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# An Overview Of Product (brand) Placement

## Introduction

In this fast-growing 21st century, product or brand placement is considered to be a paid marketing attempt or promotional toolkit where references to certain brands or products are merged with another media, for example, a film, television program, radio or online games, with particular expectations. Despite the growth, the definition of product (brand) placement is still debatable as some researchers do not consider them either to be always paid or limited to just television and movies. The most accepted definition of brand placement is “the purposeful incorporation of commercial content into non-commercial settings”.

## Previous Literature

It was observed that with the first TV commercial being aired in 1941, television became one of the leading media for brand placements. Though the first case of brand placement is considered to have begun in a French Film in 1896 but it was formally identified and named in the 1980s. In 2006, it was reported that for every three minutes of programming there was at least one product placement at most of the major US networks. These product or brand placements are classified in different ways by different researchers. For example, the most commonly used classification is the three-dimensional framework by Russell in 1998 which classified them on the basis of their visual or screen component, verbal or script component and plot component. Similarly, Gupta and Lord classified them on the placement’s modality and prominence in 1998.

Previous researches have also demonstrated that the state of mind the context of the programming incites may effectively affect the processing of commercials. An individual mindset can significantly affect the reactions to persuasive communications and can importantly affect the perceptions an individual generates about a commercial.

Research on the influence of the mood initiated by a programme on the viability of product or brand placements is rare in the literature, however, one would expect the research results to be in the similar direction. Since the use of product/brand placements on television has gained new criticalness, research on how the mood of the respondents influence the effectiveness of product placements is potentially promising. This is connected to the declining viability of 30-second commercials.

Previous literature also judged prominence of product placements on six dimensions such as visibility or placement of the product in the scene, mention of the brand by one or more actors, length of the placement, subtlety, use of the product by the leads and presence of the product in the lead’s scene or script. These researches have shown that prominent brand placements - placements where the product or brand identifier is fundamental to the action in the scene or where the product is made exceedingly obvious by size or virtue or position on the screen - are more effective than subtle placements. Product placements in movies are considered an intriguing communication strategy (Brée, 1996; Russell, 2002). Watching movies or television soap operas is anyway not a similar experience. This, therefore, leaves the question of whether brand placements in television programmes a successful communication strategy in contrast to

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30-second commercials are.

The traditional 30-second commercials and product placements contrast greatly as far as their execution requirements are considered. Though in television commercials the publicizing plot is built around the brand, product placement, by and large, includes placing the brand inside an officially existing plot. Therefore, Russell (1998) claims that it cannot be expected that prominent product placements on-screen will outperform television commercials as far as their effect on brand awareness. There is, however, little proof validating this thesis.

Most of the previous researches limited their boundary conditions on memory-based effects with very few studies focusing on the effects or behavioural changes in the consumers of these placements. Moreover, the researches had their limitations in using short episodes and less prominent placements (Balasubramanian et al., 2006). Such type of studies showed that in contrast to the 30-second-long commercials, the brand placements were more effective and productive in getting a positive attitude from the audience towards the respective brands.

One of the other limitations observed in the past research and studies was their focus on short-term effects of product (brand) placements while being negligent the possible long-term effects of the same.

## **Brand Placement, Media and Branded Entertainment**

Not only is the amount of commercially enlivened content increasing, but the sort of brand placement is also evolving eventually. Today, brand placement covers an expansive range, from straightforward declarations ('This program is brought to you by ...'), or a plain display of a brand (logo) and product in a scene, to complete programmes created as a team with sponsors in which the brand turns into a characteristic part of the program, otherwise known as brand-integrated programmes or hybrids. The media business, specifically the television industry, has embraced brand placement as an alluring source of income in a circumstance of fierce competition.

This development in product or brand placement has been affected by the development of media outlets. Generally, advertising was put in adjacent to entertainment in an order to benefit from the mass of audience the diversion pulled in. However, in the course of a recent couple of decades, the entertainment industry has multiplied, and entertainment is now disseminated and consumed through an assortment of media. These changes have opened the way to integrated advertising, with advertisers or marketers understanding that communications through product placement can be a successful part of the promotional blend. This kind of integrated product placement has been named 'branded entertainment' by the industry and can be illustrated as a convergence between advertising and entertainment.

In spite of confusion over terminology, it is unmistakably clear that 'branded entertainment' is an established promotional technique and the indication of its growing popularity and significance can be seen in the expanding organization of branded entertainment as of late. In 1991, the Entertainment Resources and Marketing Association (ERMA) was formed to speak to the corporations, and agencies also, giving entertainment assets to the filmed entertainment and media network. In 2003, the BCMA was launched to provide a platform to advertise and entertainment experts or professionals and associations who are engaged with creating

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branded entertainment. Over the most recent couple of years, all the major worldwide advertising and marketing communications organizations and agencies have set up committed brand entertainment divisions. Branded entertainment has turned into a key technique for multinational organizations to penetrate certain nations like China, India, the Philippines, and Africa.

These adjustments in organizational structures and the services they offer have come at a time when a part of the world's leading advertisers is scrutinizing the fate of the traditional advertising model or the 30-seconds commercials. In a recent couple of years some of the world's leading brand advertisers, for example, Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola have called on agencies and media proprietors to ponder how brands may associate with customers in the long run. Steven Heyer, Coca Cola's president and chief operating officer, said in 2003 that he was moving far from advertising spots and the traditional product or brand placement towards 'ideas that bring entertainment value to our brands, and ideas that integrate our brands into entertainment' (Aitchison, 2004).

## **Practitioner's View on Brand Placement**

To date, five empirical examinations have considered, studied and observed professionals in the field of brand placement. The five studies are explorative and altogether different in their scope, some concentrating on the sentiments and opinions of the different parties associated with the brand placement, while others have tended to improvements over time.

Sandler and Secunda (1993) demonstrated that organizations and agencies are less concerned about the undeniably yet increasingly obscured boundaries between advertising and publication material than sponsors themselves. Cameron and Curtin (1995) considered feature advertising (i.e. single commercials intended to look like an editorial copy) and found more prominent concern about the disintegration of validity and credibility among publishers than among newspapers and magazine advertising managers. Pardun and McKee (1999) explored how the vast majority of the public relations and advertising practitioners perceived brand or product placement. Public relation managers are generally more positive about the eventual fate of brand placement than advertising managers. This was clarified by the fact that PR practitioners are more comfortable with unpaid and uncontrolled product promotional tool-kit as compared to their advertising counterparts.

## **The effectiveness of Brand Placement**

The contrast between pure brand placement and branded entertainment can be shown by a method for a continuum that communicates the dimension of brand integration with the storyline or plot. At one end of the continuum with no brand integration, there is passive product placement, for example, the conspicuous depiction of the Coca Cola name in the program American Idol. Such placements are less compelling and less effective than other variations of product placement. At the opposite end of the continuum, the product is coordinated into the storyline for the program or film. An episode of the CTC show The Eleventh Hour, for instance, featured Nicorettes woven into a storyline about a character endeavouring to quit smoking. Making brands inherent components of plot lines like this distinguishes branded entertainment from the traditional use of the product. In the past, advertisers tried to place products in shows when they progressed towards becoming hits. Presently, advertising deals are going on

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alongside the creative development. Programming sponsored by and produced for single promoters and advertisers offers them benefits like exclusivity, decreased clutter and the capacity to incorporate products into scenes and plots in manners that do not appear to be unmitigated or devised (Elliott 2006).

Branded entertainment coincides with the ascent of unscripted or reality television, where an absence of content and focus on 'real world' circumstances lend themselves to the integration of products and brand names. Colgate-Palmolive, for instance, gave a £39,000 budget plan to each team on the reality television show, *The Apprentice*, whose task it was to launch Crest's latest flavoured toothpaste. Branded entertainment is now quite common and as a general rule appears in reality shows but is also making its way into scripted television shows, where products are woven in amid series development. Branded entertainment in computer games and video games is also ending up becoming increasingly prevalent. It is anticipated that more than one third or 33% of product placement in video games by 2020 will be in the form of 'advergaming,' where advertisers make a game focusing around a product as opposed to putting their brands inside a well-known title.

## Conclusion

The final conclusion from these studies was that having a product or brand placement and 30 second commercial of the same during a single television opera or movie or video game actually does not hinder or have a negative impact on the behaviour of the audience towards that respective brand or product or services. This makes it quite a feasible marketing strategy, specifically for the target audience that prefers to skip television commercials or are more sceptical towards advertising. Product or brand placement will continue to be an ever-growing market domain due to the media segmentation as well as consumer sophistication with films and television industry being its most chosen media platform.

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