

# Consumer reactions towards product placement in movies media essay



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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Product Placement In Movies](#) \n \t
2. [LITERATURE REVIEW](#) \n \t
3. [RATIONALE OF THE STUDY](#) \n \t
4. [RESEARCH OBJECTIVE](#) \n \t
5. [METHODOLOGY](#) \n \t
6. [PRELIMINARY FINDINGS](#) \n \t
7. [CONCLUSION](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

A review of trade and popular press over the past few years quickly reveals the interest in and growth of the product placement industry. Product placement is one of today's hottest new media, and it is getting increasing attention from advertisers, media planners, and research firms attempting to assess its effectiveness and value. It is getting increasingly popular and rapidly becoming a serious marketing discipline worldwide.

Most major movie releases today contain product placements. It is a multimillion-dollar business with every frame in a movie having an opportunity for branding. From cars and cell phones, to mouth fresheners and branded tea-our heroes and heroines are the ultimate consumers.

According to the PQ Media Global Product Placement Forecast Series 2006-2010 Country-by-Country Analysis, global paid product placement grew 37. 2 per cent to \$3. 36 billion in 2006 and is forecast to grow 30. 3 per cent to \$4.

38 billion in 2007, with growth accelerating in China, India and Australia (“What Every Global” 2006).

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## **Product Placement In Movies**

Product placements have played a role in motion pictures for many decades and can be found in

Hollywood movies dating from the late 1940s and early 1950s (The Economist 1991). Movie legend Joan Crawford drank Jack Daniels whiskey in the 1948 movie Mildred Pierce (Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993). In the 1950 movie Destination Moon, four space travellers rocketed to the moon drinking Coke and wearing Lee jeans (Vollmers and Mizerski, 1994). And Bollywood is not far behind. The earliest reference of product placement in Hindi movies comes in the 1940 classic Chalti ka Naam Gadi with Coca Cola. In 1967 movie An Evening in Paris, Sharmila Tagore was seen sipping delicately from a 200 ml bottle of Coke, struggling to make sure the logo was visible.

Rajdoot motorbike was seen in Bobby way back in 1973. A few more recent and popular examples of product placements in Bollywood are Stroh’s beer in Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge; ICICI Bank, Ford Ikon, Archies Cards, Tide detergent and Tata Tea in Baghban; and Times of India in Hum Tum.

The practice of using branded props in movies started as a casual process. Branded items were simply donated, loaned, or purchased for particular movie scenes to enhance their artistic qualities (Spillman, 1989). But things changed with the 1982 movie ET-The Extraterrestrial, in which the alien creature was lured from its hiding place with Reese's Pieces candy. The Pieces candy sales increased by 65 per cent just 3 months after the movie's release (Buss 1998, Farhi 1998, Reed 1989). It was since then that marketers began actively seeking their own product placements, fully understanding its commercial impact (Caro, 1996).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Several studies have investigated the attitudes and perceptions of viewers regarding the practice of product placement. These studies were efforts at determining whether moviegoers find the practice objectionable, given the stealth and 'deceptive' nature of the product placement, as claimed by some consumer groups.

Interestingly, these studies found that, in general, the majority of people in the United States don't object to the practice of product placement (Gupta and Gould, 1997; Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993; Ong and Meri, 1994).

Placements are seen as adding realism to scenes, are preferred to fictitious brands and are understood to be more and more a necessary component to cost containment in the making of programmes and movies (DeLorme and Reid, 1999; Gupta and Gould, 1997). Most consumers considered product placement as a less obtrusive form of marketing communication than other advertising forms in the movie theatre, even though some of them criticized

product placement as a deceptive communication strategy (Nebenzahl and <https://assignbuster.com/consumer-reactions-towards-product-placement-in-movies-media-essay/>)

Secunda, 1993). Not many similar consumer studies in India were found, though a study carried out among students in India did find positive attitude towards product placement (Panda, 2004).

## **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Since the beginning of televised programming, advertisers in India have shelled out big bucks to promote their products on TV. The 30-second TV ad spot had been the sole reigning champion for a very long time, but no longer so today. Although the number of television channels has increased in the last decade from under 50 to over 200 today, the number of advertisers has grown much more rapidly (Surapaneni, 2006). Moreover, the bulk of advertising is limited to few popular TV channels. This has resulted in tremendous advertising clutter. Also, it has been noticed that TRPs of ad breaks have declined with channel zapping. And with marketers demanding more bang for their advertising buck, agencies were prompted to come up with innovative solutions. An association with Bollywood gives them an opportunity to look beyond the 30-second television commercial.

For advertisers, the product placements provide clutter free noticeability (and possible sales!) from the huge number of Bollywood viewers in the captive atmosphere of theatres, on TV during film telecasts and at homes through DVD/VCDs. For filmmakers, the placement of appropriate brands in their films offers a legitimate and profitable source of revenue, over and above making the films more realistic. Obviously, it's a win-win script for advertisers and filmmakers.

The penetration and popularity of films in India can never be doubted. The Indian film industry is one of the largest in the world, producing 1041 films annually. And Bollywood, the Hindi film industry, commands a huge 40 per cent share of the Indian film market (Media and Entertainment, 2007). The output of Bollywood is phenomenal. In 2006, the \$3.5 billion industry produced 152 films. With a growing international market, Bollywood ticket sales are close to \$4 billion every year (Bollywood-A Foretaste, 2007).

The trend of product placements in Bollywood is increasing and advertisers are expecting mileage from this means of communication. This justifies the need to study the viewers' reactions towards this practice in general. It could be helpful to marketers using this means of communication in understanding their target consumers.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The research objective of this study is to understand the viewers' reactions towards the current practice of product placement in Bollywood. The main objective is translated into the following seven questions representing different aspects of viewers' reactions:

Do the product placements make the scene in a movie more realistic?

Are the product placements a source of information about latest products?

Should undue focus to place product be avoided?

Do product placements cause irritation/distraction?

Are product placements overused these days?

Are product placements a means of money making for film makers?

## **METHODOLOGY**

For this study a total of 121 respondents were surveyed in the city of Ahmedabad. The sampling method was convenient sampling, with care taken to include approximately equal number of respondents across demographic variables of gender and age. Considering persons below 16 years as children, only people of 16 or above were surveyed. Each respondent's frequency of watching Hindi movies per month (irrespective of whether at home or theatre, on satellite TV or VCD/DVD) was also noted. The persons who mentioned watching less than 1 movie per month on an average were considered underexposed to the medium of movies and hence not included in the sample.

The survey tool was a structured questionnaire consisting of a short initial description of the product placement practice to familiarize the respondents with the topic. The questionnaire was divided in two parts. In the first part, respondents were required to give personal details resulting in 3 variables, namely, gender, age and approximate frequency (of watching Hindi movies per month). The second part contained 7 items/statements which were based on product placements in general and not for any specific movie. These statements measured viewers' reactions as per the questions discussed above. The variables generated by the second part of the questionnaire are as follows:

Variables

Questions

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## REALISTIC

makes the scene in a movie more realistic

## INFORMATION

is a source of information about latest products

## SUBTLE

should not be given undue focus in the scene

## DISTRACT

causes irritation/distraction

## OVERUSED

is overused these days

## MONEY

is a means of money making for film makers

## BAN

should be banned

Thus a total of 10 variables, 3 based on personal details and 7 based on reactions were generated by the questionnaire.



## **PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

Out of a total of 121 respondents surveyed, 64 (ie, 53 per cent) were males and 57 (ie, 47 per cent) were females. Their age ranged from 16 years to 76 years. The approximate number of Hindi movies watched ranged from 1 movie per month to 30 movies per month. Charts indicating the profile of respondents based on personal detail variables are provided below.

The response in terms of percentage of the respondents is summarized below.

Variable

Agree/Strongly agree

Disagree/Strongly disagree

Neutral

REALISTIC

23%

48%

29%

INFORMATION

71%

12%

17%

SUBTLE

64%

18%

18%

DISTRACT

21%

52%

27%

OVERUSED

64%

12%

24%

MONEY

85%

4%

11%

BAN

21%

47%

32%

A first hand glance at the above table shows that a huge 85 per cent of respondents thought product placements was a money making means for film makers and a large majority also thought placements were a good way of knowing about ongoing products. More than half of the respondents thought product placements were overused in movies these days and that they should be subtle and not overbearing. Close to half the respondents did not think scenes got more realistic with product placements. But again around half the respondents also thought product placements did not distract them and should not be banned.

The process of deriving detailed results is underway. It is proposed to report difference in reactions of respondents across gender, age and movie watching habits as also correlations between the reaction variables using various statistical analysis tools of the SPSS package.

## **CONCLUSION**

Though this study is limited only to Ahmedabad city and a limited sample size, the results may not be conclusive but indicative enough for marketers using this means of communication. From the preliminary results it can be said that people do have positive reactions towards the product placement

practice if done subtly. So creativity and innovation can actually make this form of advertising quite paying.