

Impact of Brand Placement in Films- A Viewer's Perception

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Abstract- Recently, several factors such as consumer tendency to avoid television commercials by zipping and zapping them, audience fragmentation due to the rise in the number of cable channels, and commercial clutter driven by increasing time allocated to advertisements and a simultaneous decrease in commercial length have caused marketers to develop innovative advertising techniques. These changes have led manufacturers and marketers to seek newer ways product placement to reach the consumer. From the mere fact that product placement exists, one can determine that corporate India has found this advertising practice to be a useful tool, or at least an avenue to explore. Even with the risk involved, marketers and advertisers find that product placement can be a valuable marketing tool for creating greater exposure for their products. Product placement can be viewed as an alternative to traditional advertising, and marketers are looking for new ways to gain awareness among consumers. Films and television offer product exposure to millions of consumers, making product placement a rapidly growing advertising medium. By subtly weaving a product into a scene, marketers hope audiences will connect their brand with the stars or story they are seeing on the screen. When product placement works, the message can be more effective than a traditional commercial. The impact is greater because the audience is involved in the plot of the movie. The current study explores the viewer's perception regarding brand placement in films. It further explores the gender as determinant of ad recall capability.

I INTRODUCTION

Brand placement refers to the practice of including a brand name, product, package, signage, or other trademark merchandise within a motion picture, television or other media vehicles for increasing the memorability of the brand and for instant recognition at the point of purchase. According to Maninder P. Singh (2006) Product placement is a marketing practice designed to intentionally insert products into the content of entertainment programs, such as movies and television programs. In most cases, the placement is subtle so as not to divert significant attention from the main content of the program or media outlet. Patric and Julia (2002) argued that Product placement in its very sense means the presentation of branded goods on screen, either visually (if the product is shown), or verbally (if it is mentioned or described).

Balasubramanian (1994) defines product placement as paid messages, which seek to influence audiences through the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a film or television programme. Wells (2001) argued that many advertisers considers product placement as a targeted and a cost effective way to reach consumers. Gould et al (2000) are of the view that in certain ways it is a hybrid of advertising and publicity as it involves using movies or other media content to place or incorporate a brand in return for money or some other promotional consideration. Balasubramanian (1994) stated that usually advertising agencies are involved in placing the clients' product in TV shows or films, but at times a specialist firm act as a liaison between agency and studio. Advertisers are looking for newer methods and media to reach the consumers for various reasons. Placement can be in the form of verbal mentions in dialogue, actual use by a character, visual displays such as a corporate logo on a vehicle or billboard, brands used as set decoration, or even snatches of actual radio or television commercials. Commercials may even be specially developed for use in a specific film. Balasubramanian (1994) stated that moviemakers are also benefited from products placements in films. Sometimes movie marketing costs remain equal to the cost of making it, and product placements in such movies helps in subsidizing such costs. Some of the major advantages that product placement offers includes no mute button, low cost, less obtrusive, does not interrupt programming, viewers captive attention and global reach. When these elements are combined it allows companies to strengthen their brand awareness, improve their image, and gain exposure for their products.

Stogel (1992) said that in today's competitive market, advertisers are placing traditional TV and print ads in unconventional places. Friendly (1983) mentioned that most of the marketers pays fees of \$50,000 to \$100,000 or even higher so that their brands can make a remarkable presence in movies and on television programmes. This practice has been existed from long but got a boost from 1982. The use of feature films as a strategy for introducing new products has grown increasingly sophisticated. Savvy marketers now build elaborate marketing communication plans cross-promoting films and brands. While some new brands have been successfully launched with placement strategies, many brands featured in films are already familiar to viewers. Understanding the consumer psyche, the triggers and barriers to a product category, achieving brand credibility and respect takes years together. And this is the stage when

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these brands need some additional support for their promotion. In this case, placement may best serve as a means of maintaining visibility and top-of-mind awareness among target markets. Placement may be successful in terms of developing or strengthening brand preference, or viewers might perceive the brand to be endorsed by the star. Recently, several factors such as consumer tendency to avoid television commercials by zipping and zapping them, audience fragmentation due to the rise in the number of cable channels, and commercial clutter driven by increasing time allocated to advertisements and a simultaneous decrease in commercial length have caused marketers to develop innovative advertising techniques. These changes have led manufacturers and marketers to seek product placement as a means to reach the consumer. Balasubramanian stated that product placement is a “paid product message aimed at influencing movie or television audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie or television program,” and this paper will analyze product placements under that definition in both film and television.

A. Ethical Concerns

Although product placement is a well-known and widely accepted practice today, controversy has not disappeared. Critics perceive product placement to have an inherent element of deception in that placements are not clearly labeled as advertisements and therefore may be viewed as “hidden but paid” subliminal messages. A study of product placements conducted by Nebenzahl and Secunda (1999) found that most of their respondents did not object to overt product placements, but those respondents who objected, did so on ethical grounds. There have been failed attempts to ban product placement, but the First Amendment has thwarted those efforts and protected product placement as free speech. He also found that the various strategies of product placement impact differently on consumers’ evaluative and ethical judgments and their effects interact with the type of program. Brennan et al (2004) investigated the attitudes and perceptions of Australian moviegoers in respect to the acceptability of product placement and audience attitudes towards the placement of ethically-charged products, such as alcohol, guns and cigarettes. They observed that Australian consumers found ethically-charged products to be less acceptable than neutral products. Gender comparisons revealed that males are more accepting of both ethically charged and neutral placements. The study depicting the comparisons to the previous American, Austrian, and French findings showed a similar pattern of individual influences on product-placement perceptions. The present paper aims to analyze the viewers’ response towards brand placements in films with reference to male and female gender.

II METHOD

A. The Study

The study is exploratory in nature and makes an effort to understand the consumer responses to brand placements in films with respect to male and female population. It aims to understand the impact of Gender on the difference in opinions.

B. The Sample

A total sample of 200 respondents was taken for the study (100 Male & 100 Female). The sample has been drawn from varied socio-economic groups representing a cross-section of the population of Indore city. All the respondents were keen towards the films and had their own views to every aspect related to films.

C. Data Collection

Primary data has been collected through self- designed, structured questionnaire, constituting of 26 statements on non-disguised 5 point Likert Scale.

D. Data Analysis

Z-test has been applied for data analysis. Z values were calculated to study whether males and females differ in their perception regarding brands placed in films. The following null hypothesis was developed.

- i. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding easy identification of brands placed in movies.
- ii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents’ perception of purchasing the brands/products after watching the movies.
- iii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents’ perception of brand placement actually promotes the brand/product.
- iv. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents’ perception of promoting brand awareness through brand placement.
- v. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents’ perception regarding the product placement in movies receives a higher processing motivation on the part of the viewers due to intentional exposure.
- vi. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondent’s perception regarding the success/ failure of the movie affects the brand.

- vii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents' perception of changing their preferences when their favorite star promotes any particular brand in a movie.
 - viii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents' perception regarding, product placement has switched from a practice that helped make scenes more authentic to a successful tool in product promotion.
 - ix. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, prominent product placements elicited higher recall than subtle placements.
 - x. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, low value brands placed in a big banner movie helps in its promotion.
 - xi. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception in recognizing the brands placed in movies in the background.
 - xii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondent's perception regarding, brands placed in movies gives a competitive edge to the company.
 - xiii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents' perception regarding, movies are an appropriate medium for brand promotion.
 - xiv. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents' perception regarding the brands / products placed in movies sometimes target the wrong segment of viewers
 - xv. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents' perception that movies provoke children to buy high involvement goods like cars and bikes, which are, for some people not affordable.
 - xvi. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondent's perception regarding movies promotes the wrong brand/product sometimes.
 - xvii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondent's perception regarding alcohol and cigarette brands placed in movies gives the negative social impact.
- the value of Z -computed $>$ Z -critical i.e. (2.565 $>$ 1.960). The null hypothesis is rejected.
- iii. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception of brand placement actually promoting the band/product because the value of Z -computed $>$ Z -critical i.e. (4.46 $>$ 1.960). The null hypothesis is rejected.
 - iv. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding brand placement promotes brand awareness because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (1.404 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis is accepted.
 - v. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding the product placement in movies receives a higher processing motivation on the part of the viewers due to intentional exposure because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (0.667 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.
 - vi. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding the success/ failure of the movie affects the brand because the value of Z -computed $>$ Z -critical i.e. (3.582 $>$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.
 - vii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception of changing their preferences when their favorite star promotes any particular brand in a movie because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (1.236 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.
 - viii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, product placement has switched from a practice that helped make scenes more authentic to a successful tool in product promotion because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (0.338 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.
 - ix. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, prominent product placements elicited higher recall than subtle placements because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (1.9498 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.
 - x. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, low value brands placed in a big banner movie helps in its promotion because the value of Z -computed $>$ Z -critical i.e. (3.362 $>$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.
 - xi. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception in recognizing the brands placed in movies in the background because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (0.4481 $<$ 1.960). The null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.
 - xii. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, brands

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- i. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding easy identification of brands placed in movies, because the value of Z -computed $<$ Z -critical i.e. (0.3025 $<$ 1.96). The null hypothesis is accepted.
- ii. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception of purchasing the brands/products after watching the movies because

placed in movies gives a competitive edge to the company because the value of Z-computed > Z-critical i.e. (3.80 > 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected.

- xiii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding, movies are an appropriate medium for brand promotion because the value of Z-computed < Z-critical i.e. (0.2122 < 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted.
- xiv. There is significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding the brands / products placed in movies sometimes target the wrong segment of viewers because the value of Z-computed > Z-critical i.e. (2.1453 > 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected.
- xv. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception that movies provoke children to buy high involvement goods like cars and bikes, which are, for some people not affordable because the value of Z-computed < Z-critical i.e. (1.447 < 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted.
- xvi. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding movies promotes the wrong brand/ product sometimes because the value of Z-computed < Z-critical i.e. (1.2485 < 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted.
- xvii. There is no significant difference amongst the female and male respondents perception regarding alcohol and cigarette brands placed in movies gives the negative social impact because the value of Z-computed < Z-critical i.e. (1.2485 < 1.960). The null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted.

$$Z = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\sigma_{p1}^2}{n_1} + \frac{\sigma_{p2}^2}{n_2}}}$$

Table 1: Showing Mean, SD and Z Values at 5% significance level (1.960) of with reference to female & male respondents

	FEMALE RESPONDENTS (n ₁ =100)		MALE RESPONDENTS (n ₂ =100)		Z
	MEAN(X ₁)	S.D.(σ _{p1})	MEAN(X ₂)	S.D. (σ _{p2})	
H ₀₁	4.33	0.964574539	4.37	0.90626328	0.3025
H ₀₂	3.24	1.111191916	3.66	1.20788654	2.565
H ₀₃	3.66	1.207886542	2.91	1.17288387	4.46
H ₀₄	3.49	1.150274451	3.26	1.16878595	1.404
H ₀₅	3.46	1.122947061	3.56	0.99818016	0.667
H ₀₆	2.91	1.172883867	3.49	1.15027445	3.582
H ₀₇	3.26	1.168785954	3.46	1.12294706	1.236
H ₀₈	3.34	1.065719276	3.29	1.02784466	0.338

H _{O9}	3.29	1.027844661	3.57	1.0075974	1.9498
H _{O10}	3.57	1.007597402	3.62	1.09894348	3.362
H _{O11}	3.62	1.098943478	3.69	1.11640657	0.4481
H _{O12}	3.41	1.215181742	3.36	1.14168049	0.2122
H _{O13}	3.36	1.141680491	3.6	1.18065211	1.034
H _{O14}	3.37	1.001564433	3.68	1.04330477	2.145
H _{O15}	3.68	1.043304773	3.3	1.14150353	1.447
H _{O16}	3.3	1.141503527	3.52	1.3444987	1.248
H _{O17}	3.52	1.344498705	3.73	1.08110493	1.2195

Astous et al (1999) studied the impact of different strategies of product placement on consumer reactions in the context of television sponsorship. They evaluated four factors viz. type of placement, sponsor's image, type of television program and sponsor-program congruity. They found that strategies of product placement impact differently on consumers' evaluative and ethical judgments and that their effects interact with the type of television program. They also suggested that the evaluations of product placement are most negative in the context of mini-series/drama television programs. Furthermore, product placements that play a passive role and are not clearly expressed within the program are generally perceived as less ethical, especially when they appear in information/services magazines.

Although product placement is a well-known and widely accepted practice today, controversy has not disappeared. Critics perceive product placement to have an inherent element of deception in that placements are not clearly labeled as advertisements and therefore may be viewed as "hidden but paid" subliminal messages. Gupta et al (1997) has cited concern for product placements of ethically charged products such as guns, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco. Placing such products and brands in a film is seen as an alarming way to get around. An even larger group is opposed only to certain types of products' being placed. Wake (2002) mentioned that according to The American lung association and the Canadian cancer society, there should be a new movie rating system that must include tobacco use in the calculation to reduce the number of young people exposed to such messages. Hudson et al (2008) studied the ethics of advertising in children movies. For the purpose of the study, he studied the ethical evaluations of parents regarding product placements in children's films and found that parents wanted more regularity on the use of product placements, especially placements of alcohol, tobacco, and fast foods.

One of the studies by Jodi Burman (2005) establishes a foundation for examining the relationship between product placement and arousal, pleasure, and brand recall finds out that suggest that arousal, as a single factor does not affect brand recall of product placement. However, with optimal levels of arousal and pleasure mentioned earlier, product

placement can be seen as a positive marketing tool. Rupert Howell, MD, ITV Brand and Commercial said that Product placement could be an innovative and important new revenue stream for ad-funded, commercial broadcasters, further enabling investment in original UK content, at a time when advertising revenues are declining. Tapan K. Panda and (2005) studied the rationality of the brand placement, the possible congruity that can be built in the story line and the image of the brand in creating a positive impact in the usage through the characterization in the story. This may be proved to be the indicators of success of effective brand placement in films and if so, as variables in bringing the desired change in consumers' attitude. Auty and Susan (2004) observed that the implicit memory (i.e. repetition) is more important than explicit recall in terms of children's brand choices. Baerns Barbara (2005) measured the future viability of the principle of separating advertising and programme content in advertising, journalism, and public relations. Research results of Brennan et al (2004) found that brand placement recognition levels achieved by audio-visual prominent placements exceed the recognition rates achieved by visual-only prominent placements. Galician and Mary-Lou (2004) argues that so many aspects of the American culture have been connected to advertising, marketing, and consumption that it becomes difficult to find any other form of discourse or ideas that are not connected to consumption or branding. The study of Gupta et al (1998) illustrates common product-placement strategies in Hollywood films and attempts to draw conclusions about the kinds of placements and the recall of products among audiences. Jacobson 1995, M. and Mazur A 1995 examines the process, discusses costs, and lists examples of placements in feature films. Ong and D. Meni (1994) investigated the associations among moviegoers purchase evaluations, brand recall patterns and ethical judgments of the medium. Moonhee & David (2007) found that product placements within a movie are often either treated as a binary variable, it is present or absent. However, placements can occur at many different levels ranging from a simple background prop to the product being an instrumental part of the story. The influence of 3 different levels of brand placements on explicit and implicit memory for the brand,

implicit choice behavior, and attitudes toward the brand were examined. The results confirmed that levels of brand placements influence recognition of the target brand and attitudes toward the brand. On the other hand, simple placement of the brand within the movie influenced implicit memory and the implicit choice task. One of the studies by Kohli et.al (2004) highlights that advertisements on television need not necessarily work, because the viewers invariably switch over channels or mute the sound when commercials crop up during shows and even cricket matches. On the other hand, a viewer is glued to his theatre seat no matter what the situation in the film is, but also feel that there could be certain barriers in such cases, because of uncertainties whether a film would run or not, unrealistic pricing, exaggerated expectations from the advertiser and lack of professionalism and finds out that if both filmmakers and advertisers take one step towards each other and realize that this relationship could be symbiotic, it would make a lot of sense. Sung et al (2008) examines to the extent and context of brand placement in Korean films over the past nine year period. He found that brands are prevalent and occurrences have increased over time. Comedy and action were the most popular genres for placement. In terms of product/service categories, non-alcoholic beverage, alcoholic beverage, automobile, clothing, and food brands appeared most often, and Coca Cola was the most frequently occurring brand. Wenner and Lawrence (2004) emphasise on the the ethical propriety of current trends in product placement in television and film entertainment. He analyzed three distinct "genres" of contemporary placements viz Product Placement, Product Integration, and Video Insertion.

IV CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Product placement has become a big business and it is because of the growing importance of entertainment in the lives of modern viewing audiences. Our society spends an increasing amount of time in front of the big and small screen alike, and advertisers are finding more ways to reach viewers. While some experts argue that the public is not as susceptible to advertising when it is aware of the tactic, the majority of audiences do not seem to be protesting the use of product placement. Marketers can use product placements in films and television programs as a way to bring about more awareness for their products. As placements have become more prevalent, they have also become more accepted by the consumer. In addition, product placements are a proven way to reach the consumer. Even so, caution should be taken as the marketer has little control of the message surrounding the product, or the audience. Since product placement is seen as an acceptable communications tool, corporate marketers should feel relatively comfortable utilizing this advertising method but should assess the opportunities for their individual effectiveness in the promotion mix.

The current study has been carried out on a sample of 200 respondents. Further it can be administered on a larger population to increase accuracy of findings. The study has

been conducted in Indore City only; it can further be administered on a larger geographically dispersed sample across various other demographic variables. In the study the responses of viewers were taken, which can also be conducted by taking the views of the brand promoters.

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