Effect of Product Placement Belief on Brand Awareness

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Abstract

Previous research papers have established product placement as a practical marketing tool to raise awareness and shift attitudes. However, limited research has contributed to acceptance, perception, and belief of product placement and its effect on brand awareness. Even though the variables of this research have been employed before, product placement was only measured in real-time under the experimental research design, and brand awareness was neglected while measuring user behavior. This research paper has attempted to measure the belief of product placement and brand awareness amongst moviegoers. Due to the restrictions of COVID this research has selected a sample population of Instagram followers of FCube cinema situated in the Chabahil area. Here, product placement belief is an independent variable, and brand awareness is a dependent variable. Data collection was collected from 94 respondents representing the sample size. The research design embraced in the study consists of relational, and causal research designs. The results suggest that various belief segments affects the degree of brand awareness. The discussion concludes with managerial implications providing insights about the interface between the targeted audience's beliefs regarding the commercialization of the movies and its effect on brand awareness helping brand managers and marketers to understand reliability of product marketing.

Keywords: product placement, product placement belief, brand awareness, brand recall

1. Background of the problem

The traditional means of advertisement that follows the standard format of commercials broadcasted on network television has lost its ability to communicate efficiently with the target audience (Bogart & Lehman, 1983). Product placement has been used as an alternative way of advertising the products with inducements that are subliminal and

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integrated within the plots of the featured movie (Nebenzahl & Secunda, 1993). Product placement is a deliberate process of inserting the product into various media platforms where audiences are found consuming advertisements consciously or unconsciously. The goal of the process is to gain some behavioral reaction from the audience (Keller, 2003). Since traditional advertising has been losing its efficiency, product placement has emerged as an alternative to sending messages to the audience authentically in a comparatively inexpensive setting (Yao & Huang, 2017).

In 2010, Zandu balm was featured in an item number accompanied by a celebrity's striking dance step, incorporating the brand's name Zandu balm in the lyrics. Despite having a dispute with the movie producers over the permit of using the brand's name, the brand enjoyed a 43 percent share of the Indian balm market as the song influenced doubling the sales of Zandu Balm (Mukherjee, 2010). Similarly, Reese's candy increased its sales by 60 percent from its appearance in a scene from the movie E.T. gaining more popularity than its rival candy M&Ms (Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). The science-fiction movie Minority report contained fifteen prominent brand names: Nokia, Lexus, Pepsi, American Express, Reebok, Burger King, etc. The movie's sole advertising revenue from the brand placement was twenty-five million dollars (Dong-Hyun, 2004).

There are countless examples of product placement of movies leading to the increment of product sales revenue. It can be seen that product placement has been an emerging alternative tool to provide brand recognition (Srivastava, 2020). Despite product placement being a lucrative revenue stream that profits both parties, movie producers and brand managers, the critics of product placement have pointed out ethical flaws in product placement and its nature of taking advantage of unsuspecting viewers without their full consent (Berkowitz, 1994). Such ethical debates have caused ambiguity amongst the audience regarding product placement beliefs. Despite the ambiguity of opinions, product placement still stands out as a practical marketing tool to raise awareness and shift attitudes amongst viewers.

Usually, the research on product placement and brand awareness is done under an experimental research design, using stimuli in real-time, recording the response with follow-up questionnaires (Babin & Carder, 1996). The measurement of product placement solely based on memory recall abilities can conflict with these experimental designs (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Furthermore, the real-time measurement of product placement on research papers has neglected to measure the audience's belief in product awareness. The audience's perception, acceptance, or beliefs hold the possibility to change the course of the reaction. If an individual viewer doesn't have the belief in product placement and hence ignores it deliberately, the viewer might not participate in the reaction. As (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956) stated, an audience's acceptance plays a vital role in the viewer's choice of reaction in a para-social setting. Hence, the research paper attempts to measure product placement acceptance, perception, and belief.

Several research studies have explored the relationship between product placement and brand attitude (Rossiter & Percy , 1987). But very few research papers have measured brand awareness amongst consumers. A buyer's ability to identify the brand in sufficient detail to purchase is called brand awareness (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). It is a necessary precursor

to brand attitude; once the brand awareness is achieved, then the consumer proceeds on forming a brand attitude based on brands they are aware of. To form a perception of brands, they must be able to recognize the brands in the first place. Brand awareness is an initial step towards brand equity (Rossiter, 2014). The few close-ended questionnaire research conducted on the product placement often compile brand awareness under the umbrella term of the product placement belief (Morton & Friedman, 2002). The relationship between performer and audiences is both imaginative and real, but the product placement on the screen translating to brand awareness is a presumption (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). Hence, a common theme trails along with the previous research which can be presented as the reason for the lack of study of a variable like brand awareness.

The current study seeks on the present body of knowledge by exploring the variables that contribute to product placement as the belief of consumers and brand awareness as consumer behavior in response to the placement. The paper measures brand awareness as a behavioral construct and measures product placement as a belief construct. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the impact relationship product placement belief has on brand awareness attempting to address the question:

- Is an individual's belief about product placement in movies related to brand awareness?

2. Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study is to determine the effect of brand placement beliefs on brand awareness. Product placement is widely measured through an experimental design, but the audience's belief, acceptance, and perception of product placement haven't been measured as a key factor that affects the behavior of consumers. This paper tends to study viewers' belief and acceptance of product placement and the choice of reaction it causes through consumers in a para-social setting. Similarly, brand awareness has been neglected as a presumed variable only; the viewer's awareness of the brand is necessary to form a brand's perception. This research paper attempts to present brand awareness as consumer behavior and explore the beliefs of consumers regarding product placement. It has tried to evaluate the relationship between these two variables: product placement belief and brand awareness.

- To examine the connection between product placement beliefs and brand awareness amongst moviegoers; and

- To analyze the role of product placement beliefs on brand awareness amongst moviegoers.

3. Literature survey

Chin and Wilson (2012) has presented a preliminary operational framework of product placement that incorporates both old and new style media formats. The paper has divided the platforms into namely four classes: traditional, video games, virtual worlds, and social media. The research paper has suggested key constructs of dependent and independent variables concerning all of these platforms. The independent variables include product

placement and dependent variables include brand awareness, brand association, brand attitude, and consumer interaction. The reviewed paper mostly has attempted to explore the effectiveness of product placement on consumer behavior. Kumar (2017) employed random forest analysis and association analysis to study the effect of product placement in films and television on brand awareness. Balakrishnan, Md. Shuaib, Dousin, and Permarupan (2012) conducted a survey through a random questionnaire distributed among five hundred university students to study the impact of brand placement and brand recall on the behavior of Malaysian consumers. Yao and Huang (2017) investigated the effects of placement marketing on product attitude and purchase intention in a traditional industry. Srivastava (2020) researched the impact of movie song lyrics incorporating brand names on brand equity.

In the previous research papers, product placement has been measured through real-time stimulus through experimental research design. Srivastava (2020) conducted the research in an MBA class by playing audio music of a movie song with brand placement, The final questionnaire of the study was distributed between one hundred and sixty MBA students as respondents to examine attitude, brand personality, and brand equity. Durmound (2017) examined brand recognition by asking the sample size precise questions regarding the movies and television services viewing. The images were taken from movies and television series for the respondent to answer the brand's name or whether they recognized the brand or not. The measurement of such real-time research design mostly depends upon the memory recall abilities of an individual, familiarity, and visible prominence of the product placement (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Most of these research activities are done to understand the impact of product placement on the viewing experience and consumer behavior. Shahid, Hussain, and Zafar (2017) reviewed the effect of brand equity on purchasing intentions. The paper clarified the connection between the consciousness of the brand and the expectation of the purchaser purchasing the brand. Brand mindfulness is the aim of product placement which further leads to the bigger picture i.e. consumption habits of the consumer.

While forecasting the consumption behavior of the viewers it is also necessary to understand that perception, acceptance, and belief in a product placement plays a crucial role in consumer behavior outcomes (Morton & Friedman, 2002). Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) has explained the relationship between para-social communication and interaction through mass communication. The research paper has explored the conditions of acceptance of the para-social role by the audience. It explained that merely witnessing a specific program provides no evidence that the audience has made an initial commitment to the subject matter offered by the ara-social role. It is very easy for an audience to detach themselves from the content since para-social relationships are unilateral and one-sided with no repercussions of cutting off from the engagement like in real life. The research paper presents an example of a spectator and his expectations from the para-social persona to bring out anticipated responses of the individual. However, if the persona fails, the spectator has been detached and off-put from the subject matter altogether. Hence, it proved that the concept of parasocial interaction doesn't work if the audience rejects it.

The very same para-social theory could be applied to understand the belief of product placement. Since product placement is also executed in a para-social setting, there are several individual spectators who vary in opinions. As Berkowitz (1994) has presented a critic of product placement pointed out ethical flaws in product placement and its nature of taking advantage of unsuspecting viewers without their full consent. Such ethical debates have caused ambiguity amongst the audience regarding product placement beliefs. So product placement is a subject matter of rejection and acceptance. This research paper has tried to shed light on the acceptance and belief of the audience towards product placement. As it deems important that the acceptance of product placement is required for the consumers to be fully committed to transferring the brand image into consumer behavior. Speaking of consumer behavior, there can be seen a paucity in the measurement of consumer behavior since it is limited to brand mindfulness, brand attitude, and purchasing intention in a traditional industry. Morton and Friedman (2002) measured brand awareness under belief construct with an item statement: When a character that I like uses the product in the movie, I am more likely to remember the product.

Brand awareness has been used as a presumed independent variable linked with product placement beliefs. Balakrishnan, Md. Shuaib, Dousin, and Permarupan (2012) has also measured brand awareness/brand placement recall as the independent variable. Other studies such as Srivastava (2020) have researched to explore the relationship between product placement and its impact on brand attitude. Brand awareness has been neglected as a presumed variable in most research papers reviewed. To form a perception of a brand the viewer's awareness is necessary. Rossiter and Percy (1987) stated that a buyer's ability to identify the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase is called brand awareness Several research studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between product placement and brand attitude. But very few research papers have measured brand awareness amongst consumers. It is a necessary precursor to brand attitude, once the brand awareness is achieved then the consumer proceeds on forming a brand attitude based on brands they are aware of. To form a perception of brands they must be able to recognize the brands in the first place. Therefore, awareness is an initial step toward brand equity (Rossiter, 2014).

Brand awareness is merely the ability to identify, and identification of the brand is goodwill, an intangible asset in itself, the main point of an advertisement is outreach to consumers despite the behavioral consumption even though that's the ultimate goal. This research paper has attempted to measure brand awareness as a behavioral construct irrespective of brand awareness partaking as a key role in purchase intention. The relationship between performer and audiences is both imaginative and real, but the product placement on the screen translating to brand awareness is a presumption (Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). Hence, a common theme trails along with the previous research which can be presented as the lack of study of a variable like brand awareness and belief in product placement. Thus, the study hypothesizes:

H_{01}: *There is no significant connection between product placement belief and brand awareness.*

H_{02}: *There is no significant role of product placement belief on brand awareness.*

The research framework of the study is presented in *Figure 1*.

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│  Product placement belief   │ ───────▶ │      Brand awareness        │
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Figure 1. Research framework of the study

Brand awareness is the ability of the consumer to identify the brand in sufficient detail to make a purchase (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). Brand awareness can be achieved in two ways: Brand recall and Brand recognition. Brand recall is mostly related to identifying brands done by consumers through either logo, name, sign, audio, or visual snippets. Brand recognition is the type of brand awareness that the manager of any product aims for, the consumer is not only able to recall the name of the brand but has sufficient detail to make a purchase (Rossiter, 2014). Brand awareness is a precursor for brand attitude, consumers tend to make a conscious brand choice only after the awareness of it. Therefore, Brand awareness is the degree of a brand's presence in consumers' minds through influential product placement in commercial movies.

The product placement usually aims to evoke behavioral reactions from the audience or consumers. In this research paper, from the consumer's point of view, the variable product placement belief has been measured considering it as the consumer's perception, and belief towards product placement. Product placements usually carry one-sided, unilateral relationships. The conceptual framework was developed based on para-social theory in which The para-social relationship exists between the consumer and the persona executing product placement. The consumers are in an open-ended relationship, free of obligation and provided with the free will of choice.

Similarly, brand awareness is defined as the ability of the consumers to recall and recognize the brand through name, logo, and symbol. Brand awareness falls under the behavioral reaction of the consumer. This paper aims to look at the effect of belief construct on behavior construct. Hence, product placement belief is belief construct and brand awareness is behavior construct in this research paper.

4. Research methodology

The study was undertaken to analyze the effect of product placement on brand awareness. Quantitative research design was applied in the study. Descriptive, relational, and causal research design were used according to the study's objectives. Descriptive research design was used to develop statistical information regarding the audience's demographic profiles. The aim of getting this information was to validate respondents' behavioral intentions and belief patterns.

Similarly, the relational design was applied to figure out the relationship between independent and dependent variables. All these variables were separately measured and further assessment was done to see the relationship without manipulating the independent variable. A causal research design was implemented to further analyze the extent and nature of cause and effect relationships of the variables.

The target population of this study was movie enthusiasts who visit the FCube cinema hall located at KL tower Chabahil, Kathmandu. In Kathmandu FCube cinema hall has only single outlet situated in Chabahil FCube cinema hall was selected out of the cinema halls in Kathmandu due to convenience. However, due to Covid-19, all the cinema halls were shut down and the data couldn't be collected through the physical distribution of the questionnaire. Therefore, the target population of this study was further changed to followers of the FCube cinema hall Instagram page. The total population of the followers was 1566. To determine the required sample size of 92 respondents from the population of 1566 Instagram followers, the study has followed the rule that requires sampling at a 95 percent level of confidence with a 10 percent margin error (Yamane, 1967).

However, 94 valid samples were collected out of 140 questionnaires. To collect the data, this study has used applications as such Bulk DM Instagram for sending a link to a questionnaire created in google forms to the followers of FCube's Instagram page. Due to Instagram guidelines, multiple Instagram accounts were used to send the questionnaire to avoid spam and accounts getting blocked. Therefore, the data was collected through an online-based survey from September 23 to September 26, 2021.

The study has employed primary methods of data collection. Primary data has been collected through questionnaires to inquire and find out the detailed characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire has been divided into general background and variables related questions. The general background questions contain basic information about the respondent. In contrast, variables-related questions contain multiple-choice questions, yes-no questions, and 5-point Likert scale questions that range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scales used to measure the construct has been extracted from the previous literature. In addition, t study has extracted items on product placement beliefs developed by Morton and Friedman (2002). This research paper has adapted product placement belief items that comprise ethics, belief, and compatibility between the behavioral and belief construct. However, brand awareness is a precursor to brand recall. Therefore, recall items weren't used in the belief construct since this research paper explores the relationship between product placement belief and brand awareness. Likewise, this study has extracted items on brand awareness developed by Balakrishnan, Md. Shuaib, Dousin, and Permarupan (2012).

5. Presentation and analysis of the data

The investigation has utilized different measurable statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, cumulative percentage, correlation, and regression analysis. In this study, correlation is calculated for all sample responses on a Likert scale to determine the degree of the link between a dependent variable and the independent variable. Regression is calculated for the responses provided in the Likert scale to find out the relationships between a dependent variable and an independent variable for all samples. The research model for the relationship is formulated as the equation below:

$$Y = \alpha + bX + e$$

Where, Y = product placement belief, α = intercept, b= coefficient of brand awarness and X = brand awareness and e = error term

The responses received from these respondents have been arranged, tabulated, and analyzed to facilitate the study's descriptive analysis. The data were analyzed using various descriptive statistical tools with correlation and regression analysis. The calculations of the data were made by using Microsoft Excel 2016.
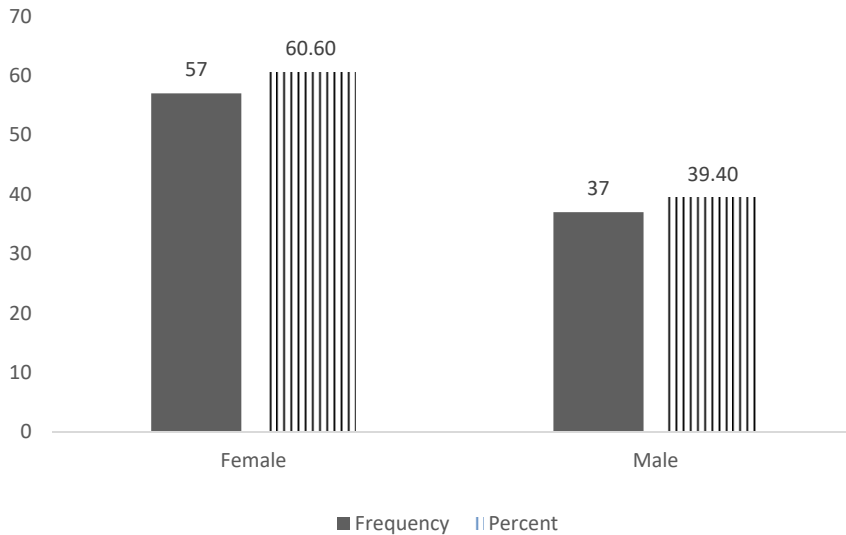

Figure 2. Gender of respondents

Figure 2 shows that out of 94 respondents, 57 are female and 37 are male. According to the table, the participation of male respondents is found less than female respondents. Resulting in the majority of 60.60 percent of respondents being female and 39.40 percent of respondents being male.
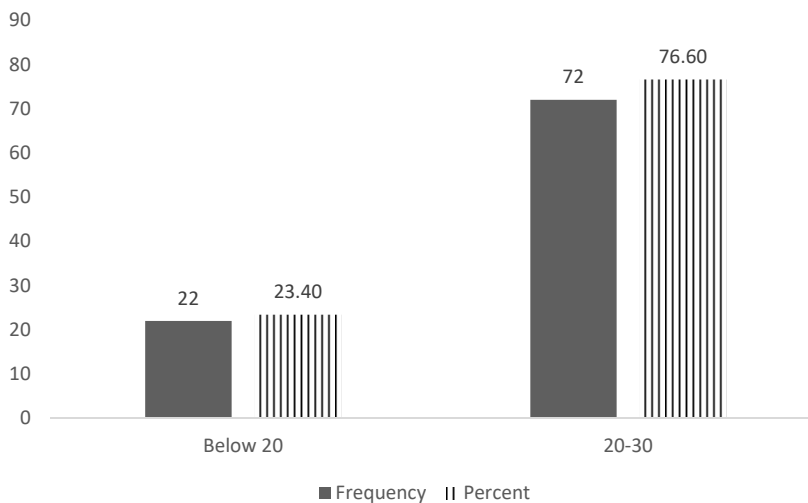

Figure 3. Age group of the respondents

Out of total respondents, 22 of the respondents are from the age group below 20 whereas 72 of the respondents are between 20-30 years. *Figure 3* shows 23.40 percent of respondents belong to the age group Below 20 and 76.60 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 20-30.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for all samples

Variables/Statistics	N	Mean	Median	Mode	STD	Variance
Product placement belief	94	3.39	3.29	3.43	0.59	0.35
Brand awareness	94	3.35	3.33	3.00	0.83	0.70

Table 1 summarized the result of descriptive statistics of the variables under study. The table depicts descriptive statistics mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and variance of the variables under the study of all sample respondents. It reveals descriptive statistics for the whole sample. It is found that the mean value for the independent variable product placement is highest among other variables with the mean of 3.39 followed by brand awareness with a mean value of 3.35. Mode is also highest in product placement with a mode value of 3.43. However, standard deviation and variance are highest for brand awareness with the value of 0.83 in standard deviation and 0.70 invariances.

Table 2

Relationship between variables for all sample

Variables		Product placement	Brand awareness
Product placement belief	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Brand awareness	Pearson Correlation	.457**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.001)	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 depicts the correlation analysis of the variable under study. The correlation analysis is conducted for the whole sample. It helps to find out the relationship between the variables under study. As shown in the table, the correlation for all samples between Product placement belief and Brand awareness is positive and significant at a 99 percent confidence level with the correlation of 0.457. Therefore, the correlational analysis shows that the independent variable product placement has a positive and significant relationship with brand awareness.

Regression analysis helps determine the impact of independent variables on dependent variables. Therefore, the regression analysis is conducted for the whole sample. For example, in the study, regression analysis is done to determine the effect of product placement on brand awareness. *Table 3* represents regression analysis.

Table 3
Impact of variable for all samples

Coefficients[a]	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	F	Sig.	Adjusted R^2
	B	Std. Error	Beta					
(Constant)	1.167**	0.45		2.595	0.011			
Product placement belief	0.644**	0.131	0.457	4.927	0.001	24.273	0.001	0.200

[a] Dependent Variable: Brand awareness

As depicted in *Table 3*, Brand awareness is used as the dependent variable and product placement belief as independent variable. The table reveals the positive impact of product placement with a coefficient of 0.644. The impact is observed to be significant at a 99% confidence level. Therefore, if there is a higher belief in product placement there will likely be higher brand awareness amongst consumers by 0.644.

Brand awareness = 1.167 + 0.644 product placement

Since the p-value 0.001 < p-value 0.01, the regression model is accepted and fit. Similarly, the adjusted R square value for regression analysis is 0.200 indicating that the explanatory power of product placement has a 20 percent variance on brand awareness. The summary of hypothesis test is presented in *Table 4*.

Table 4
Hypothesis test

Hypothesis	Results	Tools	Confidence level
There is no significant connection between product placement beliefs and brand awareness.	Rejected	Correlational analysis	99%
There is no significant role of product placement beliefs on brand awareness.	Rejected	Regression analysis	99%

6. Findings and discussion

The study aims to examine the relationship between the independent variable product placement belief and the dependent variable brand awareness. It employs various statistical tools and techniques to determine the effect of product placement on brand awareness such as descriptive, correlational, and causal research designs. In the study, the data was collected online and analyzed using mean, median, mode, standard deviation, variance, correlation, and regression. The major findings are as follows:

- The relationship between Product placement belief with brand awareness is observed to be positive and significant 99 percent confidence level with a correlation coefficient of 0.457.

- Despite the belief of the audience in product placement 1.167 brand awareness was found amongst the audience.

■ The impact of product placement belief is found to be positive and significant at a 99 percent confidence level. The coefficient of product placement shows that an increase in product placement belief causes an increase in brand awareness. Thus, if the acceptance of product placement belief is high in the audience there will be higher brand awareness.

In media platforms such as cinemas and movies, product placements are employed for a positive shift of brand attitudes (Chin & Wilson, 2012). Product placement belief was chosen in order to correlate the attitude of the audience towards product placement. Brand awareness was chosen as it is an integral indicator and precursor of brand attitude, which determines consumer behavior (Rossiter, 2014). The research paper aimed to establish a foundation for examining the relationship between product placement beliefs and brand awareness of Instagram followers of FCube cinemas situated in Chabahil. The total population of the followers was 1566. The study employed the convenience sampling method to determine the required sample size of 92 respondents from the population of 1566 Instagram followers. According to the purpose of the study, the research paper aims to provide insight and exploration of product placement belief and its effect on brand awareness which allows informing brand attitude of the audience.

Results obtained from the data analysis show product placement belief has a significant relationship and positive impact on brand awareness of Instagram followers of FCube cinema, Chabahil. The findings suggest that the audience's belief in product placement and its presentation in the movie is associated with brand awareness. The result is consistent with Morton and Friedman (2002) who observed a positive relationship between product placement beliefs and product usage behaviors. The results of the study of Balakrishnan, Md. Shuaib, Dousin, and Permarupan (2012) also confirm the positive relationship between brand placement acceptance and brand placement recall, brand preference, brand loyalty, and intentions to purchase Srivastava (2020), and Yao and Huang (2017) both reveal that there is a positive relationship between placement marketing and purchase intentions.

7. Conclusion

The research paper aims to establish a foundation for examining the relationship between product placement beliefs and brand awareness of Instagram followers of FCube cinemas situated in Chabahil. The data analysis shows the relationship between product placement belief and brand awareness. The concluded result is there is a positive as well as significant relationship between product placement belief and brand awareness.

The paper contributes to reconciling and classifying the relationship between product placement beliefs and brand awareness. The study measured the general belief of the audience towards product placement and the outcome was related to their brand awareness. The study has correlated the general belief, and acceptance of product placement with brand awareness of the audience, which is a precursor of brand attitude shift and consumer behavior. The relationship beween product placement belief and brand awareness was found. However, it was seen that some degree of brand awareness was found ingrained in the audience despite their belief in the product placement. The brand awareness was mostly measured through a close-ended questionnaire, so the influential extent of product placement belief over brand awareness is inconclusive.Hence, the study

shows there is relationship between the subset of beliefs carried by an individual towards product placement and their awareness of the brand. The findings solidify the foundation for understanding the linkage between beliefs and behavior of the sample population.

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