that brand represents culturally and this is reified in the messages designed by the media, and magazines in particular. While these ideas may not actually be real, they are made real by the media for the
young people consuming it and the pervasiveness of the media today makes that reification more important in the process of identity development.

There is a lack of information about how much magazines actually present these consumerist problem-solving methods as opposed to behavioral problem-solving methods. While overt advertisements in magazines have been studied frequently, the presence of covert advertisements placed within magazine content, particularly in teen magazines, has been virtually ignored. This covert advertisement is important because while people do not acknowledge its effect on decision-making, the effect is still ever present in the unconscious and often even more effective and influential than overt advertisements in passively consumed media (Godrej, 2006). Because the information in magazines is actively consumed, one could infer that covert advertisements in actively consumed media would be even more effective than those in passively consumed media.

One of the reasons these covert advertisements are effective is that they mimic reality (Maynard & Scala, 2006). The brands which people see in their everyday life in stores and supermarkets are reflected in the articles they are reading and they can then relate to the information on a more personal and familiar level. Whether the covert advertisements are paid for or not, the mere presence of these brand placements within magazine content is a reflection of the culture from which they are created (Karrh, 1998).

The present study is an attempt to fill that gap and determine how teen magazines teach adolescent women how to solve their problems and develop their identities. Because adolescent girls are searching for new modes of socialization and advice and it has been determined that magazines are frequently used to fill this void, research on the types of solutions they offer girls for their problems is crucial to understanding the development of identity for today’s young girls.
Materials and Procedures

This study was a content analysis of five issues each of two different teen magazines with a primarily female readership. The magazines coded were the June/July, August, September, October, and November 2007 issues of *Cosmo Girl* and the July, August, September, October, and November 2007 issues of *Seventeen*. These magazines were chosen because of their availability at area grocery and drug stores and because of their continued success in the magazine industry while others have come and gone (Case & Moses, 2007). The back issues of each magazine were requested and obtained from the publishers. A pilot study included *Teen Vogue* but through further study it was decided that *Teen Vogue* was significantly different from *Cosmo Girl* and *Seventeen* because of its primary focus on fashion. While both *Cosmo Girl* and *Seventeen* also include extensive fashion sections, they are portrayed primarily as lifestyle magazines rather than fashion magazines.

Each issue was coded two times; the first time was solely for coding and the second coding session was during data entry. At this time, all coding decisions were reviewed to maintain consistent coding rules. Only actual magazine content was coded; advertisements, tables of contents, credits (pages listing publisher and editor information), and reference sections at the end of the magazines were not included. Each issue was coded for self mentions, product placements, brand placements, and behavioral modification suggestions. Coding was continued to a point of saturation; patterns arose quickly and remained steady throughout the coding process.

Self mentions were defined as any time the magazine itself, the magazine’s website, or products created and branded by the magazine was mentioned. Self mentions included during
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Interviews were not counted. For example, in the August 2007 issue of *Cosmo Girl* there was an interview with singer Kelly Clarkson. The interview layout looked like this:

**CosmoGirl:** So why did you call your new album *My December*?

**Kelly Clarkson:** There were several reasons...

In cases like this, self mentions were not included because they provided a reference point for who was speaking at specific points during the interview and were integral in understanding the flow of the interview. Also, self mentions included in running headers and footers were not included so as not to inflate the numbers. However, self mentions within article titles were included.

Product placements were defined as non brand specific product suggestions. Product placements include mentions of makeup, makeup products, hair products, types of clothing, etc. that do not give specific brands to buy. For example, in the November 2007 issue of *Cosmo Girl* there was a product placement that read, “Just wear a moisturizer with SPF every day...” This was coded as a product placement because the suggestion did not include a specific brand of moisturizer. Also, product suggestions like this were not dually coded as product placements and behavioral modification suggestions because the focus of this suggestion is on the product and not the behavior. Other types of product placements were band names, because a band is not a specific product that someone could buy. However, solo musicians were not included as product placements because while a band name is a product to be sold, a person’s name is often used without the pretext of trying to sell a product. The final decision was to code band names as product placements and not to include solo musicians (as well as actors’, models’, and other celebrities’ names) because the purpose of a band name is to always refer to the product. (the band), while the names of celebrities’ were not created for the sole purpose of promoting a
product. However, during the coding process, note was taken of this decision and, in the end, not including celebrities' names did not make a significant difference on the results. Foods included in recipe ingredients lists and health article suggestions were coded as product placements as well. Electronic devices such as mp3 players were included as product placements when specific brands were not included.

Brand placements were defined as specific branded products suggested. These included specific brands of makeup, hair products, clothing products, etc. For example, in fashion spreads within the magazine there would be a full page picture of a model and in a corner there would be a list of the specific clothing she was wearing, “jeans: sizes 1-11, Refuge, $32, select Charlotte Russe stores”. In cases like this, “jeans” was not coded as a product placement because it was used as a signifier so that the reader knew which article of clothing was being described. To avoid inflating numbers the entire line would be coded as one brand placement. The specific store and clothing brand were coded together as one. While band names were coded as product placements, specific song titles and albums were coded as brand placements because they are specific products to buy. Movie titles were also coded as brand placements. Specific restaurants and foods where a brand was included (i.e. Chex mix was suggested in a recipe) were coded as brand placements. Books were also coded as brand placements. Electronic devices with brands were included as brand placements. For example, the mention of “mp3 player” would be coded as a product placement but the mention of “Ipod” would be coded as a brand placement. Websites with “.com” were coded as brand placements as well. Websites with “.net” were not counted as brand placements because they are generally reserved for network service providers and are not commercial. While “.net” can be used for commercial purposes, that is not its original purpose. There were only a couple of instances were a “.net” website was mentioned so
this decision would not have changed the results. Websites with “.org” were also not counted as brand placements because they represent non profit organizations that are not used to sell products commercially.

Behavioral modification suggestions (BMS) were defined as specific behavioral suggestions for readers. Suggestions coded as BMSs included exercise movements, suggestions on how to wear an outfit, recipe directions, directions for how to use makeup to “get the look,” suggestions for how to talk to your boyfriend, horoscope advice, etc. Items were only coded as BMS if direct verb commands were used. Simple informational tips were not coded if there was no verb included. For example, in the August 2007 issue of Seventeen, “Take a chance and change your look once in a while!” was coded as a BMS. However, in the October 2007 issue of Seventeen, “Flats make dressy jeans more casual” was not counted as a BMS (“flats” and “jeans” were coded as product placements). Directions from the magazine to the reader were also coded as BMSs. There were several instances when the magazine would say something like “Check here every month.” These instances were coded as BMSs. Behavioral modification suggestions with steps were coded together as one BMS. For example, an article that contained several exercise movements would have a couple of steps to each movement. In these cases, each movement was counted as one BMS and the steps were consolidated into one. Recipes were also consolidated and counted as one BMS. However, articles that had several BMSs listed that were not connected to get a final product were coded separately. For example, in the August 2007 issue of Cosmo Girl there was an article titled, “10 Things You Wish You Did This Summer.” This article listed 10 things to do (i.e. “Scare Yourself”, “Start A New Ritual”). Because each of these suggestions were disconnected from each other and were not steps to completing a final product or reaching a final goal, they were coded separately.
Results and Discussion

In its inception, this research was designed to determine the level that teen magazines use brand and product placements to influence the identity development of their readers in comparison to behavior modification suggestions. The results indicate that teen magazines use high levels of brand placements to influence the behaviors and values of their young readers. The hypothesized relationship between culture, values, and “expected” behaviors and brand placement has been supported. However, during the coding process it was discovered that the attempts of the magazines to shape behavior and identity development through brand placements were also part of the structure of the magazines themselves. The magazines are designed and organized in a way to fully utilize the effectiveness of said brand placements and to maximize their placement potential. Even the sections and components of each monthly issue guide the readers to establish the need for consumption and honing of the “image” of a modern American young woman. The subtle commands provide prescriptions for how to thing about life, interpersonal behavior and relationships in terms of branding as well as how to buy one’s way into acceptance.

For each category of coding (Self Mentions, Product Placements, Brand Placements, and Behavioral Modification Suggestions) a total number was calculated for all the issues combined and an average number of suggestions per page was calculated. There was an average of 0.99 self mentions per page, 2.19 product placements per page, 5.43 brand placements per page, and 1.95 behavioral modification suggestions per page (see Figure 1).

The averages for product placements, brand placements, and behavioral modification suggestions were then each compared with the others with a t-test using Microsoft Office Excel 2003. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the average number
of product placements and brand placements per page and between the average number of brand placements and the behavioral modification suggestions per page. Both of these t tests yielded a p value of less than 0.05. However, there was not a significant difference between the average number of product placements and behavioral modification suggestions per page. This t test yielded a p value greater than 0.05.

The structures of both magazines seem to include similar sections. *Seventeen* had these sections: fashion, beauty, health, love life, and real life. These were all separated and identifiable with headers and footers identifying the section. *Cosmo Girl* was less structured but did include each of these sections. In *Cosmo Girl* the fashion and beauty sections were combined together in a section called “the cg! look”. There were also a sections entitled “guys” (similar to *Seventeen*’s “love life”, “body and soul” (similar to *Seventeen*’s “health”), and “get real” (similar to *Seventeen*’s “real life”). *Cosmo Girl* also had a section entitled “cg! insider” which had interviews with celebrities.

The fashion sections included articles about fashion trends and how to wear certain types of clothes. The beauty sections included articles about makeup, skin care, and hair care. The health sections included articles about nutrition and exercise as well as emotional health. The love life sections gave advice about dealing with boyfriends and getting boyfriends. The real life sections were a hodgepodge of articles about social issues, politics, giving back (volunteering, donating, etc.), going to college, interviews with real people who have experienced some sort of trauma, etc. At the end of every issue in both magazines there was usually a return to the focus on fashion and beauty. There was usually a long fashion spread towards the end, after the last section, and sometimes a lengthy beauty section.
The fashion sections were by far the longest out of all of the sections. The highest numbers of brand placements were found in the fashion and beauty articles. One survey of American teens found that they put a lot of care into choosing what clothes to wear based on what is in style (Clark et. al, 1999). The focus of the magazines on fashion plays into the concerns of teenagers and gives many specific brand suggestions of what to wear within the content of the articles; sometimes they describe in detail the designer/brand of the clothing item, sizes it is available in, stores it is available in, and its price. With page after page of fashion articles with these specific brand placements the magazines live up to their reputation of little more than a catalog (Godrej, 2006). There are several pages in each issue that are designed to look specifically like catalogs pages. In the October 2007 issue of Seventeen there is an article titled “the cutest…flats.” On this one page there is no text only the title, a small one sentence caption, pictures of 16 pairs of shoes and a list of each pair of shoes’ brand, price, and where they can be purchased. In this way, these magazines act as catalogs, the only difference being that the reader cannot go directly through the magazine to order the products. However, with the detailed description of where to go (often including websites) the difference between the magazine and the catalog is minimal.

However, even in articles about health, brand placements were still prevalent. For example, an article titled, “Are my boobs normal?” in the September 2007 issue of Cosmo Girl made a positive effort to help girls feel better about their own unique bodies but also contained three brand placements for specific bras to buy for girls with breasts of different sizes. These brand placement took a prominent position in the article’s layout. There were also brand placements for health spas and exercise equipment in articles about exercise. From this we can
see that even in articles which we might not expect to deal with purchasing, girls are given suggestions of things to buy to fix their problems.

In an article titled, “Stop teen sex slavery” in the August 2007 issue of Seventeen, readers were given suggestions on how to help stop teen sex slavery. At the top of the list of things to do was to buy a rubber bracelet and wear it. While the proceeds of the sales of these bracelets goes to rescuing girls from sex slavery, the suggestion is made in a way that makes having a bracelet trendy. They authors of the article did not say, “Donate money to the fight against teen sex slavery.” They said, “Buy one of these glow-in-the-dark bracelets (about $2, plus shipping) at globalangels.org to rescue girls from dangerous situations and help them heal.” While this is a not for profit “.org” website, donating money to the organization is promoted first as a way to get something for yourself. There is a different attitude associated with donating money than with purchasing. Donating to charity is considered a responsible and charitable move and is often considered to be a type of spending that can only occur when there is extra money. Because many Americans are now in debt there is no extra money to go around (Stokes, 2007). By representing and gift donation as a product that the reader needs, even charities are appealing to the consumerist nature of the teen readers of these magazines.

There are many other articles in which teen readers are taught that the first and best way to solve a problem is to purchase something. In the October 2007 issue of Seventeen there was an article titled, “Shop for the cure.” This article lists ten specific products to buy that have some portion of their proceeds go towards breast cancer research or whose companies have made donations towards breast cancer research. While on the surface it looks as though one would be doing something good by buying these products. It is simply an example of purchasing to solve a problem rather than addressing the issue directly by donating.
Almost every picture of a model or celebrity has a caption that describes what he or she is wearing. Because of *Cosmo Girl*’s claim that they are trying to create a celebrity lifestyle magazine these articles and pictures are abundant (Case & Moses, 2007). While Seventeen does not claim to be a celebrity lifestyle magazine, it too is full of indirect celebrity endorsements of products. For example, in the November 2007 issue of *Seventeen* there is an article about Carrie Underwood (country singer). There is a full page picture of her and a caption telling the brand of every article of clothing she is wearing. The caption even tells about her shoes which are not visible in the picture because her jeans are so long that they cover them. This is an obvious advertising strategy to get the name of the brand to the reader.

Throughout the study, special attention was paid to the mention of two specific social networking websites: Facebook and MySpace. There were equally prominent mentions of these two sites in articles and readers were encouraged to join these sites so that they could read more about issues in specific articles and people who had written in to the magazine. The mention of these social networking sites is an intricate cycle of advertising. For the websites to exist free of charge to their members they must sell advertising space on their pages. Upon inspection of both Facebook and Myspace one can see a plethora of advertisements sometimes even geared towards specific website members based on their interests. The website then advertises in the magazines to get more people to visit and therefore view the advertisements so that sales will increase and companies will continue to buy ad space on the website so that there is funding to maintain the site.

The magazines first get the readers to trust them and believe that they are only trying to help. One study found that a video news release was more persuasive than an overt advertisement. The only variable that affected this was the amount of credibility the viewer
assigned to news programs in general (Karrh, 1998). One can see that information provided as fact was more persuasive than overt advertisements as long as the viewer trusted the source. In television the highest number of brand placements occurs in programs such as sports, news, feature magazine programs, and programming considered “non commercial” (Maynard & Scala, 2006). It is likely that the same trust occurs in magazine articles as in television programs in which readers feel they are being given factual information and the information is perceived as helpful rather than commercial. The attempts of the magazines to solicit trust from its readers is obvious. *Cosmo Girl* refers to its readers as “cosmo girls” and “cg’s.” By doing this the magazine is creating an in group of which its readers are a part. It gives the illusion that only “cosmo girls” have these inside tips on life and they are more likely to succeed. They also use “cosmo girl” as an adjective to describe things. They frequently include a section in issues titled, “She’s so Cosmo Girl” in which the magazine interviews a celebrity, athlete, politician, or any other successful woman. In a way the magazine claims successful women by putting its mark on them saying that she is, “so CG!” This then attaches the idea of success with the magazine which creates a bond between the magazine and the reader. The reader continues to buy the magazine and trust the advice given which is usually in the form of a brand placement. While *Seventeen*’s name is not easily converted into a name for its readers or an adjective to describe things, it frequently refers to its readers (“Seventeen readers”) and uses its own brand name throughout the magazine in the form of blurbs titled “17 facts” and others. In this way, the magazines and the reader’s membership to the “cosmogirl” and “17” club are capable of being used as social props themselves and the readers are encouraged to use them as such.

As seen in the article “What a Girl Wants from Advertisers,” teens, and people in general, are getting tired of the advertising agencies’ attempts to play on their insecurities and taking the
easy road in trying to solicit their purchases (Cuello et. al, 2006). Stores and companies must now push through the consumers’ irritation with advertisements and use ad campaigns that place less emphasis on the product itself than on the lifestyle of the consumer (Clark et. al, 1999). By focusing on the lifestyle of the teen and how this product fits in, teens are less likely to see the brand placement as not fitting in to their reading experience. The studies about movies showed the people actually respond better to movies when realistic brands were used rather than unidentifiable or fictional brands because it allowed them to relate the movie more effectively to their own lives (Maynard & Scala, 2006). It is likely that what is known about brand placement in movies and television can be transferred to print media. Readers are more appreciative of specific brands and respond better to the advice in the articles when given specific instructions for how to fix their problems and what to buy to fix them. This eliminates a possibility of error when choosing one’s own purchases. If the magazine says, “use mascara to…” the reader would then go to the store to buy mascara to create this look only to find an entire aisle of different brands of makeup. Each of those brands would then have many different types of mascara in many different colors to choose from. With the abundance of choice and the aspiration of perfection, teens fear any mistake in their appearance. In this way the magazines are involved in reality engineering (Karrh, 1998). They shape the social image of the readers through popular culture. By having an article about a celebrity who is perceived well by the public, is successful in their career, and is, above all, physically attractive the teen reader perceives that older and successful person to be perfect and they aspire to be like them. By telling the teen reader exactly what specific shoes the celebrity is wearing or what specific mascara she uses the teen reader then associates that product with the perfect person that she sees in the magazine pictures and articles and wants to buy that product to achieve the same perfection. This is even more relatable
than overt advertisements because rather than seeing a model portraying a fictional person using the product, brand placements within magazine content show real people that the teens recognize and know are successful.

**Conclusion**

The use of media as a tool to communicate cultural values and ideals has become even more pervasive in today's society. Further, research indicates that media's impact on people's decisions about themselves, their lives, and solving their problems can be profound. Some have suggested that the magazines use product and brand placements as a mechanism for influencing purchasing decisions. However, it could be that magazines are designed to give the reader information of the type and in the format that they demand. It may very well be that consumers prefer specific brand suggestions rather than general recommendations or alternative solutions to their problems and the magazines are presenting what the consumer demands in the magazine as a product.

Helpful future research might include investigating whether the results yielded by research concerning product and brand placements in passively consumed media such as movies and television are similar to those in print media such as magazines. Product and brand placements in passively consumed media (media in which viewers are not attempting to retain information) are found to be more effective at influencing purchasing decisions than overt advertisements. Because of this, one might hypothesize that similar results would be indicated concerning non-passively consumed media (i.e. magazines) because people are attempting to retain the information and overt advertisements are more easily avoided or passed over. This combination of psychological research on how the brain actually processes media and its
messages and social research and how people are influenced by and incorporate the messages into their lives can lead to greater insight into the development of identities in today’s culture.
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