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The Effectiveness of Samsung Product Placement in Korean Drama

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ABSTRACT

The worldwide success of placing products in Korean dramas as a powerful advertising tool inspired this study. However, past studies have shown inconsistent and contradictory findings regarding product placement in Korean dramas, which has a significant relationship with brand recall. Thus, this study aims to determine how recent Korean dramas use product placement to promote and raise awareness of South Korean products. The objectives of this study are 1) to understand the impact of Korean drama script placement (audio) on brand recall; 2) to examine the impact of Korean drama screen placement (visual) on brand recall; 3) to investigate the impact of Korean drama plot placement on brand recall. The tripartite Typology of Product Placement was derived as the theoretical research of this study. The quantitative method in the form of a survey was applied to assess the important relationship between independent and dependent variables. The research respondents were active international Korean drama viewers in the KFriend Facebook group. SPSS was utilised to analyse and evaluate the relationships between the study's hypotheses. The findings indicate that script placement (audio), screen placement (visual), and plot placement have a significant relationship with brand recall among Korean drama viewers.

Keywords: Korean drama, product placement, visual placement, audio placement, plot placement, brand recall.

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Introduction

Product placement has been defined as a hybrid message, as stated by Balasubramanian (1994): All paid attempts to influence audiences for commercial benefits using communications that project a non-commercial character; under these circumstances, audiences are likely to be unaware of the commercial influence attempt and/or to process the content of such communications differently than they process commercial messages. (p. 30) The hybrid messages that have been categorised into different types of product placements are as follows:

- 1) Brand placement is the general placement of advertisers, and the products, contents, and services provided.
- 2) Image placement involves the positive image of the individual or the organisation.

- 3) Location placement portrays the geographic region of certain locations, such as nations or places.
- 4) Generic placement involves the product's overall group, such as noodles or coffee.
- 5) Idea placement involves the good image of certain ideas, such as a positive mindset.

Nowadays, the audience is exposed to more Korean dramas through applications like Netflix, Viu, and iQIYI. Fatimah and Sharifah (2018) stated that promoting Korean dramas encourages audiences to learn the Korean language. According to Shim (2006), 130,000 tourists from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand visited their favourite film locations because of the glory of Korean dramas such as *Winter Sonata* and *Autumn in My Heart*. Moreover, some Korean products were advertised in Kdramas; as a result, Laneige, Dal. Komm Coffee and Hyundai's sales have been reported to increase. CNN Indonesia (2024) stated that the Roger Vivier footwear featured as product placement in the Korean drama *Queen of Tears* became one of the best-selling products and was obsessed by Korean drama fans.

Literature Review

Product Placement

The current trend in marketing is the use of placement of products as content to engage their audiences in promoting and selling a product (Danielle, 2014). It is one of the easiest forms of advertising and one of the most important marketing strategies. Branswell (2002) described product placement as one of the advertising tools that can help agencies decrease their production costs.

Gurses and Orkan (2014) argued that the impact of product placement is more effective when viewers are unaware of it. This idea was supported by D'Astous and Chartier (2000), who posit that product placement is an appropriate tool for building a brand image and increasing brand recognition. The use of a brand's appearance, logo, or product without formal expression is a subtle or implicit product placement (Gurses & Orkan, 2014).

Recently, Korean dramas have utilised brand and image placement, where actors and actresses incorporate specific brands or products into their dialogues to enhance their perceived value (Natalia & Setefanus, 2020). Entertainment experts consider product placement an important aspect of long-term marketing strategies (Kramolis & Kopeckova, 2013).

According to IMDb (2016), the inclusion of Toretta drink and Dal. Komm Coffee as product placements in the Korean drama *Goblin* led to a notable surge in sales for these items. A similar trend occurred for Laneige Whitening BB Cushion and Laneige Two Tone Lip Bar, promoted in the Korean drama *Descendants of the Sun*. The resulting study by Natalia and Setefanus (2020) revealed that subtle product placement has subconsciously influenced the viewers.

Location placement that promotes appealing places to visit is common in Korean dramas. Haunter (2012) established that the goal of product placement is to create something as close as possible to genuine viewer interest. Yun Jae Jin, the Head Officer of the Malaysian Korean Tourism Organisation, highlighted the important role that *Winter Sonata* played in boosting Korean travel industry by featuring appealing places in South Korea.

Statistics show that 967,000 foreign tourists visited South Korea. Meanwhile, in 2022, the number nearly tripled to 3.198 million. Asia Fund Managers (2023) reported a positive increase in the number of incoming tourists visiting South Korea from January to August, estimated at 6.5 million. S&P Global (2023) noted, "South Korea's tourism sector has been strengthening during 2023 and expected to show further improvement during 2024, as international tourist travel in the Asia-Pacific regions continues to recover".

The study is significant in filling the gap in previous research and broadening the study on how media affects society and lifestyle. Marketers believe that product placement will increase product awareness and customer purchase intention. Qazzafi (2019) stated that there are five stages in the purchase

intention process: 1) problem recognition 2) information search 3) evaluation of alternatives 4) purchase decision 5) post-purchase behaviour.

Besides, the study is significantly relevant to broadening the study by Keisha, Stanss, and Shinta in 2021 on the influence of Samsung product placement in the Korean drama *Crash Landing on You* on brand memory. The independent variables of this study are the script placement (audio), screen placement (visual), and plot placement in specific Korean dramas. Thus, the current study focuses on recent Korean dramas based on recent ratings.

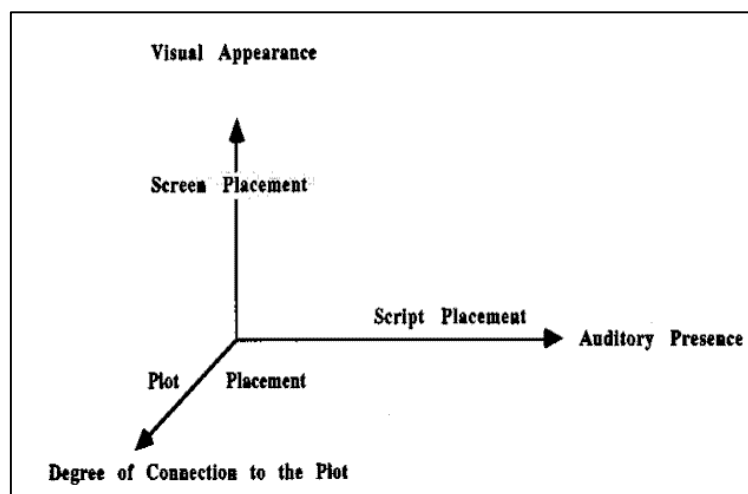
Throughout the result, marketers will be able to understand consumer behaviour and their psychological perception of the brand and/ or product, leading to brand recall. This will help marketers develop better marketing strategies and maximise their Return on Investment (ROI).

The types and categories of product placement have an impact on the effectiveness (Homer, 2009) and are categorised into three (Law & Braun, 2000): 1) visual placement 2) audio placement and 3) plot placement. Russell (2019) proposed the "Tripartite Typology of Product Placement", which classified product placement into three types: 1) visual appearance, 2) audio presence, and 3) plot placement.

Visual dimension is when the product is presented straightforwardly in the drama, otherwise known as a screen placement. The audio dimension is when the product is mentioned or contained in the dialogue, which is called script placement. The plot placement combines visual and audio ranges within the storyline to integrate the brand into the drama.

Figure 1

A Three-Dimensional Construct of Product Placement (Russell, 2019)



Visual Placement

Visual placement is when the brand is subtly or directly represented in the drama. Ruselle (2019) stated that increasing the frequency of the appearance of the product or brand creates marketers' trust that it will increase customer acknowledgement. Besides that, the camera technique in the drama results in brand recognition among the viewers. For example, the main lead frequently showed that she was applying Laneige Whitening BB Cushion and Laneige Two Tone Lip Bar in the Korean Drama *Descendants of the Sun* without mentioning the brand.

Audio Placement

Russell (2019) stated that audio placement is the dialogue that mentions the brand or product in the drama. As the impact of hearing is greater than visual, the effectiveness of audio placement depends on the frequency it is mentioned. The information being processed by the viewers is by listening to

the information of the product or brand without seeing it. For example, two brands verbally mentioned in the Korean Drama *Goblin* were Toretta Hydration Drink and Dal. Komm Coffee. Russlle (1998) divided audio placement into three categories:

1. Brand context is verbally mentioned
2. The repetitive mention of the brand or product
3. The emphasis on the name of the brand or product

Plot Placement

Hackle et al. (2008) stated that plot placement enhances the brand or product visibility in the drama scene by integrating it as part of the storyline. Interest in the brand or product can develop when the plot is well-connected to it. The viewers remember the prominent plot placement more effectively than the non-prominent product placement. Thus, it will lead to the intention to purchase impact on viewers. This is because the viewers feel they are associated with the storyline in the drama.

Korean Drama Product Placement

In 1997, South Korea faced a financial crisis, and the country borrowed 57 billion USD from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to pay for its debt. However, Kim Dae Jung, South Korean president from 1998 until 2003, helped to solve the financial crisis by promoting South Korea through the creative industry, such as drama, music, and video games. In 2002, the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS)'s famous drama, *Winter Sonata*, received an overwhelmingly positive impact from viewers throughout East Asia. According to Yun Jae-Jin, the Korean Tourism Organisation (KTO) Director in Kuala Lumpur, drama has become the main factor in attracting tourists to South Korea. The former president's intelligent action by promoting their country through drama has garnered the researchers' interest in studying their marketing techniques.

The Star (2012) stated that *Winter Sonata* is the first Hallyu in Malaysia, starting the golden era of Korean drama. The existence of new technology has made the Korean entertainment industry change from a "limited industry" to an Asian entertainment industry, proving that Asian viewers have accepted it. 1.5 million views of *Winter Sonata* have proven Malaysian viewers' acceptance of Korean drama. It also showed that the Korean drama's cultural, visual, language, and value elements have influenced the viewers' psychological aspects, including their actions, interests, and motivations. Nowadays, applications such as Netflix, Viu, and iQIYI expose audiences to even more Korean dramas.

Previous studies have focused on the impact of Korean drama product placement on the viewers. One is from Samuel et al. (2007), who proved that the Korean drama *Winter Sonata* influenced Japanese tourists to visit the shooting location in several places in Seoul, especially Nami Island. This study showed that visual elements play an important role in affecting the audience. Fuziah (2012) conducted a study focusing on the impact of Korean drama on Malaysian viewers. The study showed that young adults spent several hours daily to watch Korean dramas. The viewers were attracted to the visual appeal of Korean drama, such as the location of the shooting.

Adam (2010), as well as Hashimah and Zaharani (2011) stated that the beautiful scenery portrayed in Korean dramas influenced the desire to visit South Korea. The shooting location becomes a favourite tourist spot while visiting South Korea. Moreover, the plots of Korean dramas often align well with their filming locations, making these locations a key factor in attracting visitors. Jamina (2022) stated that the highest-rated episode of Kdrama is *The World of the Married*, which was aired in 2020 with a 28.371% rating. It is based on data from Nielsen Korea in December 2022. This drama used a lot of product placement to promote South Korean products. The second highest rating of Kdrama (24.936%) is *Reborn Rich*, the latest Korean Drama in December 2022. Sompi (2021) stated that *Hometown Cha Cha Cha* ended with the highest rating of 12.7% in 2021. By promoting Korean drama, many audiences are interested in learning the Korean Language (Fatiha & Sharifah, 2018).

Shim (2006) stated that the glory of Korean dramas such as *Winter Sonata* and *Autumn in My Heart* attracted 130,000 tourists from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand to their

favourite film locations. Dwi and Eristia (2020) also highlighted that Laneige sales have increased, and due to the product placement in the Korean drama *Descendants of the Sun*, Laneige has expanded its presence in the Korean, China, and Singapore markets. Natalia and Setefanus (2020) shared a South China Morning Post report that the sales of Amorepacific's skincare and lipstick have increased by 400% in China due to the impact of the product placement in Korean drama.

BH Online (2019) reported that Hyundai Moto Co in Seoul posted the highest quarterly net profit in seven years, which is consistent with the product placement involvement of Hyundai Moto Co in most Korean dramas. However, Jerrica (2021) reported that Hyundai Malaysia has the lowest resale value compared to Japanese cars. This shows that the demand for Hyundai in Malaysia is not as high as in Seoul, even though Hyundai has been actively involved in Korean drama product placement.

Samsung Product Placement

Kesia et al. (2021) stated that Samsung's products have been actively featured in most popular Korean dramas in 2020. The appearance of Samsung smartphones in Korean drama *It's Okay to Not Be Okay*, *Flower of Evil*, *Itaewon Class*, and *Crash Landing on You* portray successful characters using Samsung smartphones. However, the extent to which Samsung influences viewers' brand recall of the product globally remains uncertain.

Mohamed (2018) stated that a significant relationship exists between the Korean Wave and the success of Korean brands such as Samsung. Roll (2015) stated that the success of Korean goods consumption is driven by the effective visual content portrayed in Korean entertainment. Although a limited number of academic studies focus on the homogeneous group, this study has been developed to focus on heterogeneous group. Furthermore, Korean drama has not been specifically highlighted as a key factor in the success of Korean goods, as reported in several articles.

Jeon (2013) stated that Samsung indirectly helped Korean drama export to the Asian market in the early stages of the Korean wave to promote their products. According to Satriani and Rini (2020), the usage of Samsung smartphones in Indonesia is due to the Korean government's initiative to promote the brand in Korean Pop Culture. The study also showed that targeted participants learned about Samsung products from Korean entertainment. Ramdhani (2009) stated that purchasing behaviour was influenced by behavioural beliefs, which were implemented in the theory of planned behaviour. The positive impact of Samsung product placement in Korean entertainment makes it acceptable in the Indonesian market.

Kim and Chao (2018) stated that Samsung has strong brand awareness among Columbian consumers, and it may be due to Samsung's efforts to actively promote its brand through Korean entertainment, which results in Samsung brand loyalty in the Columbian market. Meanwhile, Rubal and Garima (2021) stated that Samsung provides free access to Korean dramas for My Galaxy app users in India, resulting in positive responses from Northeast Indian viewers. Besides, Kesia et al. (2021) stated that the repetition of Samsung's visuals in many scenes in Korean drama helps viewers realise the product's existence, increasing brand awareness.

Barrientos (2020) reported that Samsung dominated new trends in Netflix Korean dramas. This has caused Samsung's popularity to spread not only in Korea but also in other countries. Samsung tries to raise brand awareness by capturing the attention of viewers when they get hooked by the characters they admire. Samsung often promotes its latest brand through Korean drama, and these are examples of the Korean dramas that have promoted Samsung's latest range of products:

1. Korean drama *The Inheritors* promoted the Samsung Galaxy Note 3 in 2013, the latest Samsung brand.
2. In 2020, the Korean drama *Crash Landing on You* and *Hi Bye, Mama!* became breakout hits in the Korean drama trend, and each drama promoted the Samsung Galaxy Note 10 series, the first model Samsung launched in 2019.

3. The Korean drama, which is a webtoon adaptation, *Itaewon Class*, promoted Samsung's latest phone technology, Galaxy Z Flip, in 2020 when the brand was newly launched by Samsung.
4. Galaxy Fold and S20 Ultra were also promoted in Korean Drama *Hi Bye, Mama!* in 2020, where the Galaxy Fold was launched in 2019, and S20 Ultra was newly launched in early 2020.
5. Samsung Galaxy 21 Phantom Violet was promoted in the Korean dramas *Nevertheless* and *Hometown Cha Cha Cha* in 2021.
6. Samsung Galaxy 22 Ultra and Galaxy Z Flip 3 were promoted in Korean drama *The Glory Season 2* in 2023.

Youth

Faizah (2007) categorised youth as having the most crucial role in the global possession aspect, and there are overlaps in definitions regarding the age range of the youth. Youth Council in Malaysia (1997) categorised youth between 15 and 40 years old, while FreeMalaysiaToday (2018) stated it as 15 to 30. However, Ismail Mustari (2007) defined youth into five categories:

1. School students who need guidance from adults
2. Tertiary education students between the ages of 18 to 25 years old who are taking their first steps into the society
3. Youth aged between 18 and 23 who are early working adults who are gaining new life experiences
4. Youth between 20 and 30 years old who are working to maintain their lives
5. Mature youth between 30 to 40 years old who are experienced in life

Brand Recall

Brand recall is when the consumer identifies and recognises the uniqueness of the product or service that has been advertised. Advertising experts in business operations tackle brand communication to establish a good standing and a set of standards to which the company should attempt to surpass or maintain and form brand recognition (Sahin et al., 2011; Chinomona, 2016). Brand communication has been discovered to play a significant role in creating positive brand attitudes. The effect of brand communication is to reveal to the public that a brand can be expanded in terms of improved awareness and better recall; as a result, customers will purchase the brand with a better recall and fulfil their target goals (Zehir et al., 2011).

Brand recall is one of the main dimensions of product placement as it is the fundamental factor influencing consumers' purchase intention. Researchers used brand recall as one of the main elements of advertising (Till & Baack, 2005; Stone et al., 2000) to measure the brand presence and the likelihood of recall in consumers' minds. Keller (1993) asserted that there are two main components: (1) brand awareness and (2) brand image (Smutkupt et al., 2011). Brand awareness represents a brand node in memory, according to the associative network model, and brand image is built through a set of associations represented by the relationships between nodes (Aaker, 1991).

Khurram et al. (2018) conducted a study on 'The Role of Brand Recall, Brand Recognition and Price Consciousness in Understanding Actual Purchase'. The study measured the relationship between brand recall, brand recognition and purchase behaviour. Besides that, it expounded on brand awareness. Dotson et al. (2017) stated that "brand awareness has been mostly gauged by either brand recognition or brand recall". Bagozzi and Saik (1983) defined brand recall as how our mind remembers the brand's content because we have experienced it. Keller (1993) defined brand recognition as how consumers remember and know the brand, leading them to purchase it.

Dwi and Eristia (2020) indicated that the effectiveness of product placement is influenced by many factors, such as the packaging of the product, the functionality of the product, the brand image and its concept, brand repetition, and brand awareness. Other factors that affect the willingness of the customer to purchase the products are celebrity endorsement, the quality of the product and the appearance of the brand.

Methods

The quantitative approach is efficient for comparing data and hypotheses testing. Thus, the research is conducted in quantitative methods. This is due to the large number of samples and the need to evaluate the hypotheses based on the research problem statement. The sample of individuals' behaviour is used to draw a statement of conclusion that generalises the entire population's behaviour. On the other hand, qualitative studies focus on a small number of respondents.

The needs of the respondents and basic questions of how, what, who, where, when, and why are the focus of the descriptive research as they become the answers for the research objectives. The scores of independent variables, which include the product placement dimensions: 1) visual placement 2) audio placement and 3) plot placement, are the indicators for the dependent variables, brand recall.

The main scope of the study is structured around the placement of Samsung products in Korean dramas. The scope of Korean dramas that have been chosen is within five years due to the recency effect. Peasley et al. (2019) stated that the recency effect is used to explain the impact of information processing, which presents the contrast in information. Murphy (2022) stated that recency is part of the model used in marketing analysis on company segmentation on purchasing patterns or consumer habits. Freeja (2022) stated that the South Korean entertainment industry achieved success abroad via Netflix. As such, the researcher chose Netflix viewers of Korean dramas who were members of the Kfriends group as the target population. The targeted group was youth between 15 and 40 years old, according to the youth categories by the Youth Council in Malaysia (1997).

A survey was used as the data collection method from the targeted respondents. The data was then analysed, and the findings were recorded. The total number of the K-Friends Facebook group was used as the target population for the study. Korea Tourism Organisation used the K-Friends Facebook Group as the official Facebook group to gather Korean Entertainment fans worldwide. The Foundation of Korea Tourism Organisation (2006) stated that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism established the Korea Tourism Organisation as an international tourism corporation.

In 2023, the total population of K-Friend Facebook was 96,000 members, and that makes the target population relevant to the sampling population as the members share a common interest towards Korean culture, products, and entertainment, such as Korean dramas, music, films, etc. Using the G Power calculation and supported by the Raosoft sampling size calculation, 407 respondents were recruited. The targeted respondents came from the targeted population that fit the criteria of watching at least one complete recent Korean Drama series within five years.

Figure 3

Raosoft Sampling Size Calculation

With a sample size of	100	200	300	With a confidence level of	90	95	99
Your margin of error would be	9.79%	6.92%	5.65%	Your sample size would need to be	270	383	659

Yeong (2021) stated that based on Nielsen Korea KDrama's rating, the Korean drama *Crash Landing on You* had surpassed the rating of *Goblin (Guardian: The Lonely and Great God)* with the highest rating of 21.683%. The study was limited to the recent Korean dramas within five years due to the recency effect theory. The following are among the highest-rating Korean dramas that used Samsung products as product placement:

- 1) *Vicenzo* in 2021 – 14.64%
- 2) *Big Mouth* in 2022 – 13.7%
- 3) *Hometown Cha Cha* in 2021 – 12.7%
- 4) *Business Proposal* in 2022 – 11.6%
- 5) *The Glory Part 2* in 2023 – 124.46 million viewing hours
- 6) *Welcome to SamDal-ri* in 2024 – 104%

Closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire for the data collection process. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies related to the current study. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Part A, Part B, and Part C. Part A focused on the demographic information from the targeted respondents. Questions in Part B tested the independent variables, while Part C focused on the dependent variable.

Table 1

Original Source of Measurement

Construct	Adapted From	No. of Items
Plot Placement	Barasso (2011)	4
Audio Placement	Barasso (2011)	4
Visual Placement	Barasso (2011)	4
Brand Recall	Bamini et al. (2012)	6

Hence, the quantitative approach is efficient for comparing data and hypotheses testing. This is due to the large number of samples and the need to evaluate the hypotheses based on the research problem statement. The survey was used to collect data from the targeted respondents, and the data was analysed, and the findings recorded. The total number of the K-Friends Facebook group was used as the target population for the study as Korea Tourism Organisation uses the K-Friends Facebook Group as the official Facebook group to gather Korean Entertainment fans worldwide.

Findings and Discussion

There were 407 respondents recruited for this study. Female respondents outnumbered male respondents reported at 81.9% and 18.1%. For age, 0.5% from age 15-17, 31.9% from age 18-23, 21.9% from 24-29, and 45.7% from 30-40. All respondents were international Korean drama viewers. This study consisted of 34.4% students, 15.0% of respondents were working in the government sector, 33.7% working in the private sector, 9.8% in self-employment, and 6.9% unemployed. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Variables	Frequency (N=407)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	73	18.1
Female	331	81.9
Age		
15-17	2	0.5
18-23	130	31.9
24-29	89	21.9
30-40	186	45.7
Occupation		
Student	140	34.5
Government sector	61	15.0
Private sector	137	33.7
Self-employment	40	9.9
Unemployed	28	6.9

Advertising remains a cornerstone of modern marketing, with organizations investing substantial resources to enhance brand visibility and influence consumer behavior. One increasingly popular strategy is product placement within entertainment media, particularly in high-consumption formats such as television dramas. According to eMarketer (2017), businesses in Malaysia allocated approximately USD 1.30 billion to marketing activities in 2017, with expenditures projected to rise in subsequent years. Despite these large investments, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating the direct return on investment (ROI) of traditional advertising methods, such as billboards, print campaigns, and outdoor signage. This gap has prompted marketers to explore more integrative, context-driven approaches that align brand messages with consumer lifestyles and entertainment preferences.

Product placement has emerged as a strategic alternative to conventional advertising, leveraging the power of narrative storytelling to subtly embed products within popular media content. Statista (2016) reported a steady increase in global product placement expenditures, rising from USD 8.25 billion in 2012 to USD 10.5 billion in 2014, with projections of USD 15.26 billion by 2019. Franco (2017) observed a similar growth rate of 12.6% between 2013 and 2016, underscoring the rising importance of this marketing tactic. Within the context of Korean dramas (K-dramas), Allkpop (2018) reported that episodes feature an average of 57 product advertisements, with ground-wave broadcasting channels incorporating at least 18 distinct product placements per episode. This approach not only increases brand exposure but also leverages the emotional engagement of audiences with storylines and characters, making products appear aspirational and culturally relevant. The global popularity of K-dramas, amplified by streaming platforms such as Netflix and Viu, has further expanded the reach of these placements to international markets, effectively turning K-dramas into a global advertising vehicle for brands such as Samsung, Laneige, and Hyundai.

While product placement offers significant potential, it is not without limitations. Over-saturation may lead to viewer skepticism or “advertising fatigue,” reducing its persuasive impact. Additionally, cultural and linguistic barriers may affect the extent to which international audiences recognize or recall embedded brands, particularly when verbal mentions (audio placement) are not easily understood without subtitles. Therefore, while product placement in K-dramas represents a promising avenue for enhancing brand recall and purchase intention, its effectiveness ultimately depends on strategic integration, audience relevance, and cultural adaptability: factors that remain underexplored in existing empirical research.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement consistently produces the same results under identical conditions, ensuring that collected data is dependable and replicable. Cronbach’s Alpha is widely used to assess reliability, where values closer to

1.0 indicate stronger internal consistency among the measurement items. Formell and Larcker (1981) recommend a threshold of 0.6 for reliability coefficients to be considered acceptable in social science research.

In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each construct (Table 3). All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold, indicating satisfactory to high internal consistency. Plot placement achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86, reflecting excellent reliability, while visual placement and audio placement both recorded acceptable levels of 0.70. Brand recall demonstrated the highest reliability score at 0.89, showing strong agreement among its six measurement items.

At the item level, some factors, such as visual appeal (0.42) and product mentioned (0.46), showed lower individual item reliability, but removing these items would not significantly improve the overall construct alpha. This suggests that while certain individual indicators contributed less strongly, the overall constructs remain robust and reliable. These findings confirm that the scales used to measure plot, visual, and audio placement, as well as brand recall, are suitable for further statistical analysis in examining their relationship.

Table 3

Reliability Test

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Plot Placement	0.86	
Product scenes	0.71	0.81
Product role	0.70	0.82
Connection	0.73	0.81
Entire drama	0.69	0.82
Visual Placement	0.70	
Visual appeal	0.42	0.71
Integration	0.61	0.55
Interrupt drama	0.51	0.63
Distract plot	0.47	0.65
Audio Placement	0.70	
Product mentioned	0.46	0.67
Integration	0.60	0.65
Interrupt drama	0.46	0.55
Distract plot	0.47	0.65
Brand Recall	0.89	
Advertising	0.87	0.89
Details	0.72	0.87
Type	0.78	0.88
Duration	0.78	0.87
Character	0.73	0.88
Retail	0.73	0.88

The study aims to ascertain how recent Korean dramas use product placement to promote and raise awareness for South Korean products, such as Samsung. The findings show that product placement dimensions impact brand recall. The study results show that all constructs reported above 0.6 are considered valid. In contrast, Cooper and Schindler (2014) define validity as "the extent to which a test measures what we wish to measure".

The researcher revised the adapted measurements and reconducted a preliminary study on different groups of respondents to test the reliability of 1) plot placement 2) audio placement 3) visual placement

as the factors that lead to the brand recall. The preliminary result showed that brand recall is strongly linked to 1) plot placement 2) audio placement 3) visual placement. It is consistent with previous studies that linked product placement with brand recall by Balakrishnan et al. (2012), Coskun (2021), and Clarence et al. (2022).

Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

The results of the current study have made significant contributions to both the theoretical and managerial aspects of existing product placement literature. The theoretical implications enhance the existing literature on product placement dimensions and brand recall. The study sheds light on the impact of audio placement, visual placement, and plot placement on brand recall among international Korean drama viewers.

The research examined the effectiveness of 1) plot placement, 2) audio placement, and 3) visual placement on brand recall among Korean drama viewers, highlighting the significant impact of product placement in Korean dramas for promoting and raising awareness of South Korean products, specifically Samsung. According to Saladino (2008), brand placement plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perspectives, influencing their thinking, and fostering loyalty towards the product. This insight helps marketers tailor their product placement strategies to enhance brand recall among viewers.

Limitation of the Study

Since the study focused on the audio, visual, and plot placement of Korean dramas for international viewers, it may have posed challenges due to the language barrier. International viewers could have had difficulty understanding the Korean language used in the dramas, leading them to rely on subtitles. Therefore, language was a limitation in this study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that product placement is a powerful tool in marketing communication, capable of influencing audience perception and enhancing brand recall among international viewers of Korean dramas. The results indicate that well-integrated brand placements, particularly when aligned with the storyline, can positively shape consumer attitudes and preferences, supporting earlier findings by Balakrishnan et al. (2012), Barasso (2011), Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012), Advincula et al. (2021), and Clarence et al. (2022). These insights highlight the importance of strategic integration, suggesting that brands should focus on seamless placement that complements the narrative rather than disrupting the viewing experience. From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize that product placement can serve as a cost-effective and impactful alternative to traditional advertising, particularly for reaching younger, digitally engaged audiences. Future research should further explore cross-cultural responses to product placement, as factors such as language and cultural nuances may influence the effectiveness of embedded marketing strategies on global audiences.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed to the conception, design, writing and revision of the manuscript.

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