

**PRODUCT PLACEMENT IN MOVIES: A WAY OF BRAND PROMOTION.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*India has the world's biggest movie industry in terms of the number of movies produced (around 800 movies annually) and numerous audiences to it. Product Placement is the art of promoting corporate brands and products in films. Where the star cast in the films at some point or other use this product so that the target audience are influenced to try out the brand. The customers can be targeted, influenced by a cost effective way, which also creates value for the brand through a powerful medium like Indian films, that is why many companies are breaking clutter and moving towards product placement. It's introduced in films to raise publicity funds for film making which turns out to be source of revenue covering certain percentage of publicity budget resulting in mutual benefit for brands as well as films. The objective of the study is to understand the concept of product placement, and its utility as a way of promotion. The author highlighted the utility and scope of using product placement as a way of brand promotion on the basis of analysis of primary and secondary data.*

**Keywords:** *Product placement, Brand, Movie, Promotion*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indian film industry has always been a two-way street (Kripalani, 2006). It has reflected the customs and culture of Indian society and has set societal trends. The Indian audience has always been emotionally involved with onscreen actors. It has always looked to the actors and actresses for new trends, fashions, and hairstyles. Actors such as Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand, and actresses such as Sadhana, Asha Parekh, and Helen were famous for their costumes and hairstyles. Amitabh Bachchan has always been an onscreen voice for the poor, and Shah Rukh Khan has represented the younger generation. Thus, it did not come as a surprise when advertisers and marketers saw mainstream cinema as an opportunity to advertise their products. Some of the early movies featured a few brands; however, there are no accounts available to determine whether those placements took place in exchange for money. The practice of placing brands in Bollywood films for money began in the late 1990s (Kripalani, 2006). Like Hollywood, Bollywood film makers have also been exploring different types of product placement. Apart from just a brand placement in a movie or a prominent character talking about it, the producers have started placing a product integral to the storyline.

The trend of weaving a product into the storyline has become common in the Hindi film industry in the past few years. Most Bollywood movie producers now have separate departments to handle product placements in their movies.. Studies by Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) and Segrave (2006) provide a historical perspective on the emergence of Hollywood and the practice of product placement in Hollywood. Research conducted by Kripalani (2006), Mishra (2002), and Thomas (2005) provided information on the emergence of Bollywood as well as the practice of product placement in Bollywood. McClure (1983) stated in his research that Hollywood movies have always reflected the political, social, and economic environment in America. Kripalani (2006) came to the same conclusion about Bollywood and the Indian movie audiences. He added that Bollywood movies have not only reflected the environment but also the customs and cultures of the audiences from different regions. Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) provided evidence that the practice of product placement in Hollywood is almost as old as the motion picture industry itself. After attracting audience's attention in the 1980s, it has become a billion-dollar industry and has shown the potential for further growth. Although product placements came later to Bollywood, they have become a standard industry practice.

Although the term “product placement” seemed to have been coined in the 1980s (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006), the practice actually dates back to before the beginning of motion pictures. There are clear examples of product placements in stage performances and art that predate motion pictures (Lehu, 2007). In its simplest form, product placement consists of an advertiser or company producing some engaging content in order to sell something (Falkow, 2010). As such, product or brand placement continues to be an important practice within advertising and integrated marketing communications in which advertisers push their way into content far more aggressively than ever before (The Economist, 2005). Even though product placement was named and identified formally only as recently as the 1980s, product placement is not new (Balasubramanian, 1994). Originally, product placement served as a way for movie studios and television networks to reduce the cost of production through borrowed props. Brand/product placement first appeared in Lumiere films in Europe in 1896. (Newell, Salmon, and Chang, 2006). Product placements may be initiated by a company that suggests its products to a studio or TV show, or it might work the other way around. Intermediaries and brokers also match up companies with product placement opportunities. (Stringer, 2006) Costs for product placements can range from less than \$10,000 to several hundred thousand dollars. However, television and movie producers routinely place products in their entertainment vehicles for free or in exchange for promotional tie-ins. (Cebzynski, 2006).

Generally, a product is placed in a movie or television show in return for payment of money or other promotional consideration by the marketer (Gupta & Gould, 1997). Prices can vary for placement, depending on the nature of the placement in the movie (McCarthy, 1994), and can range from nothing to several million dollars (Fournier & Dolan, 1997). The price of product placement can be a function of the type of product that is featured; some product categories are easier to place in a movie than others (McCarthy, 1994). The prominence of the placement in the movie can also affect the price. For example, a placement where the product name is mentioned might cost more than one in which the product logo is simply visible in the background of a scene. Brennan, Dubas, and Babin (1999) have suggested that the original motivation for product placements was on the part of the motion picture studios in their effort to add a greater level of reality to the movies by having real brands in the stories. Over time, however, motion picture producers became aware of the commercial value of these placement opportunities, and the

practice has become far more prevalent. In the past decade or so, product placement has become a very sophisticated business, with product placement agencies reviewing scripts in an effort to find product placement opportunities for their marketer clients (McCarthy, 1994). Given that a product placement can vary from a casual mention of a brand in a single scene of a movie to a brand being a major presence in the story, supported by joint advertising and promotion of the movie and brand, it is perhaps inappropriate to characterize all product placements as essentially the same thing. They can differ quite a bit, and, most likely, the way and at what level viewers process them can vary as well. Having stated this caveat, product placement can be compared to other forms of marketing communications in a number of ways, in that all product placements as a form of marketing communications share some common aspects with one another, but they are different from other forms of marketing communications.

Balasubramanian (1994) considered product placements as one type of a hybrid message, a combination of advertising and publicity. He stated: Hybrid messages include all paid attempts to influence audiences for commercial benefit using communications that project a non-commercial 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. As Balasubramanian noted, product placements are generally paid for, just as with advertising, but placements are not identified as paid persuasion efforts by sponsors, which makes them similar to publicity. Therefore, the sponsor gets the best of both of these traditional forms of communication, advertising and publicity. That is, the sponsor has some limited control over the communication (subject to editorial considerations of the movie or television show), but the communication is not usually identified explicitly as a persuasion attempt; therefore, the effort to persuade is not made salient to the audience. Although all product placements share some common characteristics, they can differ in a number of ways. A brand can be visually present in a scene, or it can be mentioned and not seen. A placement can be brief, or the product can be an integral part of a character or the story. Therefore, it is likely that product placements can operate in very different ways, depending on the nature of the placement. Similar to how advertising can work at different levels (i.e., inform, persuade, remind), product placement can operate at different levels, depending on the extent to which and how the placement is woven into the movie.

## DEFINITION

Scholarly definitions of product placement primarily focus on placing products in the broadcast media for money. Balasubramanian (1994) referred to it as a hybrid message – a paid message aimed at influencing movie (or television) audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie. Maynard and Scala (2006) described product placement as a strategic marketing tactic, the process through which an advertiser pays to place a product in a movie. They called product placement an alternative route for traditional overt advertising. Karrh (1998) defined brand placement as a paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers through audio and visual means within mass media programming, noting that the term product placement is used interchangeably with brand placement. Product placement is the purposeful incorporation of commercial content into non commercial settings, that is, a product plug generated via the fusion of advertising and entertainment (Ginosar and Levi-Faur, 2010). Product placement--also known as product brand placement, in-program sponsoring, branded entertainment, or product integration--is a marketing practice in advertising and promotion wherein a brand name, product, package, signage, or other trademark merchandise is inserted into and used contextually in a motion picture, television, or other media vehicle for commercial purposes. In product placement, the involved audience gets exposed to the brands and products during the natural process of the movie, television program, or content vehicle. (Panda, 2004; Cebrynski, 2006) That is, product placement in popular mass media provides exposure to potential target consumers and shows brands being used or consumed in their natural settings (Stephen and Coote, 2005). Ultimately, the product or brand is seen as a quality of the association with characters using and approving of the product placement. Shapiro (1993), in the context of movies, classifies PPL into four types viz. a. that provides only clear visibility (product/brand name shown); b. that is used in a scene; c. that has a spoken reference; and d. that provides hands-on use and mentioned by a main star.

Russel (1998) has classified them along three dimensions: visual, auditory and plot connection. The visual dimension refers to the appearance of the brand on the screen. This is called screen placement also which can have different levels, depending on the number of appearances on the screen, the style of the camera shot for the product and so forth. The second dimension called auditor refers to the brand being mentioned in a dialogue. This is also called script placement

which has varying degree depending on the context on which the brand is mentioned, the frequency with which it is mentioned and the emphasis on the brand name through the tone of the voice, place in the dialogue, character speaking at the time. The plot connection dimension refers to the degree to which the brand is integrated in the plot of the story (Russel1998). One of the popular methods of classifying the placements was a combination of level of integration and explicitness (d' Astous and Seguin 1998). They define three types of product placements namely *Implicit PPL*: An implicit PPL is one where the brand, the firm or the product is present within the program without being formally mentioned. It plays a passive, contextual role. In the implicit PPL the logo, the brand name, or the name of the firm appear without a clear demonstration of product benefits *Integrated Explicit PPL*: A PPL is integrated explicit whenever the brand or the firm is formally mentioned within the program; it plays an active role. In this type of PPL, the attributes and benefits of the product are clearly demonstrated *Non-Integrated explicit PPL*: A non-integrated explicit PPL is one where the brand or the firm is formally expressed but is not integrated within the contents of the program. The sponsor name may be presented at the beginning, middle or end of the program or it may be part of the program title. Steertz (1987) defines product placement as follows: "Product placement is inclusion of a brand name product, package, signage, or other trademark merchandise within a motion picture, television show or music video." (Steertz in Immonen 1998, 13; Steertz in Babin & Carder 1996, 140) Steertz's definition is quite general and may indicate that at the time of that particular study (1987) the technique of product placement was in fact used only in these formats mentioned in the definition. Steertz also does not express the commercial mechanisms and the mutual exchange of services that is the essence of product placement. Stacy Vollmers redefined the term in 1995 by adding these aspects to the definition: "Product placement is intentional and compensated inclusion of a product or a service (product, package, logo, trademark, verbal mentioning or an advertisement of a product) in an entertainment production." (Vollmers in Immonen 1998, 13)

## **OBJECTIVES**

The present study is based on a dual objective of:

1. To study the concept of product placement in movies.
2. To study Product placement in movies as a way of Brand promotion.

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Due to media fragmentation, media proliferation, and declining advertising efficacy, product placement increasingly is becoming an effective way to reach consumers and non-users (Mackay, Ewing, Newton, and Windisch, 2009). It is estimated that two-thirds of TV viewers cut the sound during commercials, channel-surf, or skip them altogether because they are annoying or irrelevant (Kiley, 2006). Smit, van Reijmersdal, and Neijens (2009) have found that the industry considers brand placement and brand-integrated programs as the future of television advertising. In recent years, product placement frequently has been used as the basis of multi-million dollar marketing and promotional campaigns with more than 1000 firms that specialize in product placement (Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan, 2006; Argan, Velioglu, and Argan, 2007) Product placements can be a cost-effective method for reaching target customers. Because of this, product placements are likely to eclipse traditional advertising messages. (Russell and Stern, 2006) Ultimately, product placements among entertainment firms, corporate brands, and agencies are all monetarily driven, either directly or indirectly. At the very least, entertainment firms and independent production companies are hoping to reduce their budgets so that more dollars can be invested elsewhere. (Chang, Newell, and Salmon, 2009)

Its purposes include achieving prominent audience exposure, visibility, attention, and interest; increasing brand awareness; increasing consumer memory and recall; creating instant recognition in the media vehicle and at the point of purchase; changing consumers' attitudes or overall evaluations of the brand; changing the audiences' purchase behaviors and intent; creating favorable practitioners' views on brand placement; and promoting Product placement effectiveness, consumers' attitudes towards the practice of brand placement and the various product placement vehicles. (Panda, 2004; Kureshi and Sood, 2010) Product placements can have a significant effect on message receptivity (Panda, 2004). The sponsor of product placements is likely to gain goodwill by associating itself with a popular program targeted to a specific audience. The more successful the program, the longer shelf life of the product placement. (Daugherty and Gangadharbatla, 2005; d'Astous and Seguin, 1999). Nielsen Media Research has shown that product placement in television shows can raise brand awareness by 20% (Cebrzynski, 2006). Tsai, Liang, and Liu (2007) found that higher brand awareness results in a greater recall rate, more positive attitudes, and a stronger intention of buying. When brand

awareness is high, a positive attitude toward the script leads to a higher recall rate. Also, when a brand gains a certain level of awareness, the more positive the attitude toward product placement, the stronger its effect on recall rate, attitude, and intention of buying. Product placements can have a significant effect on recall (Panda, 2004). Hong, Wang, and de los Santos, (2008) found that product placement upholds brand salience or the order in which brands come to mind. They note that to build brand salience, product placement strategies should focus on how a product can explicitly convey the product's superiority, durability, performance, and specification. Product placement can have a significant effect on recognition (Panda, 2004). In addition, product or brand placement recognition levels received from audio-visual prominent placements exceed the recognition rates achieved by visual-only prominent placements (Brennan and Babin, 2004).

Argan, Velioglu, and Argan (2007) suggest that the audience pays attention to and accepts brand placement in movies and takes celebrities as references when shopping. However, the movie should not be over commercialized. It also has been noted that product placements on emotionally engaging programs were recognized by 43% more viewers (NextMedium, 2008) Product placements are associated with increased purchase intent and sales, particularly when products appear in sitcoms (Russell and Stern, 2006; Panda, 2004). In general, attitudes toward product placement are favorable across media types. Additionally, viewers tend to like product placements as long as they add realism to the scene. Snooddy (2006) has found that viewer enjoyment of product placements actually increased for media vehicle versions of product placements where products were an integral part of the script. He conjectures that peoples' lives are so saturated with brands that the inclusion of identifiable products adds to the sense of reality, that is, validates the individual's reality. Also, product placements are preferred to fictitious brands and are understood to be necessary for cost containment in the making of programs and movies (Pokrywczynski, 2005). People with more fashionable and extroverted lifestyles typically have more positive attitudes toward product placement (Tsai, Liang, and Liu, 2007). Sung and de Gregorio (2008) found that college students' attitudes toward brand placement are positive overall across media, but that brand placements in songs and video games are less acceptable than within films and television programs. Researchers have shown that viewers like product placements (unless there are too many) because they enhance realism, aid in

character development, create historical subtext, and provide a sense of familiarity. For marketers, the availability of a captive audience with greater reach than traditional advertisements, and the advantage of showing brands in their natural environment provide motivation for product placements (Turcotte, 1995). 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. The 98:02 pareto ruling Hindi film industry also has made this practice more acceptable to Indian film producers. Increase in the number and level of brand placements in Indian films stand as a proof to this proposition. The 98:02 pareto talks about the number of Hindi films that are able to become success and cover up the costs and earn net revenue for the film producers. Though there is not enough data available to substantiate the loss of revenue in Hindi films in various years but the performance of movies in the box office can be taken as an indicator for the proposition that 98% of the Hindi films flop in a year and the producers are not able to get revenue for their investments. The basic objective of permitting product placements in movies is to cover up the possible level of production cost before the movie is released. Research indicates that product placement practice is a potential tool for brand communication. Indian film and advertising world needs to standardise the tariff structure for the product placements.

So we can summarise the above discussion by concluding that product placements are emerging as useful additional form of marketing communication. They score over traditional television advertising for three reasons viz: goodwill gains by associating with a popular program, purchase of large portion of commercial time within the programme prevents communication interference from competition (Gay, 1988) and integration with program reduces likelihood of zapping (Meenaghan, 1991). The practice of product placement has proliferated due, in part to the high level of message clutter in traditional advertising media, combined with the increased fragmentation of media audiences (Gunther 2000, Gupta and Lord 1998). Previous research also suggests the effects of product placements on consumers can influence brand recognition, recall and attitudes (Babin and Carder 1996; Brennan, Dubas and babin 1999, Karrh, Frith and Callison

2001; Gibson and Maurer 2000; Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Krauter 2000, Gupta and Lord 1998). Consumer's beliefs towards product placement activities have been found to influence their acceptance of the placements in general (Nebenzahl and Secunda 1993). A few number of research studies have also attempted to establish a correlation between audience beliefs towards product placements activities and their purchase intent following exposure by comparing the effects across the cultures (Karrh, Frith and Calisson 2001; Gould, Gupta and Grabner-Krauter 2000). However opportunity exists about the nature of the relationship between product placements beliefs and subsequent behaviours as well as variables that can predict behavioural outcomes. Increase in product placements and institutionalisation of the industry indicate that advertisers are using the technique to sway consumer's brand attitudes (Avery and Ferraro, 2000). Moster et al. (2002) explains that films offer product exposure to millions of customers, making product placements a rapidly growing marketing communication medium. By cleverly weaving a product into a scene, marketers hope audiences will connect their brand with the stars or story they see on the screen. In order to counter television commercials zipping and zapping, audience fragmentation due to the rise in the number of cable channels, commercial clutter driven by increasing time allocated to advertisements and a simultaneous decrease in commercial length. Several factors caused marketers to develop innovative placement techniques (Gupta and Lord, 1998). These changes have led manufacturers and marketers to seek product placement as an alternative means to reach the consumer. Due to the proliferation of advertisements and the consequent difficulty in getting commercial messages to reach and influence potential customers, product placement appears to be an interesting alternative to traditional marketing communication tools (D'Astous and Chartier, 2000).

According to Berglund and Spets (2003) placing products and brands on both the screen and in the conversation, increases the probability that the viewer recognises the product or brand. It is therefore anticipated that potential customers absorb information about products and brands from many sources. Mass media advertising has been challenged with increasing audience fragmentation, media advertising clutter, rising fee rates (Russell 1998, 362; Stanley & Benezra 1998, 16; Gunther 2000, 88; Raphael 2001; d'Astous & Chartier 2000, 31), and a considerable amount of cynicism among the general audience (Sandler & Secunda 1993, 73; Nebenzahl & Secunda 1993, 1; Marsh 1995, 11; Belch & Belch 1998, 12), exhibiting itself in adoption of

various forms of passive avoidance of media advertising as well as active advertising avoidance methods ("zipping", "zapping" and "grazing" in television programming: fast-forwarding of commercials in video-recorded programming, pausing the recording during commercial breaks, and channel-hopping during commercial breaks) (Kitchen 1994, 20; Gupta et al. 2000, 42; Bosselmann 1994, 49). Especially the youth markets have recently exhibited strong rejection to traditional advertising, as younger people aspire more to discover products and brands by themselves (Loeb 2000, 4). Nowadays there are also a number of program storage and playback technologies that actively help avoiding commercials during programming (Oleck 2000, 14; Goodale 2001, 13; Friedman 2001, 3). These factors have made marketing communicators look for alternative communications methods that could reach the target audience more effectively. It has been reported that audience has become somewhat tired of traditional advertising and would prefer some less obtrusive forms of marketing communications. Product placement has started to proliferate in this anti-advertising environment and is expected to continue its growth as long as traditional marketing communications methods remain in their current state. (Law & Braun 2000, 1071; Nebenzahl & Secunda 1993, 9; Goodale 2001, 13; Oleck 2000, 14; Ditlea 2000, 16)

The release of "E.T. — The Extraterrestrial" in 1982 launched product placement into new heights (Buss 1998, 29; PR Central 1996), this was followed by "Risky Business" and "Top Gun" and many others, and in 1986 a marketing textbook described product placement as an "established advertising medium" (Koberger 1990, 91), a statement that is loaded with irony, considering what is known about the product placement's purpose of use today. In a 1992 advertising industry report, major advertisers recommended the advertising industry to recognise product placement in movies as a new communications medium (Solomon & Englis 1994, 60). This is to implicate that product placement does not provide benefits for the entertainment industry alone. One of the cornerstones in PPL's vitality is the mutually beneficial nature of the practice, that along with realism and cost-reduction benefits to entertainment production side, also benefits the other main party in the arrangement, i.e. the product marketer that provides the props for the use in the production. With PPL the product / brand in question receives exposure in an entertainment context, which in turn enhances awareness of the product among the audience. (Stewart-Allen 1999, 8; Palmer 1998, 48; Lucas 1995, 94; McCarthy 1994, 30; Gunther 2000, 88; Curtis 1999, 29; Marsh 1995, 11; ISM Entertainment 1998; PR Central 1996;

Turcotte 1995; Cebzynski 1999, 6; Shimp 1997, 347; Belch & Belch 1998, 12; Gould et al. 2000, 43) Product placement has been considered effective since it is able to retain visibility for the product and simultaneously avoid the media advertising clutter brought about by the ever increasing competition for the consumers' attention. (Sandler & Secunda 1993, 73-74) Motion pictures, especially in theatres, are free from interrupting advertising, and this obtrusion-free environment makes product placement an extremely clutter-free communications medium (Turcotte 1995; Jowett & Linton 1980, 90; d'Astous & Chartier 2000, 31). PPL also circumvents the "zapping" by viewers as the products are integrated into the entertainment content, and is likely to create goodwill for the product from the association with a popular entertainment form and the implied endorsement of the talent (cast, director, etc.) involved with the product. (d'Astous & Séguin 1999, 896; Turcotte 1995; Freeman 2000, 13; Dryer 1999, 39; Koberger 1990, 87; Shimp 1997, 347; Pickton & Broderick 2001, 501) Sandler & Secunda (1993) conducted a research study on advertisers' and advertising agencies' attitudes toward product placement that provides support for marketers' positive perceptions about PPL. The results of the study indicate a widely supported view that product placement is a growing trend and is useful for advertisers. Respondents also expressed that product placement is a subtle form of advertising, yet it is not considered a deceptive way to influence consumers. (Sandler & Secunda 1993, 75-76) The "re-invention" of product placement has gained new urgency because consumers increasingly have the technical power to avoid commercial messages on TV. Consumers are exponentially overwhelmed by commercials, consequently irritated by them (Fennis and Bakker, 2001; Aacker and Bruzzone 1985) and trying to avoid them (Woltman Elpers et al., 2003). Consumers were already using frequently the remote control in order to switch away (zapping) from TV commercials. With the introduction of PVRs such TiVo, Replay TV and so on, consumers can not only fast-forward through recorded programs but can now also easily skip with a PVR's auto-skip button. So the blame of avoiding commercials (zapping, zipping, and skipping) seems now to fall on digital video recorders and digital television. As the convergence of TV and the internet continues at an inevitable pace, consumers will only gain more control over what they see and when they see it (Zutter, 2005; Woltman Elpers et al. 2003).

**CONCLUSION:**

From the above analysis and from the review of literature can be concluded that product placement in movies is a way of brand promotion. On the basis of the above analysis the concept of product placement is made clear. And it can be concluded that product placement is a useful way of brand promotion.

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