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## "Sex and the City" film a marketing dream

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By Michelle Nichols, Reuters  
May 16, 2008 - 12:00 a.m. EST

NEW YORK (Reuters) - From Manolo Blahnik high heels to designer dresses, the materialism of the characters in television's "[Sex and the City](#)" has made the movie version a marketing dream that some companies are paying for dearly and at least one is getting for free.

The film about the glamorous lives of writer Carrie, publicist Samantha, lawyer Miranda and curator Charlotte, whose friendships, loves and fashion sense in Manhattan captivated millions of viewers during six seasons on HBO, opens in [theaters](#) worldwide this month.

Manolo Blahnik and Jimmy Choo became household names thanks to Carrie's love of designer shoes. Now some corporations are hoping her influence will reach beyond fashion and that fans will covet products ranging from luxury cars to designer handbags.

[New Line Cinema](#) has reportedly dubbed it "the Super Bowl for women" in reference to the U.S. football championship that sees companies pay millions of dollars for television ads.

The movie has "promotional partnerships" with at least eight companies whose products appear in the film.

Sarah Jessica Parker, who plays Carrie and produced the movie, said it could not have been made without these deals.

"It's a huge part of making a movie now, it's a huge part of financing and marketing in foreign territories and it would have been impossible, unfortunately, for us to make this movie without some partnerships," Parker told reporters.

### Photo

*Click on photo to enlarge*



[Actresses](#) (L-R) Kristin Davis, Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon and Kim Cattrall arrive for the German premiere of "Sex And The City: The Movie" at a [cinema](#) in Berlin May 15, 2008.  
REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch

"The challenge is ... when is product distracting and when does it fit into a story? Fortuitously, these women are material people," she said.

#### TOUTING LINKS TO FILM

Parker said the partnerships often do not involve companies paying to have their products in the film. Instead, businesses spend heavily to promote their ties to the movie.

While Carrie, Miranda and Charlotte travel in New York's signature yellow cabs, Carrie's love interest, "Mr. Big," cruises around in a black Mercedes-Benz.

Meanwhile, Samantha is living on the U.S. West Coast and drives a white Mercedes-Benz SUV that is unavailable in the United States until January.

Steve Cannon of Mercedes-Benz said the company does not pay for product placement but has its own media campaign promoting its involvement in the film and the product used.

"Given the built-in fan base, it's pretty certain regardless of what the initial reviews say that it's going to be a solid success," Cannon said. "We decided that this was one of these projects we would spend extra money activating."

The designer handbag-renting Web site, Bag Borrow or Steal, was approached by New Line to be a partner after it was written into the story by writer/director Michael Patrick King.

"It was really a [Cinderella story](#) for us," said Jodi Watson of the bag rental firm. "It's instant credibility for our concept and our brand."

She said the company did not pay to be included in the movie. But it has spent more money to tout its connection to the movie than it has on any other promotional campaign.

#### 'FEMALE FANTASY'

Does product placement really work?

"There's quite a bit of research that suggests it works in different ways and for different reasons," said S. Shyam Sundar, director of the Media Effects Research Lab at Penn State University.

Elayne Rapping, professor of American Studies at The State University of New York in Buffalo, New York, said "Sex and the City" tapped into some women's dreams.

"The selling of lifestyles and clothes was a major factor in the success of that show," she said. "It's very much a female fantasy of what working women wish they had, but we all know we don't have."

Some unlikely companies found themselves unexpectedly caught up in "Sex and the City."

In one scene, Carrie and Miranda eat lunch in a park with paper bags from British sandwich chain Pret A Manger placed on their laps in what appears to be an obvious case of product placement. But that was not the case.

Sacha Turner, the company's New York business development manager, said Parker regularly buys lunch from Pret and had requested the sandwiches for the scene simply because she likes them.

"We donated it," Turner said. "It's fantastic advertising for us, but we were just really (pleased) that she had requested us."

Reuters/Nielsen

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