

Brand Placement on Turkish and British Television Soap Operas. A comparative content analysis.

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Abstract

This paper is about my doctoral research-Product Placement- a comparative study of product placement on Turkish and British soap operas.

Keywords: Advertising, Brand Placement, Turkish television, British television, comparative content analysis.

1.Introduction

Since brand placement is a relatively recent development for Turkish and British television, there are key areas that need research attention. Namely, to investigate the context of product placement and significance of it. While there is a substantial literature on what is commonly termed product placement, there are different ways in which, as advertising practice, this is done in different countries. This study aims to compare brand placement practices in two countries, Turkey and the U.K. There have been many studies looking into the product placement on various countries. Boeing, Uran and Gentry (2013: 3) state that “Product placement is currently used throughout media all over the world”. However, the bulk of current research is focused on product placement in American broadcast media. This research will look at brand placement on Turkish and British soap operas. Hence, this literature review will focus on studies relevant to Turkey and Britain, referring to American studies only when necessary. As Russell (2002:307) so aptly observes, “understanding how product placement works remains an open empirical question”. Therefore, this study aims to compare and contrast frequencies and methods of brand placement in Turkey and Britain.

2. Aims of this research

Numerous theories and models have been developed to research and explain the dynamics of brand placement. Individually each has given a partial understanding of brand placement. This research will look at the strengths and weakness of the most commonly cited theories and models.

The aim of this research is to test the following propositions. There are different approaches to brand placement in different countries. A naturalistic approach to brand placement can be strategically and theoretically justified, than an overt approach to brand placement. The overall aim is to produce a synthesis of the theories that provides a theoretical framework to undertake comparative analysis of brand placement in different countries.

The theories to be analyzed will be CBEE Theory, Secondary Brand Association Theory, Balance Theory, Informational/Transformational Advertising Theory, ParaSocial Theory, Dual Coding Theory and the model to be explored is the Hierarchy of Effects Model.

From these theories and the model the following concepts will be used to explore, through empirical research, the viability of a synthesis, Modality, Brand Familiarity, Placement Fit, Character Liking, Viewer-Character Relationship, Program Involvement and Informational vs. Transformational Theory. The proposed methodology will be a hybrid quantitative and qualitative approach.

Content analysis will be used to operationalize and apply the main concepts to representative samples of soap operas broadcast on a regular basis in the U.K. and in Turkey. The U.K. drama to be analyzed is Coronation Street and for Turkey, it will be Ask Laftan Anlamaz.

3. Research Questions

The research questions are based and come from the theories and model introduced in Table 1.1. In order to assess the strengths and weakness of each theory, each will be subject to evaluation. The primary guiding question will be in what ways do the theories and model and their related concepts help us to understand the strategic aspects of brand placement in culturally comparative terms? The more specific questions relate to the specific theories and model and are as follow.

CBEE Theory. How can Keller's arguments be applied to actual instances of product placement? How do his arguments relate to Informational and Transformational strategies?

Secondary Brand Association Theory. What differences exist between British television and Turkish television in terms of associations-story, place, characters?

Balance Theory. Is brand placement driven by character liking? How does brand placement in British and Turkish television differ in the use of a brand with a character? Does Turkish television use characters more or less than British television?

Informational/Transformational Advertising Theory. In what ways do British and Turkish television use Informational/Transformational advertising tactics in product placement? Is there a difference in use? In what ways is it different?

Dual Coding Theory. Is there any empirical evidence for this? Pavio (1921) Can we use his claims to empirically test them?

Hierarchy of Effects Model. Are any Hierarchy of Effects Model visible in Brand Placement in British and Turkish television?

4. What is Product Placement?

Avery and Ferraro (2000:217) claim that the popularity and impact of traditional television advertising have been in decline in recent years, as a result of increased costs and competition from cable and independent networks since the late 1980s. Similarly, Waldt, Toit and Redelinghuys (2007), point out that audiences do not believe advertising, since audiences believe advertising is paid commercial. Demir and Gok Demir (2012:40) state that, “since audiences are skeptical towards commercials, advertisers have begun to turn to a variety of alternative advertising channels in order to reach customers”. Similarly, according to Gurses and Okan (2014), media multiplication and disintegration have led to lessen the effectiveness of the traditional advertising and search for a new media method. According to Demir and Gok Demir (2012), product placement technique has started to be one of the most important promotion mix components in the last two decades in consequences of audiences’ suspicious ideas about advertising. According to Newell, Salmon and Chang (2006), the movie industry has begun to mix on screen product placement with off-screen promotion owing to the shift of broadcasting programs from local to national. Thus, it has resulted in increased consumers as well as lowering advertising cost.

Balasubramanian’s, (1994:31) defines product placement as, “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 program)”. On this point of unobtrusive and obtrusive, Balasubramanian’s, (1994:31) mentions in his definition that a product placement should be a subtle method.

According to the Chandler and Munday (2015:316),”The promotion of a particular product or brand through its visible inclusion as part of the set or scenery in a film or television production”. Chandler and Munday (2015) restrict the use of product placement within a film or television production and the modality by saying “visible inclusion” is paramount.

Although all definitions might initially give away the same meaning, in fact they all are different. Since most of the scholars and practitioners defined product placement as an advertising tool used in movies or cinema screen, there are also writers who mentioned about product placement in different areas.

The preceding authors while defining what product or brand placement is do not offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for cross-cultural comparative research.

While a starting point for understanding product placement in general, dictionary definitions do not take into account the place of placement within the broader models of advertising and marketing communications. For this, the research literature is more informative.

4.1 Types of Product Placement

Lehu (2007) states that the effect on its audience is shaped by the manner of appearance. Lehu (2007) also divides product placement into four categorized in terms of appearance

such as classic placement, institutional placement, evocative placement and stealth placement.

Basically, a product or a brand is showed in the camera in classic placement. This technique supplies low cost or no cost and simple to be applied. However, audiences may not be aware of it. In corporate technique, putting forward brand is important. It carries some risks and advantages. When it comes to its advantages, it is easier to embed a brand into a footage and has a longer existence as a product may not no longer be in the market and when it comes to its disadvantages, audiences are not aware of it if they do not know about the brand. Corporate and classic placement have the same potential disadvantages. In evocative placement, the brand is not mentioned nor is shown. This technique is not meant for every product or every brand. A product has to have exclusive patterns for audiences to identify the brands. This technique carries the same obstacle as well. When it comes to stealth placement, it is imperceptible. It can be visual and audible. All techniques have the same obstacle.

However, according to Gupta and Lord (1998), the strategies of product placement are divided into three category. The first category is visual (VIS) which shows visual brand identifiers without any sounds or an appropriate message. Although the visual technique is the most popular among them, it carries some disadvantages without audio messages such as lacking of recalling a product in the future.

Visual product placement technique is seen as the most positive way among Swedish audiences (Abrahamsson and Lindblom, 2012). According to Russell (2012), this technique can be successful for memory when it is only congruent to the plot.

While the combined audio-visual solves this problem, it also has some disadvantages such as being the most expensive and the hardest process. The second category is audio (AUS) that conveys an appropriate message without showing visual brand identifiers (Gupta and Lord, 1998). According to Swedish audiences are neutral for audible product placement technique. According to Russell (2002), audio technique is better than visual technique in terms of memory because auditory message is processed more deeply and thus are remembered better. The final category is combined audio-visual (AV) that shows visual brand identifiers and mention an appropriate message on the screen audibly at the same time(Gupta and Lord, 1998). According to Abrahamsson and Lindblom(2012), Swedish audiences are more positive for audio-visualplacement technique.This argument is supported by Wilson and Till (2011). They state that combined audio-visual (AV) product placements is superior in terms of recall than audio and visual techniques (Wilson and Till, 2011).

Hong, Wang and De Los Santos (2008) have an another important point to mention is that although well integrated product placement fits scripts and stories, it boosts brand salience less compared with poorly integrated product placement because poorly integrated product placement tend to be prominent on the screen and attract more attention from audiences. Thus, higher grade of attention tends to ensure higher grade of brand salience in the memory. On the other hand, Russell (2002), states that congruency

augments conviction, incongruent placements do not affect brand attitude positively because they appear spurious and it leads to be discounted.

Kureshi and Sood (2010) agree with Russell(2002) develop their argument in the following way, the placement of brands are so important for brand placement effectiveness and it should be decided very well before applying.

4.2 Product Placement in Turkish Television and British Television

In Britain product placement are paid while in Turkey they do not have to be paid (BBC news, 2011). It leads to conflicting in Turkey whether it is a product placement or not. Like in Turkey, Britain also does not allow certain products to be advertised such as alcoholic drinks and cigarette (BBC news, 2011). Similarly, it isn't allowed on news, children programs like in Turkey (BBC news, 2011). The proposition holds that British television programs have taken a naturalistic approach – that is, brands are placed so that they are subtle and unobtrusive - to brand placement and Turkish television a more overt and obtrusive approach – that is utterly blatant.

5. Conclusion

Since brand placement is a relatively recent development for Turkish and British television there are key areas that need research attention to investigate the context of product placement and significance of it. With the lack, as it will be shown, of a comprehensive theory aiding advertising strategy for brand placement, this research will add to the limited literature by researching the possibility of a theoretical synthesis that enables the use of a theory and related concepts to inform strategic and tactical decision making by advertising practitioners. The proposition holds that British television programs have taken a naturalistic approach – that is, brands are placed so that they are subtle and unobtrusive - to brand placement and Turkish television a more overt and obtrusive approach – that is utterly blatant.

It is argued that these differences can be measured through a content analysis of frequencies, positioning and role of the brand in the narrative current theories and models of brand placement fail to comprehensively explain cross-cultural differences.

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