

Product Placement: More Effective than Traditional Advertising

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INTRODUCTION

One thing that the industry and academic research field agree about is that product placement is a hybrid message. All paid attempts to influence audiences for commercial benefits using communications that project a noncommercial character; under these circumstances, audiences are likely to be unaware of the commercial influence attempt and/or to process the content of such communications differently than they process commercial messages.

Product placement is said to have emerged with the birth of motion pictures in the mid 1890s; however, scholarly literature is inconsistent in the evaluation of the beginnings of the same. Originally, the idea emerged for movie studios and television networks to borrow props that led to a reduction in production costs. It was actually in the year, 1982 that the practice became more widespread, as a result of the placement of Reese Sales of the sunglasses tripled in one year, the year after with the placement of Ray-Ban sunglasses worn by Tom Cruise in the movie *Risky Business*.

Due to this unexpected commercial value of placement opportunities, interest in product placement grew tremendously, and today, a variety of branded goods in different product categories have pushed themselves onto the silver screen. The product placement process usually starts when companies approach movie studios or TV shows, and suggest them to use their products. This can also work the other way around.

It has been suggested that the commercial impact of placing a branded product on television may be greater than in movies, as television viewers are far larger in numbers. Consumers can choose when to see a movie, while television has become more pervasive in consumer lifestyles and more difficult to avoid. Results from surveys on American households have shown that the television is set on for 7.2 hours a day and that people spend 40% of their free time watching television. Also, viewers can start to develop loyalty toward the program or its characters as a result of watching favorite shows for an extended period of time. So, pairing a product with a character that the viewer is loyal to can increase product placement effectiveness, as the character brings the personality of his or her character to the product and therefore giving an opportunity of establishing a stronger message approval.

Product placement is a classic fusion between traditional advertising and Public Relations. The various types are:

1. Brand placement: Placement of commercial content, products and services, or the advertiser in general
2. Image placement: Positive presentation of an individual, organization etc. such as a politician or NGO's.
3. Location placement: Positive presentation of a geographical location, such as a country or city.
4. Generic placement: Placement of an entire product group, such as wine or chocolate.
5. Idea placement: Positive presentation of an idea, such as healthy lifestyle.

Depicting characters using certain products, or going to stores and restaurants or, portraying a reality is not only believed to be beneficial for media producers, but for the marketers as well. As one advertising agency executive stated: "With ordinary advertising you can only say so much. With placements you can hint at what kind of product it is far more effectively".

It's potential reach is greater than with traditional advertisements, since the audience cannot switch channels as with commercial breaks. Likewise, the message life becomes longer as movies and TV shows are usually released overseas and

on DVD. Benefits from investments in product placements (such as brand awareness) may therefore be received many years after the original release.

The primary advantage of product placement with regards to consumers is that the produced media becomes cheaper. Because it contains elements from both advertising and PR, It provides a benefit mix of the two elements, since the advertiser keeps some control over the message exposed to the customer, and the message is perceived credible by the audience because they will not be aware of the attempt of commercial influence, making their resistance toward the commercial message lower.

The first dimension is visual product placement. This refers to placements that can only be seen on the TV screen and are a part of the scenery in a production. The second dimension is verbal and is called audio placement. Audio placement concerns the placement being mentioned verbally in a production. The last dimension is audio/visual placement and this type of placement is both visual and verbal. It differentiates itself from the two other dimensions as it holds a major position in the plot of a production. This multidimensional nature of product placement shows that a variety of psychological processes can be in function, when a viewer is exposed to a brand in a movie or TV show.

Media producers have become more dependent on using advertisements as a way to offset production costs and a large part of the entertainment industry, such as the sport and film industry relies on product placements and sponsorship agreements.

The advertiser becomes able to expose the brand to the consumer in an indirect manner, and therefore to some extent avoid the consumers' defense mechanism and learned resistance toward traditional advertising. Several concerns with regard to product placement being a marketing communication tool is that marketers have minor knowledge if consumers are sensitive to product placements or recognize products which are deliberately placed in attribute films by marketers and advertisers.

In Hindi Cinema:

The first recognized product placement in Hindi film is "Coke" in Subhash Ghai's "*Taal*". In order to promote Stroh's Beer, actor Shahrukh Khan mentions its name in the movie "*Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge*" for a 15-second slot. BR Chopra's "*Baghban*" is an instance where Amitabh Bachchan endorsed a multiplicity of brands namely Ford Ikon, ICICI Bank and Tata Tea. As the motorcycle Rajdoot was launched through a film, a similar product placement was done by Maruti Suzuki which launched its new model "Swift" in Abhishek Bachchan starrer, "*Bunty Aur Babli*". Automobiles are among the more favorite products for placement in films as is evident from the movie "*Dhoom*" starring actor John Abraham who promoted Suzuki in a scene. The pharmaceuticals are also being promoted through films like in the movie "*Parineeta*" in which the actress Vidya Balan promotes Saridon tablets. The trend of multibrand advertising is fastly catching up which is evident in the film "*Chalte-Chalte*" starring Shahrukh Khan and Rani Mukherjee. The movie promotes Castrol engine oil, Santro and Versache.

The impact of movies on the Indian audience is one of the most influential objects. The emotional values that are attached to the film's story or the characters or even the characters portraying the characters is the key area to be targeted by advertisers. Advertising, thus plays an important role for those who want their brand to have a broad range for their own brands.

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