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New Trend of Promotional Strategies in Bangladesh: A Study on the Acceptance and Influence of Product Placement from Consumers' Standpoint

Adita Barua [α], A S M Saifur Rahman [σ], Kazi Noor-E-Jannat [ρ] & MD Rifat Zahir [ω]

Abstract- The study intends to contribute to a more serious understanding of consumer acceptance of product placement and its influence on purchase intention of consumers. 168 respondents from different cities of Bangladesh participated in the study. The methodology of the study designed using the true experimental method. Collected data has been analyzed via SPSS windows software version 24. This study is guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action, which recommends that individual consumers' behavior is guided by their purchase intention. the consumer awareness of product placement does not influence the consumer attitude toward product placement significantly. It may have its impact on consumer behavior but it's not a major influence. The study also suggests that consumer attitude toward product placement is the most influential variable than the consumer attitude in shaping consumer purchase decision and product placement may not have a huge impact on consumer purchase decision. Some recommendations are provided to the marketers and researchers to improve the placement efficiency.

Keywords: product placement, consumer behavior, purchase intention, acceptance, attitude.

I. Introduction

Simply, product placement can be defined as the use of a brand in media content to influence the consumer behavior (Akar, 1991). To be specific, when companies pay a medium like a movie, TV show, drama or a virtual game to have their brand name or product display or utilization during the movie, show or the game for a certain period of time, it is called product placement (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). While a favorite celebrity is endorsing a brand or product, it creates a positive image in the mind of consumers considering the brand or products that influence consumers' perception significantly (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987).

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An example of product placement in a television program in Bangladesh is "Ittyadi" a more than 25 years old TV Show, originated and cast by maverick television host Hanif Sanket. The show pioneered in investigative and thought-provoking documentaries on prolific personalities from different strata of society. Since the beginning, the program used product placement in their fun games, documentaries even in music. Later several shows came forward with this trend such as Close Up One, a reality singing competition to find new talent to represent Bangladesh for a year.

Bangladeshi drama is rather advanced in placing the products in their scene and dialogues. Mostly, the telecommunication companies are utilizing their products and services placed in a wide range of ways. Besides, different hotels and restaurants are being used in the scene to promote their business and create a positive brand image in the psyche of consumers. Some such examples are, "Vitamin T" and "Impossible 5" in 2013, promoted Airtel telecommunication company of Bangladesh. Now each year on occasions like Valentine's day, Friendship day, Father's Day, Mother's Day – thought to provoke short films are also becoming a possible arena for product placement to the promoters.

Bangladeshi movies are not spared from product placements by the companies. One very recent example is the movie named "Musafir", released in 2016 promoted malt beverage. Though the trend is fully yet to adopt by the industry. But it can be considered as the new advertising avenue for the promoters.

Though the relationship between the consumer buying decision and consumer behavior is unclear, it has always been thecenter of the marketing research. Marketers always wanted to know "who" is "who" through studying the consumer behavior.

Leslie and Leon (2009), defined consumer behavior as the process how consumer searches for information while purchasing a product, its usage, their post-purchase evaluation and how they classify products to fulfill their needs. They also discussed consumer behavior based on the consumer's the four phases of a decision-making process. The phases are

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as follows: 1) need recognition, meaning realization of a need to resolve a problem. Therefore, they will 2) search for an alternative product from different sources (internal sources like past experience, learning and so forth and/or external sources like marketing promotion mix). Then, the consumer will try to 3) evaluate the alternative products to select the suitable product to purchase and employ it. Finally, the consumer will have a 4) post-purchase evaluation which will influence their purchase behavior for arepeat buy or dispose of the product. But, it should be noted that the phases may not be traced by the consumer as the problem may or may not be solved by the purchase of a product. Moreover, situational factors also have an influence on the consumer purchase decision.

Therefore, the questions that the study intends to answer are: How consumers perceive the product placement? Is product placement help in brand recognition and evaluation? how great is the influence of product placement toward consumer buying behavior?

In Bangladesh, only a handful researches have been conducted in regards to some specific industry. But in general, no research has been conducted that can suggest a strategy make an effective product placement to make the brand positioning effective and stand out from the competitive brands in the mind of consumers.

Lately, several studies on product placement have conducted consumer surveys to evaluate the impact of product placement on brand awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions (Wiles & Danielova, 2009). DeLorme et al., 1999, found that consumers often try to relate the movie world to their own, which intern significantly influence the consumer attitude and norms. This study intends to contribute to a more serious understanding of consumer acceptance of product placement and its influence on purchase intention of consumers.

II. Literature Review

To clarify the confusion and mistaken concept of product placement, the study intends to define the term and its practices in the market arena by the promoters. The study also intends to supply a finite definition with collective concepts and definitions used by the uppermost people in the industry to help the readers to develop a fresh perception of the term, product placement.

A consumer certainly exposed to the product placement, while watching a movie or a TV show or playing an online video game. It is actually an indirect kind of promotion, where a brand or product deliberately displayed in a piece of performance, whether it is visual, oral or virtual (Karrh, 1998). Now it is common in movies and TV shows, which also rapidly being used in dramas, games and music videos also. Unlike other advertising stunts, product placement doesn't use expressed pitched for sale (Rohani & Nazari, 2012). A simple instance of product placement is an actor driving a car with the brand and model is clearly detectable.

Product placement often misinterpreted as a type of paid advertisement, though, around 99% of all product placement is unpaid, globally (Olejar, 2016). Hence, product placement is not an advertisement, most likely to be a form of promotion. It can be any sort of audio or visual communication, including or reference a product, service or a trademark so that it can be highlighted along with a consumer exposed mode of media (IPPA, 2009). Product placement is also recognized as "embedded marketing" (Kwon, 2012), usually found in movies, TV shows, dramas etc.

Hence, a product placement is a form of promotional strategy in which products and services are embedded in a drama, movie or TV show in a noticeable way to capture a large audience (Langner, Okazaki, & Eisend, 2012). Product placements are presented, mentioned or discussed within the plot of a movie/ shows/ dramas in a fashion that will create positive feelings towards the product or service. Thus, the term "product placement" also referred as an "embedded marketing," as it is usually found in movies, TV shows, dramas, games, plays, and so on. For instance, think of the "Transporter" movies using Audy cars or "James Bond" movies using fancy sports cars. This way audience develops a more substantial connection with the product and that gives the reason for their purchase decision (Olejar, 2016).

Though over the past decades, product placement has become an interesting topic in the area of marketing, the past studies of product placement are not sufficient enough (Balasubramanian et al., 2006). Yet, those past studies on product placement reflect the issue of product placement for marketing purposes.

Due to the evolving traditional and digital media, the role of product placement has become more significant for the promoters as the product communication has become an urgent demand for the promoters (Conchar, Crask, & Zinkhan, 2005). Due to the declining effectiveness of the traditional patterns of brand communication via advertising, and public relations, promoters are looking for the new and innovative ways of brand communications. While the consumer resistance toward traditional broadcast advertising is quickly growing, product placement through digital technology has been widely extended and drawn the attention of promoters and academics (DeLorme & Reid, 1999).

Nebenzahl and Segunda (1993), first studied on the consumer attitudes toward the product placement. They found that consumers usually don't object to the practice of placing the product in the movie plots as they saw it as an efficient technique for promoting products. But yet some of the sampled population

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brought up the ethical issues of an excessive appearance and controversial influences of product positioning.

While evaluating the consumers' acceptance of product placement, some specific perspectives, such as - product types, gender, frequency of media viewed (De Gregorio and Sung, 2010; McKechnie and Zhou, 2003); and, consumer's personality in case of initial marketing research (Caprara et al., 1993). According to the evidence from Gould, Gupta, and Sonja (2000), consumer attitude toward product placement can also be influenced by the non-cultural variables, such as individual differences in gender, consumer's personality traits etc.

Several past studies on movie placement found that, though consumers were aware of promotion, they have an open-minded attitude toward the product placement. Even many preferred product placement as it connects them to their social life. Gould et al., (2000) compared the degree of acceptance of product placement in media from the consumers of the United States, Austria, and France. The outcome of the study indicated that compared to the Austria and France, American consumers favorably accepted the product placement and were more expected to have favorable purchase intentions of placing products. But the study also identified the cultural differences as the core determinants of the influential power of product placement.

Past studies showed several benefits offered by the product placement from the perspective of promoters and media producers. Rohani and Nazari (2012) showed that product placement can help to stabilize the cost of making movies or TV shows for the producers and brings reality to the plots. Again, it likewise offers a mass promotion at a low cost for the marketers. But none of the studies evaluated the consumer's view (Wiles & Danielova, 2009). The study intends to satisfy the gap from the consumer's perspective by evaluating their awareness and acceptance of product placement and its influence on their purchase decision.

III. Methodology

The study covers an extensive area of concepts that can only be covered with an inclusive combination of primary and secondary data. For the purpose of the study, we looked at the previous studies regarding the product placement to have a better understanding of the subject arena.

To get the most accurate outcome from the study, the study designed using the true experimental method. Moreover, true experimental type researchers are most suitable to prove or disprove a hypothesis. As it fulfills all the conditions of true experimental research design. The conditions are as follows – 1) Randomly assigned sample group; 2) Viable control group is used in the study; 3) Only one final dependent variable to answer the research question. 4) All the subjects used in the study are given equal chances to be assigned to the both experimental and control group.

This study is guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action, which recommends that individual consumers' behavior is guided by their purchase intention. State of mind, attitude, is then shaped from that intention and he/she acts from that disposition which thusly frames their view of life. Individual consumers can anticipate behavior from an intention that is created intellectually; these intentions, then make us carry on instantly as a programmed reflex. There are three elements that decide our intention: our attitude toward a particular behavior, our impression of social measures, and our recognized behavioral control. In whole, the more confident we feel about an attitude and view of social standards, the greater the behavioral control, and the more the individual will do the conduct in view of his/her belief. In this study, the relationship between product placement is tested against the consumer attitude, brand recognition and evaluation, and their final purchase decision.

A quantitative survey using questionnaires has been conducted to fulfill the purpose of the study. The questionnaire contains three section. The first section includes the demographic data of the respondents. In the second section, the responses in Likert scale has been collected on five important variables to measure the hypothesis of the study. The third section includes a few open-ended questions to discuss and explore the effectiveness of product placement from the depth of consumers' perspective.

The sample size for the study is N= 168, which includes the consumers of varied age and profession. The respondents are selected from the Cox's Bazar area and have a tertiary educational background.

The variables used in the study are – Consumer Awareness of Product Placement, Consumers Attitude Toward Product Placement and Consumers Purchase Decision.

Using the variables, we have prepared three hypotheses to test with the collected quantitative data. The hypothesis are as follows –

SL	Null Hypothesis	Alternative Hypothesis
1	Consumers positively accept the product placement as a promotional strategy.	Consumers negatively or neutrally accept the product placement as a promotional strategy.
2	Product placement has a positive influence over purchase decision.	Product placement has a negative or neutral influence over purchase decision.

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IV. Findings & Analysis

The questionnaire survey conducted to test our hypothesis included a small sample from different districts of the country and included 168 respondents who were willing to share their perception and contribute toward our study. The results of the study are given as follows-

Table 1: Reliability Test of data

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	No of Items	Revised Alpha	Revised No of Items
Consumer Awareness of Product Placement	.556	7	.603	6
Consumers Attitude Toward Product Placement	.639	7	-	-
Consumers Purchase Decision	.670	7	-	-

Reliability is standard when the alpha value is above .6 and below .7, though there is an argument. But an alpha value more than .9 is considered as an arbitrary number of variables are taken into considerations, which means the number of questions we considered in the article is more than necessary.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Data

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consumer Awareness of Product Placement	3.76	.472	-.559	1.476
Consumers Attitude Toward Product Placement	3.42	.580	-.017	-.190
Consumers Purchase Decision	3.59	.573	-.484	-.222

To simplify the interpretation of a descriptive analysis has been conducted, where mean indicates the average response from the selected respondents. From the above table 2 of descriptive statistics, regarding the consumer awareness of product placement, the mean is 3.76, indicating that the average response from the respondents. The value of mean in this case denotes that respondents were aware of the products are being promoted via the media plot. In the case of consumer attitude toward product placement, the mean is 3.76, indicating that most of the respondents have a positive attitude toward the product placement. Again, with consumer purchase decision mean is 3.59, helps us to understand that respondents are positively influenced by product placement while making a purchase.

Variability Analysis helps us to understand the distance between the mean scores of the items used to compute the variables. The most common measure of the variability is the Standard Deviation. It tells us the differentiation between the scores of the items used in variables. The standard deviation shows that there is very little variance among the responses gathered from the selected sample population. This indicates that the responses are consistent.

Moreover, to evaluate the normality of the data used in the study we have conducted a normality analysis (Skewness & Kurtosis). As the standard usually goes that the skewness value is acceptable if it lies between -1 to +1 and the kurtosis value is acceptable if the value lies between -3 to +3. But there is an argument that both values are acceptable if they lie between -3 to +3.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation

Variables	Awareness	Attitude	Purchase Decision
Consumer Awareness of Product Placement	1		
Consumers Attitude Toward Product Placement	.515**	1	
Consumers Purchase Decision	.458**	.536**	1

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). ***

Considering the normality of data used for the purpose of this study a Pearson correlation analysis have been conducted assuming the data set used are normal. Here we can see that when significance level is .01, all of the variables have a moderate correlation.

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From the table 3, the correlation coefficient between consumer awareness of product placement and consumer attitude toward product placement is .515, indicating that the more consumer become aware of the product placement the more attitude changes toward the product placement positively.

In the case of correlation between the consumer awareness of product placement and consumer purchase decision, the coefficient is .458, which is a positive moderate relationship. This can be interpreted as the more people become aware of the product placement, the more their purchase decision becomes influenced by the product placement in a positive way.

Again, the correlation coefficient between the consumer attitude toward the product placement and the purchase decision is .536, showing a positive moderate correlation between the variables. This indicates that the more people grow a positive attitude toward product placement as a promotional strategy the more their purchase decision positively influenced by the product placement.

Finally, the matrix reveals that consumer attitude toward product placement is the most influential variable than the consumer attitude in shaping consumer purchase decision. But the coefficient of correlation among the variables is not that much of high, which suggesting that the product placement may not have a huge impact on consumer purchase decision.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Variables	β	t - level	Significance
Attitude	.515	7.733	.00

Dependent variable: Consumer Attitude toward Product Placement
Predictors: Consumer awareness of product placement

Regression Analysis helps to examine the impact of one variable on another variable and check the impact of independent variables on the dependent variables. The value of R is taken from the table of the model summary table, and value of df and F is taken from ANOVA test table while data analyzed by the SPSS tool. Here, R^2 = .265, F= 59.801, df = 167, No of IV =1. In regression analysis, the R^2, which is .265, which indicates that 26.5% of the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variable. This can be interpreted as that only 26.5% of the Consumer Attitude Toward Product Placement are positively influenced via Consumer awareness of product placement in media.

The F value is 59.801 and the df value is 167, which are representing the explanatory power of the regression model. To put it simply, it is indicating whether the independent variables helped to determine the dependent variable or not. The value suggests that the Consumer Attitude toward Product Placement is considerably influenced by the independent variable though it is not that highly significant.

The significance level of the variables is lower than .05 which indicates that the influence of independent variables on the dependent variables is not significant. This can be interpreted as the influence of consumer awareness of product placement on creating a positive consumer attitude toward the product placement is not recognizable.

The beta value denotes that the impact on a dependent variable by 1 unit change in an independent variable. Here the beta values associated with consumer awareness of product placement and consumer attitude toward product placement is .515, which indicates that in the case of creating a positive consumer attitude toward the product placement, the independent variable, Consumer awareness of product placement, don't have that much of influence.

Finally, the regression model showing that the consumer awareness of product placement does not influence the consumer attitude toward product placement significantly. It may have its impact on consumer behavior but it's not a major influence here to prove the first hypothesis.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	β	t - level	Significance
Awareness	.248	3.348	.001
Attitude	.408	5.507	.000

Dependent variable: Purchase Behavior
Predictors: Attitude, Awareness

Here, Adjusted R^2 =.325, F= 41.158, df = 167, No of IV =2.

In the case of multiple linear regression analysis, the focus should be given on the adjusted R^2, which is 325. This value indicates that 32.5% of the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variables. This can be interpreted as that only 32.5% of the respondents are influenced via product placement as they aware of product placement in media and they have a positive attitude toward the product placement.

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The F value is 41.158 and the df value is 167, which are representing the explanatory power of the regression model. To put it simply, it is indicating whether the independent variables helped to determine the dependent variable or not. The value suggests that the consumer purchase decision is considerably influenced by the independent variable though it is not that much of significant.

The significance level of the variables is lower than .05 which indicates that the influence of independent variables on the dependent variables is not significant. This can be interpreted as the influence of consumer awareness of product placement and consumer attitude toward the product placement on consumer purchase decision is not recognizable.

The beta value denotes that the impact on a dependent variable by 1 unit change in an independent variable. Here the beta values associated with consumer awareness of product placement and consumer attitude toward product placement are .248 and .408 respectively. This indicates that in the case of consumer purchase decision making, both independent variables don't have that much of influence. This is clearly not in favor of the second null hypothesis we considered for the study.

Finally, the regression model showing that the consumer awareness of product placement and consumer attitude toward product placement do not influence the consumer purchase decision significantly. It may have its impact on consumer behavior but it's not a major influence here.

V. Discussion

This study measured the effectiveness of product placement via consumer awareness and attitude toward the product placements on media types such as – TV shows, movies, dramas, games and finally the effects of the overall influence of product placement on consumer's purchase intention.

The first hypothesis of the study is to evaluate the acceptance of product placement from consumer's standpoint based on their awareness of product placement. This also considered the ethical factors and the in general behavior of the sampled consumers.

Results showed that the current audiences of Bangladesh understand that a product is being placed as a promotional strategy, though they are not familiar with the term "Product Placement". There is a significant level of acceptance of product placement though the reaction actually depends on their encounter ability of the product in real life. When consumers regularly encountering a product and regularly, they are getting accustomed to the product and actually being influenced to purchase the product to some extent. Most importantly, what the study explored is that consumers are adopting the insights and use of the product from the placement in movies, TV shows or in games.

In the case of Bangladesh, the most effective media seem to be the Dramas. Such a difference can be clarified by the consumers' ability to connect the drama scenes and characters to their real-life scenarios. A statistically significant result has been observed that the millennial generation of Bangladesh are more accustomed to the product placement and their acceptability is quite remarkable.

In the case of the second hypothesis of the study, it intends to evaluate the influence of product placement from consumer's standpoint based on their awareness and acceptance of product placement. This also considered the intention of purchasing the product and referring the product to the influential circle of the consumers like friends and family.

The result of the study shows that the product placement may not have a huge impact on consumer purchase decision. But the fact that remains that there is a positive correlation or influence. This may be due to the unfamiliarity with the placement. But what the study found interesting is that the younger people intend to be influenced by the product placement by their favorite stars, especially in the case of the lifestyle products placed in the media. To make it more simplified, the study reveals that the young people are becoming the "early adopters" for those particular products that are placed by their favorite actors.

The study base that the dramas and film's perceived realism have higher plausible than that of conventional advertisement methods. Most importantly, product placement extends the links between the scene and real life due to the realism and authenticity added to the scene.

When a product is encountered via the audience in any media, it connects them with that particular product to some extent. The placement is connecting the audience with the product, and the actor or actress or the media itself is acting as the mediator. An intimated or perceived fact of realism is perhaps one of the primary vehicles by which companies can hope to transfer a message to the public by a placement.

Consequently, while exploring the answers to the questions: How are consumers accepting the product placement? How prominent is the influence of product placement to consumer behavior? Which factors do influence consumer behavior?

The study came out with a model that answers the questions based on the study. The study shows that product placement influences the consumer purchase decision in three phases as illustrated in figure 1.

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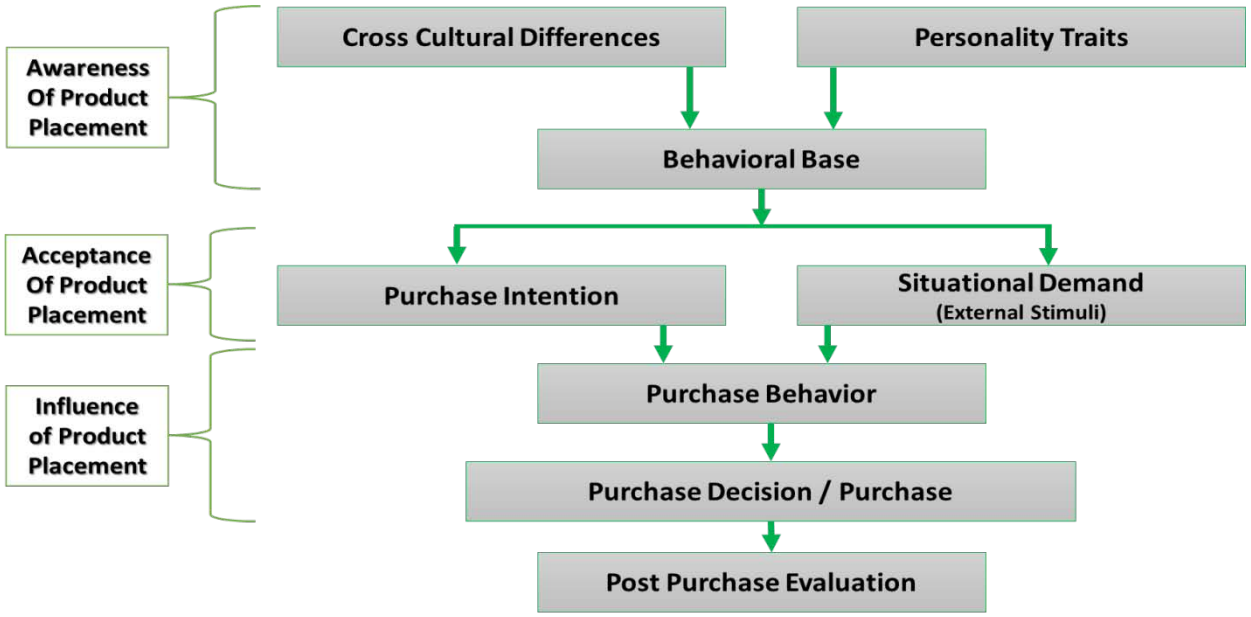

Figure 1

Evidence shows that consumer's behavioral base is built upon the cultural differences and unique personal traits of the individual consumer. In this phase, theconsumer accepts the product placement in different ways. Young consumer shows significant interest over the product placement, however, aged people accept it on the basis of subject and embedded content of the placed product in media. Personality trait includes the factors such age, education level, family, and gender. cross-cultural factors include the social values, norms, beliefs and surrounding environment of a consumer such as the social orientation of the consumer. According to the reasoned action theory, these factors interact with the product placement strategy and influence the self-views and decision-making process, resulting in the attitude toward the product placed.

Acceptance of placed products may develop the purchase intention of the consumer. However, these intentions are significantly influenced by the external stimulus or situational factors like availability of the product and price. These two factors influence the consumers to make the final purchase decision of products placed. The result indicates that product placement has a positive but insignificant influence over consumers' final purchase decision. However, this also depends on the placement efficiency of the consumer.

Finally, the study reveals significant compliance of the reasoned action theory which illustrates the acceptance of product placement and its influence toward consumer behavior, particularly purchase decision.

VI. Concluding Remarks

The recent movement of product placement has become very much involved with the modern marketing communication mix. Nowadays, many companies are advancing their products or brands via movies, television shows, movies, music videos, or even games as their media partner.

Another exceptional advantage of product placement is that it can hold the audience, as there is no break during commercial and it is a component of the vehicle. Consequently, audiences don't go to the trouble for surfing the channels. Therefore, product placement has the huge potentiality to connect the audience with a product/ service/ brand to gather exposure and mass promotion.

If the promoters consider the strengthening of a brand landscape, a long-term product placement might become handy for brand name recognition and serve as long-term reminder advertising. So, product placement should be considered as an integral part of the marketing plan along with the other techniques in the promotional mix. Furthermore, Product Placement is a form of advertising that catches viewers while their defenses are down, therefore, they are not as critical to the advertisement.

The results of the study found that consumer purchase decision is in overall not highly influenced via product placement. It should be noted that for the marketer's efforts to be successful in delivering messages that the target audience will understand and acknowledge, product placement can play a pivotal role in the case of movies and dramas, but not in the cases of other media tools, such as TV programs, print, and video games.

A repetition of advertisements, in combination with strategic product placement, will create a mnemonic cue in the mind of the consumer, which – in a favorable case – will lead to a top-of-mind awareness of

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the brand (Belch and Belch, 2004). Likewise, as the results of this study show, placement, in particular in movies, increases the level of brand awareness, brand familiarity, brand image, and purchase intentions.

An extension of this research for future investigation could be a deeper and more exclusive insight into the various media, such as a stronger focus on product placement of brands solely in television programs or solely in movies even in video games. Effects of product categories and specific brands might be considered in future research. Regulations on product placement and public policy issues could be discussed in future research. Future research could also focus on the effectiveness of combining tools such as event promotions and advertising campaigns. Finally, future research could also focus on consumer response to product placement changing over time and cultural differences. Cause and effect analysis and qualitative research also could be used in further research.

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