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Expect More Product Placement on TV

BY PPN STAFF

Advertisers are finding a way into your television sets. And it's no longer through commercials.

Five years ago, if you asked experts about the future of product placement, they would've never predicted how big it is today.

"Gossip Girl" opened its second season with a luxurious party in the Hamptons. At the party, vitaminwater was served to the guests. Plus, different varieties of the Coca-Cola produced drink were mentioned in the dialogue throughout the season. "In some instances, the drinks had as much screen time in a single episode as a guest actor or recurring minor character," describes Brian Steinberg of Boston.com describes.

Advertisers have been more aggressive in product placement for the past years. Before, TV networks wanted to regulate the entry of these shrewd advertising vehicles. Now, media outlets are actually loosening restrictions to welcome more product placement.

The condition of the economy changes the playing field. It makes "everything at least discussable," said Peter Tortorici, president of WPP Group's Group M Entertainment, an arm that creates deals in branded entertainment and product placement.

Tortorici says that the new willingness of TV networks will create positive ideas for product placement. However, he warns that some of it will lead to mistakes. This past TV season, several product placements were torched by bloggers and critics for being blatant and out-of-context.

In CW's "90210", Dr. Pepper played an integral role in one episode. Characters went on a road trip and they vowed to drink nothing else but Dr. Pepper for the whole trip. On NBC's "Chuck", Subway sandwiches got more than its money's worth with a product placement and a tagline mention in the dialogue.

"As the media landscape continues to become more fragmented, we do believe it is necessary to find creative ways to reach consumers and maintain relevance," said Elena Zanolin, entertainment marketing manager at Dr. Pepper.

Why is product placement suddenly rising?

That's simple. The bad economy gave advertisers and producers a dependent relationship.

It used to be: advertisers need placements on TV shows for brand exposure and TV networks have a choice whether to allow them or not. While the advertising need remains (maybe even more), TV networks need the extra cash as well. With the economy tightening finances, more and more producers are turning to product placement and branded entertainment for extra revenue.
