

## PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND BRAND VISIBILITY ACROSS FILM GENRES: EVIDENCE FROM SRI LANKAN CINEMA

D. M. S. M. Dissanayake<sup>1</sup>, B.S.S.U. Bandara<sup>2</sup>, Y. Kuhanya Sivasangari<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Product placement is defined as the purposeful inclusion of branded products in film and television, making it a major tool in increasing brand visibility, brand recall, and recognition. This research aims to examine the influence of product placements on brand visibility in the Sri Lankan context and to explore the role of film genre as a moderator. The study used a quantitative research method, and a structured questionnaire with a large sample of respondents collected data. Findings reveal that product placement positively correlates with brand visibility. Among the three factors, the frequency of exposure shows the strongest positive effect on brand visibility. Additionally, types of placements and contextual fit also have a positive but less pronounced effect on brand visibility. The moderation analysis suggests that film genre has a significant direct effect on brand visibility, but not on the relationship between product placement and brand visibility. These findings imply that the Product Placement successfully increased the brand recall and recognition among Sri Lankan viewers within the film genre. Given the evolving nature of the Film Industry, these findings will offer valuable theoretical and practical insight to marketers, brands, and film directors to improve product placement strategy in terms of frequency, type of placement, and fit with the context.

**Keywords:** Brand visibility, contextual fit, film genre, frequency of exposure, product placement

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Drama, Cinema and Television, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
Email: senalidissanayake00@gmail.com\*

<sup>2</sup>Department of Marketing Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
Email: saumya.uditha@kln.ac.lk

<sup>3</sup>Department of Marketing Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
Email: skuha241@kln.ac.lk



Proceedings of the 16th International Conference on Business and Information - ICBI 2025 © 2025 by The Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

DOI:

## **Introduction**

Product placement is a marketing method that aims to offer a more organic advertising format and emphasises its potential to shape the digital marketing landscape (Gündüzyeli & İpek, 2025). It has become a billion-dollar business around the world because it is proven to get attention, and it can help build brand recall and recognition (Kohut, 2024). Recent meta-analytic studies have found that product placements tend to generate higher recall and brand recognition compared to traditional advertising, with a significant positive impact on consumer attitudes and purchasing intention. However, the effects of product placement could be moderated by frequency, placement type, and contextual differences, such as the category of the film or program the product is placed. For example, comedies or action movies' effect on viewers' processing and recall of embedded brands is likely to be different from dramas or documentaries. (Cokki et al., 2025) Therefore, this study demonstrates how these variables work in the Product Placement concept and how they influence the effectiveness of Brand Visibility. The study mainly examines how film genres are associated with product placement and brand visibility and what specific factors contribute most to product placement success in a developing market context.

Despite the extensive research on product placement around the world, research evidence is rather limited in South Asia, and Sri Lanka lacks any considerable evidence on the moderation of brand visibility outcomes by film genre. Overall, while a limited number of studies have examined product placement in films in Sri Lanka, the researchers do not find any relationship between film genre and product placement. Prior studies (e.g., Srivastava, 2016; Mukherjee et al., 2021) mention the cultural effects but ignore differences that might stem from genre. Accordingly, this study adds to the research stream as it addresses the gaps in its effects on brand visibility outcomes, where product frequency, type of placement, and contextual fit can all be moderated by genre in the film.

## **Literature Review**

According to Sunita Kumar's study "Influence of Product Placements in Films and Television on Consumers' Brand Awareness," Product placement is an advertising method and tool that includes products in entertainment programs such as movies, TV programs, and video games, with a specific objective (Kumar, 2017) The effectiveness of product placement is mainly based on the dynamic interaction between the frequency of exposure, types of placements, and the contextual fit. and it influences brand visibility outcomes. Recent meta-analytical evidence shows that the frequency of exposure works as the foundational variable when finding the effectiveness of product placement (López-Rodríguez et al., 2024). In types of placements, Hamdan's research on "The Effectiveness of Samsung Product Placement in Korean Drama" states that the type of placement could be viewed as the process of product placement. (Hamdan et al., 2025). Further to them, contextual fit plays the role of the decisive moderating variable in assessing how frequency and placement type interact.

Brand visibility represents how efficiently audience segments both have seen and remember a brand they have seen (Blankenship, 2024). Also, brand recall represents the remembrance of a brand in the presence of cues other than the brand name. It is a key indicator of advertising and marketing effectiveness as it is a part of brand equity. (Jin et al., 2019). The term brand recognition is used to determine whether consumers can recognise a product by its attributes, even if the consumer does not remember the product's name when other products are displayed (Kenton, 2024). The film genre is a specific form of classification within the motion picture industry. As it is a historical form of classification, it is a historical feature of the audience's experience with motion pictures (Pathak, 2024). This is where such labels serve to categorise narratives according to well-treaded norms and discern themes that inform about the emotional mood and the discourse styles (Lannom, 2025)

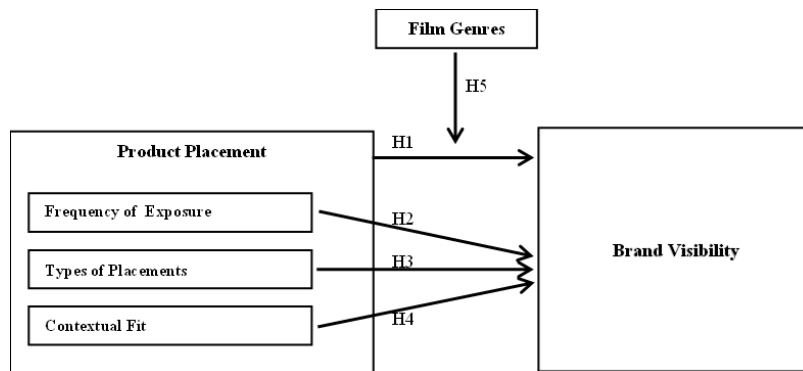
Previous studies show that product placement helps in increasing brand visibility due to various factors that include the placement salience, plot ties-in, and audience tie-in. Although Western literature implies genre-specific effects, with affective ones making brand recognition difficult and cognitive ones making it easy, there are no studies on this track in South Asia because there is a narrative of culture, and a hybrid genre, such as the case of so-called masala movies, generates a unique response from audiences (Mukherjee et al., 2021). The current literature of South Asian states focuses on such cultural elements as star power and the appeal of emotion but almost ignores genre as a mediating variable (Srivastava, 2016). In Sri Lanka, due to the lack of formal regulation of product placement in the country and the lack of any empirical research about the effects of genres, the current state of practice remains speculative, warranting context-specific, evidence-based approaches (Asia Video Industry Association, 2024).

The independent variable was established from a thorough examination of recent literature and conceptual frameworks, which was further refined during the operationalisation step. The constructions are primarily informed by Russell's Tripartite Model (2002), which is the central organising framework for understanding the influence of four dimensions of product placement on audience responses. (Russell C. A, 2002)

Frequency of Exposure, Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan (2006) developed an all-encompassing model demonstrating that stimulus factors, such as frequency of placements, greatly influence placement effectiveness and brand recall. (Balasubramanian et al., 2006). Types of Placements, Russell's (2002) study found that audio-visual product placements prompted the highest recall, then visual-only placements, followed by audio-only placements. Contextual Fit, Gillespie et al. (2018) offered the Product Placement Fit Model, which argues that affective congruence and cognitive congruence for the brand and scene minimise negative viewer reactions and increase brand processing. (Gillespie et al., 2018)

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual framework*



*(Source: Authors' Compilation)*

## Methodology

The research adopted a quantitative method. The variables in the study were operationalised and examined with a group of items and indicators measured using a Likert scale. For the questionnaire, twelve films were selected that included product placements. These movies represented six categories, with two films selected from each category. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select movies for the questionnaire. This purposive, non-probability sampling technique permitted the authors to purposely select films that were in line with the aims of the study. The primary data for this study were gathered through the distribution of a structured questionnaire. The population of this research consisted of Sri Lankan film viewers aged 18 and above who possess the cognitive ability to understand product placement as a marketing strategy. Individuals under the age of 18 were excluded to ensure the participants had the necessary media literacy and purchasing awareness to meaningfully contribute to the study. In the interest of procuring unbiased answers and increasing representativeness, a random sampling technique was used to collect data from individuals aged 18 and older.

According to the Sri Lanka Film Corporation Report (2025), the theatrical audience is approximately 1.5–2 million individuals, and digital consumers are approximately 3–5 million individuals. This provides an estimated total population of ~4.5 to 7 million adult film viewers in Sri Lanka (Somaratne, 2021). Therefore, the Morgan Table recommends a minimum sample size of 384 respondents for statistically valid findings at a 95% confidence level and at a margin of error of 5 %.

The responses were then evaluated using SPSS, and the data were determined to be normally distributed based on the skewness and kurtosis values falling between accepted values of ( $\pm 1.96$ ). An adequate sample size added to the validity of these tests. Hayes' PROCESS Macro was employed to study moderation effects due to its ability to provide bootstrapped confidence intervals and ease of use regarding the analysis of interaction. This made it a more robust and efficient approach than utilising traditional regression approaches.

All ethical standards were closely adhered to during the study. Participants had a full understanding of the purpose of the study, and consent was obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of their data were maintained, and all these measures were consistent with ethical standards for human subject research.

## Findings

Data was collected through a questionnaire survey employing two quantitative methods. The researcher circulated 250 questionnaires through Google Forms and 150 through hard copy, and 392 questionnaires were returned. After the data screening process, a total of 346 valid and complete datasets were included in the final dataset.

As demographic information of the study, the gender distribution of the sample demonstrates a fair presence of both male and female subjects. Out of 346 participants, 177 were females (44.5%), and 169 were males (42.5%). Most of the participants were aged between 18 and 25 years ( $n = 141, 35.4\%$ ) and 26 to 33 years old ( $n = 138, 34.7\%$ ), representing over 70% of the overall sample. There were smaller proportions of respondents from the older age categories: 34–41 years ( $n = 48, 12.1\%$ ), 42–49 years ( $n = 10, 2.5\%$ ), and 50–57 years ( $n = 9, 2.3\%$ ). Most participants came from the Northwestern Province ( $n = 113, 28.4\%$ ). The rest of the provinces that contributed relatively high numbers were the Southern Province ( $n = 67, 16.8\%$ ), the Central Province ( $n = 41, 10.3\%$ ), and the Western Province ( $n = 33, 8.3\%$ ). In contrast, the numbers represented were very low in the Eastern Province ( $n = 3, 0.8\%$ ), Uva Province ( $n = 20, 5.0\%$ ), Sabaragamuwa Province ( $n = 29, 7.3\%$ ), and the North Central Province ( $n = 39, 9.8\%$ ), with just 1 participant (0.3%) coming from the Northern Province.

According to reliability analysis, most scales in parts of the survey will have acceptable to good internal consistency for this data. For instance, “Contextual Fit” ( $\alpha = 0.765$ ) and “Film Genre” ( $\alpha = 0.761$ ) show good reliability, whilst “Brand Recall” ( $\alpha = 0.747$ ), “Brand Recognition” ( $\alpha = 0.718$ ) and “Frequency of Exposure” ( $\alpha = 0.622$ ) exhibit acceptable reliability. However, “Types of Placements” ( $\alpha = 0.410$ ) is below the minimum acceptable level, suggesting that these items, when linked together, may not be an effective way of measuring the same set of underlying concepts. Validity analysis suggested that the value of  $KMO = 0.607$  is mediocre, but still acceptable as an indication of sampling adequacy. The strong outcome of the Bartlett Test ( $p < .001$ ) affirms that items correlate to each other to an extent that factor analysis or PCA can be performed. The normality of the study variables was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics. All variables recorded skewness values ranging from  $-0.338$  to  $0.163$  and kurtosis values ranging from  $-0.172$  to  $0.324$ , which fall well within the acceptable range of  $\pm 1$ , indicating that the data distributions are approximately symmetric with no significant departure from normality. Given the large sample size ( $N = 346$ ), these values suggest that the assumption of normality is adequately met for all variables, including the dependent variable and its components, thereby supporting the suitability of parametric statistical analyses.

Despite the reliability coefficient for the “Types of Placements” construct ( $\alpha = 0.410$ ) not meeting the acceptable limit, this limitation is recognised in the interpretation of the results for Hypothesis 3 (H3). However, the decision to keep the scale was supported by a strong overall model fit and the theoretical consistency of the construction. The items also conceptually matched other previously validated studies to support their inclusion to ensure consistency for comparison. We encourage future studies to re-evaluate and amend the measurement scale to improve internal consistency.

**Table 1**  
Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Result	Status	Key Findings
H1 There is a significant relationship between product placement and brand visibility	$r = 0.582, p < 0.001$ $\beta = 0.582, p < 0.001$	Supported	Product placement has a significant and positive effect on brand visibility
H2 There is a significant relationship between the Frequency of Exposure and brand visibility	$r = 0.613, p < 0.001$ $\beta = 0.613, p < 0.001$	Supported	Frequency of exposure is the strongest predictor of brand visibility, confirming that repeated exposure enhances brand recall and recognition
H3 There is a significant relationship between Product placement type and brand visibility	$r = 0.381, p < 0.001$ $\beta = 0.381, p < 0.001$	Supported	Different types of placements (visual, verbal, integrated) significantly impact brand visibility, though with a lower effect than overall presence or frequency
H4 There is a significant relationship between contextual fit and brand visibility.	$r = 0.390, p < 0.001$ $\beta = 0.390, p < 0.001$	Supported	The context fit with product placement has a positive impact correlation with brand visibility
H5 There is a Moderating impact of Film Genre on the Relationship Between Product Placement and Brand Visibility	Direct effect: $\beta = 0.259, p = 0.031$ Moderation effect: $\beta = 0.053, p = 0.149$ $\Delta R^2 = 0.0032$	Partially Supported	Film genre has a significant direct impact on brand visibility, but does not significantly moderate the product placement-brand visibility relationship

(Source: Authors' Compilation)

## **Discussion**

In this study, the findings indicate that Product Placement has a significant and positive impact on Brand Visibility. These results align with several prior studies that have found a strong relationship between Product Placement and Brand Visibility. According to a comprehensive meta-analysis that examined 364 studies and found that brand placements have strong positive effects on brand placement memory (Babin et al., 2021). Moreover, the research suggests that Frequency of Exposure correlates positively, even strongly, with brand visibility. Prior Studies suggest that the frequency of exposure to product placements on multiple occasions increases the strength of the brand, which accords with principles of marketing that argue that frequency enhances brand recall and recognition. Bibliometric analysis identifies frequency-based brand recall as a main metric for measuring brand visibility. Recent studies show that moderate repetition levels (4-7 exposures) maximise brand recall and recognition without harming the brand. (López-Rodríguez et al., 2024). While Types of Placements also have a positive impact on Brand Visibility, the study implies that it has a lower effect than the overall presence (IV – Product Placement) or frequency of a placement. Recent research on Samsung product placement in Korean dramas shows that using several placements, such as script, screen, and plot placement, creates synergistic effects on brand recall among international audiences. (Hamdan et al., 2025). Additionally, the context fit with product placement has a positive impact correlation with brand visibility. Organic product placement within the backdrop improves brand awareness and consumer reception. Factors of economic congruence have dominated research studies in Sri Lanka, which have shown that economic volatility brings about preference changes towards value contextual fit. (Chan et al., 2016).

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the results show that the impact of product placement on brand visibility is significant and positive. The effects of the product placement, the frequency of exposures, placement types, and the context fit are all positive on brand visibility. Frequency of Exposure has the strongest impact on brand visibility, while the other two variables have equal positive impact. As the quality of product placement (in terms of frequency of exposure, types of placements, or contextual fit) increases, so does visibility of the brand, ultimately leading to greater brand recognition and recall. Marketers and filmmakers are therefore encouraged to pay full attention to the design and position of the product to enhance audience immersion and brand value.

As shown by the process macro moderation analysis mode, film genre has a significant direct effect on brand visibility, implying that some genres might have more interest or engagement from the audience, thus generating more brand attention naturally. The moderating role of film genre in the relationship between product placement and brand visibility is not supported by the analysis. This study is important for businesses as it shows how a developing industry like the film industry offers marketers a valuable opportunity to enhance brand visibility through strategic product placement. It also provides insights into how filmmakers integrate brands in ways that support both the film's narrative and the brand's image without causing a negative impact. Most of the participants were aged 18-25, while the representation of older age groups was low. This can potentially bias the results. There was also an unequal geographic distribution where most of the respondents were sampled in Northwestern Province; hence, generalizability might not be possible across the various regions in Sri Lanka.

From a practical standpoint, our evidence indicates that marketers and filmmakers should focus primarily on frequency of placement and contextual fit rather than changing the genre format. However, it remains possible to choose genres that could align with the intended target audience's engagement patterns to help increase visibility.

There is limited research on how to optimise product placement strategies for different film genres, including factors such as prominence, modality, and plot integration. Further study is needed on how emotional involvement in various genres influences cognitive processing and brand recall. The effects of product placement in hybrid genres remain largely unexplored, despite their growing popularity. Longitudinal and cross-cultural studies could provide deeper insights into genre-specific placement effectiveness and long-term brand impact. Future researchers should explore how each genre affects Brand visibility and purchasing intention. In addition, researchers can create genre-specific placement models that help to inform strategic decisions based on the ability of each genre to support different kinds of viewing. As the effects of product placement in hybrid genres remain largely unexplored, despite their growing popularity, future researchers could examine that as well.

## References

- Asia Video Industry Association. (2024). *AVIA regulating for growth – Advertising matrix for Sri Lanka*. Asia Video Industry Association.
- Babin, B. J., Herrmann, J.-L., Kacha, M., & Babin, L. A. (2021). The effectiveness of brand placements: A meta-analytic synthesis. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 38(4), 1017–1033. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2021.01.003>
- Balasubramanian, S. K., K., J. A., & Patwardhan, H. (2006). Audience response to product placements: An integrative framework and future research agenda. *Journal of Advertising*, 35(3), 115–141. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367350308>
- Blankenship, W. (2024, November 12). 9 ways to increase your brand visibility. *Oktopost*. <https://www.oktopost.com/blog/increase-brand-visibility/>
- Chan, F. Y., Petrovici, D., & Lowe, B. (2016). Antecedents of product placement effectiveness across cultures. *International Marketing Review*, 33(1), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-07-2014-0249>
- Cokki, Soelaiman, L., & Tjokrosaputro, M. (2025). The impact of virtual influencer product placement on brand awareness in Indonesia. *Innovative Marketing*, 21(2), 119–133. [https://doi.org/10.21511/im.21\(2\).2025.10](https://doi.org/10.21511/im.21(2).2025.10)
- Gillespie, B., Muehling, D. D., & Kareklas, I. (2018). Fitting product placements: Affective fit and cognitive fit as determinants of consumer evaluations of placed brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 82, 90–102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.09.002>
- Gündüzyeli, B., & İpek, F. E. (2025). The role of product placement in digital marketing: Insights from world cinema and Turkish films. *MANAS Journal of Social Studies*, 14(3), 1236–1252. <https://doi.org/10.33206/mjss.1590365>
- Hamdan, F., Kia, K. K., & Meng, L. L. (2025). The effectiveness of Samsung product placement in Korean drama. *Journal of Communication, Language and Culture*, 5(1), 132–148. <https://doi.org/10.33093/jclc.2025.5.1.9>
- Jin, H. S., Kerr, G., & Suh, J. (2019). Impairment effects of creative ads on brand recall for other ads. *European Journal of Marketing*, 53(7), 1466–1483. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2017-0674>
- Kenton, W. (2024, September 16). What is brand recognition? Why it's important and benefits. *Investopedia*. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brand-recognition.asp>
- Kohut, M. (2024). Product placement in the marketing communications system. *Economics of Development Systems*, 6(1), 112–118. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2707-8019/2024-1-10>
- Kumar, S. (2017). Influence of product placements in films and television on consumers' brand awareness. *Archives of Business Research*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.14738/abr.52.2747>
- Lannom, S. (2025, March 7). Ultimate guide to movie genres — 90+ genre examples for film & TV. *StudioBinder*. <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/movie-genres-list/>
- López-Rodríguez, C. E., Bernal, L. G., & Renza, L. A. (2024). Measures of brand awareness: Bibliometric analysis and systematic review. *TEM Journal*, 13(4), 3056–3067. <https://doi.org/10.18421/TEM134-40>
- Mukherjee, U., Pradhan, A., & Barn, R. (2021). Coming of age in the diaspora: Bollywood and the representation of second-generation British Indian diaspora. *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, 9(2), 115–146. <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2021.366>
- Pathak, R. K. (2024). The evolution of film genres: A historical analysis. *International Journal for Research Publication and Seminar*, 15(1), 42–47. <https://doi.org/10.36676/jrps.v15.i1.07>
- Rose, M. P., & Shanthi, R. (2024). The effect of product placement in movies on brand recall: A meta-analysis. *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope*, 5(4), 807–814. <https://doi.org/10.47857/irjms.2024.v05i04.01421>
- Russell, C. A. (2002). Investigating the effectiveness of product placements in television shows: The role of modality and plot connection congruence on product memory and attitude. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(3), 306–318. <https://doi.org/10.1086/344432>

Somarathne, M. P. (2021). Sri Lankan moviegoers in COVID-19 pandemic era. In *Asian Congress for Media and Communication (ACMC) 2021 International Conference*, Auckland.  
[https://whova.com/portal/webapp/auotm\\_202205/Agenda/2060653](https://whova.com/portal/webapp/auotm_202205/Agenda/2060653)

Srivastava, R. (2016). Integrated advertising effectiveness on retail consumers. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 22(3), 281–300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2015.1095831>

## Annexures

**Table 2**  
*Questionnaire*

Variable	Dimensions	Indicators
Product Placement	Frequency of Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think I have seen brands a few/many times in films</li> <li>I noticed that the duration of the brand exposure in films made me easily recall the brand.</li> <li>According to my understanding, the length of the product that appeared in the key scenes is good</li> </ul>
	Types of Placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel that the product is not overly displayed</li> <li>I think that the product is integrated into the plot of the movie nicely</li> </ul>
	Contextual Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe that the product fits the scene's content</li> <li>I believe that the product fits the character's lifestyle.</li> <li>I think the brand image and the film genre are consistently matching.</li> </ul>
Brand Visibility	Brand Recall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I believe I was able to recall the brand name without any prompts or cues after watching the film.</li> <li>I think I was able to mention the brand name on my own without any reminders after watching the film.</li> </ul>
	Brand Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think I could recognise the brand when it was shown among several other brands.</li> <li>I think I could mention the brand after watching the film.</li> </ul>
Film Genre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The genre of the film closely matched my interests.</li> <li>I was more likely to recall brands featured in the films that matched my preferred genre.</li> <li>The genre of the content influenced my attitude toward the brands that appeared in it.</li> <li>I felt more emotionally engaged with the product placements because of the genre of the film.</li> </ul>

(Source: Authors' Compilation)