Volume 19 Issue 15
Originally issued as E3

Global Journal of Management and Business Research: E Marketing
Volume 19 Issue 3 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-4588 & Print ISSN: 0975-5853

Analysis of Product Placement in Web Series and its Influence on Consumer Buying Behavior

By Alpana Kakkar & Kalyani Nayak
Amity University

Abstract- Web series runs on multiple digital platforms. When it comes to taboo-breaking and intellectual video content, web series have been playing a significant role in India. In a country, where television shows and the different movie or entertainment industries have to face the tight censorship in their content, web series have been the go-to source of thought-provoking entertainment for millennials. Brands are rapidly catching up with this changing trend and started merging their products with the help of product placement in entertainment media. This research is conducted to know whether consumers are affected by product placement or not. Through this paper, we will explore the relationship between product placements and the digital platform.

Keywords: *advertising, digital platform, product placement, push or pull marketing, web series.*

GJMBR-E Classification: *JEL Code: M30*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

© 2019. Alpana Kakkar & Kalyani Nayak. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Analysis of Product Placement in Web Series and its Influence on Consumer Buying Behavior

Alpana Kakkar [α] & Kalyani Nayak [σ]

Abstract- Web series runs on multiple digital platforms. When it comes to taboo-breaking and intellectual video content, web series have been playing a significant role in India. In a country, where television shows and the different movie or entertainment industries have to face the tight censorship in their content, web series have been the go-to source of thought-provoking entertainment for millennials. Brands are rapidly catching up with this changing trend and started merging their products with the help of product placement in entertainment media. This research is conducted to know whether consumers are affected by product placement or not. Through this paper, we will explore the relationship between product placements and the digital platform.

Keywords: advertising, digital platform, product placement, push or pull marketing, web series.

I. Introduction

We are now living in a digital world. Everyone is using the Internet and mobile phones to stay updated with the latest trends. From communicating with their loved ones to watching their favorite shows, everything is happening online. Here comes the concept of digital media or alternate media. A new breed of content creators is evolved with the time, who create contents for digital audiences. With fresh and creative contents, the creators launched some short fictional series. These series were later launched on digital platforms and were named as – Web Series [32]. Web Series is a sequence of scripted or non-scripted shows that releases on the Internet in an episodic form, which is known as webisodes. They are generally built upon each other and are produced in the form of seasons [21] [33]. Web Series are streamed on various platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, TVF (The Viral Fever), Hotstar, Voot, ALT Balaji [36], and many more platforms. YouTube is generally famous for vlog videos. Content Creators have their separate channel on YouTube, and they post their videos on their individual channels only. There are also corporate channels on YouTube, which are handled by a team like ScoopWhoop, Bindass, Filtercopy, etc. [19] [29]. Web series like 'A Girl in the City' and 'Bang Baaja Baarat' are released on corporate channels of YouTube. On the other hand, other digital platforms directly stream web series on their website or application.

The era of digitalization has changed the scene of watching drama and what they have offered us till date. We have evolved a lot from watching typical daily soaps on TV to watching realistic and less melodramatic content on digital platforms in the form of Web Series. The mediums through which we are consuming entertainment is gradually changing, and the taste of viewers seems to be changing. For example, Balaji Telefilms Limited (a famous production house) used to offer various kind of soap operas to watch on TV sets, but like the taste and need of viewers changed with time, they also have to come with their separate digital platform – ALT Balaji, to be in the market. As the name explains itself, ALT is used for alternative Balaji, which means alternative media [28] [31].

In the Indian entertainment industry, there is an increase in the number of viewers with the recent arrival of web series as most of the series are youth-oriented, web series have new plots and new and creative ideas for the storyline, and it is much closer to the reality. Unlike soap operas, it is finite with lesser drama and realistic dialogue delivery. It does not consist of contradictory things like black magic, ghosts, vampires and all other things which have no meaning in real life. Web Series are more realistic as it has to face less censor. Every second, a youth present in India is using the mobile phone, tablets, laptops and other gadgets to watch web series. Nowadays, it can also be watched on Television. Currently, more than 350 million [22] people watch various kinds of content on the digital platform, and with the increasing number of smartphones, they tend to grow more in the future. Web series attracts a large audience to tune in and watch it regularly as most of them are free to watch and the whole series is released at once. Thus, we do not have to wait for plot twists, and we can skip the risk of getting spoilers. They are short in length as compared to TV shows; more shows can be watched on digital platforms on lower rates as compared to TV sets. Due to this reason, various brands are closely following trending web series, and they are experimenting with marketing their brands in the simplest ways. They do this by placing a product in their content.

Product placement is a marketing technique where specific products and brands are incorporated into another work, like TV shows, movies, web series or any digital content. It is also known as embedded marketing. Product placement is done in four ways, first, by mentioning the name of the brand by the characters in the show, secondly, by placing them in the

Author σ α : Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida, India. e-mails: akakkar@amity.edu, kalyani.nayak@student.amity.edu

© 2019 Global Journals

background as a prop in some scenes. Third, by placing them in the 30-58 seconds of advertisement, which is usually paid and cannot be skipped. Lastly, by placing products or brands in the advertisement on YouTube that is generated by Google AdSense based on the user's history. These kinds of advertisements are administrated, sorted and maintained by Google [27]. Product placement can be observed with the help of visual figures, actual product or dialogues spoken by an actor. The popularity of product placement is increasing day by day. Product placement makes way for higher chances of viewership and thus, helps to higher the brand recall, giving apparent benefits to the advertisers. First, the product placed in a web series should be subtle, which will increase the trustworthiness of the product in the viewer's mind. Secondly, the medium of entertainment is linked with the Internet, which will help in facilitating a viewer to buy a product, and it will increase the suitability of making purchases, which will also increase the role of product placements. At this rate, product placement may become a dominant marketing strategy in the upcoming years [23].

Brands have a readymade target market through which they connect to various digital platforms and promote their brands on them. Brands are adopting various strategies in order to compete with other brands in the digital world. Many brands have started sponsoring the web series to target the youth easily as most of the viewers like to watch a genre of series. Branded contents directly relate to the quality of products; thus, it often consists of great deals. With branded content, it is hard to tell whether the viewers are watching a show or commercial as they link their brands smartly in the series and make it a part of the plot as if the characters usually are discussing any product on screen [20][30]. The advantage is that the brands have to spend less on web series as compared to when they make a full-fledged advertisement [10].

Brand funds sponsored content, but it has nothing to do with the content of the series or products placed in the series. It is another way to advertise the brands in web series by getting associated with its title as a sponsor. With emerging technology, the definition of product placement has changed from "the practice of placing brand name products in movies as props" to "a form of advertisement, where the advertiser pays to have its product/service/brand shown or mentioned [20]."

It started in 2014 when the first web series streamed on YouTube, "Permanent Roommates." This series released on TVF and it gained much buzz amongst the youngsters because of a different kind of story, and there were more than 50,000 [24] million views on this series. The audience found the story closer to the real world, and it helped them to feel connected to the characters of the story. Ola sponsored the second season of Permanent Roommates as they displayed that it is better to travel in Ola instead of a bus. They also introduced a character named Purushottam Ji as an Ola driver who loved his taxi. This helped them to do the branding naturally, which viewers also enjoyed while watching.

This paper tries to understand how branding is being done in the web series. It also tries to identify the relationship between branded content and its perception on viewers.

II. Literature Review

To continue with further research, we will review some similar work done in product placements:

We will discuss about some traditional techniques, which are being used by the marketers to promote their products earlier. Display advertising is a kind of online marketing, which involves designing graphical advertisements and placing them next to the content. It not only helps in the promotion of new products or services, but it also helps in increasing the brand awareness [4]. There are two broad ways of marketing- Push and Pull marketing. Push marketing is a business strategy that takes the product to the consumer, whereas pull marketing brings the consumer to the product [5]. Product placement that is done in the form of advertisements shown in digital platforms or YouTube, between the shows is an example of push marketing whereas placements done in the form of active and passive placements is an example of pull marketing. Push marketing strategy also known as push promotional marketing strategy [34]. It refers to a strategy in which a brand uses various marketing strategies to push their products in such a manner that the consumers notice it [6]. This strategy is used when the product needs to gain exposure. This helps in creating product demand in the market, and it helps to increase consumer awareness. The pull marketing strategy is also known as pull promotional strategy [34]. It refers to a strategy through which a brand tries to increase the demand for the product and to build customer loyalty [7]. It focuses on creating brand equity and product value. Apple brand is known for its best marketing strategies. Apple knows that it is cheaper to promote their products in a show than to promote them on commercials [35]. They know the importance of web series as they are released globally on digital platforms. It also provides extended shelf life to its products [8].

The basic definition of product placement says that it is the promotion of branded goods and series which is displayed with the context of the show. The concept of branded product placements came into light as most of the consumers believed that the advertisements shown in the shows are not real [1]. Instead, it was paid by the manufacturer of the product to place it in the advertisement. However, when the same product is placed in digital content, they were

© 2019 Global Journals

assumed more credible and more accurate to real life experiences. There are two types of product placements – Active and Passive product placements. In active product placements, the product is used in real life. It helps in increasing brand awareness. In passive product placements, the product is only used as a prop in the background of a show [13]. There are three primary product placement strategies – Implicit, Integrated explicit and Non- Integrated explicit. In Implicit strategy, the logo or the product of the brand is not clearly shown within the program. They are placed at the background with no demonstration of the benefits of the product. Integrated explicit placement involves the product to play an active role in a scene of the show. On the other hand, non- integrated explicit placement involves the product to be formally expressed in the scene but not mixed with the content of the show [14].

Product placements is not only used in content shows but it is also used in the movies, which is a visible alternative to conventional forms of advertising. This helps viewers to easily recognize the products placed in the movies as they are placed prominently [12]. The consumer brand evaluation towards product placement advertising will be positive if the brand has a positive brand image [9]. Moreover, consumer evaluation and ethical judgment are not dependent on a brand's image. The proper placement of a brand grabs a consumer's attention. Brand recognition could be higher when a product placement includes not only visual mention of the product but also requires both audio and visual mention of the product [10]. In simpler words, the placement of the product should active in nature so that viewers can easily recognize the brands while purchasing. Product placements done in the films may also help to change the attitude of viewers towards the brand. This change may improve their purchase intentions, and therefore, customers will be satisfied with the brand [11]. It does not mean that a marketer will place as many products he wants. The marketers who obtain creative placements in films are unlikely to see viewer recognition scores increase because of prolonged exposure times. In contrast, an increase in exposure time results in an increase in viewer recognition of on-set placements, when the total exposure time does not exceed ten seconds [17].

Entertainment industry is not only limited to the films now, we have alternative media also. Alternative media is the type of media which differs from traditional technology [2]. In terms of TV sets, alternative media comprises of digital platforms like Netflix, Voot, Hotstar, YouTube [36], etc. The reason behind the popularity of alternative media. There are mainly three reasons behind this – now, we can watch all the Hollywood sitcoms under one platform. Earlier, these kinds of shows were not available in India. Ease of access is available now as one can watch anything at any point in time. Instead of spending much money, one can directly pay for the subscription and watch a wide range of contents online [3].

Companies are using product placements to increase their product sales and brand awareness among viewers. If the product placement is done in a systematic manner, then only it will help the company to generate profits [15]. The ideal situation of product placements should be win-win for the consumers, clients, and media vehicle, product placement agency. Consumers get to know about new products; clients can do branding at lower costs; media vehicles can get brands for free, and it may reduce their production budget; production placement agency can make money by bringing various parties together [18].

III. Methodology

For our research paper, we used a quantitative method to collect data from multiple sources in order to obtain information related to web series and consumer buying behavior. We surveyed to collect the data; the sample comprised of 152 various individuals.

The questionnaires were distributed online among the respondents via Google Forms. This survey consisted of a variety of close-ended questions with multiple choice answers. Some demographic questions were also included in the survey, which asked general information such as age, sex, and occupation. The survey uses both descriptive methods to determine the current situation about the use and impact of product placement toward consumer behavior.

The questions that were asked during surveys are:

Q1: What is the name, age, and occupation of the respondent?

Q2: Do they watch web series?

Q3: Which genre of web series do they watch the most?

Q4: Name of a series which they liked watching?

Q5: Are they familiar with the concept of "Product Placement?"

Q6: Have they noticed any product placement in web series?

Q7: How many episodes of the series do they watch per week, on an average?

Q8: On which gadget do they prefer to watch their shows?

Q9: Does product placement affect their enjoyment of a series?

Q10: Do they watch advertisements that come in between the series?

Q11: With how much concentration, do they watch those advertisements on a scale of 1 to 5?

Q12: Do they enjoy watching when their favorite stars promote such brands or products in a series?

Q13: Do they skip that part in the series where they see someone promoting the products?

© 2019 Global Journals

Q14: Do they feel annoyed while watching product placement in a series?

Q15: Do they buy the products that are promoted in web series?

Q16: Do they think brand collaborating with web series is a good thing?

Q17: Product placement in movies is quite useful; do they think it will be helpful in web series too?

Q18: What makes them notice a brand?

Q19: What rating will they give to the products placed in web series as compared to the products displayed in commercial advertisements?

Q20: At the time of product purchasing, makes verbal mention of a product, placement in the series plays a vital role for them?

Q21: What kind of advertisement has a long-lasting impact on them?

Q22: Does celebrity endorsement influence their product purchasing?

Q23: Do they believe products advertised explicitly by the celebrities are of good quality?

Q24: Would they buy a brand just because their favorite celebrity is endorsing that?

Q25: Will they stop buying the product displayed in series, if their favorite celebrity stops endorsing it by getting into a scandal?

Q26: How much importance do they think that brands in web series should take a stand on a social/political issue?

Q27: At the time of shopping does product placement in web series, affects their decision-making process subconsciously (mind)?

IV. Findings

The respondents of the survey were of age group 14-55 years old. Out of them, 74 were male, and 78 were female respondents. Majority of the respondents were students, and some were working professionals. Most of the respondents agree that they watch web series and like to watch certain genres of web series only according to their age groups. They are aware of the concept of Product Placement. Majority of the respondents agree that they have noticed the placement of the products in the web series. On average, most of them watch 1-2 webisodes (web episodes) in a week, and they prefer to watch them on their mobile phones. Product placements sometimes affect their enjoyment while watching the series when it becomes too apparent. Hence, most of the respondents pay the least concentration while watching advertisements and sometimes they do not even watch it. However, they like that part in the series when their favorite celebrity is seen promoting products. Most of them think that it is a good thing if brands are collaborating with the digital platform. The first thing that everyone notice in a brand is its quality. When it comes to recalling a product from the series, verbal mention plays a vital role as product placement has a long-lasting impact on viewers compared to commercial advertisements. Involving a celebrity does not influence their product intention nor do they think that every product endorsed by a celebrity would be of good quality. They do not care much about brands taking a stand on the social or political issue. However, they agree on this, that placing products in web series subconsciously affects their decision-making process while purchasing a product.

We used Amazon QuickSight, which is a business analytics service used to create visualizations. We will use QuickSight to create visual representations in the form of charts and graphs to analyze our data sets.

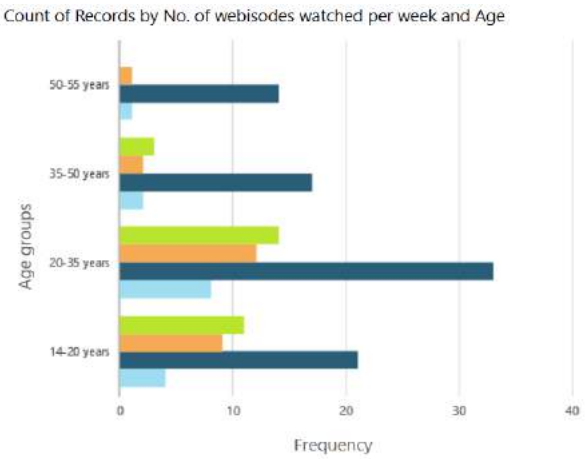

Fig.1: Content watched by viewers in a week based on their age

Through Fig.1. we can illustrate that the age group of 20-35 year watch most number of episodes in a week as compared to other age groups. As most of the individuals of this age group are working professional or students, they have a very tight schedule to follow. While travelling in metro or buses, they spend their time watching series on their smartphones.

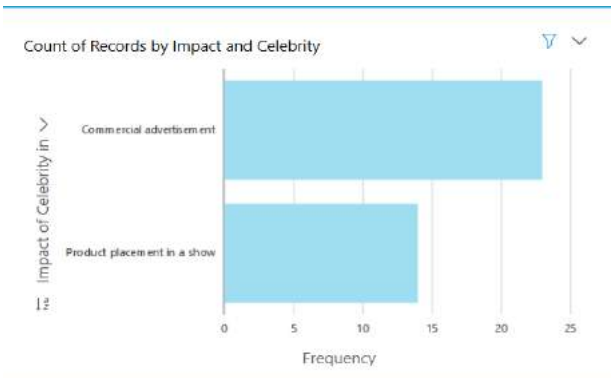

Fig. 2: Influence of Celebrity Endorsement in product placement and commercial advertisement

© 2019 Global Journals

Through Fig.2. we can depict that celebrity endorsement in a series have more long-lasting impact on viewers as compared to the commercial advertisements. Because viewers were able to relate with the character of the series easily as compared to the characters shown in commercial advertising.

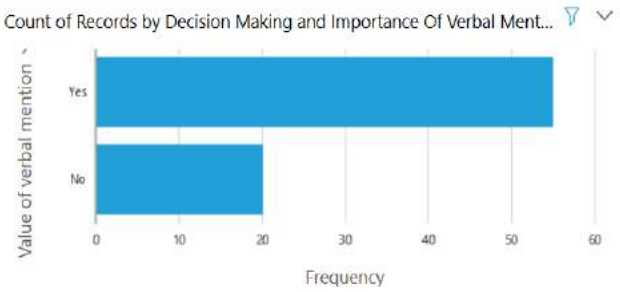

Fig. 3: Importance of Verbal Mention of the product at the time of Purchase Intention

Through Fig.3. we can interpret that verbal mention of the product in a series plays a vital role while making a decision at the time of purchasing a product. It helps viewers to recall the brands easily. For example, in TVF Tripling series, the marketers constantly mention the features of TATA Tiago verbally throughout the series [16].

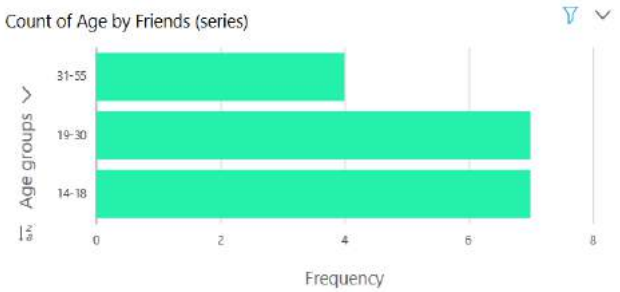

Fig. 4: Popularity of web series – Friends among different age groups

Throgh Fig.4. we can say that 'Friends' which is comedy show is popular in teenagers and the viewers who are in their 20s as they like to watch Hollywood sitcoms more than Indian web series. But, that does not mean that age group of 31-55 do not watch the show at all. Some parents may have to watch series because they want to accompany their children while watching this kind of shows to understand their mentality and some may actually like the show. Here, placed product will be mostly targeted to the youth as the series is popular among them only.

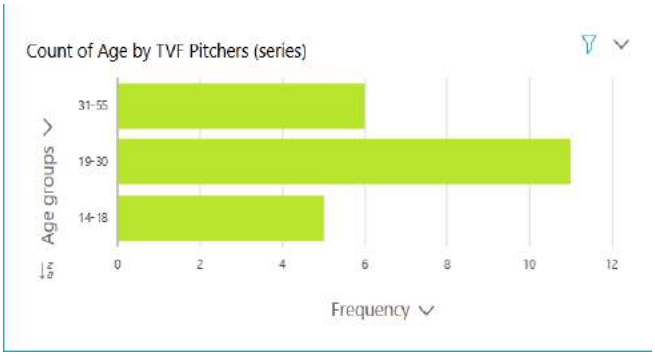

Fig. 5: Popularity of web series – TVF Pitchers among different age groups

Through Fig.5. we can depict that TVF Pitchers series was mostly watched by the age group of 19-30 years. As, this age group directly relates itself with the content of the series. So, Product placed in such series will be directly targeted to the age group of 19-30 years.

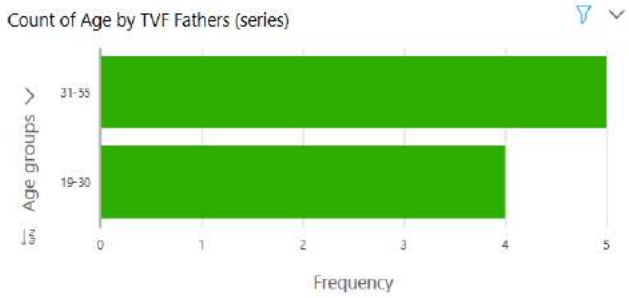

Fig. 6: Popularity of web series – TVF Fathers among different age groups

Through Fig.6. we can say that there are some series that are watched by adults only. When asked about TVF Fathers series, there were no teenagers who watched this series as it was solely launched for the adults of the country. Hence, the product placement done in the series were targeted to the age group of 31-55 years.

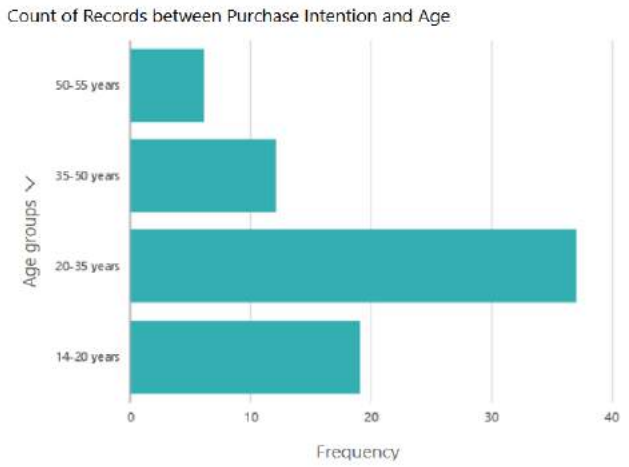

Fig. 7: Purchase intention based on age

© 2019 Global Journals

Through Fig.7. we can illustrate that 20-35 is the age group that buys most of the products placed in web series as compared to all other age groups whereas, 50-55 is the age group buys the least product. Because there are more youth-oriented shows created or launched. It is much easier for marketers to target the youth as they get easily influenced by the products to satisfy their wants.

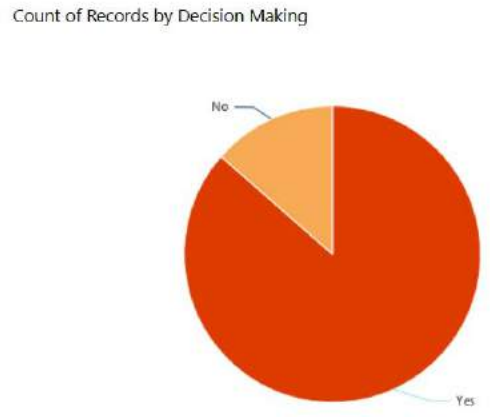

Fig. 8: People who buy products

Through Fig. 8. we can depict that most of the respondents get influenced by the product placements done in digital platforms and hence, product placement affect their purchase intention. For example, when someone says "Thanda matlab", anyone will respond quickly to this by saying Coca-cola. This is happening because the brand has placed their product subconsciously in your mind.

Based on our analysis, we found out that if a brand wants to promote their products through a digital content, then they must focus on these two key factors – Firstly, they should to know which age group to target through the placement of products and secondly they should mention the product and its features verbally in the series.

We tried to search a real life scenario of product placement where it helped product to gain profits after being placed in a web series. As India has become the world's third largest technology startup hub [25]. We have seen many startup companies placing their services in the web series. Zoomcar is a startup company, which provides the facility of self-drive car rentals, and it was founded in 2013. To create awareness of its services, it was placed in the series called "What the Folks". In the third episode of the series, we have witnessed the active placement of Zoomcar by a character. This series was released on YouTube in the year 2017. As soon as this product was placed in the series, it experienced a growth of 40% in its revenues [26]. This news was break by the CEO of Zoomcar himself, Greg Moran in the article of The Economic Times. After this, they planned to enter international market of Southeast Asia and Africa in 2018.

In this way, product placement helps in increasing the brand awareness and it brings a good return on investment (ROI).

V. Conclusion

Product placement relies heavily on not being noticed but being remembered by the consumers at the time of purchasing a product. It acts as a great supporting tool in the combined effort of integrated marketing communication, where it helps to promote a brand safely and comparatively cheaper than the traditional advertisements. Web series is suitable for experiment purpose for a brand as they have short episodes and seasons, which appears to be more useful to the viewers. After doing this research, it has been found that the respondents, in general, had a positive perception of product placement in web series. A conclusion can be drawn from the entire paper is that show producers need to keep two key factors in mind when placing a product in web series. Firstly, they should to know which age group to target through the placement of products and secondly they should mention the product and its features verbally in the series. It is also becoming a popular method of advertising as it brings a good return on investment and it significantly increases brand awareness.

References Références Referencias

1. Du Preez LD, Williams S (2004). Investigating the usage of branded products in film: the perception of males and females at the University of Pretoria. University of Pretoria: Pretoria. Unpublished postgraduate report.
2. Kumar, S. (2017). Influence of Product Placements in Films and Television on consumers Brand Awareness. Archives of Business Research, 5(2), 163-179.
3. Nagar, K. (2016). Consumer Response to Brand Placement in Movies: Investigating the Brand-Event Fit. Vikalpa, 41(2), 149–167.
4. J Segarra-Saavedra, V Tur-Viñes, E Campos-Domínguez, C del-Pino-Romero (2017): "Branded Web-Serie as an Advertising Strategy. The #EncuentraTuLugar case". Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 72, pp. 883 to 896.
5. Patel, Chirag & Pankajray Patel, Dr. (2015). Brand Recall for Product Placement in Hindi Movies. Global Journal of Management and Business Research. 15.
6. Chang, S.; Newell, J. & Salmon, C.T. (2009). Product Placement in Entertainment Media. International Journal of Advertising, 28(5), 783-806.
7. Scott, J. & Craig-Lees, M. (2010). Audience Engagement and Its Effects on Product Placement

© 2019 Global Journals

Recognition. Journal of Promotion Management, 16(1/2), 39.
8. Koravi, Vinod S., et al. Analysis of various effects of web series streaming online on internet on indian youth. 2019.
9. Mathur, M., & Goswami, S. (2012). A study of consumer behavior and product placement in Indian cinema. Annals of Management Research, 2(1), 29-38.
10. Gupta PB, Lord KR (1998). Product Placement in Movies: The Effect of Prominence and Mode on Audience Recall. J. Curr. Issues Res. in Advert. 20(1):47-59.
11. R. K. Srivastava. (2016) Promoting Brands through Product Placement in Successful and Unsuccessful Films in Emerging Markets. Journal of Promotion Management 22:3, pages 281-300.
12. Van der Waldt, De la Rey & Ls, Du & Toit, R &, Redelinghuys. (2007). Does branded product placement in film enhance realism and product recognition by consumers. African Journal of Business Management. 1. 19-25.
13. Sarwar, F., Aftab, M., & Iqbal, M. T. (2014). The impact of branding on consumer buying behavior. *International Journal of Technology and Research*, *2*(2), 54.
14. Alain D'Astous Ph.D. & Francis Chartier M.Sc. (2000) A Study of Factors Affecting Consumer Evaluations and Memory of Product Placements in Movies, Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, IEEE 2000.
15. Homer, P.M. (2009). Product Placements, the Impact of Placement Type and Repetition on Attitude, 2009 IEEE.
16. Chee Kit, Liew & Lim Qui P'ng, Elizabeth. (2014). The Effectiveness of Product Placement: The Influence of Product Placement towards Consumer Behavior of the Millennial Generation. International Journal of Social Science and Humanity.
17. Ian Brennan, Khalid M. Dubas & Laurie A. Babin (1999) The influence of product-placement type & exposure time on product-placement recognition, International Journal of Advertising, 18:3, 323-337.
18. Williams, Kaylene & Petrosky, Alfred & H. Hernandez, Edward & Page, Robert. (2011). Product Placement Effectiveness: Revisited and Renewed. Journal of Management & Marketing Research. 7. 132-155.
19. New trends in product placement Lilia Gutnik, Tom Huang, Jill Blue Lin, Ted Schmidt Strategic Computing and Communications Technology, Spring 2007.
20. Gajjar, N. B. (2013). Factors affecting consumer behavior. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, *1*(2), 10-15.
21. Whedon, J. Web series and Web Television.
22. Ambekar, A. In-depth: Web series, original programmes and the new-age digital audience.
23. Vasan, A. Product Placements in Bollywood movies.
24. Kamath, A. To Study the Effect of Branded Entertainment in Web Series on the Brand Sales.
25. Shira, D. Startup India Scheme: All You Need to Know.
26. Shankar, S. Zoomcar hits 40% growth in revenues.
27. Rai, A. Digital content platforms: Share of ad spend on web series expected to grow; here is why.
28. Eloff, D. The Role and Importance of Alternative Media.
29. Jain, A. Why are Brands Investing in Web-Only Video Series?
30. Cardona, L. What is branded content? Definition, advantages and examples.
31. Durden, O. Mainstream vs. Alternative Media.
32. Parmar, M. Mumbai: with 4G coming to India.
33. Kadish, M. The Business of Web Series: What are the Returns on Online Episodic Content — Monetary or Otherwise?
34. C. Pull Marketing Strategy.
35. C. Push Marketing Strategy.
36. E. S. Netflix, Hotstar, SonyLIV, ALT Balaji and other OTT platforms say yes to self-regulation.

© 2019 Global Journals