

Promotion Using Product Placement In Movies: Perception Of Rural And Urban Indian Audience

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ABSTRACT

Product placement as a promotional tool is often used as an alternative by marketers. Not much focus is placed on this tool. The present paper discusses concepts related to product placement. The paper highlights the importance of product placement as a promotional tool. It has implications for marketers and researchers. Initially, the literature was reviewed to understand the concepts and findings in product placement. It was found that not much work is done in India on product placement. The study intends to capture the perceptual differences of rural and urban consumers. The differences in perception were studied on the basis of certain factors. The responses were obtained from urban and rural consumers near Indore, Madhya Pradesh, and independent sample t-test was used to study the significant differences. Results show that both rural and urban consumers are influenced by products placed in movies. However, the urban consumers were more interested in buying the products used in movies than the rural consumers.

Keywords: Visual Placements, Rural and Urban Audience, Bollywood Movies

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new technologies and the demand for low-cost methods of advertising have made the marketers to modify their promotion strategies and discover new ways of advertising the products. Over the years, Product Placement has evolved as a new marketing communication tool and has gained more popularity than the traditional methods of advertising. Product placement is a tactic used by the marketers to promote the brands by using real branded products in fictional and non-fictional media so as to enhance the interest of the customers in the product. This method is usually adopted by the marketers to make an impact on the audiences. The objectives of making an impact can possibly be to raise purchase intention, increase brand awareness, attract consumer's attention, enhance brand recognition, etc. (Schoenherr, 2012). Product Placement in movies is increasing rapidly as movies provide product exposure to millions of consumers. By smartly using a product within a scene, marketers expect that the viewers will be able to associate their brand with the movie actor and the storyline of the film. Thereby, it increases the awareness and recognition of the product (Waldt et al., 2007).

Product Placement in Bollywood movies (popular name for the Indian film industry) is not an entirely new concept. In 1998, the brand Coke was integrated in the Bollywood film *Taal*. The product was shown as being shared by the lead actors of the film. Similarly, products like the mouth freshener 'Pass- Pass' and 'Hero cycles' were placed in the Indian film *Yaadein*. Both the products were embedded in the storyline of the film and were well represented as being used by the characters of the film. Product placements help in developing a strong emotional relationship with the consumer as product placements lead to a higher awareness of the brand than the other types of advertisements. In the recent years, the use of product placements in Bollywood movies by the marketers has increased rapidly. The film makers are focusing on using multi brands in the film to make it look more realistic. In Farhan Akhtar's film *Don*, many products were integrated including TAG Heuer, Motorola, Garnier, Citibank and Louise Philippe. In *Dhoom 2*, products like Coke, Pepe Jeans, Sony, Disney Channel, McDonalds and Suzuki Zeus were placed. In the 2011 film *Bodyguard*, Sony Vaio and Blackberry cell phones were extensively placed in the film. Both the products are shown in many scenes of the film and are used by both the lead actors of the film. Similarly, in the 2010 film *Aisha*, numerous brands, including Volkswagen Beetle, L'Oreal, Dior, etc. were placed within the movie. Product placements in movies have now become one of the most effective and popular methods of marketing a product.

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There are different kinds of product placements: Visual Placements, Audio Placements and Plot Connection Placements. Audio products' placement occur in movies when the name of the brand is cited in the dialogue of the film. Visual product placements are of three types. Firstly, when the brand itself is seen as part of the background of the film or is exhibited by the characters of the film. Secondly, the brand's logo or insignia appears in the film. And thirdly, an advertisement of the product is shown in the film to create an 'ambiance' in the backdrop of the film (for example, billboards, TV advertisements, etc.) (Brennan et al., 2004). Plot connection product placements happen when the product is being used as a part of the plot of the film like getting an important position in the storyline of the film or constructing the personality of the character. It includes constituents of both audio and visual placements (Nuangthong, 2007). The popularity of product placements in movies over traditional advertisements and their subsequent impact on the audience raises many questions in the researcher's mind. Like how the placement of a product in the film can affect a consumer's attitude towards the product? How the placement of a product in a film increases the brand's recall and recognition by the viewers? Or does the type of product placement used by the marketer have an impact on the brand awareness of the audience? Does the placement of a product in the movies can make it look more realistic to the viewers? This research attempts to provide a better insight on the effects of product placement in films on the audience and on their buying patterns. It also attempts to enhance the literature on the significance of product placement in films and its effects on the audience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Patil and Bisoyi (2012) highlighted that the product placement is a form of hybrid communication that consists of all the paid efforts which influence the viewers towards the commercial benefit of the product, as it uses communications that portrays a fictional character. The viewers are generally not aware about these commercial influencing efforts and, therefore, deal with the content of these communications in a different way than they deal with the commercial advertisements. The findings of Karrh (1998) stated that the memory is enhanced for a brand that is placed inside the movie relative to the memory of the same brand when advertised without placing it inside the movie. As per the researchers Gupta and Lord (1998), brand recall and brand association are higher when the brand placement is both audio- visual rather than just visual placements. When the brand placement is audio-visual, the viewers are able to create a mental picture for the product (visuals) as well as they are able to verbalize the words in the audio background of the movie. This leads to a higher brand recall than the visual-only brand placements.

According to Balasubramanian (1994), the type of product placement also lays a significant impact on the recognition and awareness of the brand. Prominent placement refers to the placement whose traits are designed in such a way that the product becomes the center of attention of the viewers. Whereas, subtle product placement is one in which the viewer is not clearly able to make out the brand as a placement by seeing it in the movie. When the product is prominently placed within the movie, the brand recognition and awareness are high as compared to the subtle placement because prominent placement focuses on longer screen placements and high visibility. Furthermore, the findings of Lord and Gupta (2010) stated that the subtle placement of products leads to a positive attitude of the viewer towards the brand, while prominent placement leads to a negative attitude. This is so because the viewers are not able to identify the commercial intent of products in subtle placements, which results in higher and valuable purchase intentions of the consumers. In the prominent placements, the commercial intent of the product becomes too obvious, which leads to lower purchase intentions of the viewers (Baxter et al. (nd.).

According to the researchers Zajonc and Markus (1982), product placements can positively impact the attitude of people towards the products. When the product placement in the movie is congruent, the attitude of the audience towards the product is positive. Furthermore, the repeated exposure of the product to the audience improves their attitude about the product. It stimulates positive feelings about the product and optimistically influences the behavior of the audience, which ultimately increases the preference of the audience towards the product (Auty and Lewis, 2004). The product placements in the movies offer a deepened sense of realism to the viewers. The usage of brands in the movies increases the realism as it provides a real touch to the daily situations of life (Reid & DeLorme, 1999). Product placement intensifies a film's connection with the audience of the film. Placing a product in films has greater credibility than the traditional advertisements, as it gives a feeling of reality to the consumers, and they also do not get distracted from the film's communications (Waldt et al., 2007).

According to Patil and Bisoyi (2012), the enjoyment levels of the audiences were enhanced when the products were

placed in the movies rather than other media vehicles. Product placement becomes an essential element of the script of the film as it makes a film realistic. Snoodly speculated that now, the lifestyle of consumers is so significantly drenched with the brands, that the inclusion of brands in the movies has become essential. The placement of products in the movies increases the enjoyment of the viewers as it helps them in adopting new brands, latest fashion trends, etc. (Braun and Law, 2000). As per the findings of Russell and Stern (2006), consumers generally try to link the character of the movies with the products placed within a movie. When the customers are rapidly exposed to the product placement in the films, they start associating the product with the character. They evaluate and analyze the products by maintaining an attitudinal balance between their relationship with the character of the film, and the relationship of the product placed with the character of the film. They develop a positive attitude towards the product placed in the movie when they are able to associate the features of the product, the character of the film and their own selves.

According to Morton and Friedman (2002), viewers usually try to link the movie star with the product placed in the movie. This connection of the product with the actor increases the intrinsic expressiveness of the placement messages. When the consumer sees a movie star using a placed product, they start developing their liking towards the placed product. They try to associate the credibility of the actor with the product placed in the movie and build a positive behavior towards the product. Furthermore, product placement proves to be beneficial for the movie actors as well. According to Jayswal and Salvi (2007), when brands are placed in the movies, the actors get a chance of being associated with prominent brands, which helps them in enhancing their personality and also makes them look stylish and fashionable.

The association of the storyline of the movie with the product plays a vital role in the recognition of the brand by the viewers. When the product is highly associated with the storyline of the movie - like using the product to resolve a difficulty in the movie, the recognition of the brand placed within the movie is high. Whereas, when the product is not well linked with the storyline of the movie and is just used in the background of the film, the recognition of the placed brand by the viewers is low (Yang and Ewoldsen, 2007). Furthermore, as per the research conducted by Barn (2009), it is very essential to suitably associate the placed product with the storyline of the movie. If the product is not well incorporated within the movie, the viewers will start getting irritated with the movie and will feel that they are watching a three-hour advertisement of the product, and not a movie. Hence, the researchers felt the need for understanding the mindset of the Indian consumers. No study was available that was studying the rural and urban mindset for products placed in movies. For a country like India, where the major population is in the rural areas, it becomes essential to study the mindset of the rural population. Similarly, an understanding of the urban respondents is required because they influence the thinking of their rural counterparts. The paper aims to capture differences/similarities in the responses of urban and rural audiences with reference to products placed in movies.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to study the perception of rural and urban people for products placed in movies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature. The research studies the effects of product placement in movies on the audience. It describes and explains how the placement of products in the films can influence audience's buying behavior, their perception of the placed product, their attitude towards the placed product, etc. Important factors considered for understanding attitude includes, noticing of product by the respondent, intention to purchase after seeing the product in a movie, image, cost perception, quality perception, social class perception, fashion- ability, and influence of friends. The hypotheses framed are as follows:

Hypotheses:

- ❖ **H₀₁: Products placed in movies are noticed equally by the urban and rural population.**
- ❖ **H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the attitude of urban and rural respondents to purchase products shown in the movies.**
- ❖ **H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the image perceived by urban and rural respondents for products shown in the movies.**

- ❖ H₀₄: There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural respondents that products shown in movies are used by the upper class 'rich' people.
- ❖ H₀₅: There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural respondents regarding the quality of the products shown in the movies. It is assumed that the products are of good quality.
- ❖ H₀₆: There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural respondents regarding the cost of the products. It is assumed that the products shown in the movies are quite costly.
- ❖ H₀₇: There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural respondents that it is trendy to use products shown in the movies.
- ❖ H₀₈: There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural respondents that using products shown in the movies impresses their friends.
- ❖ H₀₉: Respondents of urban and rural region are of same opinion regarding disturbance created in the flow of movies by the placement of products in the movies.

❖ **Data Collection and Analysis** : A self developed and administered instrument was developed in order to collect data needed for the research on the 'Impact of Product Placement in the Movies on the Audience'. The questionnaire included various queries regarding the effect of the placement of products on the viewer's buying behavior ; on changes in their attitude towards the products placed in the movies ; on their perception of the placed products when they were used in the movie. Non-probability convenient sampling method was used for the research. The study was carried out during January and February 2012. Out of the responses received for 129 respondents, the responses of 29 respondents were rejected because of incomplete details. The responses of 100 respondents were considered, so the response rate of the research was 77.51 percent. 52 respondents were from Indore (urban area), whereas 48 respondents were from small villages near Indore like Anjad, Runeja, and Ajnod (rural areas). Urban and Rural location of the respondents was taken as the independent variable. The dependent variables included responses on statements inquiring the perception of urban and rural respondents for product placement. Analysis was done using SPSS 16.0. The Independent sample t- test at 5% level of significance was employed for testing of the hypotheses.

Table 1: Group Statistics for All Hypotheses					
	Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
H01	Urban	52	3.40	1.317	.183
	Rural	48	3.67	1.209	.174
H02	Urban	52	3.58	1.194	.166
	Rural	48	2.21	1.110	.160
H03	Urban	52	3.52	1.379	.191
	Rural	48	3.60	1.333	.192
H04	Urban	52	2.33	1.080	.150
	Rural	48	3.02	1.669	.241
H05	Urban	52	3.46	1.228	.170
	Rural	48	3.60	1.106	.160
H06	Urban	52	2.50	1.196	.166
	Rural	48	3.02	1.391	.201
H07	Urban	52	3.25	1.118	.155
	Rural	48	3.48	1.031	.149
H08	Urban	52	3.73	.972	.135
	Rural	48	2.58	.986	.142
H09	Urban	52	3.67	1.232	.171
Source: Primary Data					

Table 2: Independent Sample t- Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
H01	Equal variances assumed	.367	.546	-1.037	98	.302	-.263	.253	-.766	.240
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.040	97.997	.301*	-.263	.253	-.764	.238
H02	Equal variances assumed	1.173	.282	5.923	98	.000	1.369	.231	.910	1.827
	Equal variances not assumed			5.940	97.994	.000**	1.369	.230	.911	1.826
H03	Equal variances assumed	.238	.627	-.313	98	.755	-.085	.272	-.624	.454
	Equal variances not assumed			-.313	97.786	.755*	-.085	.271	-.623	.453
H04	Equal variances assumed	19.767	.000	-2.487	98	.015	-.694	.279	-1.248	-.140
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.446	79.390	.017**	-.694	.284	-1.259	-.129
H05	Equal variances assumed	.643	.424	-.608	98	.544	-.143	.234	-.608	.323
	Equal variances not assumed			-.611	97.944	.543*	-.143	.233	-.606	.321
H06	Equal variances assumed	2.616	.109	-2.012	98	.047	-.521	.259	-1.035	-.007
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.999	93.090	.048**	-.521	.260	-1.038	-.004
H07	Equal variances assumed	.368	.545	-1.063	98	.290	-.229	.216	-.657	.199
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.066	98.000	.289*	-.229	.215	-.656	.197
H08	Equal variances assumed	.127	.723	5.856	98	.000	1.147	.196	.759	1.536
	Equal variances not assumed			5.853	97.135	.000**	1.147	.196	.758	1.537
H09	Equal variances assumed	4.804	.031	-.706	98	.482	-.160	.227	-.611	.290
	Equal variances not assumed			-.711	96.838	.479*	-.160	.225	-.607	.287
Source: Primary Data										

RESULTS

The analysis is based on responses of individuals who noticed the product placement in movies. The results of hypotheses testing are summarized in the Tables 1 and 2.

❖ **H₀₁: Not Rejected** : The hypothesis was not rejected. The value $p \geq 0.05$ indicates that no significant difference was observed with reference to noticing products placed in movies by the urban (mean = 3.40) and rural respondents (mean = 3.67).

❖ **H₀₂: Stands Rejected** : The hypothesis stands rejected at 5% level of significance ($p \leq 0.05$). Hence, urban respondents (mean = 3.58) showed a greater positive attitude than the rural respondents (mean = 2.21) to purchase products placed in movies.

❖ **H₀₃: Stands Not Rejected** : The value $p \geq 0.05$ indicates that no significant difference was observed in image perceived by the urban respondents (mean=3.52) and rural respondents (mean=3.60) for products placed in movies.

❖ **H₀₄: Stands Rejected** : The hypothesis stands rejected at 5% level of significance ($p \leq 0.05$). Hence, rural respondents (mean=2.33) had a stronger perception (than the urban respondents, (mean=3.02)) that products placed in movies are for the upper 'rich' class.

❖ **H₀₅: Stands Not Rejected** : The value $p \geq 0.05$ indicates that no significant difference was observed in the responses of urban (mean=3.46) and rural respondents (mean=3.60) regarding the quality of products placed in movies.

❖ **H₀₆: Stands Rejected** : The hypothesis stands rejected at 5% level of significance ($p \leq 0.05$). Hence, rural respondents (mean=2.50) had a stronger perception than the urban respondents (mean=3.02) that products placed in movies are costly.

H₀₇: Stands Not Rejected : The value $p \geq 0.05$ indicates that no significant difference was observed in the responses of urban (mean=3.25) and rural respondents (mean=3.48) that products placed in movies are fashionable/trendy.

H₀₈: Stands Rejected : The hypothesis stands rejected at 5% level of significance ($p \leq 0.05$). Hence, urban respondents (mean=3.73) had a stronger opinion (than their rural counterparts, (mean=2.58)) that using products placed in movies can impress friends.

H₀₉: Stands Not Rejected : The value $p \geq 0.05$ indicates that no significant difference was observed in the responses of urban (mean=2.25) and rural respondents (mean=2.48) that products placed in movies disturb the flow of the movie.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is said that in India, cricket and Bollywood are worshipped. The present study is an attempt to find out to what extent movies can help marketers in promoting their products. On the basis of the above results, it could be observed that rural and urban customers were equally noticing the products placed in movies. Thus, marketers can tap the rural and urban customers equally for product promotion through movies. Urban customers showed an inclination to purchase products shown in movies. They were more influenced by movies than by their rural counterparts. Marketers can tap the urban customers by placing products in movies (though this promotional tool may not largely influence rural customers). Influence of movies could be noticed as both urban and rural consumers had a positive perception of products placed in movies. Thus, marketers can build a strong brand image by placing their products in movies.

On an average basis, it could be said that expenditure and income of Indian rural consumers is comparatively lower than their urban counterparts. They think that the products shown in movies are for the upper class. This is not observed in case of urban customers. Thus, these products are well accepted in the urban region. However, for the rural region, marketers have to design their marketing strategy in such a way so as to dispel the notion that products shown in movies are exclusively for the upper class.

Mean scores of both rural and urban respondents clearly show that both feel that products placed in movies are of good quality. Marketers can use this to develop a strong brand image for their products. Rural respondents found products placed in movies costlier than did their urban counterparts. The reason may be the same as discussed above. The income and expenditure of rural consumers is lower than that of their urban counterparts. Movies set fashion/trends in India. Both rural and urban customers found that products placed in movies are fashionable and trendy. Marketers can use this cue to keep updating their products. The urban customers were found to impress their friends by using products placed in movies. Rural consumers do not indulge in this kind of behavior as they might harbor thoughts that movies are not very realistic. For marketers, urban customers are good targets. Lastly, both groups didn't find that the flow of a movie was disturbed by products placed in the movie. This is an advantage over TV advertising, where consumers keep changing the channels.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the study are as follows :

- 1) The study was restricted to a particular region only - in and around Indore, Madhya Pradesh.
- 2) For the study, only residential locations -both rural and urban were used. The study based on some demographic variables like income age etc. may throw up different results.
- 3) Only some selected factors/ indicators were selected for the present study.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results, it could be ascertained that rural consumers were quite positive about products placed in movies, but were not purchasing those products. They were observing the products, found the same of good quality, and fashionable. However, they felt that movies are a fantasy world that was out of their reach, and the products

showcased in movies were not for purchasing. The felt that the products were for the upper class only and were quite expensive. Urban customers were very much influenced by movies, and could be easily convinced for buying products that are shown in movies.

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