

Covert Advertising in the Global Business World: A Thematic Analysis of Product Placement in Amazing Spider Man 1 and 2 Movies

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ABSTRACT Covert advertising is a marketing communication tool which allows the advertiser to communicate a salient message to the audience. It provides an opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship between a consumer and a brand. This study examined the use of covert advertising and its socio-cultural implications for post-2015 development agenda, using Amazing Spider-Man 1 and 2 as examples. This paper focused on the usage of contents and patterns of covert advertising, in the Amazing Spider-Man 1 and 2. A mixed method of content analysis and ethnographic observations were employed in the paper in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The results revealed that the use of language for product placement was geared towards lexico-semantics. In doing so, consumers are able to associate positive qualities to the product in the way it was portrayed in the movies. For instance, speed and efficiency for the automobile category. Covert advertising is a growing force in the African movie industry and advertisers can make use of this advertising technique for the promotion of brands and marketing management.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars agree that covert advertising is a major brand communication strategy used to promote the image and value of a brand (Okorie and Akhidenor 2011; Muthukumar 2013; Vasanthi 2013; Alrasheedi 2014; Aka et al. 2015). It is believed that covert advertising can be used as a brand communication tool to promote and build a brand. Muthukumar (2013: 6) maintains that covert advertising has long been used as a vehicle and has its own impact among consumers. It has emerged as a key component of Integrated Marketing Communication. As a vehicle in the advertising medium, it is less costly and could create better impact in the target market. Covert advertising is nothing but a unique kind of advertising in which a product/brand is placed as an insert in a movie which is normally endorsed or patronised by a celebrity acting in the movie.

Similarly, Vasanthi (2013: 284) is of the opinion that “covert advertising is seen as a hybrid form of advertising. Covert advertising is a product or brand embedded in entertainment and media. In other words, branding of various prod-

ucts by placing them within films or television programmes where the audience may not realise that this is another form of advertising”.

Alrasheedi (2014: 70) also believes that “advertisers use various techniques in order to conceal such intentions smartly. Advertisers use covert communication as an effective way to persuade the audience to buy their products”. It is this type of thinking that made Aka et al. (2015: 2) to assert that “advertising affects the behavioural pattern of consumers and ensures the patronage of the advertised brand. It makes use of messages channeled through the right medium, that is, the medium mostly used by potential customers (Newspapers, TV, Radio and Billboard). So, advertising works with the right message channeled through the right media to the right audience”. Thus, covert advertising is used as a brand communication strategy to create, maintain and build a brand in a market space. Unlike overt advertising strategies, covert advertising makes use of a stealth marketing communication approach, to reach to existing and prospective customers.

This study examined the use of covert advertising and its socio-cultural implications for

post-2015 development agenda, using *Amazing Spider-Man 1* and *2* as examples. The focus of this paper was the usage of contents and patterns of covert advertising in *Amazing Spider-Man 1* and *2*.

Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of the paper were to:

1. Determine the recurring production technique used in covert advertising in order to promote business;
2. Assess the major theme and patterns of covert advertising used to promote brands in the business world; and
3. Determine the recurring language used in covert advertising to promote business.

Research Questions

The research questions asked in the paper were:

1. What is the recurring production technique used in covert advertising to promote business?
2. What is the major theme and patterns of covert advertising used to promote brands in the business world?
3. What is the recurring language used in covert advertising to promote business?

Review of Previous Studies

In the field of advertising, there are various qualitative and quantitative studies on the importance of covert advertising in global business. A stream of researches focused on the influence of covert advertising on purchase decisions (Okorie and Akhidenor 2011; Williams 2011), while some studies focused on the contexts and patterns of covert advertising (Morton and Friedman 2002; Yang and Roskos-Ewolden 2007; Bullen 2009).

In a study by Morton and Friedman (2002), “viewers usually try to link the movie star with the product in the movie. This connection of the product with the actor increases the intrinsic expressiveness of the placement of messages. When consumers see the movie star using a placed product, they try to associate the credibility of the actor with the product placed in the movie and build a positive behaviour towards the product. Thus, the importance of the match-up hypothesis must be

encouraged when preparing and producing covert advertising messages.”

In another study conducted by Yang and Roskos-Ewolden (2007) entitled ‘the effectiveness of brand placements in movies: levels of placements, explicit and implicit memory, and brand-choice’, the authors observed that covert advertising in TV shows and movies has become a mainstream advertising strategy in any modern society. The study revealed that level of brand placements influences recognition of the target brand and attitudes towards the brand. The authors maintain that simple placement of the brand within the movie promotes implicit memory and the implicit choice task.

Bullen (2009) observed that screen texts are used to promote a range of disparate brand name items via cross selling and product placement. She argues that this method of advertising has contributed to the hybridization of entertainment and advertisement. A great amount of research has been done in covert advertising. However, some scholars feel that the research is limited.

Neijens (2010) conducted a study on character involvement in product placement and found that the use of products by characters, can have effects on consumer attitudes. The studies mentioned above serve as a link to the current study. The aim of this study is to show how factors such as character integration, prominence and repetition form part of contents of product placement that should be examined.

In the same vein, Okorie and Akhidenor (2011) examined the effect of covert advertising on brand purchase, using the movie ‘Letter to a stranger’. The study also examined if the products advertised had an impact on the public, their level of awareness as well as if the placements contributed to the patronage of the product towards the advertised products. It was recommended in the study that Nigerian movie producers and advertisers should work together in order to create more placements in Nollywood movies. However, such placements should be creatively done in order to be able to recapture the hearts of many Nigerians.

A study conducted by Williams (2011) focused on the effectiveness of product placement. It was revealed in the study that a large percentage of consumers skip adverts. Statistics on the number of shows that make use of product placement in the U.S. was provided.

According to the study, this figure is relatively high.

Based on previous studies, it is evident that covert advertising, on the global scene, is a persuasive communication strategy that advertisers can use to showcase their products. Thus, overt advertising performs a pivotal role in promoting brand purchase. The role of covert advertising in global business is very essential for any firm that wants to engage in the selling or transaction of goods and services in the society.

Literature Review

Covert advertising cannot be separated from the film industry (its history is rooted in the industry). Akashoro and Hussein (2013) citing Tapan (2008), identify three best ways in which covert advertising can occur. First, without any form of contractual agreement, a particular brand is used by members of the crew to enhance a scene, even though the product itself may not be seen or presented. Second, when the product is arranged and the product itself serves as compensation. Third, when the product is arranged and there is a financial compensation. The film industry uses three basic methods of covert advertising. In this section of the paper, examples of covert advertising are discussed in the three biggest film industry.

In Hollywood, many advertisers and film producers make use of covert advertising as a brand promotion approach to project a brand in an excellent light. In the movie 'Skyfall', James Bond, played by Daniel Craig, while drinking, comments about Heineken beer. It has been reported that Heineken paid \$45 million to have their beer replace 007's venerable (and venerated) Vodka Martini - shaken, not stirred. The money also paid for a scene in which the dashing duo implies the beverage is the best pale lager on the planet. Other brands are also promoted in the Skyfall movie, such as Omega, Sony, Tom Ford, Range Rover and Jaguar.

In another movie 'Mission Impossible 4' played by Tom Cruise, there are several BMW vehicles in the movie. The first one is a series 6 convertible which Cruise steals from one random guy in a street and then chases the main villain. The most notable car placement in M:I 4 is BMW's prototype i8. The winged-door i8 is a hybrid that accelerates to 100 kilometres (62

miles) per hour in 4.6 seconds and can get 78 miles per gallon (introduced in 2014). It is believed that BMW spent an additional \$10 million to promote the film. Other brands promoted in the movie are Apple, Dubai and Burj Khalifa.

Just like Hollywood, Bollywood producers and advertisers have embraced the use of covert advertising for brand development. The movie '3 Idiots', is about the journey two friends undertake in their search for a third compatriot, played by Aamir Khan. In the movie, the Volvo SUV XC90R design is a placement in the film. The red Volvo XC90 was still to be launched in India. However, Volvo obtained two red SUVs, air-lifted from their headquarters in Sweden, to facilitate the film production. Also, an Airtel Internet data-card and its signature tune were 'placed' during an important sequence while Sharman Joshi is in hospital and Aamir tries to connect to Web cam chat through this data-card.

Vinayak (2010) maintains that "the 2002 film Road, shot mostly on roads with the lead characters driving the cars, featured the lead character driving Tata Motors' Safari 4-wheel SUV. For this placement, Tata Motors paid about 12.5 million rupees (\$266,250 USD)." Vinayak further explains that the trend of weaving a product into the storyline has become common in the Hindi film industry, in the past few years. In fact, other films such as *Fashion* (2008) and *Dostana* (Friendship) (2008) included several brands that were integral to the movies' themes.

In Nollywood, covert advertising is an emerging trend among film producers and advertisers. Generally, Nollywood is Nigeria's film industry; it is the world's third largest producer of feature films. Unlike Hollywood and Bollywood, Nollywood movies are made on shoe-string budgets of time and money. An average production takes just 10 days and costs approximately \$15,000. In the movie 'Figurine', the film producers secured placement from Omatek, Motorola, GlaxoSmithkline and Unilever.

Also, the movie 'Jenifa 3' uses covert advertising to promote a number of brands. The Lagos State Government sponsored the movie. There are several scenes of how the government promotes traffic order, environmental health and transport development. Other products such as Lifebouy, Globacom and Close-up are also promoted in the movie. The movie 'Letter to a Stranger' focuses on Jemima Lawal (Genevieve Nnaji), a management consultant and Frederick

(Fred Amata), two lovers who broke-up due to some misunderstandings. This separation gets to her (Genevieve Nnaji), and it affects her work as well. Her boss notices that she is not doing too well at work again and sends her on a compulsory leave which is supposed to last 31 days. This movie was sponsored by Ecobank. It also promotes several brands such as Motorola and MTN. Throughout the movie, all calls are made through Motorola phones. Each time any of the characters' phone rings, the Motorola ring tone, 'hello moto' is heard or the MTN slogan, 'everywhere you go'.

Benefits of Covert Advertising

The diminishing effect of overt advertising techniques has led to the development of covert advertising in order to create and promote a brand. There are several benefits of using covert advertising for brand promotion. One of the major benefits is to re-brand a product or service. For example, the movie, 'The Amazing Spiderman', advertises Microsoft's Bing, which is the search engine of choice for Peter Parker (a.k.a. Spider-Man). The character uses the website to search information about his father and browse pictures of spiders. Microsoft arranged for the product placement with Sony in order to rebrand the image of Bing among users. In retrospect, Bing has been trying to get off the ground for quite some time now with the use of product placement in TV shows such as *The Vampire Diaries*. Although Bing has not yet taken off as Microsoft had anticipated, *Comscore* maintains that the search engine accounted for 30 percent of U.S. web searches, after a product placement in *The Amazing Spiderman*.

A major benefit of covert advertising is its ability to promote a brand. In essence, the goal of covert advertising is brand awareness. For example, the popular Korean drama 'Iris' had its first filmed scenes shot in Akita, Japan, on 10 March 2009. Due to several pivotal moments of the series being filmed in the prefecture, Akita soon experienced a surge of Korean tourists going on tours tailored to followers of the show. The Korean drama created awareness of the beautiful scenery of Akita. A survey carried out by the NTV reporter found that random people on the street of Seoul ranked Akita behind Tokyo, as the place they would like to visit the most in Japan [Osaka and Hokkaido were the

other options]. Most of the people who chose Akita did so because they wanted to visit the places shown in the drama.

Covert advertising helps improve sales and production. Many firms have reported that they witnessed a tremendous increase in sales due to the influence of covert advertising. Akashoro and Hussein (2013) notes that the use of Sony Ericsson phone in a James Bond movie, in 1997 increased the market share of the Ericsson trademark. Also, in the movie "About Schmidt" (2002) starring Jack Nicholson, child sponsorships for an agency 'Plan International' quadrupled. Nicholson plays the part of a retiree whose world is falling apart and by sponsoring a young Tanzanian boy, Ndugu, he finds something to live for.

Also, covert advertising can increase consumer memory and recall of the brand or product. Brands placed prominently in a movie scene enjoy higher brand recall than those that are not. Verbal and visual brand placements are better recalled than placements with one or the other. James Bond, played by Daniel Craig, while drinking and making comments about Heineken beer is a good example of visual and verbal placements which can build brand recall. It has been reported that Heineken paid \$45 million to have their beer replace 007's venerable (and venerated) Vodka Martini — shaken, not stirred.

Techniques of Covert Advertising

There are several techniques used in covert advertising for creating and promoting a brand. One of the major techniques used in covert advertising is product placement. According to Stephen et al. (1997: 37), 'Product placement in movies involves incorporating brands in movies in return for money or some promotional or other consideration'. Okorie and Akhidenor (2011) argue that this kind of placement also involves placement in other media such as television, and is considered as a hybrid of advertising and publicity. In other words, it is arranging a company's products to be seen or referred to in the media such as during television programmes and cinema films.

Okorie and Akhidenor (2011) citing Russell (1998: 307), categorise covert advertising along three dimensions in terms of product placement: visual, auditory and plot connection. The visual dimension refers to the appearance of the brand

on the screen. Screen placements can have different levels, depending on the number of appearances on the screen and the style of camera shot for the product. The second dimension is auditory or verbal, and refers to the brand being mentioned in a dialogue. Such “script” placements also have varying degrees, depending on the context in which the brand is mentioned, the frequency with which it is mentioned, and the emphasis placed on the brand name (tone of the voice, place in the dialogue and character speaking at the time). For example, in the movie ‘Letter to a Stranger’, the Motorola ring tone, ‘hello motto’ is heard or the MTN slogan, ‘everywhere you go’. Finally, the plot connection dimension refers to the degree to which the brand is integrated in the plot of the story. ‘While lower plot placements do not contribute much to the story, higher plot placements constitute a major thematic element’ (Russell 1998: 308). It takes a major place in the story line or build the persona of a character. A mere mention of the brand or a brief appearance of the product on the screen would be considered lower plot. For example, in the movie ‘Transporter 2’, the Audi car was integrated in the storyline.

The increase in the number of placements in movies has sky-rocketed as advertisers and producers at large, need the benefits obtained from engaging in product placement, as the budget for these movies are at a high price. This increase, apart from the benefits, can be attributed to some factors (Gregorio and Sung 2010) as follows: growing dissatisfaction among advertisers with the performance of the traditional media, increase in the production of movies which has made producers to engage in product placement to cover cost.

Lehu (2007) identifies three types of product placement used in movies, each having its advantages and disadvantages. These are: (a) Classical placement: This is the process of making a product or a brand to appear in the camera’s view. The advantage is fairly obvious as the expense for this kind of placement can be regarded as cheap. The disadvantage, however, is that a product can pass by unnoticed and this defeats the aim of the placement. (b) Corporate placement: It prioritises the brand over the product. The main goal of the advertiser is to register the brand itself in the minds of consumers. The advantage of this is that it is easier to achieve on screen as it does not fade easily from the

memory of consumers. The possible disadvantage is that it may not accomplish its purpose as consumers might not notice it since they are familiar with the name. (c) Stealth placement: It is a subtle form of placement. It is well integrated into the scene and adds a genuine feeling to the scene which may generate a more powerful impact when noticed. Stealth placement is generally perfectly integrated into the story or the scene in which it appeals, and thereby, avoids criticisms of commercial overtones. The disadvantage is that it can go unnoticed by the audience unfamiliar with the brand.

According to Singh (2013), the process of product placement consists of three main agents. It consists of companies that wish to place their products in the media, the product placement agent that acts as an intermediary between the advertiser, and the film studio that wants the extra benefits for having products in their production. The product placement process is finalized with a contract where the advertiser and the production company agree on the terms of placement. As part of the contract, the placement is attached to the script pages depicting the scenes where the product is meant to appear.

The second technique used predominantly in covert advertising is sponsorship. The goal of sponsorship is to link the product more directly to the film or programme. It is more expensive than product placement but also more effective. Sponsorship is not done overtly but rather, in an entertaining manner. For example, Sony was one of the major sponsors for *Skyfall*; a major sponsor for *3 Idiots*. The movie *Skyfall* earned \$1.1 billion worldwide, and it was the highest-grossing film worldwide for Sony Pictures in 2013. The movie, *3 Idiots* grossed \$63 million worldwide at the end of its theatrical run. *3 Idiots* was also listed in the Guinness World Records for the highest box office film gross for a Bollywood film. It is important to state that the power of sponsorship positively affects the success of the movie. The success of the movie has a snowball effect on the services and products of the sponsor. Thus, sponsorship promotes a mutual beneficial service for both the advertiser and film producers.

The third technique used in covert advertising is called plugging. From a general standpoint, it is the practice of a company paying for its product to be placed in a prominent position

in a film or television programme as a form of advertising. In Cinema theatres or restaurants, the customer may get special promotional offers to encourage him or her to buy a product. There are three major advantages of using this technique. First, consumers feel happy because they have a cheap or free product. Second, it is a way of getting people to use or think about your product. Third, plugging is 'hands on' advertising; people cannot just ignore it like they can in magazines or on television. For example, plugging was used to sell Ray-Ban Predator shades, these shades were packaged with movie tickets for the movie 'Men in Black 2'.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A mixed methods approach (content analysis and ethnographic observation) was employed in the study. Content analysis is a research technique for the objective systematic description of manifest content of communication. (Kerlinger 2000) considers content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables cited in (Wimmer and Dominick 2003). The study was also premised on a range of ethnographic observations combined with data drawn from excerpts of movies such as *The Amazing Spiderman 1 and 2*. This method was chosen because it has to do with the analysis of covert advertising in movies. The units of analysis used in this study are (1) Advertising Appeals: these involve the type of appeal used in movies. These include logical, rational, musical, scarcity, fear, emotional, and humour. (2) Language Presentation: This is the use of Graphological Devices (G), Phonological Devices (P) and Lexical Semantics (LS). (3) Production Technique: This focuses on the three dimensions used in product placement. They include Audio dimension (A), Visual dimension (V) and Plot connection (PC).

RESULTS

The advertisements analysed were based on *Amazing Spider-Man 1 and 2*. Product categories included automobile, electronics, food, beverages and clothing. Table 1 shows that Sony had the majority of products promoted in the

Amazing Spider-Man 1. At different intervals shown in the time code, Sony had a variety of its products displayed ranging from VAIO laptops, Sony phones to televisions. Products such as Ben and Jerry's and Chevrolet were more subtle in the movie compared to Bing, Nike and more importantly, Sony.

Table 1: Products promoted in the movie-The Amazing Spider-man

Brand	Category	Time code
Sony	Electronics	00:16
		00:38:31
		00:51:47
		00:52:04
		1:15:09
		1:35:29
Bing	Other	00:13:23
Nike	Clothing	00:27:08
		00:18:24 00:23:25
		00:31:52
Ben and Jerry's Chevrolet	Food and beverages Automobile	00:32:26
		00:24:52
		00:55:17

Table 2 shows that Sony, once again, had a greater number of products advertised in the movie. However, comparing the *Amazing Spider-Man 1* with that of its sequel, the latter had a fewer number of products placed. Sony remained relevant in this sequel with its range of products. A striking feature that can be observed from this table is the presence of Google in the sequel. Bing can be termed as a competition for Google, however, the use of Bing in *Amazing Spider-man 1*, and the presence of Google in the sequel shows the dynamism of product placement and the level of competition in the industry.

Table 2: The Amazing Spider-man 2

Brand	Category	Time code
Sony	Electronics	00:04
		00:02:51, 00:03:08,
		00:03:14
		00:11:31
		00:16:05
		02:08:22
McDonalds	Food and Beverages	10:00
Google	Other	33:26
		01:26:31
Kodak	Electronics	56:23

Dimensions of Product Placement

Tables 3 and 4 show that Sony appeared at the beginning of the movies with a visual dimension showing only the company name “SONY”. This is because Sony was the major promoter of the movies, hence the introduction of the movies with its name. However, 53 percent made use of plot connection at various intervals of the movies. With plot connection comes character integration which is why at various points in the movies, these products are linked to the plot of the movie. Google and Bing were incorporated in the plot as search engines used to search for the character’s father. The mobile phones, laptops and the television set owned and used by the character at certain points in the movie are all of the SONY brand. The remaining 43 percent that made use of the visual dimension were basically placed at the background of a scene or the character. Products such

Table 3: Dimensions of product placement -The Amazing Spider-man 1

Brand	Dimensions	Time code
Sony	Visual	00:16
		00:38:31
	Plot connection	00:51:47
		00:52:04
Bing	Visual	1:15:09
		1:35:29
	Plot connection	00:13:23
		00:27:08
Nike	Visual	00:18:24
		00:23:25
		00:31:52
		00:32:26
Ben and Jerry's Chevrolet	Visual	00:24:52
	Visual	00:55:17

Table 4: Dimensions of product placement- The Amazing Spider-man 2

Brand	Dimensions	Time code
Sony	Visual	00:04
	Plot connection	00:02:51, 00:03:08,
	Plot connection	00:03:14
	Plot Connection	00:11:31
	Plot connection	00:16:05
	02:08:22	
McDonalds	Visual	10:00
Google	Plot connection	33:26
	Plot connection	01:26:31
Kodak	Visual	56:23

as Kodak and McDonalds, considering the scene and location of their placement, blended in better than products that used plot connection. This is because they blended well in the scenes. Because of the subtlety in the background, consumers may see it as a coincidence.

Language Use and Representation

In terms of language use and representation, brands that are more inclined to technology make use of lexical semantics (LS) (with the presentation of a product in order to get the attention of consumers). Tables 5 and 6 show that Lexico-semantics was used in the majority of products placed as LS. The basic idea of LS is to allow consumers to make inferences about the products themselves. Sony is presenting itself as a tech savvy product with connection and speed and with the ability to get information as quickly as possible. In the sequel, the leading female character is able to get information on Spider-man’s whereabouts on his graduation

Table 5: Language use and representation-The Amazing Spider-man 1

Brand	Language use	Time code
Sony	None	00:16
	LS	00:38:31
	LS	00:51:47
	LS	00:52:04
	LS	1:15:09
	LS	1:35:29
Bing	LS	00:13:23
		00:27:08
Nike	P(peter: sorry yo, sorry. close up shot of the nike sneakers)	00:18:24
		00:23:25
		00:31:52
		00:32:26
Ben and Jerry's Chevrolet	P	00:24:52
	G	00:55:17

Table 6: Language use and representation-The Amazing Spider-man 2

Brand	Language use	Time code
Sony	None	00:04
	LS	00:02:51, 00:03:08,00:03:14
	P	00:11:31
	LS	00:16:05
	LS	02:08:22
	P and LS	10:00
McDonalds	LS	33:26
	LS	01:26:31
Kodak	LS	56:23

with her Sony phone faster than his arrival to his graduation. This scene buttresses the fact that having a Sony phone means getting access to information faster. The features of the television set owned by the main character are displayed in order to enable consumers to associate the product with good picture quality.

Other products such as Bing and Google are also inclined towards lexical semantics as they associate themselves with connectivity and access to information. The position of Nike in the movie and the Phonographological language (P), create a pleasant feeling in the audience through humour.

DISCUSSION

Covert advertised products in these movies blend with the characters and are suitable for the scenes and locations. This makes for a successful product placement. A noticeable feature among the products and which occurs throughout the movies is the fact that Sony has a strong presence in all the movies. Apart from being a major promoter of the Amazing Spider-man sequels, it is obvious that the company takes product placement as a serious strategy, hence its appearance in all movies. The strategy used by Sony as observed from the two films is that they are inclined towards associating their products with advanced technology. They are also geared towards demonstrating the attributes of their different products.

Two major themes were identified in the movies as follows: Character integration; and technology savvy.

(a) Character Integration

A striking theme observed in these movies is character integration (this means the characters actually used these products). 81 percent (8 products) made use of character integration. This brings more focus to the brand because it is closely connected to the character. Every product in the automobile and electronics category, including Bing and Google had relevant roles to play in the movies. The advantage is that consumers get to associate the product with the character by using it and in the movies, the characters are presented as heroes. However, with character integration, there comes the problem of brands. These movies, however, make the products to blend with the characters giving them a suitable fit. This is in line with Neijens' (2010)

study who maintains that the use of products by characters can have effects on the attitudes of consumers.

(b) Technology Savvy

Products such as Sony, Bing, Google, are used in the movies in order to track or locate a particular thing or person. For Sony, in the James Bond series and the nature of the film, the products from the mobile phones to the laptops were depicted as technology savvy with the ability to locate things or persons anywhere. It can be said that this was a marketing strategy to show that advanced technology is what the consumers stand to gain from using this mobile phone. Bing and Google though rivalry competitors were used for the same purpose by the main character in the Amazing Spider-man and its sequel. These brands were used to locate places and people that had something to do with the Spider-man's father. The reason for using this strategy is to ensure that any information, ranging from people to places, and anything else worth searching for, could be obtained from such brands.

From the analysis, lexico-semantics had the highest rate (72%) in Amazing Spider-man 1 and 2. This gives consumers a chance to make inferences with brands and associate them with positive qualities. Other brands such as McDonalds, VW Beetles focused more on the event leading to the placement of the products, such as events laced with humour. Product placement strategies, either integrated, non-integrated or implicit, one way or the other, affects the success of the brand. Products that are integrated tend to attract attention more than products placed in the background as a result of their domineering presence in the movie.

Interestingly, there are two major socio-cultural implications of these findings for post-2015 development agenda. First, film makers and producers in Africa and other parts of the world can adopt this strategy to serve as a financial nexus for producing quality-based films that reflect the current realities in their socio-cultural environment. Second, advertisers can adopt this advertising strategy to promote their products and services in global markets. This can go a long way in breaking barriers and limitations that negatively affect traditional or overt advertising techniques.

CONCLUSION

In the domain of brand communication, covert advertising is essential in creating, maintaining and promoting a brand. The goal of covert advertising is brand promotion, which is pivotal for any firm that has the intention of engaging in the selling or transaction of goods and services in the society. Just like overt advertising, covert advertising exerts information that reinforces brand values as well as projects, goods or services to a particular target audience in an excellent light, in which consumers become favourably disposed to a product. Importantly, advertisers should also note that placements are not only done in movies, but could also be done in television programmes, series, books and video games. Using covert advertising will introduce a new system of advertising products that can recapture the hearts of many people who might have given up on advertising in Africa, and other parts of the world. Covert advertising can also serve as a financial hub for producers and directors, to produce quality and humane-based movies, in the post-2015 development agenda; aimed at promoting sustainable development in the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are advanced in order to address the use of covert advertising and its socio-cultural implications post-2015 development agenda, using Amazing Spider-man 1 and 2 as examples:

1. Advertisers should ensure that in a bid to showcase their products, there should be an element of subtlety in their placements. Hence, other industries in the world should also utilise covert advertising in order to reach out to consumers.
2. Brands that are to be incorporated into movies should be artistically directed to ensure that they fit into the movie perfectly. The storyline of the movie should be considered carefully, as well as the characters involved in order to determine if the products to be used actually have a place in such movies and if they relate to the characters as well.
3. Film makers in Africa and Asia could use covert advertising as a financial base for revenue generation, as well as build solid networks with large multinational firms.
4. As part of efforts to promote the post-2015-development agenda for sustainable devel-

opment; film makers and advertisers could work hand-in-hand to promote business projects in Africa and Asia, which will be mutually beneficial in different global fronts.

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