

Product Placements: Carrying The “sultan” Way

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Abstract

The case tries to evaluate the product placements incorporated in the biggest hit of the year 2016 a bollywood movie “Sultan” with the lead actor Salman Khan portraying the role of a wrestler from a small town making it big in the wrestling world by beating all the odds. Eyeballs and potential reach is what marketers are after and what better than a salman khan film-since he is one actor who alone can garner all the attention with his huge legion of die-hard fans. The movie had a lot of product placements in the form of in-film placement or out-film placement or co-promotion so as to outreach the audience and piggy-back on the star power. The case tries to assess the brand placements- prominence, repetition and plot connection so as to ascertain the potential of the trade.

Keywords:

Product placement, in-film placement, integration, plot connection

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Product Placement in Bollywood

Product Placements in Bollywood movies is not new. It has its roots long back when Rajdoot was famously introduced in Raj Kapoor film “Bobby” in the year 1975. It's always interesting to study how these products placed in a bollywood film leverages itself and proves a beneficial gamble. Apart from the brand itself, it is very important that the endorser is a known renowned personality to justify the spend.

Controversy's favorite child & still a brand Magnet: Salman Khan

Salman Khan has always been the favorite of marketers despite being involved in a lot of controversies one or the other day, be it the hit and run case or his recent statement comparing himself to a rape victim, these controversies are just a small wave and won't affect the star's power and the brands he is associated with. Khan is able to churn out Bollywood's hits and all his movies undoubtedly enters the one billion to two billion club sometimes three billion club. Take an example of the recent release “Tiger Zinda Hai” not only the opening collection is the highest ever in Bollywood but its first-weekend collection is also the highest ever in the industry. It has already surpassed three billion mark in just two weeks. It can be seen even in his previous movies, for eg. in the Movie “Dabang”, how brands were integrated, how the scenes were designed to create an impact and how it actually influenced to the consumers. The Movie also had a commercial insertion namely sonic branding wherein the Brand “Zandu Balm” was placed in the

chartbuster song of that year “MunniBadnamhui darling tereliye, mai “Zandu Balm” hui darling tereliye” After that another popular brand “Fevicol” was inserted in the lyrics of the song “Mere photo kochipka de saiyan “fevicol” se”. Brand . The right amount of in-film promotion assures an amplified consumer attention. He endorses brands like Thums Up, Relaxo, Astral Pipes, Suzuki Motorcycles, PN GadgilJewellers and Wheel. Per endorsement he charges a whooping amount of approximately 10.5 millionRs, Thumps Up being his longest association, till date. There was a period when brands started relooking for an association since he was convicted and sentenced for a jail term of five years however this didn't change his equation with the brands as he was let off on bail.

“Sultan” of Product Placement

Sultan is one movie that has done an exemplary product placement. Released in the year 2016 it showcase a rural plot revolving around the protagonist of the film “Salman Khan”. Sultan which is from the premium production house “YRF(YashRaj Films)” bagged 1.8 billion in the domestic market and 2.5 billion in International market, was touted to be the most successful film of the year 2016 even before its release and thus a lot of brands were queuing up its way to be associated with the film one or another reasons. There were eight in-film and one out-film brand placements that were integrated marvelously into the scenes. The Brands namely Relispray, Escorts Tractors, Force Motors, Astral Pipes, CP Plus, Videocon DTH and Paras Ghee are examples of in-films placement implicitly and explicitly integrated in the plots. The only out-film placement being Micromax mobile handsets. A blockbuster ensures visibility and thus companies want to reckon on the star power by associating its brands with the movie. Industry watchdogs says that such brand placements usually costs them anywhere between 7.5 million and 30 million.

Brands banked on Salman Khan's “sultan”

Varuna Pumps

This water pump company based in Ahmedabad wanted to concentrate on only one media when they launched the product in 2015 and thus on the basis of their media budget they launched it on seven radio spots which was a success. Post success, they were encouraged to next launch it in a video format but with some innovative strategy so as to reach to a larger audience base. The company thus launched a two-film campaign to communicate the message of making people's lives simpler by varunapumps, which was aired during the interval of “Sultan”- touted to be the biggest release of the year 2016. In one of the video a villager women is seen facing difficulties to fetch water in a vast barren stretch & another video a city based aged parsi couple is seen struggling to get water from ground floor. 1,800 theatres across Gujarat, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra were selected to target. The innovative practice adopted was by developing an ad reviving the lost charm of a short film format, the ad portrayed “slice of life advertising strategy” theme being water shortage faced by rural and urban Indians. Water is a highly emotional topic for Indians as there is an erratic importance of it in Indian society.

Timex

Timex has associated itself with “Sultan” through both in-film placement and outside integration releasing a video that showcases Salman Khan's journey as an actor to the sultan of Bollywood. This association is a perfect fit provided the connect between Timex's focus on fitness and Sultan's spirit. Also the character of Sultan helps justify this association better, since he is extremely focused towards an active life, like Timex. As a part of this association through the video, the director of the film is seen talking about how the actor's intense training with Timex Ironman sleek 150 helped Salman Khan get the Ironman wrestling avatar with its features like stopwatch with 150 Lap Memory, Interval Timer, Target Pacer and Hydration Alerts .He further adds that Timex Ironman Sleek 150 is a user-friendly sports watch and is a must have for all the fitness enthusiasts. The IRONMAN series is one of the most successful fitness tracker presented by Timex and thus the campaign wanted to educate the audience to use it for an active and fit life. TIMEX as a brand

has always focused on improving lifestyle of people through its technologically advanced products. The marketers tried every bit to make the brand's message congruent with the plot of the film & inconjunction with world-renowned athletes.

Force Motors

The movie plot has a lot of wrestling events and thus Force motor is implicitly integrated in those events as the sponsors of the events. The brand has been weaved into the story plot to highlight the message –'The Force That Drives Sultan'.

Relispray

The pain-relieving spray brand “Relispray” from MidasCare Pharmaceuticals Pvt.Ltd. has been finely integrated in the movie scenes wherein the protagonist after his wrestling match is in pain and applies Relispray. This is one good example of the association fit. It has also tied itself with film as an out-side placement by running an ad campaign in association with the movie.

Astral Pipes

A brand will be well accepted by an audience of interest when the connection solidifies the theme of the movie. The purpose of Astral Pipes was to connect with the North Indians since it is an important market for them. The storyline of Sultan takes shape in Haryana(North India) and also the brand positioning “Strong Nahin, Astral Strong” connects very finely with the spirit of the film which reflects the grit, endurance & strength of Sultan .Salman Khan is also the brand ambassador and thus according to the trade gurus it is a perfect connotation for theintegration. Apart from placement, the brand is also one of the many sponsors of the film.

Paras Ghee

Paras Ghee was used to decipher the consumption habit of North Indian culture of consuming ghee. Ghee- a byproduct is considered as an important ingredient in each and every aspect of life of Indians especially the North Indians, the placement was finely integrated in the film. The protagonist is shown fighting in a wrestling match sponsored by Paras Ghee and winning the same. Beyond that, in order to push its product, a contest was run by the brand giving the winner an opportunity to meet “Sultan”.

Videocon D2h

Videocon D2h tied up with “Sultan” to take the brand to the rural vicinity of India as an extension to its latest campaign “KhusiyonkiChatri”. To strengthen the association Videocon D2h even carried a 360 degree campaign with an objective to create an impact for impending DAS-IV digitalization towns, areas highly influenced by Hindi cinema. It is considered to be the most prominent and repetitive placement tied in an innovative way as the actor is shown playing the franchisee owner in the movie and has was able to grab eyeballs due to the repetitiveness of the brand shown in a lot of scenes.

Escorts Tractor

The essence of the brand “Escorts Tractor” to provide agricultural solutions has been weaved in the storyline of the film wherein the integration talks about the credibility, strength and mileage of the product thus resonating with that of the wrestler in action “Sultan”.

Conclusion:

It is difficult to predetermine the success of a film compared to the tried and tested gross rating points and traffic indexes , product placement in movies is considered a gamble and to play it well it is very important to be incorporated with proper media planning and precision. Getting a spot in Sultan would be comparatively less risky, for the marketers, provided its star power, production house and the storyline. The

products were placed in the movie with a clear objective of establishing the credibility of the possible emblems of reality and brand conviction. The way in which the placed products contribute to the positive and reminiscent way towards the progression of the plot is commendable. Be it Videocon D2h which is finely incorporated as an innovative placement technique or Relispray, Force Motors, Paras Ghee or Timex which seems perfectly natural to the situation, all the placements are reasonably and rationally integrated for a original communication. The placement strategies of some being implicit (Force, Relispray, Astral pipes) to integrated explicit (Videocon D2h and Timex) or non integrated explicit (Micromax, Varuna Pumps) every strategy is weaved into the plots perfectly. While stealth advertising is still considered unethical and deceiving, product placement in “Sultan” comes out as an innovative communication practice as the integration seems logical to the plot connection and prominent enough to make their presence felt as much clearly and overtly as possible.

Questions:

1) Explain and compare the product placement strategies given in the case.

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