



# The importance of product placement in Bollywood films. A study of its success as an advertising tool

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## Abstract

The advent of mankind has led to the complete evolution of the biosphere where homo sapiens have largely ruled and dominated the activities in the environment. Owing to these progressions and activities, the marketing world today has undergone various developments in the long. Once such development has been the invention of the practice of product placement. This paper discusses the practice in brief and focuses on how it has helped the Indian film industry, particularly the Bollywood industry to grow and prosper. The conclusions made from this research bring out the importance of product placement in Bollywood films and at the same time justify its significance as an advertising tool in today's world.

*Keywords- Bollywood films, product placement, marketing communication, advertising*

## Introduction

The advent of mankind has led to the complete evolution of the biosphere where homo sapiens have largely ruled and dominated the activities in the environment. First it began with conquering the land, then building shelter on this land and then advancing their own agendas in the form of various industries to keep the cycle going and leave a treasure trove for the generations to come. Some were mainstream industries like agriculture and automobiles and some innovative ones like data mining. But among all this chaos, the past gives enough precedence of the fact that a single industry has never been enough for the salvation of the needs of human beings.

As we are moving forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have observed that these industries have given birth to other industries which in turn has driven our economy to the brink of success. There are many people who push from all the four sides to keep the wheels of a process running that adds the power of progression to an industry. Without all these hands working together, no economy could have succeeded in today's world. This paper talks about one such industry that has not only survived in the hours of doom but also given birth to several others in its time of gestation.

Bollywood, almost a century old industry has survived the adversities of the world and liberated as one of the top 3 film industries of the world. No Indian can imagine a month in their life where they do not watch a Bollywood film and enjoy it to the full capacity. This industry has not only infused entertainment in the lives of people in India but all around the world. It has easily become an outlet of letting out creativity for hundreds of people and a huge source of revenue for others. In fact, in the FY 2019, Bollywood's revenue nudged closer to 4000 crore rupees with just 170 releases (Dey, 2020).

With more than 1000 films produced every year, it is obvious that Bollywood not only feeds the thousands of people working in it but also works as an avenue for supplementary industries to prosper from its products. These can be

the fashion industry that hugely gains from these films, the cosmetics industry, the design industry, the music industry etc. Just like these supplementary industries that work in conjunction with the movie industry in India, different wings of businesses like finance, marketing, advertising, law gain from it.

As an outsider and a consumer of the Bollywood industry's products, I would say that the marketing and advertising of it is the most important aspect because if the consumer is unaware of its product, it cannot consume it. Marketing does not only have the job of promoting the movie but also making sure that this promotion takes place under a certain fixed budget. They have to make sure that all the stakeholders are in sync and working towards a common goal. In the past decade, the field of marketing has diversified to such an extent that it has given birth to various arms which help in the common objective. One such objective is *Product Placement*.

Therefore, this paper will not only study the success of product placement as an advertising tool but also see the quality of the relationship between Bollywood films and product placement and how the two have help each other in growing and synthesising together.

### **Background of Product Placement**

As recent as the words 'product placement' sound, the older is their history. In Japan, a famous 18<sup>th</sup> century comic novelette author Santo Kyoden would insert information about his tobacco shop and other works in his comics. In America, before the Civil War, an entertainer by the name of Dan Rice would go around singing songs that contained names of local restaurants and hotels. Even Charles Dickens' novel *The Pickwick Papers* can be considered an example of product placement since Pickwick was a carriage line at the time (Grimsley, 2013).

These examples clearly state that product placement has a long history, one which even the world is unaware of. When this practice actually started, no one coined it as such. It was either named exploitation of media, tie-ups or tie-ins. Amongst these, tie-ups stuck the most with the industry experts. Upon further evolution, this practice was acknowledged as product/brand placement. Intentionally or unintentionally, most of the film industries around the world have used this practice. But this practice became famous and spottable after an extra-terrestrial being was enticed with Hershey's Reese's Pieces candy in the Hollywood movie *E.T.*

This campaign not only gave the movie producers the right to use the candy, but also gave Hershey's the right to use the movie to market their product. It was one of the most sensational moves in marketing history with Hershey's spending 1 million dollars in exchange for promotional rights. Its investment paid and there was a reported 65% jump in the profits two weeks after the premiere of the movie (Conrad, 2008). This is just one example. After this, the practice became recognised and people started using it as an effective marketing tactic.

The above example makes it clear that the exercise came into being in Hollywood and slowly transpired to other nations. In retrospection, we can say that this was a blessing in disguise. To define product placement, it is a paid product message aimed at influencing movie or television audiences via the planned and unobtrusive entry of a branded product into a movie or television (Balasubramanian, 1994). Nowadays, due to the increasing popularity of the exercise, it is being used in music videos, video games, plays, novels, etc.

Before talking about the product placements in Bollywood, we need to focus on the reason for its eruption and existence. The dissemination of media and the media clutter is increasing to such an extent today that it becomes truly impossible as an advertiser to determine if I have been able to create an impact on the minds of the consumers through my advertisement. Back in the 70s, it was assumed that an average person saw 500 to 1600 ads per day (Carr, 2020). But these statistics tell us about the scenario before online marketing and advertisement were in full force. Now, it is estimated that a person can encounter up to 6000 to 10000 advertisements in a day, or is at least exposed to it.

Even though the human mind is better than the CPU of a computer, it can only retain so much information. Even if we ignore the media clutter and the excessive information that a consumer is exposed to, commercial advertisements on broadcast media just do not cut it anymore. The problem of 'zapping' has become a daily encounter wherein consumers just switch to another channel when they come across an ad while watching something on the television or listening to something on the radio.

As far as research goes, these are the two major problems because of which product placement (in television serials or movies) came into existence. When a viewer is engrossed in a show or a movie, they give all their attention towards it. Therefore, when their favourite actors communicate about a product or use it, it usually catches the viewers' attention. Moreover, the industry experts feel that it adds a sense of realism to the movie or the show and therefore the consumers understand the utility and the functionality of the product/service in an efficient manner and can connect with it more. In some countries, this practice is used for products like cigarettes and liquor which cannot be openly advertised otherwise.

Apart from these reasons, when we look at the financial aspects of product placement, in today's time, it helps to cut and cover production costs even before the film is released. Besides, a brand can get an actor to indirectly advertise the product for a fraction of a fee they would have charged if it has been a full-blown advertisement. Subhash Ghai's films *Yaadein* and *Taal* (a break-through film in this practice of product placement) have been said to recover their production costs from Coke and other brands even before the films were released (Anonymous, Brand Placement in Indian Film Industry, 2018). It can be said that Subhash Ghai was one of the first producers to have really understood the force and benefits of product placement. That being said, as a third party, one cannot fathom if a particular product placement was paid or unpaid without being informed about it.

Since we've already mentioned Bollywood, the studying the relationship between product placement and Bollywood becomes integral. It is said that the first ever product placement in Bollywood took place in a film named *Shree 420* in 1955 where a large Coca-Cola banner can be seen in the background when Raj Kapoor (the actor of the movie) enters Mumbai for the first time. After this, a visible product placement was seen in the movie *An Evening in Paris* released in 1967 where Coke was placed. The film *Koshish* released in 1972 also had a Coke crate being placed next to the main character. As mentioned earlier, we cannot determine if these were intentional and paid for or not but many years down the line, it can be concluded that Coca-Cola was one of the first brands to understand the potential in the Indian markets.

One of the other famous product placements was in the film *Bobby* released in 1975 of the Rajdhoot motorcycle which later came to be known the Bobby motorcycle. It is said that the practice of placing products/brands in Bollywood movies in exchange for money started in the late 1990s (Vaghela, 2013). Having said that, products can be used in movies in three ways. Either the cast or the crew of the film decide to use the product and therefore draw up a contract accordingly. Sometimes, the brand wants the product to be a part of the film and therefore offers the product itself as compensation. The third way is when the brands offers the product as well as extra compensation for the product to be displayed.

Knowing that product placements are done but being unaware of how it takes place is a like accepting a trophy without earning it. Usually what happens is that a marketer/brand that wants to market their product gets in touch with an advertising agency who have tie-ups with suppliers and set designers. These set designers then contact the producer and the director who review the product and what the deal has to offer and edit the script in a way to incorporate the brand. Due to the increasing scope of revenue in product placements, separate agencies and dedicated product placement departments in production houses (who contact brands to reduce production costs) have erupted to carry out this task.

Like every practice is biased to a particular media type or segment, larger brands prefer their products to be placed more in films. This is because firstly, the CPM of advertisement in movies is very low as compared to broadcast media. Moreover, movies have a higher involvement on the part of the consumers. Usually when watching a television show at home, a viewer's attention span is low. Some studies suggest that more than 50% of consumers while watching TV also perform other tasks (SA & J., 2014). In movies, the consumers take special efforts to reach a theatre, purchase a ticket therefore they also focus on the movie more. Additionally, movies are usually re-watched a greater number of times as compared to TV shows. Therefore, the advertisement and its message remains for a longer period.

Despite the above facts, there is one advantage of using product placements in series. If a product placement is not producing any results in a series, because of their functional continuity in filming and gaps in release of episodes, they can be changed. This is not possible in movies because there is hardly any way in which they quality and result can be tested.



All said and done, we can say that in the end, there is no way to ensure whether a consumer has been able to identify and recall the product which was placed in a particular scene. It is very possible that viewers totally miss it and the brand ends up losing. Moreover, it is not derogatory for a product placement to have a positive effect on the attitude of the consumer. The marketers cannot possibly interpret their reactions ahead of time. Therefore, consumers can react positively or negatively towards it or be totally indifferent towards it.

## Objectives

1. To understand the background of product placements and how it came into being
2. To analyse the evolution of product placement practices in Bollywood films
3. To comprehend the importance of product placement today with reference to primary and secondary data collected
4. To emphasize on the future practices in this sphere
5. To make brief comparisons between practices in this area being carried out in different parts of the world.

## Literature review

(Kaur, 2014) in the research has discussed how promotion plays an important role in the success of any sound marketing strategy and is the key to the communication with a consumer. The author has laid emphasis on the trend of product placement as an effective in-film advertising strategy mentioning some examples of Bollywood films that have successfully followed the path. He describes how it is suitable in providing an edge over the other media and at the same time cut costs. Although the results are very triumphant, there are certain limitations which should not be overlooked.

(Chawla & Pincha, 2017) have talked about product placement as the trend which encourages consumerism through consumption in a growing market economy. They have successfully cited various papers that show the positive results that the other industries derive from Bollywood movies. The foundation of the research is based on the fact that product placement adds realism to the movies so that the consumers connect with it in a better manner and stating at the same time that recognition increases effectiveness. They have broadly highlighted the enumerable purposes of the practice concluding with the fact that the masses have gladly accepted product placements further helping the marketers exploring this avenue to different levels.

(Patel & Patel, 2015) have focused on the factors that influence brand recall for product placement. They have abundantly highlighted the absence of research done in this context with reference to Bollywood films and therefore undertaken a study to do just that. In their experimental research design, their hypothesis is based on three factors i.e. genre of the film, the prominence of the product placement and the genders of the audience seeing the film. Their research concluded that where the genre of the film and the prominence did affect the brand recall of the placed products, gender did not have much to do with the same. Although this conclusion seems quite justifiable, certain factors like emotional states and moods of the viewers, their genre preferences etc. was not taken into consideration.

(Shukla, 2013) in his thesis has explained different aspects of product placement in Hindi films and conducted a critical study to evaluate its effectiveness at the same time. He discusses how this strategy should be part of the integrated marketing communication strategy. The hypothesis stated helps to identify the perception of the viewers relating to the product placement, their response and attitude towards it as well as if they consider it to be an ethical practice. Overall, different examples have been stated and a brief comparison between of the practice in Hollywood and Bollywood has been made. The thesis concludes with a positive nod towards product placement and certain suggestions for each and every agent involved in the process.

(Gokhale, 2010) discusses the significant differences in the practice of product placement in Bollywood and Hollywood films. She highlights the fact that although Hollywood was the first to start this practice, Bollywood is not too far behind. The sample selected by her help to conclude the study and give a justifiable difference between the two industries. Although verbal mentions about the brands/products has been greater in Hollywood movies, the screen time shared by them has been more in Bollywood films. Along with the differences, she cites certain

similarities as well. There are some factors i.e. the difference in the audience perception and reactions towards the said product placement may not be accounted for which could have a significant impact on the results.

(Mathur & Goswami, 2012) give a brief history of product placement practices in films and carry out further research alongside citing various literature that help to understand consumer behaviour towards product placements. Their compilation of secondary scholarly observation and primary data collected ascertain that emerging as a useful medium of marketing communication. Their research gives insights on the diverse range of factors that should be considered when studying its effectiveness and state that payments for product placements should be linked to effectiveness in the long run.

(Vaghela, 2013) has evaluated the type of product placements and brands used in Bollywood movies with special emphasis on the top 10 movies in the year 2010. The reasons for the same along with the associated financial costs incurred by the movie industry in various countries have been quoted to give a clearer picture. Various products placed in the top 10 movies have been mentioned to draw a justifiable conclusion on the same. More products were placed in verbal form than in non-verbal and more tangible products were placed rather than intangible services.

(Harwani, 2011) in her paper not only mentions the effectiveness of product placements like the others but also sheds light on the process, procedures and people involved from the product being placed in the film to the consumers viewing it as one. The brands need to be very careful when placing products because the receiver should identify with the product otherwise it would result in loss of time and money. She mentions the various ways in which product placements can be categorized and further emphasizes on the differences between the product placements in movies and television shows.

(Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006) talk about the history of product placement and how it has now become an integral part of the marketing world. They mention that the product placements started as early as 1930s but a particular term was not coined for it. The definitions of product placements have evolved over the years and facilitated their inclusions in different aspects of marketing communications. They authors mention the practice as a barter system that helps in gaining a competitive advantage on the hands of the advertisers and the brands and adds a speck of realism on the part of the movie producers and directors. They conclude that it has evolved into a multibillion-dollar business with past practices paving the path for future growth.

(Song, Meyer, & Ha, 2015) analyse the effects that product placements have on the experience of the moviegoers and the media performance. They undertook the study to find the possibility of existence of a relationship between product placement and media programming and if this relationship also existed between product placement advertising and word of mouth. They concluded that when product placements are not excessive in number and involve major brands which are familiar, have a positive effect on the experience and the minds of the consumers. Although, number of placements beyond the saturation point (44 in this study) would have a negative effect. Therefore, the movie studios and marketers need to understand both the negative and the positive aspects and take an informed decision about the betterment of their activities.

## **Methodology and approach**

For the purpose of this research, various research papers that form the part of the review were identified. The research done in them more or less form the foundation of this paper. The methodology followed here is a qualitative research wherein the researcher has tried to understand, analyse and expand the available literature on the topic. Various sources of information and data have been referred so as to form a comprehensive conclusion and bring out the essence of the topic in the best possible manner.

A survey through convenience sampling was conducted in order to understand the general perspective of the audiences towards product placement and relate it to the secondary data so as to justify them. 4 films from various time-periods have been chosen from the Bollywood industry to identify the product placements and strategies used in them and at the same time look at the importance of these placements.

The four films would be analysed in a way that would state the upside of product placement as an advertising tool and at the same time analyse them on the assumption of what would the scenario be like if these were absent. These

steps were taken to reach a reasonable conclusion that would prove the importance of product placement in Bollywood films and depict its future in marketing communications.

## Data analysis

- Primary Data Analysis

For the purpose of getting a generalised understanding of the perspective of the audiences towards product placement, a survey was conducted as mentioned earlier. The responses were then grouped in such a manner that they were able to deliver justifiable results. The data was collected through convenience sampling due to the lack of resources owing to the time period that they were collected in. The sample size is fairly small because of the nature of the research (qualitative). Therefore, the sample size was sufficient enough to draw certain conclusions that facilitated an overall better understanding of the topic.

The following tables analyse the data collected in brief and a comprehensive conclusion based on these are stated in the findings.

Row Labels	Count of Were you aware about the concept of product placement initially?		
No			21
Yes			26
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>47</b>

**TABLE 1**

Row Labels	No	Yes	Grand Total
15-20	11	13	24
20-30	10	10	20
30-40		1	1
40 and above		2	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>47</b>

**TABLE 2**

The above given table represent the knowledgeability of the concept of product placement amongst the sample. Table 1 clearly shows that approximately 55% of the respondents were aware of the practice of product placement whereas almost 45% of them were not. Of these 55% people, most of them belong to the age group of 15-20 years. A possibility of this outcome is easily attributable to the presence of more respondents belonging to the age group of 15-20 years.

Count of Which genre do you prefer to see?				
Row Labels	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
Action		1	1	2
Comedy	2	3	7	12
Drama	1	1	5	7
Horror	1		2	3
Romance			1	1
Rom-com	4	1	13	18
Sci-fi		2	2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>

**TABLE 3**

The above table categorises the preferred movie genres of the respondents into 7 most popular genres. When analysed individually, we can conclude that the highest recall rate is for the romance genre wherein one respondent prefers the genre and also recalls the product placement in it. It is followed by Rom-com which has 72% recall rate followed by drama and then comedy. A study wherein three genres viz. drama, action and comedy were compared, drama had the highest recall rate (Patel & Patel, 2015).

Count of How often do you see a Bollywood f				
Row Labels	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
<b>15-20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>
More than three times		3	7	10
Once	1		4	5
Thrice	1	2	1	4
Twice		1	4	5
<b>20-30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>
More than three times	2		6	8
Once	1		2	3
Thrice		1	2	3
Twice	1	1	4	6
<b>30-40</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
More than three times			1	1
<b>40 and above</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>2</b>
Once	2			2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>

**TABLE 4**

The above table signifies the number of times a particular age group watches Bollywood movie in a month and whether they are able to recall any product placements in them. The most lucrative numbers here are that of the 20 respondents falling in the age group of 20-30 years, 8 of them see a Bollywood movie more than 3 times a month and of them 6 are able to recall the product placements. Which means that 75% of the 8 respondents are able to recall the product placements.

Count of Which genre do you prefer to see?				
Row Labels	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
<b>Home-maker</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>2</b>
Rom-com	2			2
<b>Self-employed</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Comedy			1	1
Romance			1	1
Rom-com			1	1
<b>Student</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>
Action		1	1	2
Comedy	2	3	5	10
Drama	1	1	4	6
Horror	1			1
Rom-com	1	1	12	14
Sci-fi		1	1	2
<b>Working Professional</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
Comedy			1	1
Drama			1	1
Horror			2	2
Rom-com	1			1
Sci-fi		1	1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>

TABLE 5

The above states the profession of the respondents and the genres preferred by respondents of a particular profession. Keeping these two factors in mind, we see how many of them are able to recall product placements. Most of the respondents who are part of the survey have been students, therefore the results are skewed in their favour. Most of the students who prefer the romantic comedy genre are able to recall product placements the highest.

Count of Have you ever :			
Row Labels	No	Yes	Grand Total
Maybe	6	2	8
No	5	3	8
Yes	11	20	31
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>47</b>

TABLE 6

The above table shows whether people are able to recall the product placements and based on that recall are they influenced enough to purchase that product or service after the encounter it in the movie. Most of the respondents that recall the placements are influenced to purchase that product or service. This shows that the placements have the intended impact on the minds of the viewers.



Count o Column	No	Yes	Grand Total
15-20	9	15	24
20-30	11	9	20
30-40		1	1
40 and a	2		2
<b>Grand T</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>47</b>

TABLE 7

The above table shows people of which age group are the most influenced to invest in the product/service when the encounter that placement in the film. 62.5% of the respondents are positively influenced to purchase the product/service when they encounter it in the movie in the form of product placement.

Row Labels	Count of Do you think this practice of product placement should be ethical?
No	8
Yes	39
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47</b>

TABLE 8

The table above portrays how many of the 47 respondents think that the practice of product placement should be ethical. 82.9% of the respondents feel that the practice should be ethical which shows that it is a success as an advertising tool.

The survey also included a question that asked the respondents to mention any product placements that they might recollect. Most of the products recollected by the respondents belonged to three major categories i.e. FMCG, electronics and transportation.

- Secondary Data Analysis

After analysing the primary data to see the general perspective of the audience towards product placement in Bollywood films, the four following films have been analysed on the basis of the product placements done in them. Due to the varying time periods from which these films have been selected, not all the product placements are compulsorily paid for.

1. Phir Hera Pheri

Phir Hera Pheri, released on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2006 is easily one of the most iconic comedy films in Bollywood history. Any millennial who is a Bollywood movie buff cannot deny that it is one of the best comedy's Bollywood has ever produced. It had a budget of 18 crore rupees but earned over 70 crores. This movie was viewed by over 2 crore people. Reportedly, 70000 DVDs of Phir Hera Pheri had been released which means that over 2 lakh people viewed it through this medium (Anonymous, Dominos Pizzas-Phir Hera Pheri, n.d.).

When talking about the product placement in this film, amongst others, the most famous one was the Domino's Pizza box. Not only was the product placement widely accepted, but the scene itself is one of the best scenes of the movie. One of the main characters played by Paresh Rawal (also a brand ambassador of Dominos at the time), carries the box in his hand while delivering dialogues to a crowd. The product placement of Dominos is exactly 3 minutes and 11 seconds long in the 153 minutes movie.

When looking from an advertising perspective, this was one of the cleverest product placements. Not only is the product portrayed, but the protagonist also talks about the 30-minute free delivery scheme of Dominos therefore

showing its functionality. This scene put forth the value proposition of Dominos and also created a light moment in the film which resulted in the in-film branding/advertisement being integrated perfectly into the film. This did not come off as obtrusive or too harsh when viewed from the perspective of a consumer.

This collaboration played perfectly well for Dominos because they were able to communicate their message in a totally seamless and creative way. Due to the extensive reach of the film, the message could be disseminated to a wide audience. Pizza, being a part of the junk food category, carries a notion of being nibbled on by youngsters. But this scene proves otherwise. Besides these, the scene also showed endorsement by Paresh Rawal.

All in all, the product placement turned out to be pretty cost-effective and a win-win situation for both the parties since Dominos got its reach and the movie makers made an almost iconic scene out of a mere advertisement opportunity. Despite the research done, the financials involved in the process are not known but it is assumed that it was a paid product placement. A research conducted with a sample size of 963 respondents showed that 71% of them were able to recall this placement without any help very conveniently (Shukla, 2013).

When we talk about the importance of this placement, the brand did succeed in adding a considerable amount of marginality to its recognition and the scene evolved to be addressed by the name of the brand among the masses. When looking from the side of the movie makers, no one can stipulate the scenario had the placement not taken effect but the movie surely would have lost a chance to have a highly talked about scene in the history of Bollywood comedy.

## 2. 3 idiots

3 idiots is one of the most sensational films of Bollywood history that defined the turning point in Indian cinema. It displayed a reality that all of us existed in but were never happy to live in. the film released on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2009 and earned over 460 crore rupees worldwide. The story of the film is indeed a reckoning one but the marketing strategies of the film also deserve a much-needed credit.

The film had an interesting plethora of brands that facilitated the overall success of the film. It had a total of 15 brands on its roster that carried out a combination of in-film and out-film branding activities. These brands contributed from 25 lakh rupees to 75 lakh rupees depending on the placement in the movie. The total package deal was between 2-3 crore rupees (Krishna & Dash). Since we are focusing on product placement, we are going to look at in-film brands and branding activities.

A total of 8 brands were associated with product placements in the film. They included brands like Air India, Airtel, Fortis Hospitals, Mahindra Flyte, Volvo, etc. For some of these products, the film makers went to great lengths to procure them for the film. for example, the Volvo XC90 was not launched in India at the time, but the director was clear about the requirement of a red SUV. Therefore, Volvo got two cars specially air-lifted from its headquarters in Sweden to make the integration possible. The hard work paid off here because many of the important scenes in the film take place in the car.

Another important placement could be the Mahindra Flyte scooter which was also launched through the film. Airtel was also a very visible placement in the movie in two scenes. Moreover, it is the most recognisable of them all due to the increased amount of awareness that it has among the masses. All the characters in the film can be seen using Samsung mobile phones which adds as a product placement. All in all, the film had great and totally relevant product placements that were not obtrusive at all and the same time added a streak of realism.

A study conducted with a sample of 963 respondents stated that 58% of the respondents recalled the Volvo XC90 correctly and only 28% recalled the Mahindra Flyte (Shukla, 2013). No proper financial statistics are available on the costs incurred in procuring the product placements or the benefit gained by the producers in terms of the money that they saved but reports mentioned that in general, these product placements helped to reduce the publicity budget by 15%.

The question arises, how important were these placements to the movie? It can be comprehended that the people behind these product placements really thought through them because all of them fit just perfectly to the scenario. They are not only identifiable but also fit so seamlessly with the script that the audience enjoys their presence. On

the part of the advertisers, it was a good platform to show case their products because of the magnitude of the film. Talking about the effects on the movie, the product placements certainly made the audience identify with the characters and add realism in every aspect.

### 3. Kuch Kuch Hota Hai

Kuch Kuch Hota Hai is yet another Bollywood classic that became the biggest hit of its time. Released on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1998, the film had a budget of 10 crore rupees. Due to its tremendous reception, it earned 80.12 crore rupees in India and 26.61 crore rupees in other countries making a total of 1.07 billion rupees. It was one of the three films of that time to have crossed the 1 billion mark.

The movie has undoubtedly left a huge mark on the romantic comedy side of Bollywood. Not only on the side of the entertainment, the movie did a lot when it comes to product placement as well. The film had a total of 144 product placements during its course of 185 minutes. Brands like Polo sport, GAP, Pepsi, Nescafe and many more fashion brands were featured in the films. It can be said that this is the one film that introduced the Indian consumers to high-end fashion brands like Tommy Hilfiger and DKNY.

Despite these associations, the fact whether all these placements were paid for or just a mere coincidence is unknown because this is all internal information and no reports citing the cost have been released. Although, when talking about the reception received by the brands due to the placements, most of them profited.

Tommy Hilfiger, a high-end brand that entered India in 2004 already had a set audience that recognised the brand and were somewhat willing to buy it. Due to the movie, when the public saw Shah Rukh Khan wearing their t-shirts, the consumers were enchanted by the style. Fake t-shirts of the same style with the name of the brand on them were manufactured and sold in different markets of the country. A market where even the home-grown brands were struggling to survive, Tommy Hilfiger was able to generate sustainable profits on a year on year basis.

Reports have claimed that the revenues of Tommy Hilfiger had risen 50% per year every year in 2008 and 2009 when almost every other brand was struggling. Their products were available at 1000 different points in the country (Bellman, 2010). One of the head executives of the brand had claimed that the partnership in the film was truly organic. They had not expected that results that it garnered (Balakrishnan, 2014).

The orange GAP hoodie worn by the protagonist also went viral due to the movie. Pepsi also earned a lot in terms of awareness from its target audience i.e. the youth at that time. The song that portrayed that brand and reflected friendship and easy-going college atmosphere was something that resonated with the Gen Y. Other brands, knowingly and unknowingly benefitted from the partnership.

It can be concluded that Kuch Kuch Hota Hai marked a milestone for some brands because of their product placements in it. The audience not only became informed about some brands but also fell in love with them that created a win-win atmosphere for both the advertisers and the producers.

### 4. Veere Di Wedding

Veere Di Wedding, released on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2018. It is a one of a kind film for Bollywood with a full female star cast. The film had a budget of 7.5 crore rupees and earned around 338.80 crore rupees at the box office. Despite its financial success, the film was not particularly liked by the audiences due to the excessive product placements that it contained. Some even went on to say that it was more of an ad film.

Although there have been other films with number of product placements more than this, but the quality of the placements is also an important aspect. Most of the placements were intrusive, poorly placed and were not in synergy with the story line as far as the personality of the characters portraying them are concerned. Some even said that there were more product placements than lucrative content.

Brands like Air India, Amul, HSBC, Uber, Lux, Apple, Bharat Matrimony and many more were placed. Usually, these would set in with any drama comedy, but the way the characters backgrounds were shown and the way these



brands were placed just clashed with each other. For example, one of the characters, a South Delhi girl who's supposed to have all the luxury in the world orders an Uber to go to one of those high-end places. Normally, this would have been understandable, but the car that appears in the film is a maroon sedan with 'Uber' written all over it. In real life, no such car with so much advertisement exists of the company. Therefore, it just comes off as too much and looks like an advertisement that is thrown in the face of the consumers.

In another instance, the characters seem to enjoying themselves in a luxury hotel in Phuket but pass around a packet of Bikaji Bhujia when talking and resolving issues. Any sane viewer would understand the problem here. Most of the placements done in the film have been the same wherein either they are too much in the face of the viewer or just do not belong in the scene,

The above stated product placements are a perfect example of what happens when the strategy has not been properly thought out. This results in a negative appeal on the part of the consumers who do recognise the brands and are familiar with it but develop a negative appeal and attitude towards it. The movie makers in this instance needed to know when the saturation level of the consumers would had reached its peak or at least should have tried to integrate these brand collaborations in a better manner.

## Findings and Discussion

The project carried out as mentioned above bore lucrative and fruitful results. The research helped in finding some very important discoveries that add value to the essence of the topic. The following are the various findings and inferences:

- The primary data collected through the survey gave a hint towards the overall outlook of the general public on product placement. People are very positive towards it and appreciate its existence as an advertising tool.
- The people do not consider the product placement as a hindrance in their ongoing process of entertainment but instead find them knowledgeable and one that introduces them to newer products.
- Most of the product displayed in the movies have a high rate of recall amongst the masses. Mostly FMCG, Electronics and Transportation products are the most easily identifiable ones.
- A study conducted on the comparison of product placement practices between the Hollywood and the Bollywood industry between 2005-2009 stated that in both the industries, the highest product placements came from the transportation sector which was followed by the electronics sector (Gokhale, 2010).
- People across all professions and age groups are aware of the practice of product placement. It was good to acknowledge that most of the millennials were aware of this upcoming advertising tool which clearly showed that it has a brighter future in the marketing world in India.
- When addressing the secondary data analysis, the product placement of Dominos in Phir Hera Pheri was a perfect example of a mixed product placement strategy wherein not only is the product a part of the background for a particular time period but is also being talked about in terms of its functionality by the actors. This adds a sense of realism that has been talked about earlier. The characters in the movie are supposed to be people suffering from a satiric financial crisis, one similar to what people experience on a day to day basis. Therefore, the use of the product not only portrays the experience it is proposing to offer but also reaches the audience it very well intends to target.
- 3 Idiots is an appropriate example when it comes to sound product placement practices. The movie was not filled with placements but at the same time had just the right amount of them that added value to the script. All the placements were moreover in the background or used by the characters but not talked about by the characters. They were used like any common man uses their daily necessities.
- When thinking on the part of the advertisers and the brands, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai provided a boost and a celebrity endorsement which would have been very expensive otherwise. The brands not only created an impact, but the placement also influenced the consumers to invest in their products. When thinking on the side of the movie producers, the one reason the movie became so popular was because of the bright colours and innovative styling that it contained which was all because of the presence of the product placements.
- Veere Di Wedding, as mentioned earlier is an example of product placements gone wrong. Advertisers and movie makers both need to know when to stop because then they would be compromising on quality for



financial ease. A study where 122 Bollywood films were examined for their product placements concluded that the movie studios need to set a boundary on the number of product placements i.e. there should be no more than 50. If this level is surpassed, it usually results in a poorer box office success (Song, Meyer, & Ha, 2015). In this case, although the movie earned money, but that could easily be attributed to its different story line and an attempt at making a female centric film in a country where male stars are worshipped.

- It is very difficult to anticipate the outcome of a product placement. If the movie does well, the advertisers' hard work pays off. If the movie flops, all the work and effort goes down the drain because it did not reach the intended target in the first place.
- It is very difficult to find out and determine the financials behind a particular product placement because they usually depend on the reception that the movie is supposed to garner which itself is unfathomable.
- In 2006 itself where the ticket sales were around 4650 crore rupees, brand integrations i.e. a combination of in-film and out-film branding activities contributed an additional 600 crore rupees to this number. Therefore 14 years down the line, this number is expected to increase substantially (Vice-president, 2007).
- In 2007, according to industry estimates, brand cameos earned around Rs 200 crore, and as a result, even small-and medium-budget movies as well as animated films are hoping to cash in on this new and lucrative revenue stream. Indeed, media analysts and industry watchers expect that figure to climb to Rs 800 crore by 2010. (Anonymous, Brand Placement in Indian Film Industry, 2018)
- Most of the audience patronizing the movies are people below the age of 25. Therefore, they have more access and propensity to consume the wide range of media and communication options available. This is possible due to the increased receptivity and purchasing power of the Indian consumers. (Essays, 2017)

## Conclusion

The span of this project has been successfully able to communicate the boon of product placement. Product placement is not only good for a particular class or profession but holds the key to triumph for various stakeholders involved in the process. Although the practice did not start in India, the progression of technology and evolution of the marketing communication strategy eventually led to the gravitation of the product placement exercise across all media platforms in the country.

Much has been said about Hollywood being ahead of Bollywood in every step. There is no doubt about the fact that Hollywood does encounter greater amount of investment and trust by brands in this arena but product placement is turning out to be one of the central marketing strategies amongst the advertising world in India, particularly in Bollywood. The amount of product placements increase almost every year leading to a larger piece of the revenue chunk in the hands of the advertisers.

Before getting into a comprehensive comparison between the workings and results of product placement in Hollywood and Bollywood, research has shown that it is integral to know that for a placement to be identifiable, it should be shown/portrayed on the screen for at least 1.5 to 3 seconds. Keeping this in mind, one of the places where the two industries compete is the screen time that they have for each placement. On an average, Bollywood has a much larger time slot reserved for these placements than Hollywood. It is indecipherable whether this is a good thing or not, but from experience, Bollywood films tend to sometimes push the product a little more than its counterparts from the other countries.

The number of placements in Hollywood films varies from 10 to 50 per year whereas in Bollywood films it varies from 25-30 per year, with the numbers steadily increasing (Gokhale, 2010). The stigma of product placement is more or less the same in both the industries. On point of similarity between both the industry is that the maximum number of placements come from the transportation sector and further categorize it, from cars. Both the industries have seen tremendous investment by various automobile brands.

When comparing Bollywood films to web-series, we can say that web-series is the new 'thing' today. Almost every millennial today, for that matter even the older generation is hooked on to web-series. This is a great opportunity for advertisers and brands because web-series offer a wider reach and almost no investment on the part of the consumers. The viewers usually do not pay for to view them and even if they do, they get subscription to hundreds of them for a small fee. Therefore, product placements in web-series is an unexplored avenue one to which brands are certainly

catching up to. Moreover, web-series usually have a smaller budget as compared to Bollywood films, hence the product placements can help even more to expand the horizon.

Before concluding the research, there are certain statistics and suggestion that need to be brought forward that could help in further research.

- Advertisers need to be very careful when drafting the placement because a positive attempt on their part can turn into a negative appeal on the parts of the consumers.
- Reach has shown that women are more sensitive towards product that could possibly portray a negative appeal.
- Product placement is a great platform for social advertising wherein socially important messages and product like sanitary pads can be propagated and help people at the same time.
- Talking about the future, it is estimated that 40% of a film's revenue will accrue from streams like TV, online rights, product placements and digital downloads. (Anonymous, Brand Placement in Indian Film Industry, 2018)
- Research depicted that product placement can be a good alternative to a traditional advertising especially in times when the consumers are bored with the monotonous TV commercials. But the film or series image plays an important role in the changes in brand image.
- Producers and movie makers need to realise that not every brand can be integrated with their content. Therefore, there needs to be a proper selection criteria and procedure.
- When talking about the OTT platforms, according to Carat Media and Advertising Agency, 74% of Netflix subscribers would rather end their subscriptions than have to watch traditional TV-style advertisements. This implies that product placement connects well with consumers and will be used more in the future. (Consumer, 2019)

In conclusion, I can say that product placement has evolved as a larger than life concept that is continuously changing how product are displayed nowadays. No consumer wants to see a simple TV-commercials nowadays and a lot more creativity and innovation is expected from the marketers. Product placement has become that limb of Bollywood films and the advertising world without which both of these industries cannot take a single step ahead. Therefore, as said earlier, product placement has been a blessing in disguise for both, the Bollywood industry and the advertising world.

### **Limitations**

While conducting this research and doing this project, the resources concerning the financial aspects of the process were highly limited. Therefore, inferences had to be made with the best available data. Due to the time period in which this research was carried out, comprehensive and good quality primary data could not be collected because of which there is a possibility of error in the sample owing to its size, but the best possible justifications have been made from the collected primary data.

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