

Analyzing Viewers' Perception about Brand Placement in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani Movies

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Abstract: The practice of Brand Placement is not very novel in Hollywood and Indian movies; whereas, with newly reviving Pakistani cinema, newer trends of brand placement and cross-media promotion are now being practiced by the marketing experts. This study is intended to compare the techniques of brand placement in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies. The comparison was drawn in terms of reception and comparative persuasive effectiveness of such advertising attempts under the umbrella of Elaboration Likelihood Model. A purposive sample of one Pakistani, one Indian and one Hollywood movie was selected from the last three years each (9 movies) then edited clips from the selected movies were used in a Within-Subjects Posttest Experimental Design for a group of (n=50) respondents selected through a Lottery Method. The results were used to understand the viewers' perception about brand placement in the three movie industries. The findings suggested that viewers had a more positive perception regarding brand placement in Hollywood and Indian movies as compared to Pakistani movies. Moreover, no significant difference was found regarding viewers' perception about brand placement in Hollywood and Indian movies. The researchers propose more in-depth comparative analysis of persuasive efficacy of brand placement with special reference to Pakistani movies.

Keywords: Advertising, Brand Placement, Cross-media Promotion, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Movie Studies, Experimental Method, Persuasive Communication, Persuasive Effectiveness, Product Placement

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Brand placement, also termed as embedded marketing, is a method of marketing, where particular products, services, logos or brands are included in other forms of media contents (e.g. movies, dramas, songs etc) through direct or indirect references, with an intention of promotion (Balasubramanian, 1994). This technique has been used frequently all around the globe and has been successful in publicizing and promoting brands (Segrave, 2004). On the other hand, the financiers or producers of media content get economic relief as the brand pays a substantial amount for its placement

(Grierson and Hardy, 1979). This research tends to compare the persuasive effectiveness of brand placement practices in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies.

The process of moviemaking involves multiple complicated and financially challenging phases; the financier or producer of any movie faces such economic pressures from the stage of idea conception to the modern practice of movie promotions (Garon, 2009). In order to fulfill this pressing concern, the producer may collaborate with some willing brands to contribute to or to share some expenses of the production (Ulin, 2014). On the other hand, products and services always need some canvas or outlet for their placement to enunciate their recognition and strength. In other words, it becomes a win-win situation for both the moviemakers and the advertisers. (Grierson and Hardy, 1979)

Brand Placement, in the form of Product and/or Services Placement, has been in partial practice in Hollywood since the beginning of the 20th century (Segrave, 2004); however, proper interest in such forms of cross-media advertising was observed since 1982 (Reed, 1989). Initially, the brand, product and/or service used to be placed in the movie merely as a prop or background object, but currently, it has been assuming a central position in many of the cinematic ventures (Nagar, 2016).

In the same manner, the Indian movie industry has also been using the practices of product placement since the 1960's and has recognized these practices as effective financial sources for production (Chawla and Pincha, 2016). Varying in their techniques from one movie to the other or from one production house to the other, placement has been there, whether abrupt or subtle ("Brand Placement in the Indian Movie Industry", 2020). There have been verbal as well as visual references to several brands in Indian movies such as the protagonist drinking Bournvita in 'Koi Mil Gaya' (2003) and protagonist working on an Apple product in 'Veere Di Wedding' (2018).

As far as Pakistani Cinema is concerned, there has been little or not widely found research in the area of brand placement. Most of the research on the subject has been Europe-centric, America-centric or focusing on the developed economies (Saqif and Razi, 2018). This may primarily be because of the fact that Pakistani Movie Industry has recently started to revive after a long crisis and is still striving to make its mark. Although Saqif and Razi (2018) found out that Product Placement is an emerging and widely popular trend in Pakistani movies, the area of their research was limited to the acknowledgement of the technique in Pakistani cinema only.

There have been some articles in a few national English newspapers (Dawn, The News, etc.) which have pointed out flaws in the placement of products/brands in recently made Pakistani movies. For example, the lyrical placements of 'Fair & Lovely' beauty cream and 'Tarang' tea in the form of two full-fledged songs in 'Jawani Phir Nahi Ani' (2015) have been criticized by many viewers on account of abruptness. However, substantial, citable and comparative studies of Pakistani Movie Industry with respect to cross-media promotion and brand placement seem to be scarce.

Brand Placement has also been a matter of debate in international markets; there have been researches on its validity and techniques in such a way that consultants provide paid advice to moviemakers for expertly placing a brand (Shears, 2014). Keeping in view the disturbance that many placement attempts have created in some recently produced Pakistani movies ("Unproductive' product placements we could have done without", 2020), it becomes imperative that comprehensive research should be conducted so that producers and consultants may garner some direction based on the audience's response.

1.2 Problem Statement

A pilot study based on content analysis of Indian and Pakistani movies was conducted by the researcher to analyze the art of subtlety and/or abruptness of Brand Placement. The findings from the pilot study revealed that the techniques of placements have been significantly varying from one movie

industry to the other. Subtle brand placements seemed to be a problem for advertisers because they fear that the placements could easily be ignored by the movie-viewers. On the other hand, abrupt brand placements seemed to be a problem for the movie content creators because such raw forms of placements deteriorate the actual plot of movies. In order to understand abalanced, optimum and, at the same time, balanced overlap of Advertising and Movie Studies, the comparative perceptions of audience must be taken into consideration. The current study does not intend to limit itself to covering the perspective of the audience about brand placement in the financially challenged Pakistani movies but also aims at analyzing such placements in comparison to Hollywood and Indian movies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To compare the viewers' perception about techniques of brand placement in Hollywood and Indian movies
2. To compare the viewers' perception about techniques of brand placement in Indian and Pakistani movies
3. To compare the viewers' perception about techniques of brand placement in Hollywood and Pakistani movies

1.4 Research Questions

RQ₁ Is there a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Indian movies?

RQ₂ Is there a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies?

RQ₃ Is there a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H₀ There is no difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Indian movies

H₁ There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Indian movies

H₀ There is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies

H₂ There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies

H₀ There is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies

H₃ There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Pakistani movies

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the concept and practice of Brand Placement, several resources were studied to serve as a foundation for this research. Kramolis and Drabkova (2012) conducted an elaborative study for describing brand placement and its various forms and defined 'brand placement' as a technique of marketing integration of a brand, product or a service into the contents of a movie or a production of television in order to provide an additive advantage over the conventional modes of

advertising. Brand Placement has been categorized in various ways. For instance, Homer (2009) termed the placement as:

- Subtle Brand Placement
- Abrupt Brand Placement

Moreover, Homer (2009) found out that brands' placement efforts definitely backfire if they are executed in an abrupt or redundantly explicit manner. On the other hand, another way of categorizing product placement in a rather more detailed manner has been given in "Types of Product Placement" (2015) in the following manner:

- Product/Service shown as being used in the scenes
- Products/Services/Logos shown clearly on screen but not being used
- Verbally mentioning the brand on screen
- Placement through music
- Contextual reference to the brand through a poster etc
- Unbranded placement when the products are visibly being used without any mention or without any logo placement. (For example, furniture, handbags, sunglasses of famous brands etc)

In addition to this, Přikrylová and Jahodová (2010) as cited in Kramolis and Drabkova (2012) described three broad and less complicated categorization systems of techniques of brand placement for contents of audio-visual production:

- Verbal Reference (when the brand is explicitly incorporated in the dialogues)
- Active Placement (when the product/service is shown as being used by the characters)
- Passive Placement (when the brand is captured in one or more shots or placed in the virtual environment within a movie or TV content)

However, the above categories have been designed based on Hollywood, European and even Indian cinematic industries; there is a lack of research related to the ways in which brands are being placed in Pakistani movies.

Review of various related studies shows contrasting views about brand placement and its efficacy in persuasive communication. Fransen, Wullf and Reijmersdal (2016) argued that placing a brand in media content is an effective form of persuasive communication because consumers do not recognize that they are being persuaded. Moreover, Barroso (2011) found out that the audience would regard an attempt at brand placement as 'creative' if it is properly connected to the plot of the movie. On the contrary, Wiles and Danielova, (2009) attempted to find out the worth of product placement in successful movies. Their findings showed that there was no evident proof that movie product placements were worthwhile. They also inferred that abnormal returns regarding such placements were due to blatancy, placement modality and character associations. Moreover, there are many disadvantages of using product placement such as lack of control, possibility of unsuccessful media programming, a clear margin for adverse character association, vague pricing of product placement and ethical implications of such placements. (Cowley & Barron, 2008)

Teng, Khong and Gh0 (2014) explained the relation between persuasive communication and Elaboration Likelihood Model in their in-depth study. According to their research, consumers interpret various persuasive messages through central or peripheral routes in a given environment. In addition to this, Gerend and Sias (2009) suggested that persuasive messages are influenced by different factors of fixation of a message in the minds of consumers. Horning, (2008) indicated a relation between psychological indicators and consumers' decisions by arguing that techniques such as placements, billboards and celebrity endorsements affect behaviour in an unconscious manner. He also examined

that placement of a brand does have a relationship with the way it has been fixated in the minds of consumers. In addition to this, Brennon and Mann (2017) analyzed brand placement and found out that brand placement and psychological elaboration are definitely interlinked but the strength of this link varies from medium to medium and region to region. The studies emphasized the need of conducting more studies to explore the link between brand placement and elaboration likelihood model.

Moreover, Morton and Friedman, (2012) explored the connection between product placement and subsequent behaviour of the consumers. They found out that many beliefs and ways of thinking ultimately influence the acceptance and effectiveness of brand placement. Redondo, (2012) examined the behavioural effects of negative product placement in movies basing the research on elaboration likelihood model. The results of the experiment conducted on cinema audiences showed that negative information discouraged the consumers using the central routes, especially if the movie content was realistic. However, negative information did not show any discouraging effect on consumers who were identified to be using peripheral routes to process the placement message.

Many research studies have shown that scholars have been using experimentation methods for studies involving elaboration likelihood model, consumer behaviour, brand placement and persuasion processes. Karson and Korgaonkar (2012) conducted a lab experiment under the umbrella of the Elaboration Likelihood Model to investigate the potential differences and similarities between advertising through the internet and other mass media. Reijmersdal, Jansz, Peters and Noort (2010) analysed the effects of brand placements on online games through an experimental method. The experiment was conducted on 2453 girls to study their response patterns. Similarly, another field experiment was conducted by Verhellan, Dens and Pelsmacker (2015) to construct a model for explaining brand placement in movies. Cholinski (2012) also studied the effectiveness of product placement through a field quasi-experiment. Similarly, Natarajan, Balasubramaniam, Stephen, Jublee, and Kasilingam (2018) used an experimental method to study brand placement in Indian movies through a stimuli-based questionnaire.

There have been many studies involving brand placement in Hollywood and European movies. Chen and Wang (2016) conducted a content analysis of top-grossing Hollywood movies and found out that product placement made its way to top-grossing movies in a very evident manner. They also analyzed the type of brands and products placed in Hollywood movies. In a more elaborate manner, Walton (2010) studied the evolution of Hollywood movies in terms of product placement in 90 years. One of the most interesting findings of his study was that product placement has been a part of Hollywood movies since the 1920's and he observed little or no change in the patterns and consistency of these placements over the decades. However, the same study suggested that more analytical studies were required in order to understand the new standards as well as trends of product placement in movies particularly after eradicating the limitations that the researcher mentioned.

Being in proximity to the supposedly the largest movie industry, Indian researchers have also used the area of brand placement as their focus of analysis. Kumar (2017), in her Indian study about influence of product placement in movies and tv, concluded that the increasing trend of using TV dramas and movies for placements was majorly owing to the positive reception among the viewers. However, the viewers or the sample of studied audience was not sure whether such marketing techniques influenced their ultimate purchasing decisions or not. In addition to this, the author also indicated more room for updating this particular research area in terms of separate analysis for movies and television.

Brand placement has been an area of research for media scholars or marketing analysts of Pakistan. Raza and Jalees (2016) studied the effect of product placement on attitudinal aspects and

found out that the strongest impact of such placements was on brand loyalty. Ovais and Nouman (2013) studied the product placement in terms of brand salience and the effect. Their findings suggested that brand salience was significantly related to implications of brand placement in Pakistan. They also suggested that placement strategy should be very carefully managed to avoid adverse effects. Khan, Mahmood, Lodhi and Aftab (2016) studied brand placement in relation to consumer behaviour and found out that there is a positive relation between consumer perception and ethics of product placement. However, all the above studies were based on international contents; the researchers laid great emphasis on the need of conducting research on brand placement in local content.

Gokhale (2010) conducted a comparative study of product placement in Indian and Hollywood movies. She deduced that this marketing technique has been a recognized and widely used practice particularly since the 1980's. Hollywood movies were termed as more successful in integrating placements into story lines, appropriate references to the products and professional handling of the placements as compared to Bollywood. However, the researcher noted that audience's responses to brands placed on the silver screens might be different from one industry to the other; and this difference of responses could be used as a factor for future comparative studies of different countries. Similarly, Kureshi and Sood (2011) analyzed the brand placement practices of Hollywood and Bollywood movies and found out that far more brands were placed in Hollywood movies as compared to Bollywood movies. However, studies related to comparative analysis of brand placement practices seems to be scarce in terms of Pakistani movie industry.

The literature examined by the researcher indicated that a comparative study about brand placement in Pakistani movies and its effects on the Pakistani people has not been conducted extensively, leaving some major void in the existing literature. Moreover, even the national researchers have not incorporated Pakistani movies and Pakistani audiences together as areas of primary research and analysis. Another void found in the literature was related to the tangent of comparative persuasive effect of brand placement in Pakistani, Indian and Hollywood movies. Similarly, there has been rare to no stimulus-based research on brand placement in Pakistan involving local content as the main center and international content as the comparative reference of the study.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the present research has been selected based on the argument that audience view the media content and then process them in different ways before being persuaded or dissuaded. During the phase of processing a message, some receivers would be more attentive towards the factual information while others would be attracted to other superficial components of the message content. Such a dichotomy of information processing is represented in the Elaboration Likelihood Model.

The current study is related to the Elaboration Likelihood Model based on the experiment conducted by Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann in 1983 as well as based on the suggestions of study conducted by Trampe, Stapel and Siero in 2010. It is imperative to analyze how the content and characters of a movie affect the persuasive value of the placed brand. Placement of brands in the movies has been termed as the usage of peripheral route to persuasion. The viewers, who get inclined towards a brand after viewing its placement in the movies, tend to follow the peripheral route. Whereas, audience who do not feel persuaded or inclined towards a brand after viewing its placement in the movies tend to focus more on the actual plot of the movie and are followers of the central route. By taking the theoretical foundation of Elaboration Likelihood Model into consideration, this study tends to analyze the viewers' perception about brand placement in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies. Moreover,

it would also be relevant to understand whether there is a change in the audience's perception towards a brand, and the comparison of perceptions in terms of Brand Placement in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This research has been conducted by using an Experimental Research Design. The primary reason for choosing Experimental design involving 50 respondents for this study is that the researcher would be present to control the environment to ensure accurate results. In order to understand the persuasive impact of products placed in different movies, it becomes essential to introduce the respondents with some stimulus. Therefore, conducting an experiment seems to be an appropriate option.

4.2 Experimental Method

An experiment is a study of cause and effect. It differs from non-experimental methods in that it involves the deliberate manipulation of one variable, while trying to keep all other variables constant. The experimental method is usually taken to be the most scientific of all methods, the 'method of choice'. The main problem with all the non-experimental methods is lack of control over the situation. The experimental method is a means of trying to overcome this problem. The experiment is sometimes described as the cornerstone of psychology: This is partly due to the central role experiments play in many of the physical sciences and also in many of the social sciences. A considerable amount of research to understand the persuasive effect uses the experimental method.

4.3 "Within-Subject" Design

A Within-Subject design is a type of experimental design in which all participants are exposed to every treatment or condition. One of the most significant benefits of this type of experimental design is that it does not require a large pool of participants. A within-subject design can also help reduce errors associated with individual differences. In a within-subject design, individuals are exposed to all levels of a treatment, so individual differences will not distort the results. Each participant serves as his/her own baseline. In this type of experimental design, the participants are exposed to various forms of treatments after regular intervals and their responses are recorded after exposure to each treatment. The term 'treatment' refers to the exposure to stimulus material. This study has used within-subjects design by showing three different stimulus materials (one from each movie industry) to the participants in such a way that after each exposure, their responses were recorded through a research instrument.

4.4 One Group Posttest Only

The researcher has selected the 'one group posttest only' format under a controlled environment for this study. The main reason for choosing 'posttest only' format was that the researcher aimed at collecting relevant data from only those viewers who had recently been exposed to movie scenes embedded with brand placement. A pretest setting is considered to be more relevant when studies are being conducted about relatively well-known phenomena or any core psychological behaviour. Moreover, a pretest would not have been possible because the current study necessitated a recent exposure to such content.

4.5 Stimulus

In terms of experimental research, stimuli are the items used to evoke a reaction from participants or respondents in a study. Stimuli may come in a range of formats including audio, visual or physical. The purpose of the stimulus should be to make the research scenario more engaging and

interactive for participants, and should mirror real-life as much as possible. It should also narrow the focus to the research question at hand, without requiring too much prompting. In order to ensure the relevant stimulus selection, the researcher resorted to the previously conducted research (Farooq and Nawaz, 2019) as a pilot study. The pilot study helped the researcher in understanding the types of scenes to be selected for stimuli through a content analysis of various movies. The stimulus consisted of clips with brand placement from the following movies:

- **Hollywood:** The Fate Of The Furious (2017), A Star Is Born (2018), Spiderman Far From Home (2019)
- **Indian:** Half Girlfriend (2017), Veere Di Wedding (2018), Kabir Singh (2019)
- **Pakistani:** Na Maloom Afraad-II (2017), Load Wedding (2018), Baaji (2019)

4.6 Population and Sampling

The population of this study was considered to be all those students of Institute of Communication Studies who were in the final semesters of their post-graduate degrees in Communication Studies and who have had the experience of watching Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies. A simple random sampling through Lottery method was carried out in order to assign an equal probability for the selection of final respondents. A sample of 50 respondents was selected by following this procedure for the experiment.

4.7 Control Variables

- Education (a close-to-finish post-graduate degree in Communication Studies from Institute of Communication Studies)
- Language Proficiency (a clear understanding of English, Hindi and Urdu languages specially from listening point of view)
- Exposure (a frequent exposure to Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies)

4.8 Research Instrument and Statistical Analysis

The research instrument is defined as the measurement tool designed to obtain data on a topic of interest from research subjects. For this research, the research instrument was designed in the form of questionnaires comprising close-ended questions based on 5-point Likert Scale. The researcher used Minitab 17 to apply 2-Proportions test for the set of first three Hypotheses.

5. HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1:

H₀: There is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Indian movies.

H₁: There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and brand placement in Indian movies.

Two - proportion test was applied in Mini Tab Statistical Software

Confidence level of 95%

Level of significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Critical region: $p\text{-value} < \alpha$

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	35	50	0.700000
2	38	50	0.760000

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: -0.06
 95% lower bound for difference: -0.205716
 Test for difference = 0.05 (vs > 0.05): Z = -1.24 P-Value = 0.893

Table 1: Two-Proportion Test for H_1

Interpretation: The proportion test revealed that there is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies and viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies. It has been proven the results are highly insignificant as the output shows that $P\text{-value} = 0.893 > \alpha = 0.05$, therefore, Null hypothesis has been proved in this case and alternative hypothesis has been rejected. It concludes that viewers are almost similarly positive in their perceptions about techniques of brand placement in Indian and Hollywood movies.

Hypothesis 2:

H₀: There is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies and brand placement in Pakistan movies.

H₂: There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies and brand placement in Pakistan movies.

Two - proportion test was applied in Mini Tab Statistical Software

Confidence level of 95%

Level of significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Critical region: $p\text{-value} < \alpha$

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	47	50	0.940000
2	29	50	0.580000

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: 0.36
 95% lower bound for difference: 0.232590
 Test for difference = 0.05 (vs > 0.05): Z = 4.00 P-Value = 0.000

Table 2: Two-Proportion Test for H_2

Interpretation: The proportion test revealed that there is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Pakistanimovies and viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Indian movies. Thus it has been proven the results are highly significant as the output shows that $P\text{-value} = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$, therefore Null hypothesis has been rejected in this case and alternative hypothesis has been proved. It concludes that viewers are more positive in their perceptions about techniques of brand placement in Indianmoviesthan in Pakistanimovies.

Hypothesis 3:

H₀: There is no significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywoodmovies and brand placement in Pakistanimovies.

H₃: There is a significant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywoodmovies and brand placement in Pakistanimovies

Two - proportional test was applied in Mini Tab Statistical Software

Confidence level of 95%

Level of significance: $\alpha = 0.05$

Critical region: $p\text{-value} < \alpha$

Test and CI for Two Proportions

Sample	X	N	Sample p
1	38	50	0.760000
2	29	50	0.580000

Difference = p (1) - p (2)
 Estimate for difference: 0.18
 95% lower bound for difference: 0.0281737
 Test for difference = 0.05 (vs > 0.05): Z = 1.41 P-Value = 0.080

Table 3: Two-Proportion Test for H_3

Interpretation: The proportion test revealed that there is a moderately insignificant difference between viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Pakistani movies and viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Hollywood movies. Thus it has been proven the results are insignificant as the output shows that $P\text{-value} = 0.080 > \alpha = 0.05$, therefore Null hypothesis has been proved right in this case and alternative hypothesis has been rejected. It concludes that viewers are a little more positive in their perceptions about techniques of brand placement in Hollywood films than in Pakistani films.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed at a comparative analysis of viewers' perception about brand placement in Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies. An experimental research design was adopted to collect the respondents' views on a carefully selected stimulus for this purpose. The results from the study revealed that there was a considerable difference of viewers' positive perception about brand placement in Pakistani movies as compared to the other two movie industries. The findings from this study necessitate more expertly executed brand placement in Pakistani movies. It is noteworthy that the viewers were not very critical about the placement attempts in Hollywood and Indian films. However, they were significantly skeptical about the techniques employed by their local film industry. The findings from this study also indicate the need to analyze the comparative persuasive efficacy of brand placement in the Hollywood, Indian and Pakistani movies so that a possible, desirable and optimal framework may be designed to gratify the needs of producers, advertisers and viewers simultaneously.

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