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The Television Cult: Rise of Brand Placements in Reality Shows

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Abstract

Brand/product placements have been a staple in marketing and are one of the most organic ways to grab attention towards the brands. Brand placement is quite random in movies, video games, and TV. In emerging markets such as India, it is still in the developing phase, given its rise in the developed market. Classical conditioning and Social Identity theory are used as a theoretical framework to evaluate the significance of personal and social identities for the viewer's behavior. This paper will examine brand placements prevalence in Reality Shows through content analysis. The study will identify the consumer's perceptions and favorability of brand placements in Reality Shows. It helps advertisers to connect the brands with consumers' minds more effectually in a cost-effective manner for both brand advertisers, broadcasters, and reality show producers. Thus, the study explores the contemporary strategic practices of brand placements in India that would help researchers, practitioners, and advertisers to reach their target audience.

Keywords: Brand Placements, Content Analysis, Reality Shows, Bigg Boss, Brand Placement characteristics.

1. Introduction

Brand Placements is well-defined as the enclosure of a product or brand name in a film, television (TV), i.e., through audio or visual means of presentation in exchange for a payment, whether in cash, supplies, or services. It is also known as brand integration or embedded marketing. Within this new media environment, brand placements are leveraged to pay for revenue loss from other traditional advertising (Seipel et al., 2018). Sponsors pay a lot of money to pitch their brands on a prevalent TV show spending millions to flash their products briefly in screens watched by thousands of people (Niranjana, 2019). As reported by (PQMedia,2018), global brand placements revenue has been increased 14% to $15 billion, with TV being a primary source of $10 billion, and is expected to grow at a similar pace over 2018-2022. It creates a necessity to discover several techniques of placements in a broader range of Asian markets (Chan et al., 2015) with extensive analysis.

2. Literature Review and Research Questions

Brand placements have grown to all modes of entertainment media i.e.., films, TV, video games, music, novels (T. Natarajan et al., 2018). As per Fong Yee Chan & Lowe (2017), Limited researches have studied the prevalence of brand placements in which studies on movies are predominant across the globe. TV placements studies are less in numbers, and mainly the focus is on USA. A thorough literature review showed that among the media like film, music, TV, etc., the reality shows are not concentrated in specific for TV studies. TV penetration increased to 66% in 2018 from 64% in 2016 (BARC, 2018), television channels

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in India has tripled over the last ten years (Madison, 2019) of which 77% of time spent on television was on General Entertainment channels (GEC) (FICCI, 2018). Whereas in GEC, reality shows tops in the list for both urban and rural India (BARC, 2018). The over-the-top (OTT) video streaming platforms like Hotstar, Amazon Prime, Netflix viewers are continually increasing due to the vital factors of airing GEC programs before the actual showtime in television channels and also preference for reality shows are consistent among all age groups (vidooly, 2019). So, the present study focus on brand placements in most-watched reality shows, ie Big Boss as per Broadcast Audience Research Council India report (BARC, 2018). An in-depth brand placements investigation on its prevalence and characterestics will provide meaningful insights for effective managerial decisions. The following research questions are framed for **brand placements in reality shows**:

RQ1: Which product/service categories are predominant?

RQ2: What are the dominant types of brands and their exposure frequency?

RQ3: What is the prevalence of country of origin brands?

RQ4: What is the level of plot involvement and type of modalities of brand placements?

RQ5: What is the primary association of brands with the character?

RQ6: What is the proportion of brands (national/international/known/unknown)?

RQ7: Investigating brand placements disclosure and its timing?

RQ8: Does the number of brand placements increase during episodes?

RQ9: Does the brand placements matches with the plot of the reality shows?

3. Research Methodology

This study aims to label the existence of brands and their implementation-style numerically, and content analysis is found suitable as it comprises a quantitative, systematic approach of data collection (Devlin & Combs, 2015). Bigg Boss (Tamil) Season 2 (106 episodes) is chosen as a sample as Bigg Boss won the highest television rating points (TRP) in all languages, making it lucrative, and the show has claimed its unique space among several GEC. Each placement will be coded as separately by different variables identified by prior researcher's brand name, brand's Country of Origin, product category (Natarajan et al., 2018), etc., Two Coders have been trained to code the variables by identifying brand placements to ensure intercoder reliability of Cohen's Kappa.

4. Plan for Data Analysis

Before importing the data into SPSS 23 for data analysis, each coder will independently view and record the observations as per the coding scheme (Krippendorff, 1980) in the spreadsheets. Descriptive statistics used to testify sample characteristics, including an average number of brands being placed in each episode and observed for their country of origin. The brands with the maximum number of placements with their execution-style will be identified by visual representation and numeric depictions of the data using statistics. For which, Advertisers are spending enormous to strive for obtaining a competitive edge over competitor products. This observation helps in identifying the plot involvement and the information regarding the brand that is exposed in reality shows.

5. Study Implications

This study conveys exceptional information on where and how viewers will probably look placements and examine how placements are progressing eventually. The outcomes will be able to help both sponsors and advertisers on placements decisions by how, where, and when placements can be utilized. This research focuses on a theoretical framework that would enable researchers, broadcasters, and practitioners to use brand placements strategically and proficiently to improve the earlier works and add more body of knowledge to the existing theories. This study would be fundamental to grasp the practices trailed throughout the years and assist advertisers with advancing placements procedures to catch the Indian market through reality shows.

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