

## ***Effectiveness of Product Placement in Hindi Movies***

(Topic related to Advertising media)

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### **Abstract**

Media planners and brand marketers are looking for alternative media vehicles to reach at customers with a distinct message so that the memorability of the message increases and hence the brand name is popularised. A **product placement** is the inclusion of a product, package, signage, a brand name or the name of the firm in a movie or in a television programme for increasing memorability of the brand and instant recognition at the point of purchase. Placements can be in form of verbal mentions in dialogue, actual use by character, visual displays such as corporate logo on a vehicle or billboard, brands used as set decorations, or even snatches of actual radio or television commercials. This is a growing trend in Indian films for various reasons.

This paper highlights the basic reasons for placing products and brands in films with special reference to hindi films and the effectiveness of these placements as a tool for enhancing the recall value of the brands in the long run.

The paper proposes a category of placements that can be used by brand marketers to put their brands in the films and identifies the caveat for putting the brands in the films.

This paper suggests about the modality and plot connections in bringing congruity in the presentation so that the brand placement does not look out of context. It also focuses on how actually the product placement works and the procedures and people involved in the process .

This research paper has implications for both academicians and practitioners who include the advertising agency people, the media planners, the brand managers, film scriptwriters and producers for developing strategies to increase the use of product placement as a tool for brand communications. The paper also highlights the future research directions in this area for Indian brand managers and academicians.

### **Key Words:**

Product Placement, Brand Recognition, Brand Recall, Brand Memory and Congruence

### **Introduction:**

Product 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. Product placements are commercial insertions within a particular media program intended to heighten the visibility of a brand, type of product or service. The common practice has been that advertising has been inserted within breaks, 30 seconds or 10 seconds commercial, but with increasing number of channels and media clutter, the target audience is not properly exposed to the message. The tendency of the audience is to change the channel whenever an advertisement appears. But by subtle placement of products in the settings of the Movie or a TV serial, the promotional message can be effectively put across the target audience. These insertions are not meant to be commercial break ups rather an integral part of the medium so that the visibility of the brand increases.

Attempts are made for the viewer to read the product or the brand as a quality of the characters using and approving it. Scripts are tailor made for the desired brand so that when they are incorporated they look natural. It is done through special mention in the programs, placement of logo or may be a shot of that particular brand. Movies have been used as the most popular platform for product placement. Showman Subhash Ghai's *Yaadein* showcased brands like Pass-pass and coca-cola. But recall the Rishi Kapoor starrer *Karz* by the filmmaker, which had an entire song sequence with the Emami banner at the backdrop. Similarly time and again we have witnessed so many brands like ICICI, Yamaha, Pepsi, Lays in movies *Aakhein*, *Baghban*, *Dhoom*, *Khushi* and *Krish* respectively.

Product placements are different than the celebrity endorsement advertisements in many ways. The celebrities endorse products and brands with commercial reasons, which normally comes in the breaks in television programs or in cinema halls. The phenomenon of zipping and change in the television usage behaviour due to surfing during commercial breaks has reduced the effectiveness of the television commercials. Similarly the commercials on cinema halls are found to be of low involvement as the audience takes them as blocks between the reasons of visiting the cinema hall and the time available to them for entertainment. So the brand communication and the entertainment products are viewed differently by the audience in both the media. Brand placement provides an opportunity where the involved audience gets exposure to the brands and products during the natural process of narration of the movie or television commercial.

We have taken the issue of the movie as area of research because compared to television, movies are found to be of higher involvement. The audience can undertake multitude of working while observing the television program at a home setting which may affect the degree of attention span of the audience and hence reduce the over all effectiveness of the medium for enhancing brand memory. Quite contrast to this is the movie going behaviour where the audience makes a voluntary choice for viewing (exposure) at a cost (financial, time and opportunity cost) for the purpose of entertainment. So he is more receptive to the information provided to him in the movie hall setting which also includes the dissemination of the product information. Further to this in a television viewing, the audience has a choice to shift the channel, as the programming is an involuntary exposure due to fixed schedules, content and timing. This involuntary exposure makes the audience to have a choice of voluntary viewing of the program of his choice and then he or she may switch to another channel. It has been observed from research that brand recall for commercials shown during the television programs with higher level of TRPs are very poor due to the channel switching behaviour (Fourier and Dolan 1997). High level of media clutter, similarity of programming across channels, channel switching behaviour are the factors responsible to generate sufficient level of research interest among researchers at the practice of brand placements in movies.

It is very important to expose the product only to the target audience. A good marketer should first identify the target market based on geographic segmentation and demographic variables or may be even both. Selection of the target audience is also done keeping the brand profile in mind. A target audience should also be able to identify with the product. The potential target audience should be able to identify themselves with the product. For instances products like Jewellery and Sarees are feminine products and rightly placed in soaps like '*Kyunki Saas Bhi kabhi Bahu Thi*' and '*Kasauti Zindagi Ki*' which has a lot of female viewership. Therefore it's absolutely

important that the marketer should not pick up the wrong receiver, otherwise results can be fatal.

**History:**

Product placement is being used since long in bollywood industry, however it was not much known . With time the frequency as well as the awareness for this advertisement media have been increased. The earliest reference of a brand placement comes in the 1940 classic *Chalti Kaa naam Gadi* with the brand Coca Cola, followed by movie *bobby* endorsing rajdhoot by Rishi Kapoor. The movie *Dilwale Dulhanyian Le Jayenge* of the 1990s was a successful story of launching of Stroh bear in Indian market. Today, product placement is used as an often-used strategy for the advertisers in Hindi films.

**However its even more important to know that HOW DOES IT ACTUALLY WORKS,**

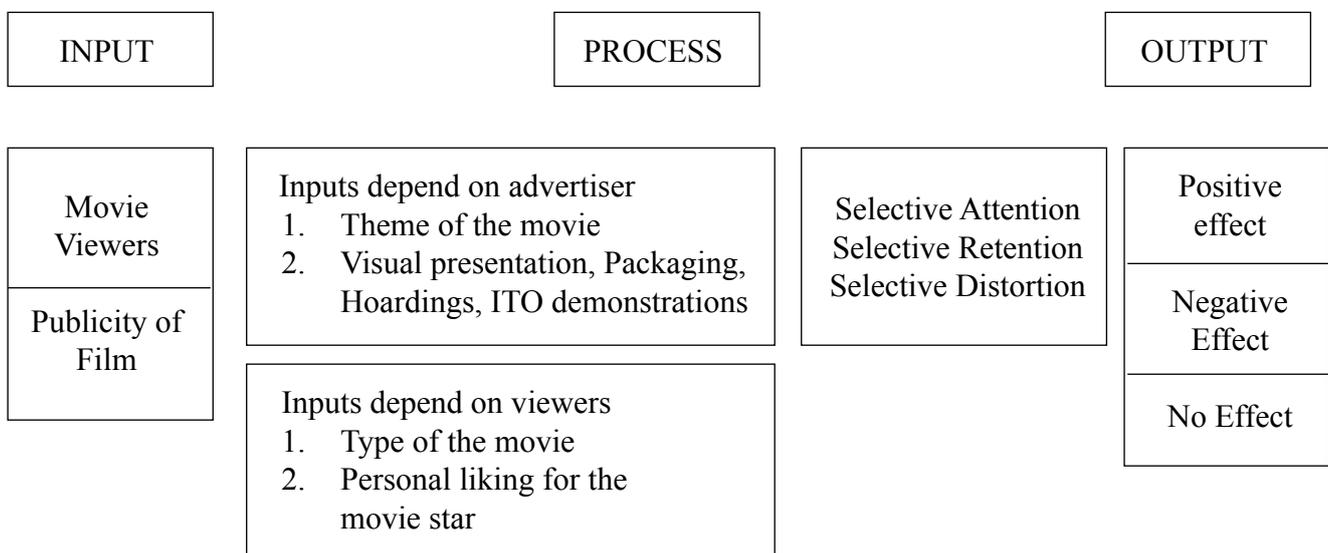
Basically Marketer pays to the Advertisement agency that decides and places specific brands strategically in films/TV shows. It is the job of the agency to maintain tie ups with prop suppliers/vendors and with set designers. Thus the agency plays the role of the mediator between the director/producer and the marketer. Suppliers get in touch with the production houses, which also look for props and some extra money as revenue. Subsequently the script is reviewed, edited and necessary changes are made in the script to place the brand appropriately to look like a natural phenomenon in the story.

A very best example of blending of a brand into the story of the movie is, a well famous brand of bikes Hayabusa in the movie *DHOOM*. The brand is used by almost all the actors in the movie, and the most important and noticeable part is that the whole story of the movie is encircled around it. It was a very well done promotional strategy, the craze of the bike in India was at its hights even long after the movie was out of the theaters. There are even more examples like Pepsi in *dil to pagal hai* and scooty pep in the movie *Sunday*.

The typical product placement starts up with publicity. Publicity attracts the viewers to cinema hall, which includes prospects of advertisers. In modern era of commercial news channels, number of viewers largely depend on positive publicity.

The number of viewers also depends on actors, production banners, popularity of music etc. Actual product placement process starts with four types of inputs, out of which the dialogues and way of presentation are controlled by the advertiser through proper coordination with the director while on the other hand viewer’s attitude towards movie and actor are uncontrollable. Former two inputs almost depend on advertiser while later two on viewers.

**Fig: Process of Product Placement.**



## **Marketing Management**

Broadly analysing, there are three ways product placement can occur:

1. The placement simply happens : This placement occurs without any type of formal contractual agreement to place a particular product or brand. The likely scenario in this instance involves some member of the cast or crew selecting a product to use in a scene because it will enhance the scene though the product itself may not be seen or presented in a favourable light.
2. The placement is arranged and some of the product serves as compensation. This type of placement a particular product is shown in the Movie/ Serial and no extra amount is paid for that. The product itself serves as compensation
3. The placement is arranged and there is financial compensation. In this type of product placement the company has to pay for the placement apart from the product.

Basically Product placement can be categorized in various forms. The most popular forms are described below:

### **1. Product/Brand as a background:**

This the most simplest form of product placement where hoardings of brand, company name, actual product or logo are placed in the scene. Sometimes packaging of the products are also placed. Here the brand is shown without any verbal reference. For instance, in the movie *Koi mil gaya*, boards of Nescafe and coca cola are seen in the background during the song *idhar chala me udhar chala*. Likewise in the movie *hero*, board of Yamaha rajdoot is seen in one of the song. Board of Virgin brand at the background in the movie *Kabhi alvida na kehna*.

### **2. Actors use the product:**

Another popular idea for product placement is to show the use of the product by characters of the movie without verbal reference to brand name or benefit.

For example: In the movie *kuch na kaho* Abhishek Bacchan and Aishwaria Rai drink coke in one scene where camera is focused purposely on the bottle of the coke. Similarly in *Taal*, Aishwaria Rai and Akshay Khanna share coke from same bottle. Use of Reebok t-shirts by actor Jhon Abraham and Arshad Warsi in movie *Goal*.

### **3. Actors mention the product:**

In this type of product placement, the product is integrated into the drama where the benefits/ attributes of the brand/product are mention by the main star without any visuals of the product.

For example: There is one sequence in movie *Koi mil gaya* where actor Hritik Roshan talrs about benefits of drinking Bournvita.

### **4. Actors mention and use the brand:**

This style of product placement includes combination of above two method where characters use the product as well as mention the benefits/attributes of it.

For instance: in the movie *Chup chup ke* actor Rajpal Yadav is shown to use Tide detergent powder. Here the level of placement is so high that all the males in the movie are shown in wite clothes in most of the scenes. Also in movie *Krish* actress Priyanka Chopra is associated with Star tv.

### **5. Product as the part of the story (theme):**

Sometimes the story is woven around a specific product or product category. This is extreme level of product placement. However, this trend is not very well developed in India. Very few films have adopted this type of product placement. For instance, In movie *Dhoom* high speed

bikes are the part of the story, also in movie *hungama* starring Akshay Khanna is given the name Jitu Videocon Who owns the Videocon Showroom.

## **6. Product in promos:**

This is the relatively new trend where the product is tied up with the promo of the movie. The trend in India was started with *Kaante* where thumps up is associated with promo, similar example is of movie *Viruddh* which was associated with Max New York life insurance. However it is more seen in the television programs especially the reality shows.

This new media of Advertising is beneficial in many ways, firstly the exposure is to a large no of people as a big amount of people see movie each year and the most important thing is that this form of exposure is not subject to zapping, at least not in the theatre. And if in case the movie is hit this exposure can be repeated especially for those who like to watch the movie more than once. The source association also plays a major role. When consumers see their favourite star wearing polo sport, drinking coke or driving a Mercedes, this association may lead to a favourable Brand image. Above all, the cost of placing the product in the movie is far less when compared to the broadcast media, the CPM for this type of media can be very low owing to the high volume of exposure it generates. Product placement also helps the marketers to bypass certain regulations, in many countries certain products are not permitted to advertise on television or to some specific market segments for instance, cigarettes and liquor. For the industries manufacturing such product this is a very effective media.

Even though product placement is beneficial, it has some other side too. In many movies the advertiser has no say over when and how the product will be shown. There is the constant element of risk as there is no guarantee viewers will notice the product. The way the product is placed also has an impact. The appeal that can be made in this media form is limited. There is no potential for discussing product benefits or providing detail information regarding the product. Also certain scenes in the movie are disliked by the audience and if the product is used in those scenes it may create a negative impact on its image.

## **Comparison Of Product Placement Between Television And Films**

High level of media clutter, channel switching behavior are some of the factors responsible for generating sufficient level of research interest at the practice of brand placements in movies. The basic objective of permitting product placements in movies is to cover up the possible level of production cost before the movie is released. There are number of examples of how the product's appearance in a movie resulted in an increase in brand performance in Hollywood movies. When agent James Bond made top secret calls on an Ericsson mobile phone in 1997 in the movie

Tomorrow Never Dies, the Ericsson trademark got an upward boost in visibility and market

share. Big stars are available at a fraction of cost against the fee they charge for an independent advertisement. But this does not imply that the small screen stars are inferior to film stars. Television stars have become favorites with advertisers and enlisted their names for the second best option as brand endorsers.

There are many other parameters of distinction as well. In-serial brand integration is relatively cheaper than in-film placement of brands. Television has emerged as one of the largest medium of mass communication hence offering wide reach and easy accessibility than films. Target groups are in regular touch with television than films. Frequency of watching a serial is more than the frequency of watching a film.

In serial brand placement also offers the benefit of flexibility. This means, if a certain brand placement is not doing well, then the marketer has the liberty to change the strategy. This option however is not available in case of product placement in cinema.

One can even take an instance of in-serial promotion by the Hindi film industry. Hum Tum, a Yashraj production, was promoted in Sony TV's '*Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahin*'. The lead star Saif Ali Khan even did a cameo in.

## **Conclusion**

Product placement is being done successfully now in the Indian films and the small screen. The marketers and brand endorsers are largely benefiting from this. The success of in-serial and film product placement depends upon the involvement of consumers in the serial as well as its popularity. From Giorgio Armani's to Raymonds, ICICI Bank to Central Bank, BMW to Maruti or Coke to Pepsi everybody has realized the need of harnessing the power of the Big and the Small screen.

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