

Who is renting my eyeballs?

Written by mlmoment

Tuesday, 11 November 2008 09:32 - Last Updated Friday, 31 March 2017 11:42

The Product Placement Counting Game

Product placement is an increasingly common practice whereby advertisers pay media makers to use or display their products as props in movies, television shows and video games. Here's a "teachable moment" to help students recognize who is renting their eyeballs when they watch their favorite shows or movies.

Have students count product placements in media programs: TV shows, videogames, social networking sites all provide great resources.

AHA! My media is full of hidden advertisements. I'm being influenced without realizing it! And sometimes these product placements affect how the story is being told...the advertisers are renting my eyeballs and often, I'm paying them for the privilege!

Key Question #5: Why is this message being sent?

Core Concept #5: Media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.

Grade Level: 3 – 12

Materials: Video or DVD of a current film, videogame or television clip appropriate to your age group that contains multiple product placements, DVD/VCR player, paper or chalk board, internet access.

Resources: <http://www.brandchannel.com/> tracks product placements in the week's number one film and includes archives from past years.

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Activity: Have the students talk about advertising in general. What were some examples of products? Where do you see most advertisements? How do you know if you are viewing an ad? When you see the specific name of a product being used in a TV show or movie, do you consider that an ad? Why or why not? Have you ever heard the term “product placement?”

Show the media piece or the video clip twice. First, look at it through without stopping or commenting. Then look at it again and have students note (or call out) when they recognize a specific product being used. List all products on the board in front of the class. How many products did the students count?

Guiding Questions for additional discussion: How can viewers know when a product is used for artistic or narrative reasons and when it is simply a paid product placement? Who benefits from product placements and who is hurt by it? Is it unethical if money is paid for an ad that is never identified as advertising? Why are product placements not listed at the end of a TV show or movie? Are there times when product placements are useful or helpful?

Have the students go online to media industry web sites to see examples and read how the industry describes product placements.

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