

# Covert Advertising in Bollywood: A Theoretical Review

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## ABSTRACT

*In today's competitive market where variety of brands and product floats and each product tries their level best to prove themselves in the market. Advertisers and marketers are using different methods and techniques to create a mark in the market among which advertising, which is considered to be an important tool for promotion/communication creates effective impact on consumers in terms of awareness. Use of different types of marketing methods become the important need for the companies for their survival in the market. Among this new form of advertising emerges that is covert advertisement which is Branding of varied product by putting them inside films or television programs where the audience might not understand that this can be another variety of advertising. This technique of advertising is totally different from celebrity advertising and in this article we are going to discuss the important covert advertising techniques like product placement, sponsorship, plugging products, viral marketing and guerrilla marketing and also brings out the examples from Indian movies where the products are successfully placed. It emphasizes the benefits of covert advertising which stresses the fact that, "placing a brand name, products or services within a movie or program increase the corporate image, brand awareness and brand image."*

**Keywords:** *Covert Advertising, Product placement, Guerrilla marketing, sponsorship*

## INTRODUCTION

In Today's competitive market which has extensive brand availability and marketers need to adopt a unique method in order to hit their target audience. Thus there is always a search of both the media and marketers for a new and innovative advertising techniques which lead to a covert advertising, which is seen as a improved and new form of advertising. Covert advertising is a product or brand is placed in an entertainment or media. In other words we can say that, "The Branding of different products or services by placing them within a films or television programs where the audience or consumers will not realize that this is another form of advertising which is being used by various companies and organizations to promote their products or services". Covert advertising is totally different from celebrity endorsement which is being done on televisions. The celebrities endorse products, services and brands with commercial purpose, which normally come with the breaks in between the television programs. Product placements will provide an opportunity where the involved audience gets exposure to the brands and products during the normal process of narration of some movie or television programme.

In this type of advertising, companies and organizations are paying amount or providing services to display their products or services used in the motion of various movies or television programmes. Covert advertising generally occurs with the involvement of a brand's logo in a shot of some movie or in some television programme. Some of the firms get this advertisement at a very low cost by supplying their product or services to the movie producers (Adidas does not pay to be the part of the movies but often provides shoes, jackets, bags etc.). Covert Advertising is considered to be one of the major form of brand and product communication which permits the advertiser to communicate a silent message to the audience or viewers. This gives an opportunity to establish an ongoing relationship between a consumer and a particular brand. The concept this advertising aimed to pay audience's attention to the communication which is being silently done by advertisers, and don't make realize that it is an advertiser message that they otherwise might ignore, the advertiser here also tries to make the disguise appearance of material to consumers. (Russel, 1998; Stephen, Pola & Sonja, 2000; Roffed 2000).

The techniques of Covert advertising are opposite then overt advertising methods. In Overt advertising there are advertisements which are found in various medias like in Print media (magazines and newspapers) in Electronic

Media i.e. (television), Outdoor media i.e. (billboards, on leaflets). Covert advertising are easier and is much cheaper than other type of adverting. Businesses houses need covert advertising because it is the best tactic which simply works at its best. It is considered to be the bases of product awareness and the audiences can easily and effectively recall the brand when they think about the movie or any television show. In today's world, covert advertisements are having a crucial place in various medias.

## REVIEW OF LITRATURE

According to **Morton and Friedman** (2002), "Audience usually try to link the connection of movie star with the brand placed in the various movie. This connection of the brand with the actor concern increases the value of expressiveness of the product placement messages. Whenever the consumer sees the movie star using a placed product, they try to associate the credibility of the actor with the product placed in the movie and build a positive attitude towards the particular product or service".

**Yang and Ewolden** (2007) stated that "The storyline of the movie sets the association with the brand plays a vital role in the recognition of the brand with the viewers. Whenever the brand is being associated with the storyline of the movie-like using the product to resolve some difficulty in the movie, the recollection of the brand placed within the movie will be very high. Whereas, whenever the product is not well linked with the storyline of the movie then it is just used in the background of the film, the recognition of the placed product by the viewers will be very low"

According to **Balasubramanian** (1994), "whenever the product is being properly placed within the movie, the product recognition and awareness are high as compared to the normal placement of the product because prominent placements will focuses on longer screen presence and high visibility".

**Choi** (2007) stated that "In the field of advertisement, as the segmentation of the audience and message broadcasting will became less visible in traditional media i.e. on television between the breaks, the marketers began looking for other ways to advertise their products or services. Among the new marketing communication tools, Brand Placement has come up as a most effective and important tool which is being utilize more frequently and deliberately these days"

## TECHNIQUES OF COVERT ADVERTISING

There are various advertising techniques which are being used in Covert Advertising .They are as follows:

- **Product Placement**
- **Sponsorship**
- **Viral Marketing**
- **Guerrilla Marketing**

**PRODUCT PLACEMENT:** This is the marketing practice which is mainly used by the advertisers and sponsors to promote the product by placing its logo ,trademark ,package,signage and brand name by inserting it into motion picture or in a some television programme.

**Sponsorship:** Sponsorship is an another covert advertising technique which is being used by the advertisers. This type of sponsorship advertisements are usually entertaining and it is never into hard selling of the product or services also it is neither very informative. Sponsorship will going to link the product or services more directly to the movie or television programme and it is more expensive than product placement but also more effective. For example movie "Mere Dad ki Maruti" sponsored by Maruti Suzuki.

**VIRAL MARKETING:** Viral marketing on internet is any kind of marketing technique that includes web sites or users to pass on a marketing message to other sites or users in different manner, creating a potential growth in the message's visibility and effect in the mind set of the consumers. In other words we can say in viral marketing- once the communication process is started, it spreads like a virus among the consumers. We can take the example as

Video clips with embedded messages can be easily sent through the World Wide Web. In addition, viral marketing will create a platform for others to communicate the marketing message through the Internet or E-mail.

**GUERRILLA MARKETING:** This type of technique of covert advertising will go to target audiences or consumers by using specialized media. In this type of marketing the investment is more in terms of time, energy and creativity. This will go to target the individual, and not on groups. Guerrilla marketing is required because it provides small business houses an unfair advantage, certainty in an uncertain world, economical aspects in a high-priced world. It shows simplicity in this complicated world of competition.

#### **COVERT ADVERTISEMENT IN INDIAN MOVIES:**

Covert advertising is a technique which plays a more important role in building product or brand recall and recognition by the consumers in a more effective way than the different types of advertisement. In today's competitive market where the competition is cut-throat and each company tries their level best to prove themselves in the market, requires the use of covert advertisements in movies and television programs. Pepsi in India, for instance, has benefited from placement in movies along with a celebrity endorsement with Bollywood movie star Shahrukh Khan. The most successful product placement for Pepsi in India was in Kuch Kuch Hota Hai. The movie Dhoom and Dhoom II has created such an important impact in the mind set of Indian youth which has increased the sale of motorbikes up to 40 percent. Similarly, Rakesh Roshan's Krrish, on the other hand, prominently featured Singapore Tourism Board, Sony, John Players, Bournvita, Tide, Hero Honda, Boro plus, Lifebuoy, HP power and Lays chips etc. Krrish, had highlighted the brand in every nine minutes and showcased 38 brands in the whole movie. In movie "Bam Bam Bole" which moves around a small town boy whose character bends the rules and achieve his success against all odds a theme that goes with Adidas' slogan- "Impossible is nothing". Similarly movie Kick, which revolves around a various products, there are number of brands which are being prominently placed in most of the shots. The manufactures of Zandu Balm which is a famous pain reliever rub and another anti-septic brand Boro-plus cream had been placed in the most successful movie "Dabang". In most of the Bollywood movies most of the producers have established a specialized department to handle brand placements in their movies. Nowadays we can see that most of the south Indian movies had also start using covert advertisements there are many such examples like brand "3" had tied up with the super hit song "Kola Vere Di"

#### **POSITIVES OR BENEFITS OF COVERT ADVERTISING**

Covert advertising in movies and television shows has various benefits that they will offer to all the companies which are associated with the process. This new technique of advertising will ensure that the viewers will have to notice the brand because the audiences have no other choice but to notice brand when they are placed in a movie. The brand will gain greater credibility and reorganization when some popular film and television stars use them. The image of any company's credibility is known internationally due to their brand awareness and its presence among the mass market. Whenever any company or organization used to place any brand name, products or services within a television program or a movie gives them an intensified size of reorganization. There are some companies and organizations which only use this technique to make realize their products or services in the market by giving them in the hands of actor and actresses. There are technological developments in terms of PVR (Personal Video Recorder), VOD (Video-on-Demand) which will go to influence covert advertising. Another important benefit of covert advertising is in remote areas where televisions is not much common and there are movie theaters which are jam packed there when product is being placed must be advertised very well. These are some of the benefits of this type of advertising.

#### **NEGATIVES OF COVERT ADVERTISING**

When some concept has positive aspects then there are several negative aspects also of placing a brand in the media: 1) Lack of control over product placement, 2) Broadcast programme may not be successful, 3) Association of negative character may be possible. The first drawback of using this technique of advertising is that the marketers will always have lack of control over how the brands are portrayed or placed into a scene of a movie or some television programme. Brands may end up being misused, ignored, criticized, associated with questionable values or used unethically. The second drawback of using this technique of advertising is that the market researchers have a very little influence over the brand placement in various media. It will be difficult to recognize where to place products or services for maximum positive exposure by the consumers or audience. Also, if there are too many

product placements, consumers may feel that they have had enough and the saturation may have a negative effect. The third drawback of using this technique of advertising is the possibility of association of negative character. It will also go to shift the attitude of target audience about the character in which product is associated.

## CONCLUSION

Covert Advertising is considered to be the most appreciated tool of marketing and advertising now a days .As this type of advertising has an psychological impact in the mind set of the consumers or the audiences because when the product or service is being placed in the movie or in some television show the consumers establish their relation with the character and the product they are using in the shot. The use of traditional advertisement with actors and actresses have more positives impact on the mindset of the consumers. But traditional type of advertisement are not applicable for all situations because the celebrities are endorsing the product or service for commercial purposes and the audiences may skip the advertisements while they are watching television programs or any other show. Introduction of new technologies like Personal Video Recorders (PVR), Video-on- Demand (VOD) allow the viewers to record the programs and they may avoid undesirable elements such as advertisement or other promotional activity. So we can say greater attention can be taken to change the negative opinion about covert advertising with the involvement of innovative techniques in a positive way by not affecting the ethical values of the society.

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