

# **BACHELOR THESIS**

## **The influence of self-control in the effect of brand placement disclosure on brand evaluation**

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**Theme 11 - The role of self-control in the effectiveness of brand placement disclosures**

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## **STATEMENT OF OWN WORK**

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Declaration:

I hereby certify that this assignment/report is my own work, based on my personal study and/or research and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

Nijmegen, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2015

Signature:

## **ABSTRACT**

To this date, the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation remain inconsistent. It was expected that people's level of self-control played a part in these mixed effects of brand placement disclosures. The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether self-control influences the effects of disclosures on brand evaluation. In an experiment, 144 participants evaluated a brand placement, which was integrated in a fragment of a Dutch television program. By means of a writing assignment at the beginning of the experiment, half of the participants were manipulated into a low level of self-control. The other participants maintained a regular (high) level of self-control. Findings of this study showed that people with a high level of self-control evaluated a brand more positively when a disclosure was present compared to people with a high level of self-control that were not exposed to a disclosure. Additionally, other findings of the study showed that the presence of a disclosure enhanced brand recall when people experienced a low level of self-control. Furthermore, this study found that disclosures make people with a low level of self-control are more conscious of persuasion by a brand placement. To this end, it appears that people's level of self-control does not evidently influences the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. However, brand placement disclosures do ensure that people are more aware of persuasion attempts even if they are depleted.

*Keywords:* brand placement; brand placement disclosures; self-control; ego depletion

## BACKGROUND

It has been over two decades since the alien *E.T.* was lured out of its shelter with the help of Reese's Pieces in the eponymous movie *E.T.: the Extraterrestrial*. The movie was well received by the audience, but even more impressive was the extraordinary increase of the Reese's Pieces' sales figures. Soon after, more brands and companies followed Reese's Pieces' example and their products were shown in all sorts of entertainment media (Paulien\_1, 2009). A new marketing concept was developed, given the term *brand placement*: the paid inclusion of branded products through audio and/or visual means within mass communication, i.e. the incorporation of brands into entertainment media (Karrh, 1998; Russell & Belch, 2005).

Since the decrease in popularity and effectiveness of traditional advertising methods, such as television commercials, advertisers and marketers seem to invest more in advertising through brand placement. However, consumers might not always notice the persuasive intent of this marketing concept (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). Therefore, the 'random' appearance of brands in entertainment media can be deceptive and manipulative. To make sure consumers are more aware of brand placement the European Union obliged *brand placement disclosures* (Boerman, van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2014), i.e. a short notification before, during or after a movie or television program warning viewers that the show contains brand advertisements.

To this date, little research has focused on the role of the receiver characteristics in the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. Differing conditions of people's *self-control* might influence the effects of brand placement disclosures. Therefore, this present study will be one of the first to study whether someone's level of self-control affects people's brand evaluation when being exposed to a brand placement disclosure.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Aston Martin in *James Bond*, Apple in *Modern Family*, and Vodafone in *The Voice*. It leads to believe that brand placement is still a commonly used marketing tool: the amount of brands appearing and integrating in movies, television shows, songs and video games seems endless. But, is this kind of advertising actually effective?

Nowadays, according to Smit, van Reijmersdal and Neijens (2009) over 10% of the television programs contains brand placement. Some of these brand placements are subtle. However, in one-fifth of the shows branded products are featured more prominently, longer and are integrated into the script (Smit et al., 2009, p. 777). Chang, Newell and Salmon

(2009) found that most companies use brand placement to increase awareness for their brand or product, which leads to selling more products and boosts sales figures. Nevertheless, it seems that brand placement not only gains more awareness and sales figures. Several studies showed that brand placement positively affects people's brand evaluation. According to Law and Braun (2000) brand placement enhances product recall, brand recognition and choice of the brand. In addition, studies of Yang and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2007) and van Reijmersdal, Neijens and Smit (2007) found that brand placement positively affects the recognition of brands, brand image and eventually the image of the program. To this end, brand placement appears to be a very effective marketing tool for brands.

### **Effects of brand placement disclosures**

Even though brand placement seems to be a very successful marketing tool over the years, there has been some discussion regarding fair communication about brands 'randomly' appearing in entertainment media (Boerman et al., 2014). Today's consumers are assumed to be more aware of persuasion attempts by brands. However, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998) state that even viewers with sophisticated knowledge about advertising are not always aware of the persuasive intent of brands shown in movies or on television. According to Boerman et. al (2014) the commercial intent of the product is kept hidden, which means that brand placement can be deceptive and a violation of viewers' right to know that they are being exposed to an advertisement. As a result, the European Union introduced and obliged brand placement disclosures (Boerman et al., 2014).

Brand placement disclosures aim to explicitly inform viewers when commercial content is integrated in entertainment media (Boerman, van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2012). When viewers are alerted to persuasion attempts in movies or television shows, they are able to notice that their freedom of choice is being influenced and therefore might choose to mentally tune-out the persuasive message (Nebenzahl & Jaffe, 1998). More specifically, disclosures ensure that people are able to activate their *persuasion knowledge*. Persuasion knowledge consists of someone's general understanding of persuasion and knowing how to interpret, evaluate and cope with persuasive attempts (Boerman et al., 2012; Friestad & Wright, 1994). In the past, several studies researched the effects of brand placement disclosures on persuasion knowledge. For instance, Campbell, Mohr and Verlegh (2012) found that consumers are able to rectify persuasive effects of brand placement due to disclosures leading to activation of viewers' persuasion knowledge. In addition, Boerman et al. (2012) found that disclosures activate both someone's conceptual (i.e. recognition of

advertisement and persuasion attempt) and attitudinal (i.e. distrust of the paid content) persuasion knowledge. Consequently, disclosures seem to be effective enough to activate viewers' persuasion knowledge, but are they equally effective to help viewers resist commercial influences and result into more critical brand evaluations?

Previous studies mainly researched the effects of disclosures on persuasion knowledge. In the past, little research has been done studying the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation, i.e. brand attitude, brand liking and purchase intention. However, the previous studies that researched the effects of disclosures on brand evaluation show mixed results. On one hand, studies show that brand placement disclosures do not affect people's brand evaluation. For example, Bennet, Pecotich and Putrevu (1999) demonstrate that disclosures enhance brand memory, but do not impact the likeability of the integrated brand. This is in accordance with findings of van Reijmersdal, Tutaj and Boerman (2013) who found that viewers confronted with a disclosure were not more sceptical towards the brand than viewers who were not exposed to a disclosure. In addition, another study of Boerman et al. (2014) showed that viewers exposed to a disclosure at the end of a program were not able to recognize the sponsored content as advertising. Therefore, they did not show more critical brand attitudes. On the other hand, the same study of Boerman et al. (2014) compromises different results and shows that disclosures actually do affect people's brand evaluation. The study demonstrates that disclosures prior and concurrent with the brand placement lead to more critical processing of the sponsored content and eventually lead to less favorable brand attitudes (Boerman et al. 2014). Additionally, a previous study of Boerman et al. (2012) also found that disclosures cause less positive brand attitudes. These findings are in agreement with previous studies that found that the revelation of persuasion attempts leads to scepticism and even resistance towards the brand (Wood & Quinn, 2003).

As noted above, existing studies that examined the effects of disclosures on brand evaluation lead to mixed results. On one hand, it appears that disclosures do not have an effect on brand evaluation. On the other hand, it seems that the presence of disclosures actually leads to a negative brand evaluation. The inconsistent effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation lead to a so-called *knowledge gap*. These mixed results might be due to little research into the role of receiver characteristics in the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. Receivers could experience differing conditions of self-control while they are exposed to a brand placement disclosure, which might

influence the effects of the disclosure. To this end, it appears to be relevant to add self-control as a variable in this present study.

### **The concept of self-control**

As stated above, people's level of self-control might determine if a brand placement disclosure is actually effective. In general self-control can be described as the mental capacity humans have to alter their thoughts, emotions and behaviour (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012). Self-control also refers to a limited inner capacity that is quickly consumed when performing a deeply controlled, wilful action. This leads to a state of ego-depletion, which implicates that other attempts at practicing something that requires self-control often fail (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2012).

Over the past few years, several studies have examined the influence of someone's self-control on persuasion attempts. For instance, Campbell et al. (2012) suggested that consumers are less likely to rectify persuasive messages when they are cognitively busy (p. 6). This suggestion is in agreement with previous findings that showed that counterarguing persuasive messages requires an active level of self-regulation (Wheeler, Brinöl & Hermann, 2012). In addition, Wheeler et al. (2012) found that resistance towards persuasion attempts can be interfered when people's self-regulation capacity is reduced. More specifically, people with a reduced self-regulation showed more positive attitudes towards persuasion attempts than people whose self-control was not reduced, due to a scarcity of resources (p. 153). These findings are in accordance with other results showing that ego-depletion leads to less resistance against persuasive messages (Burkley, 2008).

Furthermore, Burkley, Anderson and Curtis (2011) also suggest that people are only able to resist persuasion attempts when they have a sufficient level of self-control and that people with a low level of self-control are influenced more easily than people whose self-control is not depleted. According to Gillespie, Joireman and Muehling (2012) a low level of self-control is similar to the 'couch potato mindset', that suggests that people watching television during prime-time are more likely to be ego depleted after spending the day regulating their behaviours (p. 62). It seems that television shows during prime-time contain a great amount of brand placements and additionally brand placement disclosures, because they are obliged. As stated earlier, prime-time viewers tend to be more depleted; it leads to believe that they are easily persuaded and less capable to resist the persuasive intent of brand placements. In this case, it is assumed that brand placement disclosures might not be effective enough to ensure that people with a low level of self-control are able to provide

sufficient resistance towards persuasion. Hence, it could be relevant to examine the influence of self-control in the effect of disclosures on brand evaluation.

### RESEARCH QUESTION

Altogether, previous studies showed differing effects of disclosures on people's brand evaluation. As mentioned before, these inconsistencies might be due to little research into the role of receiver characteristics in the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. The receiver's level of self-control could determine if a brand placement disclosure is actually effective. People with a high level of self-control seem to be more capable to resist persuasion attempts than people with a low level of self-control. On one hand, the presence of a disclosure could make people with a high level of self-control even more aware of the persuasive intent of the brand placement and therefore lead to a negative brand evaluation. On the other it is assumed that people with a low level of self-control are less capable to resist persuasion by the brand placement, in response to a disclosure. This might reduce the effect of the disclosure and therefore may not lead to a negative brand evaluation.

Consequently, this study will mainly focus on the influence of people's level of self-control in the effect of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. The contribution of this study is to offer new insights into the previous mixed effects of disclosures and to test whether self-control plays a part in these differing outcomes. To this end, the main research question of this study, supported by two hypotheses, is as follows:

*To what extent does self-control influence the effects of brand placement disclosures on people's brand evaluation?*

- H1: When people have a high level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure results into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure
- H2: When people have a reduced level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure does not result into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure



## METHOD

### Materials

This study was conducted by means of an experiment. The experiment had two independent variables: the presence or absence of a *brand placement disclosure* and *level of self-control* (high or low) of the participant. The analysis model of the independent and dependent variables is presented in Figure 1 on page 13.

The stimulus material of this experiment consisted of a video fragment and a writing assignment. Participants were exposed to a fragment from the Dutch television program *Divorce*. The fragment was a short scene from season 3 (episode 12) and lasted for 2 minutes and 43 seconds. The scene contained an integrated brand placement i.e. the beer brand Bavaria, which was actively used by the actors. Within the fragment, the independent variable brand placement disclosure was manipulated. In one version of the fragment the disclosure was absent. The other version of the same fragment had a brand placement disclosure saying ‘This program contains product placement’, which was added at the beginning of the fragment and lasted for 4 seconds.

In order to manipulate the level of self-control participants were exposed to a writing assignment at the beginning of the experiment. The participants were asked to write a short essay about their last vacation or trip, in about 8 to 10 sentences. The writing assignment had two versions: a version where the letter ‘A’ was prohibited to use and a version where all letters were allowed to use (Derrick, 2013). Participants who were manipulated to maintain a high level of self-control were allowed to use all the letters during the writing assignment. Participants who were manipulated into a low level of self-control were prohibited to use the letter ‘A’. The prohibition of the letter ‘A’ affected the participants’ level of self-control, because it overrode their tendency of the words that first come to mind. Therefore, the participants needed to practice control over their automatic responses and regulate their behaviour, which led to a state of ego depletion (Gillespie et al., 2012).

### Participants

A total of 144 participants participated in this study (age:  $M = 28.8$ ,  $SD = 12.2$ ; range 17 – 65; 71.5% female). The majority of the participants had the Dutch nationality (96.5%) and had a higher educational level (81.7%). A chi-square test showed no significant relation between version of the experiment and gender ( $\chi^2(3) = 3.23$ ,  $p = .357$ ). A one-way analysis of variance showed no significant relation between both version of the experiment and age

( $F(3, 140) = 1.331, p = .267$ ) and version of the experiment and educational level ( $F(3, 127) < 1, p = .590$ ). This implicates that the participants' gender, various age categories and educational levels were equally distributed over the four versions of the experiment. Furthermore, 13 of the 144 participants were excluded from the actual data analysis due to misinterpretation of one of the manipulations in the experiment. Some continued to use the 'A' in the condition where the letter was prohibited to use. Others claimed to have seen a disclosure, while they were in fact exposed to a fragment without a disclosure.

## **Design**

This experiment had a 2 (brand placement disclosure: present or absent) x 2 (level of self-control: high or low) i.e. two-factorial design. Both independent variables were between-subject factors.

## **Instrumentation**

Participants filled in an online questionnaire in which they evaluated the beer brand Bavaria in the Dutch television program Divorce. This study had one main dependent variable: brand evaluation, which consisted of two terms 'brand attitude' and 'purchase intention'.

### *Brand evaluation*

The measurements of brand evaluation were as follows: brand attitude was measured with the statement 'The following questions are related to Bavaria. Please indicate how you feel towards the brand...' followed by seven seven-point semantic differential scales: dislike/like, bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, negative/positive, poor quality/high quality, uninteresting/interesting and unattractive/attractive' (based on Boerman et al., 2014). The reliability of the seven items measuring brand attitude was good ( $\alpha=.94$ ).

Purchase intention was measured with the question 'What is the possibility that you will buy Bavaria the next month?' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'very unlikely – very likely (based on Spears & Singh, 2004).

### *Brand memory*

The variable brand memory was measured with brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall was measured with the question 'Have you seen any brands during the fragment?' anchored by '1 = Yes,..., 0 = No'.

Brand recognition was measured by showing the logo of Bavaria and logo's from other brands (i.e. Heineken, Puma, Adidas, Apple and Samsung) following the statement 'Below you will find some logo's of product brands. Please indicate which brands you have seen during the fragment' anchored by '1 = Brand X, 0 = other brands' (scales based on van Reijmersdal et al., 2013). The logos from the other brands were chosen at random.

### *Persuasion knowledge*

Persuasion knowledge was measured to see if participants were able to distinguish the persuasive intent and be distrusting and sceptical of Bavaria in Divorce. The variable persuasion knowledge was divided in conceptual persuasion knowledge, i.e. recognition of the advertisement and persuasive intent, and attitudinal persuasion knowledge, i.e. distrust of the paid content and scepticism against the persuasion attempt (Boerman, 2012). The measurements were as follows:

*Conceptual persuasion knowledge* was measured to see if the participants were able to distinguish the persuasive intent and selling intent of Bavaria.

Recognition of Bavaria as advertising was measured by two statements. The first statement 'The fragment contained advertising' was followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'totally disagree – totally agree'. The second statement 'The item about Bavaria in the fragment was advertising' was followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'totally disagree – totally agree' (based on Boerman et al., 2014). Persuasive intent and selling intent were measured with the statement 'Bavaria was shown in the fragment to ...' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'totally disagree – totally agree'. This statement was measured by six items: 'to inform the consumer (1), to sell Bavaria (2), to make sure the consumer likes Bavaria (3), to entertain the consumer (4), to boost the selling of Bavaria (5) and to influence the consumer (6)'. Persuasive intent was measured by items 3 and 6. Selling intent was measured by items 2 and 5. Items 1 and 4 were fillers. The reliability of the six items (fillers excluded) measuring conceptual persuasion knowledge was good ( $\alpha=.86$ ).

*Attitudinal persuasion knowledge* was used to see if the participants were able to resist and distrust the persuasion attempt. Attitudinal persuasion knowledge was measured by the statement 'I find the display of Bavaria in Divorce' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'totally disagree – totally agree'. This statement was measured by eleven items: 'reliable', 'convincing', 'unfair', 'manipulative', 'likeable', 'not credible', 'entertaining', 'deceptive', 'acceptable', 'annoying' and 'distracting' (based on Ham, Nelson

& Das, 2015). The reliability of the eleven items measuring attitudinal persuasion knowledge was good ( $\alpha=.82$ ).

### *Manipulation checks*

*Self-control.* To examine the effectiveness of the writing assignment, which resulted into a high or a low level of self-control, and the participants' attitudes and mood after finishing the assignment, two measurements were conducted. The first question regarding the participants' mood, which was asked right after the writing assignment, was 'Could you indicate how you are feeling at the moment?' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'very negative – very positive'. The second question, which was asked at the end of the questionnaire, was 'The next questions are related to the writing task prior to the fragment. Could you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements...' followed by the statements: ' (1) I found the task to be difficult, (2) The task cost me a lot of effort, (3) I needed to suppress an automatic response during the task, (4) I needed to practice self-control during the task' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'totally disagree – totally agree' (based on Janssen, Fennis & Pruyn, 2010). The reliability of the four items measuring the manipulation check of self-control was good ( $\alpha=.95$ ).

*Disclosure.* To see if the participants were able to recall seeing the brand placement disclosure they were asked if that had noticed a disclosure prior to the fragment. The manipulation check regarding the identification of the brand placement disclosure was measured by the question 'Have you noticed a disclosure about product placement during the fragment' anchored by '0 = no, 1 = yes'.

### *Control variables*

The questionnaire contained a few control variables to make sure the effects of the brand placement disclosure on brand evaluation were not caused by potential differences between participants. These control variables were program familiarity and brand familiarity.

*Program familiarity* was measured by the question 'To what extent were you familiar with Divorce, prior to participating in this research?' followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 'not familiar – very familiar'. The second statement regarding familiarity with the program was 'I watch Divorce' anchored by '1 = never, 2 = once or less a month, 3 = twice or three times a month, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily' (based on Boerman et al., 2014).

*Brand familiarity* was measured by the question ‘To what extent were you familiar with Bavaria, prior to participating in this research?’ followed by a seven-point Likert scale anchored by ‘not familiar – very familiar’. The second statement regarding familiarity with the brand was ‘I drink Bavaria’ anchored by ‘1 = never, 2 = once or less a month, 3 = twice or three times a month, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily’ (based on Boerman et al., 2014).

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to fill in some background questions, such as: age, gender, nationality and education.

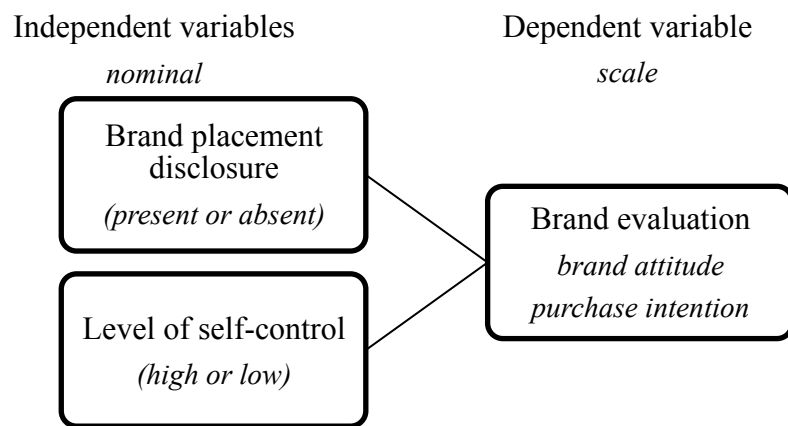
## **Procedure**

The questionnaire was administered with the online program Qualtrics. The participants of the study were recruited via social media and e-mail. The opening page was used as an introduction, to welcome the participants and to inform them about the procedure of the fragment and questionnaire. Second, the participants were exposed to the writing assignment. Half of the participants were prohibited to use the letter ‘A’ in the writing assignment. The other half of the participants was permitted to use all the letters of the alphabet. Next, the participants evaluated one of two television fragments. The participants were randomly assigned to whether or not they have the manipulated writing task and to the version of the fragment (with or without a disclosure). The last page of the questionnaire included the questionnaire of the study.

## **Statistical treatment**

In order to test the data of this present study, various statistical tests were conducted. A Chi-square test was carried out to see if there was a relation between the versions of the independent variables and participant’s gender. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to test whether the versions of the independent variables had a significant relation on the participant’s age and educational level. The reliability of the variables were tested by a cronbach’s  $\alpha$ . Effects of the two independent variables on the dependent variables were tested by multiple two-way analyses of variance, logistical regression analyses and one-way analyses of variance.

*Figure 1 - Analysis model of independent and dependent variables*



## RESULTS

The main research question for this study was to what extent self-control influences the effects of brand placement disclosures on people's brand evaluation. This research question was supported by two hypotheses, i.e.: (1) When people have a high level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure results into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure and (2) When people have a low level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure does not result into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure.

### Manipulation checks

**Self-control.** A two-way analysis of variance for the manipulation check of self-control with self-control and disclosure as factors showed an expected significant main effect of self-control ( $F(1, 127) = 186.86, p < .001$ ). Participants who had made the writing assignment where they could not use the letter 'A' felt more depleted after the writing assignment ( $M = 5.50, SD = 1.49$ ) than participant who had made the assignment without any restrictions ( $M = 2.20, SD = 1.20$ ). There was no significant main effect of disclosure ( $F(1, 127) < 1, p < .471$ ) or a significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 127) < 1, p = .341$ ). The results are presented in Table 1.

**Disclosure.** A logistical regression analysis for the manipulation check of disclosure with disclosure and self-control as factors showed no significant effect of both disclosure ( $Wald(1) = .451, p = .502$ ) and self-control ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = .997$ ). There was no significant interaction effect between disclosure and self-control as well ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = 1.000$ ).

The analyses of the manipulation checks showed an expected significant effect of self-control on the manipulation check of self-control. Therefore, the manipulation of self-control was successful. However, no significant effects were found regarding the manipulation check of the independent variable disclosure. Somehow, not all participants who were exposed to a disclosure prior to the fragment were able to recall seeing a disclosure prior to the fragment.

Table 1. Means for manipulation check of self-control per independent variable (i.e. level of self-control and disclosure) ( $N = 131$ ) (1 = positive; 7 = negative)

	Disclosure absent			Disclosure present			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Low self-control	5.28	1.84	22	5.68	1.18	30	5.50	1.49	52
High self-control	2.22	1.22	44	2.17	1.20	35	2.20	1.20	79

### Mood

A two-way analysis of variance for the mood of the participant after finishing the writing assignment with self-control and disclosure as factors showed a significant main effect of self-control ( $F(1, 127) = 22.86, p < .001$ ). Participants with a low level of self-control felt less positive after finishing the writing assignment ( $M = 4.15, SD = 1.84$ ) than participants with a high level of self-control ( $M = 5.33, SD = 1$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant main effect of disclosure ( $F(1, 127) < 1, p = .405$ ) and no significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 127) < 1, p = .594$ ). The results are presented in Table 2.

As mentioned above, the analysis of the participant's mood after finishing the writing assignment found a main significant main effect of self-control. Which implicates that the manipulation of self-control did affect the participant's mood. Therefore, this variable was included as a covariate in the analyses on the other dependent variables.

Table 2. Means for the participants' mood after finishing the writing assignment per independent variable (i.e. level of self-control and disclosure) ( $N = 131$ ) (1 = negative; 7 = positive)

	Disclosure absent			Disclosure present			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Low self-control	3.95	1.86	22	4.30	1.84	30	4.15	1.84	52
High self-control	5.30	1.00	44	5.37	1.00	35	5.33	1.00	79



## Brand evaluation

Brand evaluation was the main dependent variable in this study, which also tested the earlier established hypotheses. In order to analyze the main dependent variables, the following covariates were used: brand awareness, program awareness and mood of the participants. These covariates were added to the analyses alongside the manipulations of the independent variables because they could have had an effect on the dependent variables as well. To test both hypotheses, two-way analyses of co-variance, i.e. ANCOVAs, were conducted.

**Brand attitude.** An ANCOVA for brand attitude with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main effect of both self-control ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .697$ ) and disclosure on the participants' attitude towards the brand ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .971$ ). However, there was a significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) = 7.51, p = .007$ ). The results are presented in Table 3.

*Split on self-control.* The difference between the presence and absence of a disclosure was only found among participants with a high level of self-control ( $F(1, 78) = 3.12, p = .081$ ): the presence of a disclosure led to a more positive attitude towards the brand ( $M = 4.79, SD = 1.07$ ) than the absence of a disclosure ( $M = 4.32, SD = 1.25$ ). There was no difference between the presence and absence of a disclosure for participants with a low level of self-control ( $F(1, 51) < 1, p = .700$ ).

*Split on disclosure.* There was no difference between the two levels of self-control for both participants who were exposed to a disclosure ( $F(1, 64) < 1, p = .340$ ) and participants who were not exposed to a disclosure ( $F(1, 65) = 1.02, p = .317$ ).

**Purchase Intention.** An ANCOVA for purchase intention with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main effect on both self-control ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .391$ ) and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .410$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) = 2.79, p = .097$ ).

As mentioned earlier, the hypotheses of this study were as follows: (1) When people have a high level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure results into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure and (2) When people have a low level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure does not result into a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure. The results of this study implicated that both the hypotheses were not supported by this research. Remarkably, the results showed an opposite effect with respect to the previously established hypotheses.

Table 3. Means for the participants' attitude towards the brand per independent variable (i.e. level of self-control and disclosure) ( $N = 131$ ) (1 = negative; 7 = positive)

	Disclosure absent			Disclosure present			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Low self-control	4.63	1.13	22	4.50	1.34	30	4.56	1.24	52
High self-control	4.32	1.25	44	4.79	1.07	35	4.53	1.19	79

### Brand memory

**Brand recall.** A logistical regression analysis for brand recall with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main effect of both self-control ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = .939$ ) and disclosure ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = .822$ ). However, there was a marginally significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $Wald(1) = 3.55, p = .060$ ). A chi-square test showed that among participants with a low level of self-control, 53.5% of the participants who were exposed to a disclosure recalled seeing Bavaria as compared to 22.7% of the participants who were not exposed to a disclosure ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.94, p = .044$ ). A chi-square test showed no significant effect among participants with a high level of self-control and the absence or presence of a disclosure on brand recall ( $\chi^2(1) < 1, p = 1$ ). The results are presented in Table 4 on page 18.

**Brand recognition.** A logistical regression analysis on brand recognition with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main effect of both self-control ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = .931$ ) and disclosure ( $Wald(1) = 1.01, p = .314$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $Wald(1) < 1, p = .372$ ).

The analysis of brand memory showed that the presence of a brand placement disclosure had an effect among participants with a low level of self-control. Participants with a low level of self-control tended to recall Bavaria better when they were exposed to a disclosure than participants who were not exposed to a disclosure. However, no effects were found for brand recognition.

Table 4. Percentages for participants' brand recall per independent variable (i.e. level of self-control and disclosure) ( $N = 131$ )

	Disclosure absent	Disclosure present	Total
	%	%	%
Low self-control	22.7%	53.3%	40.4%
High self-control	56.8%	54.3%	55.7%

### Persuasion knowledge

**Conceptual persuasion knowledge.** An ANCOVA for conceptual persuasion knowledge with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main effect on disclosure ( $F(1, 122) = 2.42, p = .123$ ). However, there was a marginal significant main effect of self-control ( $F(1, 122) = 3.61, p = .060$ ). Participants with a low level of self-control ( $M = 5.15, SD = 1.41$ ) were less aware of the persuasive intent of Bavaria in the fragment than participants with a high level of self-control ( $M = 5.86, SD = .90$ ). Furthermore, there was a marginal interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) = 3.86, p = .052$ ). The results are presented in Table 5.

*Split on self-control.* The difference between the absence and the presence of a disclosure was only found for participants with a low level of self-control ( $F(1, 51) = 3.32, p = .074$ ): the presence of a disclosure led to more awareness of the persuasive intent of Bavaria ( $M = 5.45, SD = 1.07$ ) than the absence of a disclosure ( $M = 4.74, SD = 1.72$ ). There was no significant difference between the absence and presence of a disclosure for participants with a high level of self-control ( $F(1, 78) < 1, p = .568$ ).

*Split on disclosure.* The difference between a high and a low level of self-control was only found for participants who were not exposed to a disclosure prior to the fragment ( $F(1, 65) = 14.18, p = .000$ ): participants with a low level of self-control were less aware of the persuasive intent of Bavaria in the fragment ( $M = 4.74, SD = 1.72$ ) than participants with a high level of self-control ( $M = 5.91, SD = .81$ ). There was no significant difference between a high and a low level of self-control and participants who were exposed to a disclosure prior to the fragment ( $F(1, 64) = 1.78, p = .187$ ).

**Attitudinal persuasion knowledge.** A two-way analysis of variance for affective persuasion knowledge with self-control and disclosure as factors showed no significant main

effect of both self-control ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .336$ ) and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) < 1, p = .514$ ). Furthermore, there was no significant interaction effect between self-control and disclosure ( $F(1, 122) = 1.52, p = .220$ ).

The analyses of persuasion knowledge showed that people with a low level of self-control are less conscious of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand compared to people with a high self-control. In addition, it was found that the presence of a disclosure ensured that people with a low level of self-control were actually more aware of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand than the absence of a disclosure. However, persuasion knowledge (i.e. distrust of the brand placement) showed no significant effects.

Table 5. Means for conceptual persuasion knowledge per independent variable (i.e. level of self-control and disclosure) ( $N = 131$ ) (1 = negative; 7 = positive)

	Disclosure absent			Disclosure present			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Low self-control	4.74	1.72	22	5.45	1.07	30	5.15	1.41	52
High self-control	5.91	.81	44	5.80	1.01	35	5.86	.90	79

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether self-control influences the effects of brand placement disclosures on people's brand evaluation. Previous studies researched the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. However, these studies showed inconsistent effects. This study was one of the first to examine the influence of people's level of self-control in the effect of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation.

### **Manipulation checks of self-control and disclosure**

The findings of the study indicate that the manipulation of the independent variable self-control was successful. As expected, and in accordance with previous research of Derrick (2012) and Janssen et al. (2010), participants who carried out the writing assignment in which they could not use the letter 'A' (low self-control) felt more depleted after the writing assignment compared to participants who carried out the writing assignment without any restrictions (high self-control). In addition, results found that participants with a low level of self-control felt more negatively after finishing the writing assignment compared to participants with a high level of self-control.

Furthermore, the results of the present study remarkably found no significant effect of the manipulation check of disclosure. It appears that 29% of the participants that were exposed to the fragment with a disclosure were not able to recall seeing the disclosure prior to the fragment. This led to the suspicion that those participants might have had a low level of self-control. However, it turned out that 10 of the participants had a low level of self-control and 9 of those participants had a high level of self-control. This implicates that the level of self-control did not affect the participants' ability to recall the disclosure. The remarkable findings are in line with those of Boerman et al. (2012), who found that 52% of the participants that were exposed to a disclosure did not recall seeing it. A possible explanation for the unsuccessful manipulation of disclosure might have been the length of the disclosure, which was only 4 seconds. The brand placement disclosure might have been too short for participants to recall it.

### **Brand evaluation**

As mentioned above, the aim of this study was to investigate if people's level of self-control influenced the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. This study had two hypotheses that were established earlier. It was anticipated that, with respect

to people with a high level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure would lead to a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure (H1). In addition it was anticipated that with respect to people with a low level of self-control, the presence of a disclosure would not lead to a more negative brand evaluation than the absence of a disclosure (H2). However, the findings of this study do not lend support for these hypotheses and even illustrate the opposite of what was expected. The present study found that participants with a high level of self-control that had seen a disclosure evaluated the brand more positively compared to participants with a high level of self-control that had not seen a disclosure. These findings contradict the previous findings of Boerman et al. (2012) and Boerman et al. (2014) that found that brand placement disclosures lead to less positive brand attitudes. A possible explanation for the remarkable findings of the present study could be that participants with a high level of self-control were able to evaluate the brand more objectively due to exposure to a disclosure. As they were aware of the persuasion attempt and therefore might not have felt deceived by the brand placement.

With respect to brand evaluation, which consisted of brand attitude and purchase intention, this study only found the previously discussed finding of brand attitude. Therefore, it could be assumed that neither people's level of self-control nor the presence or absence of a disclosure evidently has an impact on people's brand evaluation. This assumption partly concurs with findings of van Reijmersdal et al. (2013) who found that brand placement disclosures do not necessarily make people more critical towards the brand placement (p. 140). In addition, the assumption is also partly in line with findings of Bennet et al. (1990) who demonstrate that disclosures do not impact the likeability of the integrated brand.

### **Brand memory**

In this present study, brand memory consisted of brand recall and brand recognition. However, significant effects were only found for brand recall. These findings indicate that participants with a low level of self-control tend to recall a brand better when they had seen a disclosure compared to participants with a low level of self-control that had not seen a disclosure prior to the fragment. These findings are partly in line with those of Bennet et al. (1999) and Boerman et al. (2012) who found that brand placement disclosures enhance people's brand memory. It can be assumed that the presence of a disclosure is positively effective, as people tend to remember the brand better due to a disclosure. At the same time, the television program shown in the fragment seems to be quite familiar among Dutch

viewers and commonly known for its obvious brand placements. Therefore, a possible explanation for the findings regarding brand recall might be due to familiarity with the television program or its 'brand placement' image. As it appears that Bavaria is one of Divorce's prominently integrated brands, it might have been easier for the participants who were already familiar with the television program to recall the brand.

### **Persuasion knowledge**

In this present study, persuasion knowledge compromised both conceptual persuasion knowledge (i.e. recognition of advertisement and persuasion attempt) and attitudinal persuasion knowledge (i.e. distrust of the integrated brand and skepticism towards the persuasion attempt). In general, no results were found regarding attitudinal persuasion knowledge. It can be assumed that the participants in this study who had seen a disclosure prior to the fragment were not specifically distrusting towards the brand in the fragment. Noteworthy, Boerman et al. (2012) found that people who were exposed to a 6-second brand placement disclosure showed higher rates of attitudinal persuasion knowledge compared to people who were exposed to a 3-second brand placement disclosure (p. 1059). According to Boerman et al. (2012) this consequently results in resistance towards persuasion and more negative brand attitudes (p. 1059). Simultaneously, these findings could be a possible explanation for the lack of findings regarding negative brand evaluations among participants after they had seen a disclosure as the disclosure in the present study lasted for only 4 seconds. The length of the disclosure could have been too short to activate the participants' attitudinal persuasion knowledge and therefore they might not have been able to feel any distrust or negative attitudes towards the brand placement. This can be partly supported by Boerman et al. (2012) who state that people need to generate a certain level of distrust and skepticism towards the brand placement before a disclosure actually alters their brand attitude (p. 1059).

With respect to conceptual persuasion knowledge, several results were found. First, the findings of this study illustrate that people with a low level of self-control were less aware of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand when they had not seen a disclosure compared to people with a high level of self-control. Second, people with a low level of self-control who had seen a disclosure were more aware of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand than people with a low self-control who had not seen a disclosure prior to the fragment. These findings are partly in agreement with those of Campbell et al. (2012) who found that people are able to recognize the persuasive effect of brand placements due to

brand placement disclosures. Furthermore, the findings of the present study regarding conceptual persuasion knowledge show that both people's level of self-control and the presence or absence of a disclosure have an impact on people's ability to be aware of the persuasive intent of brand placements.

### **Limitations of the study**

With respect to the limitations of the present study several recommendations for further research can be made. First of all, the questionnaire of this study was distributed with an online program. This might have been a limitation as it led to less control over the participants and the participants could easily have been distracted by other factors while taking part in the experiment. Especially regarding the manipulation of self-control, in which participants needed to fill in a writing assignment. There were some participants who had completed the questionnaire but had not successfully made the writing assignment. In the future, it is recommended to not distribute questionnaires with assignments that influence participants' level of self-control online. It might be better conduct an experiment like this face-to-face. Researchers might be able to make sure that participants complete the (writing) task seriously and without being distracted by other factors.

Second, the disclosure shown prior to the fragment only lasted for 4 seconds. This might have been too short, as 29% of the participants who were exposed to a disclosure did not recall seeing it. Therefore, some participants might not have been fully aware of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand.

Third, as mentioned earlier, the television program used as a fragment in this study appears to be rather familiar among Dutch viewers and quite known for its use of brand placements. Therefore, it could be possible that people already knew the persuasive intent of the integrated brand. Furthermore, the brand shown in the fragment was beer from Bavaria, which might not have been the best product or brand to evaluate. This could have been a limitation, as some people might not drink beer, dislike the brand Bavaria or like another beer brand more compared to Bavaria they might have had a preconception about Bavaria. Thus, it is recommended to use a more general, maybe luxurious, product in the future.

Finally, a possible suggestion for further research could be a study with a stronger assignment for the manipulation of self-control and a more objective product brand. In addition, it is recommended to add several lengths of disclosure time to the study as well. It could be unique to research the influence of self-control on the effects of brand placements disclosures with differing durations on brand evaluation.



## **General conclusion and practical implications**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the influence of self-control on the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. Self-control particularly stood out in the research, as it was anticipated that a high and a low level of self-control both had a different impact on the effects of brand placement disclosure on brand evaluation. This study aimed to give explanatory insights into previous studies that showed inconsistent effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation. However, the findings of this present study are quite differing and inconsistent and therefore cannot lend strong academic insights into these previous inconsistent effects. To this end, it appears that people's level of self-control does not evidently influence the effects of brand placement disclosures on brand evaluation.

At the same time, there are several other findings of the present study that are worth to appoint. First, this study found that brand placement disclosures enhance people's brand memory. Especially people with a low level of self-control tend to remember a brand better due to disclosure. Second, the findings of this study show that brand placement disclosures ensure that people with a low level of self-control are more conscious of the persuasive intent of the integrated brand. Hence, these findings lead to some interesting practical insights for both marketers and consumers. On one hand, although brand placement disclosures are actually meant to inform people about commercial content in entertainment media (Boerman et al., 2012), they are beneficial to marketers as well. This is due to the fact that disclosures also enhance people's brand memory. On the other, for consumers, it might be comforting to know that brand placement disclosures do make sure that people are aware of the persuasion attempt of a brand placement when they are depleted.

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