Brand Placement in Movies: A Successful Strategy for Brand Management

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Abstract

Companies are constantly looking for new ways to market their brands to consumers as traditional media becomes swamped with advertisements. In this regards brand placement in movies is emerging as one of the key strategic marketing tool explored by many advertisers and corporate houses in recent times. In-film brand placement is becoming incredibly popular all around the world. Branding is evolving into a significant source of income for Indian movies as well. However, there are no proper strategic directions for the stakeholders about the outcomes of the brand placements in movies in India. The main purpose of the research is to analyze the outcomes of brand placements in South Indian movies. A Structural Equation Model was developed using SmartPLS to analyze the effect of the congruence, and significance of the plot on brand-event fit, and consequently on attitude towards the brand and purchase intention towards the brand. It was found that brand placements in South Indian movies have a significant influence on attitude towards the brand and consequently on the Purchase intention towards the brand. The outcome of the research is of great use to advertisers and companies and other stakeholders who intend to place their brands in South Indian movies.

Keywords: Brand Placement, Movies, Congruence, Significance of the plot, Brand-event fit, Attitude and purchase intention

Introduction

Brand placement is "The integration of a brand into an entertainment medium with the intent of marketing" (Russel and Belch, 2005). It is the integration of brand advertising into the plot and narration of an entertainment program, which requires active collaboration between the advertiser and program creators (Hudson & Hudson 2006). As marketing communications become indistinguishable from entertainment media, the notion of brand placement in an entertainment setting has gained a lot of interest from academics and practitioners alike (Winkler & Buckner, 2006 ; Eagle, 2007 ; de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Steel, 2007).

An important tactic for marketers to raise brand awareness among consumers is brand placement in movies. This strategy is employed by brands since it works well to connect with a big audience. Millions, and occasionally billions, of people, can view them at once. Additionally, it is less expensive than conventional advertising strategies like radio and television adverts. The use of products and services in the plot of movies is becoming increasingly popular among advertisers because they allow them to influence their target audiences' attitudes and behaviour (Russell, 2002). Brand placements in movies give advertisers a longer shelf life than typical commercials (d'Astous & Chartier, 2000).

India, which is a hub of different film industries, contributes approximately 1500 to 2000 films in 21 languages to the world's film industry annually (Deloitte report 2019). India's music and films are well-known throughout the world. The Hindi film industry, or Bollywood, holds a key position. However, a few regional films have also become very popular pan-India and abroad, including those in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, and Punjabi, among others. All thanks to Director, and visionary Mr. Rajamouli, his Magnum Opus Bahubali 1 and 2 has shown that even regional movies can also earn more than Rs.1000 crores. This was seen in the year 2022 which was considered a glorious year for regional movies. According to the IMBD study, KGF 2 and RRR, two of the greatest films from the South, both made more than Rs. 1000 crores at the box office. Even small-budget movie like Kanthara (made with a mere budget of 15 crores) has created havoc in the movie industry by earning staggering revenue of more than Rs. 400 crores.

History of Brand placement in Indian cinema

Hindi movies have a significant market in India. So let's first thoroughly comprehend the significance of Hindi movies and brand placements in Hindi movies before looking into brand placement in other regional language films. Hindi films are

performing well in terms of investment and income generation. Even production companies from outside of India are making big financial investments in Hindi movies. The significant investment in movies necessitates making every effort to maximize earnings both on and off the screen. The idea of brand placement aids in revenue generation.

The 1950s are when product placement first became popular in India. Coca-Cola was included in "Chalti Ka Naam Gadi," one of the earliest documented brand placements in a Bollywood film (1958). Rajdoot bike (Enfield Motors) was introduced in Raj Kapoor's 1973 smash blockbuster movie "Bobby." One of the placements that spectators will scarcely overlook in the Chennai Express movie is the Nokia phone that Shahrukh Khan used and discussed. In the titles of movies like "Ferrari ki Sawari," "Meri dad ki Maruti," or in songs like "Fevicol" in Dabangg, branding activities are also prominently featured. More than 100 brands were given a platform by the hugely successful movie "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" to advertise themselves in the movie. The movie "Taal" served as a platform for Coca-Cola brand promotion. 20% of the budget for the film came from that brand placement. Both are young-adult films and the brand are marketed mostly to the same age range.

Branded product placement in movies was formerly thought to be a Bollywood phenomenon. Although the Indian audience is exposed to product placement in various media as well as in the domestic and international entertainment business, South Indian films have also followed the trend. South Indian movies are a significant trend with the Indian populace, much like Hindi movies have a sizable outside market. Since access to movies of all genres has become simpler thanks to the development of OTT platforms and DTH, even south Indian films enjoy a sizable following in India, along with many Bollywood productions. Additionally, there is a lot of interest in south Indian films. Films like KGF2, RRR, and Kanthara were released on a national scale and were a huge success in terms of generating cash and winning over viewers with their solid content. Given how frequently South Indian films are viewed by audiences, there is a reasonable interest in learning what effect brand placements in South Indian films have on viewers.

Literature Review and Hypothesis

Product placement is the placement of brands into films and television programs (Karrh, 1998). Movie product placement initially appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. Academicians are now interested in the topic of product placement much later, almost a century later. This was a result of Steven Spielberg's smash movie E.T. (1982). Hershey's saw an incredible increase of 66% in sales of Reese's Pieces. The product placement in the movie triggered a boost in sales (Gupta & Gould, 2007; Gupta & Lord, 1998). The majority of product placements used low-involvement goods, with the automobile industry accounting for the lion's share (18% of all placements) (Sapolsky & Kinney,1994). According to a study Balasubramanian (1994), "brand placement" refers to deliberate product inclusions in motion pictures or programs aired on TV that may positively affect viewers' beliefs & behaviours towards a product or service. Brand placement is a type of "hybrid message" that combines features of publicity and advertising. He intended "any paid attempts to influence audiences for commercial benefits using communications that project a non-commercial nature" when he said "Hybrid message." This was his attempt to paint brand placement in the movie as an undetectable kind of advertising to the audience. "Commercial insertions into a specific media program intended to heighten the visibility of a brand, type of product, or service," La Pastina (2001).

Hypothesis

In several brand placement studies, congruence was the main focus (DeLorme and Reid 1999; Russel 2002). The congruence between the Event (movie) and brand is a crucial factor to take into account when integrating the brands, according to practitioners. They went even further and stated that it is preferable for the brand, content, and viewers to be in alignment. According to some research, people are more likely to react favorably when the brand and the event are consistent (Hamlin & Wilson, 2004).

According to Meenaghan (2001), views of congruity reflect how predictable the sponsored brand is thought to be. Congruence will therefore probably enable the brand-event fit (Murphy, 1996; Gray, 2000; Hamlin & Wilson, 2004; Welsh, 1999: Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).

The brand's significance or importance to the program's main plot is the main emphasis of the brand event fit construct. In his study, Russell (2002) stressed the significance of the plot as one of the key predictors of the brand event fit.

A successful marketing plan may involve connecting a brand with an occasion that causes favorable attitudes about the brand. This could enhance sales and even create a long-lasting competitive advantage. Consumer reactions may be positively impacted by the fit between the brand and the event, leading to a positive attitude toward both (Dousteyssier-

Fleck, 2004). According to the study by Shwu-Ing Wu and Chen-Lien Lo (2009), brand event fit affects attitudes toward brands. Additionally, a customer's attitude about a brand influences their intention to buy. According to Flaherty and Pappas (2000), consumer purchase intentions are significantly influenced by how they feel about the main brand.

From the aforementioned literature review, the following hypotheses have been set:

H1: Congruence has a significant influence on Brand-event fit

H2: The significance of the plot has a significant influence on brand-event fit

H3: Brand-event fit had a significant effect on attitude towards the placed brand in the movie

H4: Attitude toward the brand placed in the movie has a significant effect on purchase Intention towards the brand placed in the movie

The constructs were adopted from previous literature and modified as per the requirement of the study (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Constructs and Their respective Statements

Constructs	Symbol	Statements	Source
Congruence (CG)	CG1	"When I hear of this product placement, I can understand the brand better"	Fleck and Quester (2007)
	CG2	"With this brand placement, I discovered a new meaning to the brand"	
	CG3	"The brand that is placed in the movie is not surprising to me."	
Significance of the Plot	SP1	"Brand played important role in the plot of the movie"	Russel (2002)
	SP2	"Brand connected to the plot of the movie"	
	SP3	"Including brand provided meaning to the plot"	
Brand-event Fit(BEF)	BEF1	"The use of this brand in the film makes sense"	Speed and Thompson (2000)
	BEF2	"My image of the advertised brand aligns with my image of the film"	
	BEF3	"The movie and the placed brand fit each other well."	
Attitude towards the placed brand(AT)	AT1	"I appreciate how the brand was used in the film"	Bruner & Hensel, (1992)
	AT2	"The brand placement in the film is excellent."	
	AT3	"I have a favourable disposition toward brand"	
	AT4	"With the brand placed in the movie, I feel a strong emotional connection."	
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	I would purchase the brand placed in the film.	Nagar, K. (2016).
	PI2	"When I wish to purchase a product in this category in the future, I might think about using this brand."	
	PI3	"I recommend to others for purchasing the brand placed in the movie"	
	PI4	"I'm considering making repurchases of the brand mentioned in the movie."	

Research Methodology

The Purposive sampling methods are used in the present study. Postgraduate students from Bengaluru City University who enjoy viewing movies were our target respondents. To finalize the movies with brand placement, before the actual study, two pilot studies were conducted.

Pilot study 1.: Selection of the cinemas for the study

There was a brainstorming session with 34 students, all of whom were between the ages of 22 and 25, and comprised both male and female students. The names of various south Indian movies that utilized product placement were revealed during the discussion. Following more discussion, a list of 10 South Indian movies with brand placements was compiled (refer to table 2).

Table 2: List of South Indian movies with Brand placements

Sl. No.	Language	Movie name	Brand
1	Kannada	KGF 1	Raymonds
2	Kannada	Rajakumara	Santoor Soap
3	Kannada	Bachan	Joyalukkas
4	Telugu	Mr. Perfect	Cadbury Chocolate
5	Telugu	Maghadeera	Pepsi
6	Telugu	Srimanthudu	Hero Bicycle
7	Tamil	Vikram	Zomato
8	Tamil	Master	Hugo Boss - Sunglasses
9	Tamil	Love Today	One Plus Phone
10	Malayalam	Hridayam	Nikon Camera

Pilot Study 2: Shortlisting movies

For shortlisting the four movies, discussions were conducted among 40 respondents. The above-mentioned movie clippings were shown to the respondents. The participants were informed to select 4 movies in which brands were integrated with the movie story in a more meaning full way. The final 4 movies with brand placement selected for the main study are given below:

1. KGF 1 – Raymond
2. Mr. Perfect - Cadbury Chocolate
3. Vikram - Zomato
4. Hridayam – Nikon Camera

Main Study

The majority of the 673 postgraduate student participants—385 men and 288 women—were found to be between the ages of 22 and 25. In this study, purposive sampling is used grounded on participant curiosity, propensity for watching movies, and familiarity with product placement in motion pictures. We chose young adults because they are avid moviegoers and social media influencers, allowing marketers to specifically target them. The participants were invited to complete a questionnaire after watching a movie clip that had been finalized during the pilot trial. To appropriately engage respondents in the entertainment environment, an attempt was made to position the chosen brands in the centre of the movie clip. The research was done between Nov 2023 & Dec 2023. SmartPLS 4 was used to create Structure Equation Modelling, which was used to validate the study's constructs.

Model Development Using PLS-SEM Approach

In the present study, the SEM method was adopted to test the research model of purchase intention. SEM can be done in two ways: firstly, covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling, and the second way is variance-based Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). There is a lot of literature supporting that PLS-SEM is preferred over COV-based SEM (Sarstedt & Cheah 2019; Hwang et al. 2020; Hair et al. 2019). PLS-SEM is mainly used in getting prediction accuracy and is hence considered a better SEM approach for the development of the theory (Gefen et al. 2011, Shaiu et al. 2019; Hair et al. 2019; Khan et al. 2019). Hence, the researcher has chosen a smart PLS-SEM approach rather than a covariance-based SEM approach for analysis using SmartPLS (V.4.0.8.4). In the PLS-SEM method, first, the measurement model's validity and reliability were examined; then, the structural model's suitability for testing the hypothesis was determined.

Results

Figure 2: PLS-SEM Model development
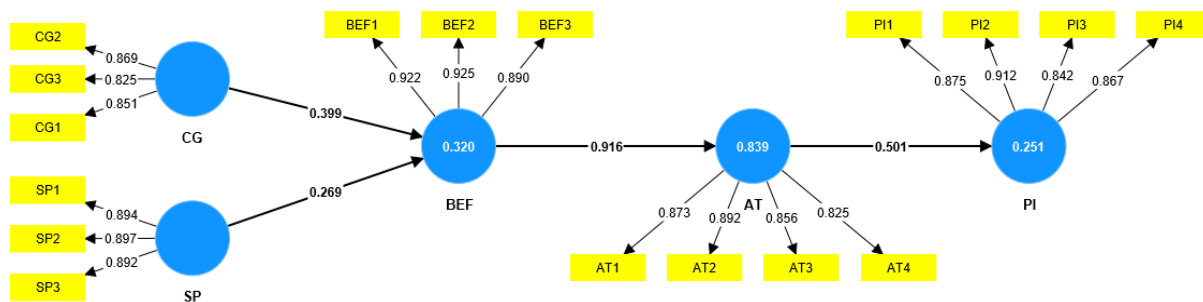
Note: *CG = Congruence; SP = Significance of the Plot; BEF = Brand-event fit; AT = Attitude towards brand and PI = Purchase intention towards brand*

This model has been developed and tested for independent variables and Dependent variables. It explains the relationship between the congruence and significance of the plot with the brand-event fit. Also, model explains the influence of Brand event fit on the Attitude towards the placed brand and consequently model explains the influence of attitude on purchase intention towards the brand placed in the movie.

Convergent Validity
Table 3: Factor loading, Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE

	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	The average variance extracted (AVE)
AT	AT1	0.873	0.885	0.897	0.743
	AT2	0.892			
	AT3	0.856			
	AT4	0.825			
BEF	BEF1	0.922	0.899	0.901	0.833
	BEF2	0.925			
	BEF3	0.89			
CG	CG1	0.851	0.805	0.805	0.72
	CG2	0.869			
	CG3	0.825			
PI	PI1	0.875	0.897	0.904	0.765
	PI2	0.912			
	PI3	0.842			
	PI4	0.867			
SP	SP1	0.894	0.875	0.882	0.80
	SP2	0.897			
	SP3	0.892			

As per table 3, the alpha value and CR are above 0.7, so henceforth we can infer that all the constructs are reliable. To evaluate Convergent validity, AVE is used and it is evident that the AVE values are above 0.5 demonstrating the convergent validity of the constructs (Hair Jr. 2016).

Discriminant Validity

As per a study, Hair Jr. et al. (2017) the following criteria are used to assess the discriminant validity in PLS-SEM: 1. "the loading coefficients have to be larger than the cross-loading values" 2. "The inter-construct correlations had to be less than the square root of the AVE values" 3. "The latent variable HTMT values had to be lower than 0.85. As per Tables 4 &5, it is evident that the measurement model satisfies all the above three criteria and henceforth we can infer that the measurement model is valid.

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	AT	BEF	CG	PI	SP
AT	0.842				
BEF	0.716	0.613			
CG	0.506	0.509	0.849		
PI	0.501	0.523	0.623	0.835	
SP	0.446	0.433	0.411	0.348	0.814

Table 5: HTMT Ratio

	AT	BEF	CG	PI	SP
AT					
BEF	0.616				
CG	0.598	0.598			
PI	0.551	0.579	0.734		
SP	0.506	0.484	0.488	0.388	

Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

The Variance Inflation Factor is measured to assess the level of collinearity in PLS-SEM,

The findings of this study show that all the VIF values are less than 5.0 (refer to table 6), indicating that there is no multi-collinearity among the predictor variable (Hair Jr et al. 2017).

Table 6: Collinearity Statistics

	AT	BEF	CG	PI	SP
AT				1.335	
BEF	2.215				
CG		2.194			
PI					
SP		2.089			

Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing
Table 7: Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

	Path coefficients	P-value	Result
CG □ BEF	0.399	0.000	Hypothesis 1 Supported
SP □ BEF	0.269	0.000	Hypothesis 2 Supported
BEF □ AT	0.916	0.000	Hypothesis 3 Supported
AT □ PI	0.501	0.000	Hypothesis 4 Supported

As per the above table 7, it is evident that Congruence is having positive and significant (p-value = 0.000) influence on Brand-event fit henceforth hypothesis 1 is supported. The significance of the plot is having positive and significant (p-value = 0.000) influence on brand-event fit, henceforth hypothesis 2 is supported. Brand-event fit is having positive and significant (p-value = 0.000) influence on Attitude towards the placed brand in the movie. Attitude has a positive and significant (p-value = 0.000) influence on purchase intention towards the brand placed in the movie. Henceforth all the model hypotheses were supported.

The Predictive relevance of the proposed model
Table 8: R^2 value

	R-square	**R-square adjusted**
BEF	0.320	0.318
AT	0.839	0.839
PI	0.251	0.251

Source: SmartPLS (4)

Table 9: F^2 value

	AT	**BEF**	**CG**	**PI**	**SP**
AT				0.335	
BEF	0.215				
CG		0.194			
PI					
SP		0.189			

Source: SmartPLS(4)

Table 10: Q^2 value

	Q²predict
AT	0.316
BEF	0.313
PI	0.245

The SRMR value is 0.05 which is smaller than 0.08, which indicates that the model's hypotheses were well tested. Additionally, the endogenous components' Stone-Geisser Indicator (Q2) and R-squared (R2) values were utilized to estimate the suggested model's predictive relevance. The R^2 of Brand-event fit (refer to table 8) (0.320), attitude toward the placement of the brand in the movie (0.839), & intention to purchase the brand, placed in the movie (0.251) all R^2 values are significant level, ,(Henseler et al., 2009) as shown in table 8, demonstrating the predictive power of the endogenous constructs in the present model.

The f^2 values range from 0.189 to 0.335 (refer to table 9), indicating the strength of the relationship among the latent variable. The f^2 values suggest that there is a medium to strong effect size level from latent variables (Hair Jr et al., 2017). Additionally, Table 10's Q2 result and the fact that all of the latent variable values are greater than 0 allow us to conclude that this model has established predictive relevance for endogenous variables. In general, the analyses above show that the proposed model is credible.

Discussion & Managerial Implication
The findings of our study showed that brands included in South Indian films generated more favourable consumer reviews. As they accomplish amazing things in the film, movie actors are revered in Indian culture as demigods. Customers are

compelled to copy a celebrity's style and follow them blindly by their aura and glamour. A brand repositioning effort or a product launch might benefit from product placement.

A problem that is significant to advertisers is whether the brand must be featured in a film and, if so, how well it must be tied to the storyline. According to our research, the plot's congruence and significance have a favourable effect on how well the brand event fits. One significant finding in this area is that respondents believed they had learned new meanings about the brand and had improved their understanding of it. This research demonstrates how crucial brand placement in movies is for strengthening customer connections. It is important to exercise caution so as not to exhaust the audience with a brand presence that is unsupported by evidence and does not advance the storyline of the movie. This might do more harm than good.

Another significant discovery is that brand attitudes are influenced by how closely a brand is related to a movie. Additionally, one's opinion toward a brand that appears in a movie can affect one's intention to buy that brand. Since brand placement in southern films can also affect consumers' buying intentions, this finding is more useful for businesses. Our research revealed new information that even south Indian cinemas are not lagging in influencing the purchase intentions of consumers, contrary to the earlier literature, which concentrated primarily on brand placement in Bollywood movies. According to the research's findings, brand placements in south Indian films have a more favourable effect on potential customers, and businesses can use them.

Limitations and Future Directions

Sample size restrictions: The study was done among educated young people in Bangalore. Future studies can be done in semi-urban and rural areas.

The present study aims only at brand placement in movies whereas future studies can focus on brand placement in Reality shows, Live concerts, Games, and other entertainment channels

The movie clippings were not seen together by the respondents. This becomes a restriction as movies are seen in theatres and in groups.

The responses of the respondents may also be impacted by the movie's show time. Investigating the aforementioned issues will result in a thorough comprehension of efficient product placements.

The current analysis only looks into brand placements in movies from southern India. A comprehensive analysis of the product placement in Indian movies can be obtained by conducting a study that concentrates on the country's all major language film industries.

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