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Product Placement Today

Due to the media spread today, product placement is already everywhere. How can we distinguish from what is an advertisement or what is not? Particularly the media today has spread into so many formats. Sometimes even a topic from the news on TV can be a product placement advertisement. In Taiwan, there is a whole different style of media that is abused by the business world and politics. The press and TV channel usually have their own side for the political party. It is really hard to tell the truth for the public and is disturbing people.

The following will discuss two main issues, how to distinguish product placement and whether or not it is ethical to get paid for doing product placement in blogs without noticing the readers?

I. How to distinguish product placement

First, there is a pattern that usually can be followed to distinguish product placement as an advertisement. For example, showing a closer shot for the product is the most common usage. Furthermore, we can tell from the frequency of the product that was shown on the media. If people do pay attention to what happens around them, they will find out that there are some products that are frequently exposed through the mass media during a particular time, suggesting that it is their campaign period. For example, there was a blog post about a new instant noodle that will be launched to the market. The review from the post seemed very attractive, so it came up the question: Is that true the

product is really that good? Then I use Google to search it and found out there are more blog reviews than I thought (Figure 1). By the time we saw these results, we can realize it is a product placement that was put in these articles.

Google 巷口乾麵 Search Instant is on ▼

About 286,000 results (0.14 seconds) Advanced search

TIP: Search for English Results only. You can specify your language in Search Preferences

▶ [\[Kee Food\] uniform alley dried noodles noodles, sesame noodles | - Food photo paper clip is also fortunate](#) - [Translate this page]
 March 9, 2011 ... had to bring it to the accumulation of instant noodles, 7-11 points, but did not think I want to buy the pickled beef noodle soup is just out of stock, the first lift of the upper shelves to see a unified new the "dry side alley", then fried bean sauce and sesame flavor all took a ...
 www.christabelle.idv.tw/archives/5054 - Cached

[Try to eat! \[Unified alley dried noodles sesame sauce & fried bean sauce flavor](#) - [Translate this page]
 February 25, 2011 ... obviously those days, very few, the most recent two try to eat the text they are all instant noodles, pop ha ha ha - yellow duck a few weeks ago received an invitation from the uniform, is look delicious corner dry surface. Then hesitated in the end there is no time ...
 www.wretch.cc/blog/cindy83812/18847219 - Cached

[Lighting fires on the sauce is completely dry side corner @ Chuan Xin bad brother:: ruffian off state PIXNET:](#) - [Translate this page]
 This is the unity of the new dry surface, called the corner dry surface, there are two kinds of fried bean sauce tastes like mahjong, when I first saw the text to try to eat butter, An entire fire, although I hate the market completely dried noodles series of instant noodles for all, including a lot of people mad push peacekeeping force ...
 masklife.pixnet.net/blog/post/28568031 - Cached

[After New Year from now I have had 13 packs of yummy dried noodles comer! @ lunch on the sauce](#) - [Translate this page]
 March 1, 2011 ... As a habit of watching the computer screen while eating the A house, every winter night, the most enjoyable time than the greedy do not go out at home and eat a bowl of steaming hot bubble surface. Recently, a new unified instant noodles, ...
 www.fojam.tw/blog/post/28179001 - Cached

[7-11 alley dried noodles @ Benmao Kitchen:: free log Wo Xuite](#) - [Translate this page]
 March 14, 2011 ... just to see shelves and trendy product called alley of dry noodles. happens to be the morning saw the movie on youtube, that Lao She dried noodles, based not eat, they do not want to make the mind of Lao She. ... I bought the 7-11 corner dry surface ...
 blog.xuite.net/linda.lu/kitchen/43316146 - Taiwan - Cached

[Alley dried noodles sesame flavor - Unified PECOS](#) - [Translate this page]
 Components>. Face: flour, food starch, salt, flour improves quality (food-grade potassium carbonate, sodium carbonate, coincidence phosphate), Vitamin E (natural antioxidant), gardenia yellow (natural food coloring), β-carotene (natural food coloring) ...
 www.pecos.com.tw> Product Overview - Cached

[Holiday Kitchen Dad Sono! Preserved Cabbage soup + duck alley dried noodles | - Aesthetics through life - Yahoo! Kimo Blog](#) - [Translate this page]
 February 22, 2011 ... another new preparation of instant noodles: sesame dried noodles alley! Cook 5 minutes or faster brew 3.5, super convenient! ... Sono latest Planning commodities * alley dried noodles * TVC! Planning concept: With the alley dried noodles, noodle opened at any time, the film ...
 tw.myblog.yahoo.com/Vincent-artlife/article?MID=11460...1... - Cached

[Dried noodles alley new TV ad market](#)
 ★★★★★ - 32 sec - Mar 29, 2011 - Uploaded by psst888
 Instant noodles industry leading unified Rights !!~ heard a dry surface with the noodle is cooked to eat the same delicious eaten like this have Yeah!!!
 Name called alley dry surface, it sounds so advertising did a like kind, very new market momentum yeah ~ ~ ~
 www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBlaPhscMg

[The Castle in The Man: \[Fresh glutinous\] alley dried noodles fried bean sauce flavor](#) - [Translate this page]
 March 9, 2011 ... because of the shared alley dry surface is the same type of goods, before the text to see other people want to try to share with the same type is a packet of instant noodles as a packet of sauce soup, sauce, others that do not have a special All-Canadian ...
 blog.otaku.tw/2011/03/blog-post.html - Cached

[7net-75 early adopters discount price! Unity alley dried noodles sesame flavor 24 in / boxes, unity, brand, instant noodles](#) - [Translate this page]
 Product characteristics. 1. Unified face a major new year 2. Emphasized as noodle "brewed" taste 3. Q shells noodles, sesame flavor concentration. Trade description. [Brand]
 [Uniform material / components / specifications / Package Contents] alley dried noodles sesame flavor 24 in / box ...
 www.7net.com.tw> noodles > Brand Series - Cached

Figure 1. The keywords of "blog" are highlighted in yellow area

If we add the keyword “blog” into search condition, we can find out there are 98,400 results pop up (Figure 2). This will be a strong evidence to prove it is a product placement.

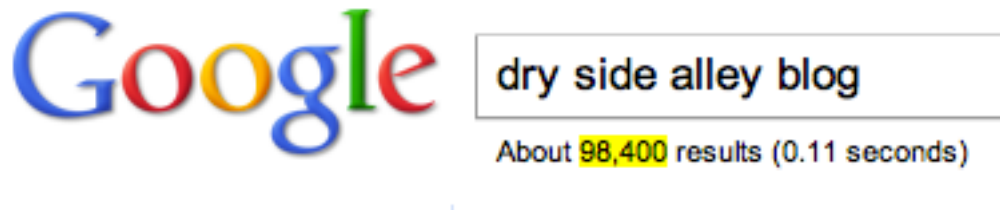


Figure 2

Recently, Google has launched a new experimental project called “Google +1 Button.” It basically works like the “like” button on Facebook which allow you to press the “+1” button if you find the search result works for you, and Google will store this data on your profile page. Next time when your friend is search for a similar thing, it will help you out. Is this going to be a new format for advertisement, which merchandisers can create a lot of accounts and add their website of products to their +1 accounts? How do we distinguish those accounts that are for business use or personal use?

In addition, there are some people who get paid by wearing some manufacturers’ clothes or get free clothing from them and the influencer wears them around, acting like a living advertisement. Whereas, there are other groups of people who pay these manufacturers for putting their products on them, such as people who pay a lot of money to get a simple Louis Vuitton bag, and carry it around (Figure 3).



Figure 3

Does that count as one kind of product placement or advertisement for the brand? These people who have brand loyalty can be separated into influencer and influencer-want-to-be, which sounds pretty sarcastic. This leads to the question: how do we see the truth? The answer will be being aware of things around you or be suspicious of everything, or at least do not be brainwashed by the media by listening to only one source of them. Last but not least, always be open-minded to different kinds of things.

II. Is it ethical to get paid for doing product placement in blogs without noticing the readers?

There are several scandals that the bloggers fake their reviews for their contracting companies. For example, a girl blogger faked her cosmetics review that she showed her acne scars had faded after using the product for 4 days, but she actually just Photoshopped it or used a concealer to cover the marks. Netizens (people actively involved in online communities) found out the truth by discovering that those pictures she took were all stamped in the same day by looking the EXIF information (Figure 4 – Figure 6). As we can see in Figure 4 which is shown that it was the first day she used the product,

the scar was more obvious. In Figure 6, the scar was almost gone. If we look at the EXIF information, the latest on is actually taken earlier than the other two ones. All these three photos are taken in the same day.

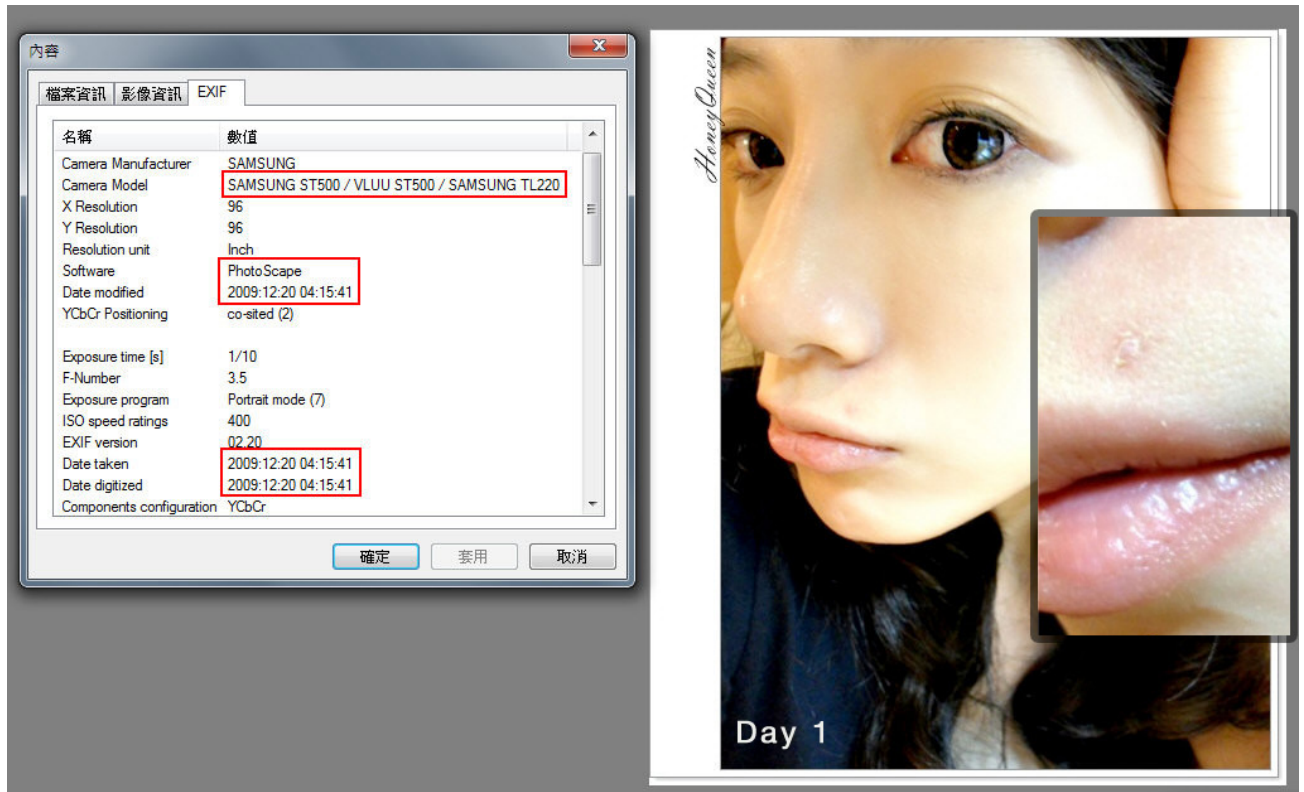


Figure 4

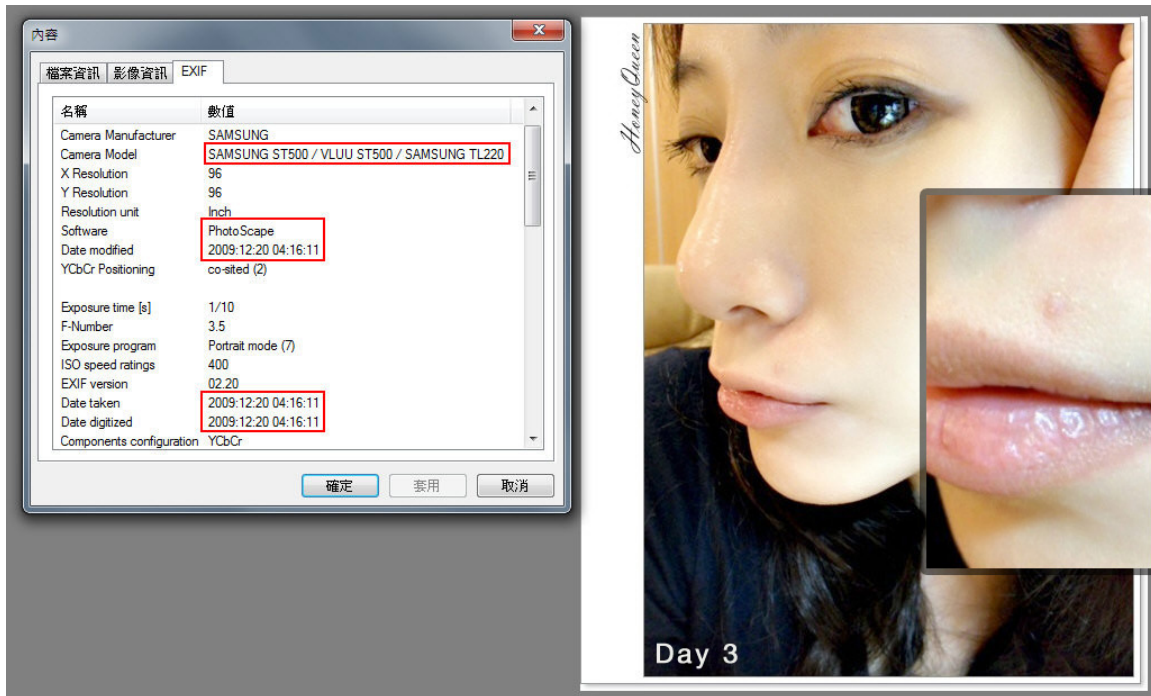


Figure 5

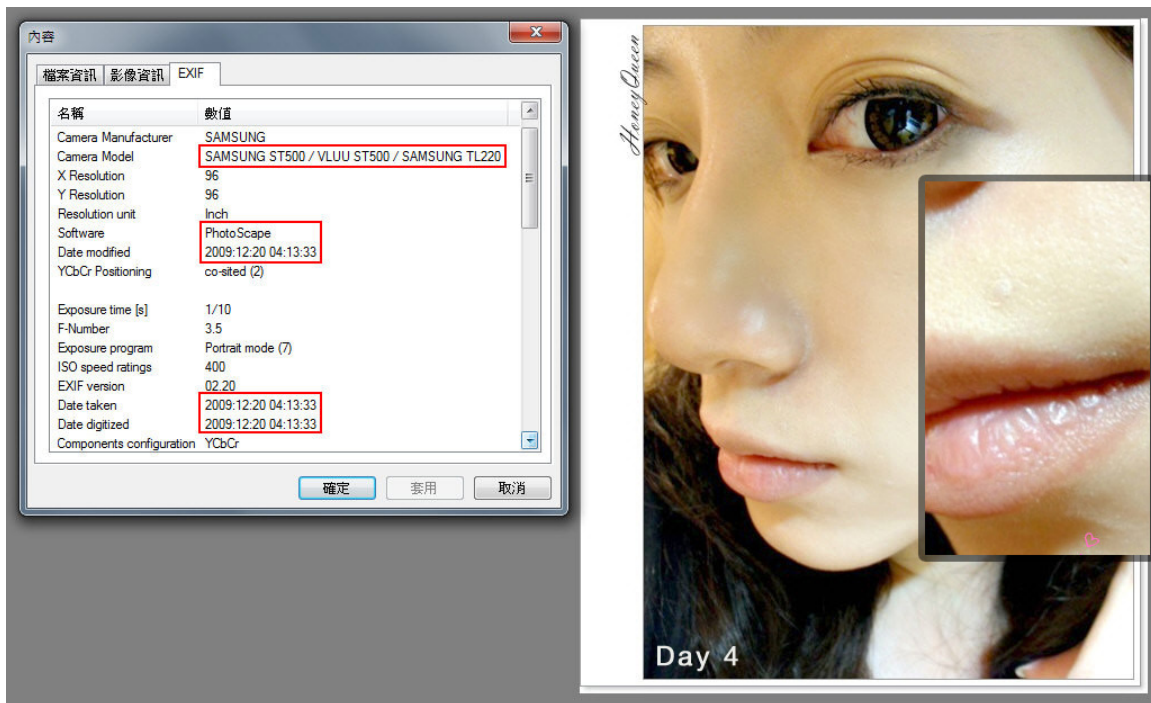


Figure 6

Moreover, the clothes and the makeup she wore were the same in all the photos. Therefore, it is really difficult to find out it is a fake unless it is full of flaws. There is

another scandal that the contracting company even provided a shopping checkout list for the blogger to prove that the item he/she writes about is really purchase by him/herself.

These evidences come along with questions: What if blogs posted statements that the review was written for a contracting company? Does it still work as well as a review-like advertisement? These questions can be categorized like this:

If the product placement is

1. Clearly marked as an advertisement –

A. Do readers still buy it?

1). If readers don't buy it – then it is a failure, otherwise, it is a success.

2. Not clearly marked as an advertisement –

A. If it is distinguished as an advertisement then are audiences still

1) Believing it? or

2) Not believing it?

B. If audiences can't distinguish it – is that ethical?

To answer the last question, I think it is unethical even if the product placement did not be marked as an advertisement. Because not being marked as an advertisement might cause a lot of issues, such as lawsuits. This will be a cheating to the audience, which is totally not fare to the public. Since it is a cheating, it might work for a while, but it will not work for the long term concern. Therefore, it is better to be marked as an advertisement, because people today are drowning in information and will not have much time to figure out the real truth of it. We even should establish a law for product placement such as São Paulo, a city in Brazil, has lunched a new law in 2007 called “The

Clean City” or “Antibillboard” that the government made all the billboards empty (Figure 7) so that the passerby in São Paulo can see the real face of the city.



Figure 7

Last but not least, if we want to passively avoid the product placement advertisement, one is that we can run away from the place that is involved with human beings, such as countryside and nature in the wild, or two, we can simply close our eyes.

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