

The influence of coffee candy product placement in Korean dramas on brand image and brand awareness among netflix users

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Abstract

Coffee candy's product placement in Korean dramas is used as a strategy to strengthen brand image and increase brand awareness among Netflix users. Coffee candy, as a local Indonesian brand, leverages the popularity of Korean dramas to reach the global market through strategic product placement. A quantitative approach was used, with a survey of 101 Netflix user respondents in Medan who had watched Korean dramas featuring coffee candy. The sampling technique was purposive, and the data were analyzed using simple linear regression. The results showed that Coffee candy's product placement had a significant effect on brand image ($R^2 = 0,774$) and brand awareness ($R^2 = 0,858$).

Public interest statements

These findings confirm that product integration in entertainment content can effectively strengthen brand perception and understanding, as well as encourage purchasing interest among young consumers. This strategy has proven relevant in modern marketing communications, especially in the digital era, which is characterized by cross-border content.

Keywords: Product Placement, Korean Dramas, Brand Image, Brand Awareness.

Paper type: Research paper

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Abstrak

Penempatan produk Coffee candy dalam drama Korea digunakan sebagai strategi untuk memperkuat citra merek dan meningkatkan kesadaran merek di kalangan pengguna Netflix. Coffee candy, sebagai merek lokal Indonesia, memanfaatkan popularitas drama Korea untuk menjangkau pasar global melalui penempatan produk yang strategis. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan, dengan survei terhadap 101 responden pengguna Netflix di Medan yang telah menonton drama Korea yang menampilkan Coffee candy. Teknik sampling yang digunakan adalah purposive, dan data dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier sederhana. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa penempatan produk Coffee candy memiliki efek signifikan terhadap citra merek ($R^2 = 0,774$) dan kesadaran merek ($R^2 = 0,858$).

Pernyataan kepentingan publik

Temuan ini membuktikan bahwa integrasi produk dalam konten hiburan dapat secara efektif memperkuat persepsi dan pemahaman merek, serta mendorong minat pembelian di kalangan konsumen muda. Strategi ini terbukti relevan dalam komunikasi pemasaran modern, terutama di era digital yang ditandai dengan konten lintas batas.

Kata kunci: Penempatan Produk; Drama Korea; Citra Merek; Kesadaran Merek.

Introduction

In the evolving digital era, the entertainment industry has been significantly transformed by technological advances, particularly through the internet and digital streaming, which have changed the way people access content (Embun Febryanti Panggabean et al., 2023). Traditional television and cinemas, once the primary sources of entertainment, are increasingly being replaced by streaming platforms like Netflix, which offer flexible access and a wide selection of films and series from around the world, available anytime, anywhere (Muhammad AzyRahmanda Lubis et al., 2025). Among the genres that have surged in popularity are Korean dramas (K-dramas), which have not only captivated domestic audiences but also become a global phenomenon, engaging millions across diverse cultural backgrounds. This success is driven by factors such as emotional and relatable storylines, high production quality, stunning cinematography, charismatic casting, and unique, innovative storytelling approaches (Bintang et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, Korean dramas have built a large fan base, with Netflix making it easier for audiences to access a wide variety of popular titles, many of which appear in the platform's top 10, reflecting their strong appeal. The broader influence of Korean culture, or Korean Wave (Hallyu), including K-pop, fashion, culinary arts, and lifestyle, further strengthens their popularity (KdChairunissaPohan et al., 2023). With this growing popularity, companies increasingly use Korean dramas as a marketing tool through product placement, which subtly integrates brands or products into films or TV shows, making them more naturally accepted than conventional advertising. In the Korean entertainment industry, product placement has become a crucial part of drama production, with domestic and international brands competing to feature cosmetics, clothing, gadgets, food and beverages, and household appliances, recognizing its impact on brand awareness and consumer perception.

Product placement is a widely used global strategy across various entertainment industries, such as Hollywood (e.g., James Bond featuring Aston Martin, Omega, and Heineken) and Bollywood (featuring soft drink brands). It has proven effective in enhancing brand recall, image, and consumer awareness. Similarly, Apple consistently uses product placement to build a premium association globally (Karniouchina et al., 2011). This cross-cultural effectiveness is further exemplified by the successful placement of the Indonesian coffee candy Coffee candy in popular Korean dramas, where its frequent consumption by main characters provides significant brand exposure and builds an emotional connection with millions of viewers.

Brand success in marketing is measured primarily by brand awareness, including the ability to recognize (recognition) and recall (recall) a brand and its image –how consumers perceive the brand and the associations they form. Brand awareness is vital for competitive differentiation, while brand image (the associations formed) is crucial for appeal. Effective product placement, as seen with Coffee candy in Korean dramas, leverages brand exposure to build a positive image and shape consumer perceptions, potentially positioning the product as premium, modern, or simply popular.

Research consistently shows that product placement can positively impact brand recognition, with its effectiveness in boosting brand awareness and shaping brand image depending on factors such as frequency of appearance, character involvement, and audience relevance. For instance, Coffee candy's placement in Korean dramas has successfully shifted its perception among Indonesian consumers from a simple local candy to one associated with international quality and global exposure. Despite this increased brand awareness, the challenge remains whether this strategy can fundamentally reshape Coffee candy's local brand image to compete globally, presenting a key area for further research into the influence of cross-border digital content on local brand perception.

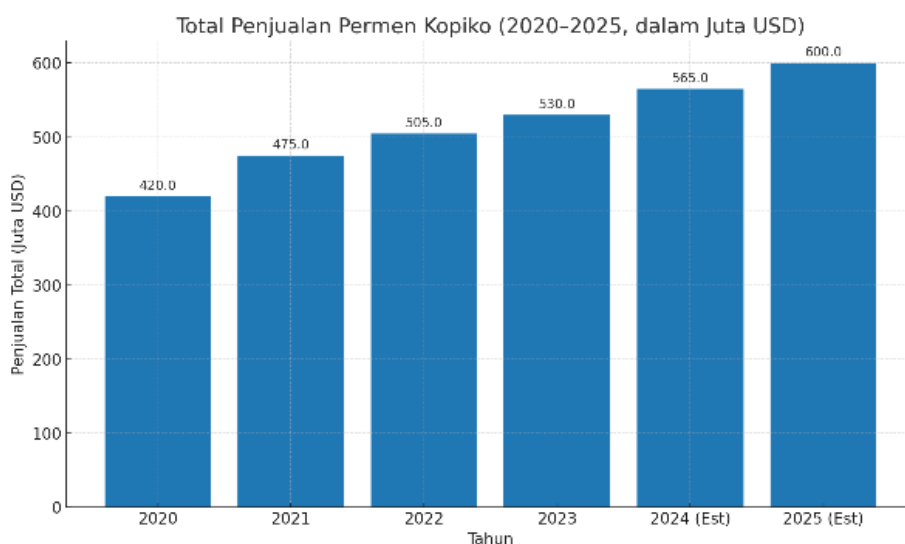


Figure 1. Coffee candy Candy Export Chart From 2020-2025 (est.)

Source: Compiled from various sources (2020-2025)

As illustrated in Figure 1, Coffee candy's total sales consistently increased from \$420 million in 2020 to an estimated \$600 million in 2025. Coffee candy's sales have shown a robust upward trajectory, with steady growth and global expansion, partly driven by product placement in popular Korean dramas like *Vincenzo*. This strategy proved highly effective, as demonstrated by the approximately 27.8% year-on-year rise in PT Mayora's shares following the placement in 2021, indicating a significant positive impact on the brand's global sales performance.

Despite the proven real-world success, academic research is scarce on how local products, particularly an Indonesian brand like Coffee candy, utilize international entertainment media to penetrate global markets and influence brand image and awareness among local consumers. Consequently, this study aims to evaluate the impact of Coffee candy's product placement in a Korean drama on brand awareness and brand image among Netflix subscribers in Medan. The findings will offer marketers valuable insights into effective product placement strategies to boost brand recognition and create a strong consumer image in the digital media landscape.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Product placement

Product placement is a marketing method used in films and television, defined as the integration of branded goods or services into a scene, making the product a natural element of the narrative itself (Belch & Belch, 2018). Unlike traditional advertising, it is considered effective at reaching audiences who may otherwise ignore conventional commercials. According to Avery and Ferraro (2022), this technique is designed to showcase a brand by placing it within a specific event, aiming to subtly and subconsciously increase brand adoption among viewers.

Furthermore, d'Astous & Séguin (1999) classify product placement into three distinct types: 1) implicit brand placement, where a brand is shown visually without any active mention; 2) integrated explicit brand placement, where the product is woven into the storyline and characters interact with it or discuss its attributes; and 3) non-integrated explicit brand placement, where the product is shown explicitly (e.g., on a sign) but is not organically connected to the plot.

Brand image

Coaker (2021) states that brand image is a reinterpretation of perceptions of a brand, formed from the information and experiences of previous users or customers. According to Simonson and Schmitt (1997), several factors shape brand image, including product quality offered by the company, the level of trust generated by users and buyers, the usefulness or benefits felt by consumers, the services provided by the company, the potential risks or losses associated with the brand, the price consumers are willing to pay, and the overall image formed through consumer perceptions, benefits, and related information.

Brand awareness

Aaker (2006) defines brand awareness as the extent to which consumers recognize or recall a brand within a particular product category. This perception reflects consumers' perception of a brand's presence in the marketplace. The more a consumer identifies with a brand, the more likely they are to consider it in their purchasing decision. A consumer's or customer's ability to recognize and recall a brand can vary depending on how effectively a company communicates the brand and how it shapes consumer perceptions. Therefore, businesses need to understand consumers' levels of brand awareness to develop appropriate and effective branding strategies.



Figure 2. Brand Awareness Pyramid

Source: David A. Aaker (1991)

According to Aisyah (2020), the explanation of Figure 2 illustrates the hierarchy of brand awareness. At the most basic level, consumers are unaware of the brand's existence. The next stage is brand recognition, where consumers can identify the brand after receiving specific reminders or cues. This is followed by brand recall, in which consumers can spontaneously remember the brand without external assistance. At the highest level, known as top of mind, the brand is the first to come to mind and is the most strongly embedded in consumers' minds compared to competing brands.

Hypothesis

H1: Product placement of Coffee candy in Korean dramas has a positive influence on Brand Image among Netflix users.

The first hypothesis states that Coffee candy's product placement in Korean dramas positively influences brand image among Netflix users. This is supported by Brand Perception Theory, which emphasizes that media exposure shapes consumer associations. When products are integrated into storylines and used by main characters, they build favorable perceptions that strengthen brand image.

H2: Product placement of Coffee candy in Korean dramas positively influences Brand Awareness among Netflix users.

The second hypothesis states that Coffee candy's product placement in Korean dramas positively influences brand awareness among Netflix users. According to Aaker (2006), repeated and natural exposure increases recognition and recall. Since Korean dramas are highly popular in Indonesia, Coffee candy's frequent appearances are expected to significantly enhance brand awareness.

Methods

Sample procedure

This study uses a descriptive and causal quantitative approach to analyze the influence of product placement on Coffee candy's brand image and brand awareness in Korean dramas. The subjects were Netflix users in Medan who watch Korean dramas and are aware of Coffee candy's products in the shows. The sample size was set at 101 respondents, in accordance with practical guidelines for quantitative research that recommend a minimum of 100 respondents for reliable and representative results (Hair et al., 2010). The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which selects respondents based on specific criteria.

An overview of the respondent demographics is provided to contextualize the sample. As presented in Table 1, the majority of respondents were female (75.2%) and belonged to the 18-24 age group (76.2%).

Table 1.

Respondent Demographic Profile

Characteristics	Categories	Frecquenty	Presentation
Age	<18 years old	1	1.0%
	18–24 years old	77	76.2%
	25–34 years old	22	21.8%
	35–44 years old	1	1.0%
Gender	Female	76	75.2%
	Male	25	24.8%

Source: Research data (2025)

Based on demographic data, the majority of respondents were female (75.2%) and aged 18–24 (76.2%). This indicates that younger age groups and female users are more likely to watch Korean dramas on Netflix. This finding is relevant to the characteristics of the primary target market for Coffee candy's product placement: the younger generation with a strong interest in South Korean entertainment content.

Measurement

The research instruments used in this study were adapted from previous studies that have been proven to be valid and reliable. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). First, the product placement variable was measured using indicators adapted from d'Astous and Séguin (1999), which include

implicit placement, integrated explicit placement, and non-integrated explicit placement. These indicators were adjusted to the context of Coffee candy's appearance in Korean dramas.

Second, the brand image variable was measured using items adapted from Simonson and Schmitt (1997) that covered dimensions such as product quality, trustworthiness, usefulness, service, price, and overall brand image. Sample items included statements such as "Coffee candy has a positive image in my mind" and "Coffee candy is a trustworthy brand."

Third, the brand awareness variable was measured using indicators adapted from Aaker (2006) that reflect the hierarchy of brand awareness: brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind awareness. For example, items asked whether respondents could easily recognize Coffee candy when watching Korean dramas or recall the brand spontaneously without assistance. By employing standardized instruments, this study aims to generate valid and reliable data to examine the effects of product placement on brand image and brand awareness among Netflix viewers in Indonesia who consume Korean dramas.

Results and discussion

Validity and reliability test

Before conducting hypothesis testing, a validity and reliability test was performed to ensure that the research instrument accurately measures the intended constructs. The validity test results are shown by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.893, with Bartlett's Test of Sphericity being significant ($\chi^2 = 1234.56$; $p < 0.001$). A high KMO value and a significant Bartlett's Test indicate that the data are appropriate for further analysis using factor analysis. This suggests that the instrument is well-suited to measure the constructs under investigation.

Tabel 2.

Validity and Reliability Result

Variable	Factor Loading Range	KMO	Bartlett's Test (χ^2 , p)	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Product Placement	0.721 - 0.902	0.893	$\chi^2 = 1234.56$, $p < 0.001$	0.932	Valid & Reliable
Brand Image	0.843 - 0.915	0.893	$\chi^2 = 1234.56$, $p < 0.001$	0.939	Valid & Reliable
Brand Awareness	0.846 - 0.901	0.893	$\chi^2 = 1234.56$, $p < 0.001$	0.934	Valid & Reliable

Source: Data Processed by SPSS (2025)

Furthermore, the factor loading analysis reveals that all items had values above 0.7. This finding confirms that each indicator adequately represents its respective construct, thereby establishing strong construct validity. Accordingly, the constructs of product placement, brand image, and brand awareness can be accurately measured using the questionnaire items.

In terms of reliability, Cronbach's alphas for each variable exceeded 0.9: 0.932 for product placement, 0.939 for brand image, and 0.934 for brand awareness. These values far exceed the minimum threshold of 0.6 and fall within the excellent reliability category. This indicates that the questionnaire items consistently and stably measure the constructs,

providing confidence in the robustness of the data. Taken together, these results confirm that the research instrument is both valid and reliable and therefore suitable for subsequent analyses.

Regression analysis

Assumption testing was conducted to ensure that the proposed hypotheses were appropriate for further analysis. In this study, the hypotheses examine the effects of product placement on Coffee candy's brand image and brand awareness in Korean dramas. To determine whether these hypotheses are supported, a multiple regression analysis was performed in SPSS 25, which enabled the researcher to analyze the data more efficiently. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

Tabel 3.

Regression Analysis Result

Dependent Variable	F-statistic (p)	Adjusted R ²	β	t-value	p (Sig.)	Hypothesis
Brand Image (H1)	338.266 (p < 0.001)	0.772	0.905	18.392	0.000	Supported
Brand Awareness (H2)	596.776 (p < 0.001)	0.857	0.896	24.429	0.000	Supported

Source: Data Processed by SPSS (2025)

The regression results indicate that both models are highly significant. For brand image, the model yields $F = 338.266$ ($p < 0.001$) and an adjusted R^2 of 0.772, indicating that product placement explains approximately 77.2% of the variance in brand image. For brand awareness, the model yields $F = 596.776$ ($p < 0.001$) and an adjusted R^2 of 0.857, indicating that product placement explains about 85.7% of the variance in brand awareness. The regression coefficients are positive and significant for both relationships ($\beta = 0.905$, $t = 18.392$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.896$, $t = 24.429$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1 and H2.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Coffee candy's product placement in Korean dramas has a significant and positive effect on both brand image and brand awareness among Netflix users in Indonesia. This supports Russell's (2002) argument that when brands are contextually integrated into a storyline, consumers are more likely to form strong symbolic associations with the brand. Such integration creates positive perceptions and associations, reinforcing Balasubramanian, Karrh, and Patwardhan's (2006) view that product placement functions as a persuasive cue rather than a passive promotional tactic. Accordingly, the positive impact on Coffee candy's brand image suggests that strategic placement in Korean dramas helps position the brand as modern, relevant, and globally recognized.

The results also strengthen Aaker's (2006) hierarchy of brand awareness, which highlights that repeated, natural exposure enhances brand recognition and recall. With high adjusted R^2 values, this study confirms that product placement is effective not only in making

the brand more visible but also in reinforcing consumers' brand memory. This is consistent with Karniouchina et al. (2011), who demonstrated that visibility in popular entertainment media increases brand recall. However, our findings contrast with Gupta and Gould (2007), who argued that product placement has only a limited influence on consumer recall. A possible explanation for this discrepancy lies in the cultural context. In Indonesia, Korean dramas are not merely forms of entertainment but cultural phenomena that generate strong emotional involvement. As a result, products such as Coffee candy featured in these dramas are more memorable to the audience than placements in less emotionally engaging contexts.

The high significance value and regression coefficient indicate that Coffee candy's product placement strategy is highly targeted, especially in the context of Korean dramas, which have a loyal audience. The main character's consumption of Coffee candy in the scene makes the product feel more intimate and emotionally relevant to the audience. In this context, it is not just visual exposure that matters; the audience's psychological attachment to their favorite scenes or characters also creates positive associations with the product.

Another contribution of this study is its focus on a local brand entering the global market through international entertainment media. Previous studies have concentrated mainly on global brands such as Coca-Cola, Apple, and Heineken in Hollywood or Bollywood contexts (Lehu, 2007; Gupta & Gould, 2007). By examining Coffee candy, this study extends the literature by showing that product placement is an effective strategy not only for multinational corporations but also for local brands seeking to expand recognition and image in global markets. This broadens the scope of product placement research by demonstrating its applicability across different brand categories and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of cultural relevance and media popularity in determining the effectiveness of product placement. Effectiveness is not solely influenced by product category or the depth of narrative integration, but also by the audience's social and cultural engagement. The immense popularity of Korean dramas in Indonesia drives high audience engagement, amplifying the impact of product placement on both brand image and awareness. This suggests that similar strategies can succeed when brands are placed in media with strong emotional and cultural appeal to the target audience.

Conclusion

This study concludes that product placement in Korean dramas significantly enhances both brand image and brand awareness, demonstrating that such placements are not merely passive promotions but persuasive strategies capable of shaping consumer perceptions. By featuring Coffee candy in widely consumed entertainment content, the brand gains stronger visibility. It builds positive associations that resonate in consumer memory, highlighting the role of narrative integration and cultural relevance in amplifying effectiveness. The findings extend existing literature, which has primarily centered on global brands in Hollywood or Bollywood, by showing how a local brand can leverage international media to strengthen its global positioning. For companies, particularly local brands like Coffee candy, the results suggest that carefully designed product placement in culturally relevant and emotionally

engaging media can serve as a powerful marketing strategy to expand reach, build awareness, and reinforce a positive brand image in both domestic and international markets.

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