THE ABILITY OF A BRAND RECALL TO MEDIATE BETWEEN PRODUCT PLACEMENT AND MULTI-ETHNIC MOVIEGOER'S CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

[1]Clarence Anthony Puspanathan, [2]Khor Kheng Kia & [3]Charles Ramendran SPR Subramaniam
[1]Department of Public Relations
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia
[2]Department of Advertising
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia
[3]Department of Business & Public Administration
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia

[1]Corresponding author: clarencean@utar.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Product placement has been a crucial influence for multi-ethnic Malaysian moviegoers in terms of purchase intentions. This research was conceptualised based on the Tripartite Typology of Product Placement by Russel (1998) and the Planned Behaviour Theory (TPB) by Ajzen (1985). This investigation measured how brand recall mediated the relationship between plot integration, audio stimulus, visual stimulus and consumer purchasing intentions. The

research focused primarily on multi-ethnic cinemagoers in Peninsula Malaysia. Past research has also proven that the ethnic background of an individual does have a positive impact on the purchase intentions of the individual. This research studied the purchase intentions of each ethnicity in Peninsular Malaysia to determine if there is a difference among the purchase intentions of respondents when it comes to brand recall mediating the relationship between product placement and the various modalities of product placement. Respondents were sampled from all states within Peninsula Malaysia except for the states of Kelantan and Perlis due to the unavailability of operating cinemas in these states. Respondents were invited to participate after they had watched a movie in the cinema. Preferences only for those who watched Hollywood movies. A total of 513 respondents participated in this research. A questionnaire based on the five-point Likert scale was created as the research instrument to collect data by adapting from past research. A reliability test was done to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instrument. Data obtained was analysed using the Smart Partial Least Squares (PLS) Software to determine the relationship between the hypotheses tested. The results generated have proven that brand recall is able to influence the relationship between plot integration, audio stimulation, visual stimulation and consumer purchase intentions of all the ethnicities in Peninsula Malaysia.

Keywords: Brand recall, consumer purchase intentions, cinema patrons, movies and product placement.

INTRODUCTION

Srivastava (2020) defines product placement as integrating products into the storyline of a movie. Due to the high rates of marketing success in the past, movie-based product placements have been widely used over the last two decades (PQ Media, 2020). Balasubramaniam et al. (2006) stated through Hollywood movies, product placements have enhanced audience brand recognition by 29 per cent (PQ Media, 2012). Alternatively, Hollywood movie producers are beginning to increasingly favour product placements in their movies (albeit not ideal) (Shen et al., 2018). Hollywood creates the highest number of movies annually, according to Li and Deng (2020). Products are placed for raising finance to cover production of the movie and firms by marketing products subtly, according to Jung and Childs (2020).

After the release of "Iron Man 2" in April 2010, sales of Reese's Pieces increased by 66 per cent, 40 per cent increase in sales was experienced by Ray-Ban, and a 30 per cent hike was also reported by Automaker Audio (Shen et al., 2018). Hood (2022) has reported that the Ray-Ban RB3025 Aviator has been the top-selling sunglasses after the screening of Top Gun: Maverick.The Malaysian cinema industry generated RM 1.08 billion in revenues, and contributed RM 250 million in taxes (PQ Media, 2021). According to the statistics from the Malaysian Box Office Index 2021, Hollywood movie screenings in Malaysia generated revenues, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Revenue of Hollywood Movie Screenings in Malaysia

Year	Revenue
2020	$ 51,326,685.00
2019	$151,326,685.00
2018	$147,857,237.00
2017	$145,089,098.00
2016	$144,203,434.00

Source: FINAS (2020).

This contrasts with the revenues generated by Malay movies, which generated:

Table 2

Revenues Generated by Malay Movie Screenings in Malaysia

Year	Revenue
2020	$24,060,000.00
2019	$31,200,000.00
2018	$36,740,000.00
2017	$12,440,000.00

Source: FINAS (2020).

The data above do prove that Malaysians do have a great liking for Hollywood movies and are more exposed to Hollywood movies and product placements within these movies.

Table 3

Tamil Movie Screenings in Malaysia

Year	Revenue
2020	$ 2,280,000.00
2019	$11,960,000.00
2018	$13,080,000.00
2017	$14,020,000.00

Source: FINAS (2020).

The use of product placements in Hollywood films possesses the potential to exert an impact on the purchasing intentions of audiences. Mareka (2019) posits that the likelihood of consumers purchasing a product is heightened when they are exposed to commercial placement inside films. Movie product placement is huge because consumers see connections between movies and the storyline (KPD Balakrishnan et al., 2012). Movie product placement generates an impression that positively impacts the purchase intentions of audiences (Sharma et al., 2015). Purchase intent describes the buyer's desire to buy a particular item (Zhulan et al., 2021). However, customer purchase intent varies by ethnicity and geography (Barasso, 2011) and culture, as well as other economic and social variables (Berlinder, 2017).

The research explored how product placement in Hollywood movies affects different Malaysian ethnic groups' purchasing intentions. Malaysia is made up of two former British colonies: West Malaysia and East Borneo. The main ethnic groups in Peninsula Malaysia (East Malaysia) comprise Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Till present, there have been very limited past studies pertaining to product placement in the Malaysian context and how it could affect purchase intentions among the three main ethnicities. Omar et al. (2017) conducted research on product placement in Malay films and their societal influence; millennials' buying habits in Klang (Kit et al., 2014); young Malaysian moviegoers' brand recall, choice, loyalty, and purchase intentions (Balakrishnan et al., 2012); and Malaysians' attitudes of product placement in local films (Nordin & Baharom, 2018). It is an ability to remember a product seen in a movie (Sharma et al., 2015). Brand recall components help customers recall and compare brands (Natarajan et al., 2018). According to Hackley and Hackley (2013), many marketers want their audience to remember their brand. Studies

have linked product placement to brand recall; it has been proven to increase product or service recall (Panda, 2004). Russell (2002) has also suggested that viewers will remember product placement marketing. Because of this, buyers notice product placement in movies.

Ethnicity affects client purchases. According to Shalender and Sharma (2021), marketers should take into account the cultural background of their target audience when developing communication strategies. The concept of a "universal" approach is no longer applicable in the field of marketing. Consumer purchase intents include cognitive processes and decision-making before purchasing a product or service, according to Bhatti and Ur Rahman (2019). This study helps advertisers and marketers create ethnically targeted advertisements in Malaysia. This research assessed six goals: 1). This study examined how plot integration product placement affects customer purchase intentions. This study examined if auditory stimulation product placement affects customer purchase intentions. This study examined how visual cues, especially product placement, affect customer purchase intentions. 4) This study examined brand memory as a significant mediator in the complicated link between product placement plot integration and customer purchase intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Planned Behaviour Theory

The Planned Behaviour Theory (Ajzen, 1985) was primarily used to research human behaviour as not every action is free will. The model has a perceived behavioural control component that predicts and defines many human goals. This theory states that motivation and ability influence conduct (behavioural control). They are normative and controlling beliefs. Components include attitude, norms, and perceived behavioural control. The TPB measures true behavioural control and has six components.

1. Attitudes are how the person views the activity of interest. It involves thinking about the consequences.
2. Behavioural intentions look at how a person's behaviour is influenced by several things. A task is more likely to be completed if it is strongly desired.

3. Norms are the assumption that most individuals approve or disapprove of whether it is acceptable to participate in the behaviour among peers and significant others.
4. Social norms are established rules of behaviour for a group.
5. Perceived power is the impression of conditions that support or hinder an action.
6. Perceived behavioural control affects perceived power. The perceived ease or difficulty of completing the targeted action is examined.

Purpose determines client purchase intentions and the urge to buy a brand after thorough research. Whether a product or service is consumed depends on the buyers' purchase intention. With purchase intention as the dependent variable, the Theory of Planned Behaviour is the most appropriate to be used in this research.

Figure 1

Product Placement Tripartite Typology
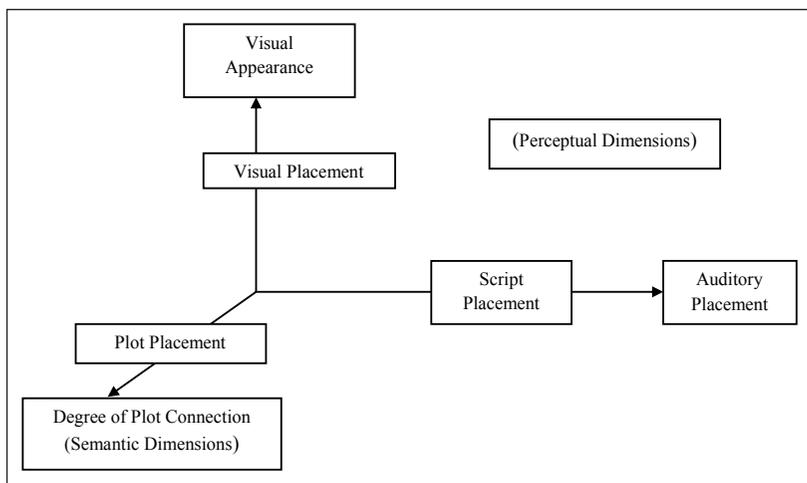
Source: Russell (1998)

The Product Placement Tripartite Typology

The tripartite typology of product placement examines various approaches to the implementation of product placement marketing. The Tripartite Typology of Product Placement, as proposed by

Russell (1998), classifies product placement into three distinct categories: visual, auditory, and plot integration. The tripartite model is a conceptual framework that encompasses the integration of three dimensions in product placement. These three models of product placement can be employed either independently or in conjunction to accomplish marketing objectives.

Product Placement Plot Integration

According to research, Hollywood films containing product placement are more successful. The merchandise is crucial to the film's plot. The film heavily uses the product. 'The Italian Job' (2003) is an example of product placement and plot integration. The film focused on a criminal organisation stealing from a former accomplice. Criminals escaped in vintage Mini Coopers. Cars dominated the story. The research participants are intimately related to industry leaders, which has tremendous influence (Russell, 1998).

Audio Product Placement

Marketers may use the aural component of product placement to advertise their goods and services. This type of placement occurs when a movie character mentions a product in dialogue, but the product itself does not appear in the movie. However, audio-alone placement requires repeats throughout the programming to guarantee that the placement syncs with the customers' minds. The repeat and length of the said placement are governed (Russell, 1998).

Visual Placement of Product Placement

This method of product placement is whereby the product is placed within the setting of the movie. Product placement on a screen has been found to increase product awareness. The product is set within the movie's surroundings, which remains visible to the audience for a period of time (Russell, 2002). Others use "screen placement methods" to improve brand recognition. Most marketers feel showing the goods increases client awareness (Russell, 1998).

Brand Recall

According to the definition provided by KPD Balakrishnan et al. (2014), brand recall refers to the cognitive ability of consumers to

remember and retrieve a particular brand from a given product category. In an alternative scenario, when a product is being described, consumers tend to associate or mentally link it with a specific brand. The process of recalling a brand is often more complex than mere identification. According to Adis and Kim (2013), brand recall can be defined as a fundamental aspect of brand comprehension, wherein information is utilised to establish the identity of a brand. Brand recall refers to the cognitive ability of consumers to recognise and retrieve a specific brand from memory across various contexts.

Brand Recall and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Brand recall impacts client purchases. According to Parengkuan (2020), the more a person is able to recall a product seen through placement, the more it will positively influence the purchase intentions towards the product. Consumers like well-known brands; thus, brand recall matters (Shahid et al., 2017). It lets customers locate and buy things. Brand recall influences purchase decisions and may be crucial to a product's success (Shalender & Sharma, 2021). Brand recall influences client buying intentions, and some trademarks remain in customers' thoughts, affecting purchases (Shahid et al., 2017). Product placement in movies and TV shows attracts viewers' attention and influences their purchases. It increases brand recall when people are shopping and researching (Parengkuan, 2020).

Consumer Purchasing Intentions and Plot Integration

Consumer purchase intentions can be affected by various elements. One of those elements is plot-integrated product placement. This is an act whereby the product is part of the movie's plot and becomes a part of the line-up within the movie. Hashim et al. (2018) explained that this involves high levels of creativity to successfully place a product within the plot of the movie. Amongst the various forms of product placement that are available, plot-integrated product placements have a far better ability when it comes to affecting consumer purchase intentions, as the integration of the product and storyline produces a convincing stimulus (Hashim et al., 2018).

Consumer Purchasing Intentions and Visual Placements

Brennan and Babin (2004) discovered that visual product placement influences customers' buying intentions. This is the most basic

and extensively utilised type of placement since the dawn of communication. Because it only requires a computer screen to present a product or brand, it is more tactical than strategic. To ensure that this sort of placement has an influence on customer buying intentions, the product must be exhibited for a long time or repeatedly. The audience would very certainly develop a preference for the things on display, which would influence future purchase decisions.

Consumer Purchasing Intentions and Audio Placements

Barroso (2011) correlates auditory or verbal placement with a brand mentioned in a conversation. The product name is stressed depending on the context, how many times it is repeated, and how much attention is placed on it. According to Balasubramaniam et al. (2006), the longer or more frequently a product is discussed, the more likely the viewers' purchase intentions would be affected. Script placement relates to verbal placement. A product that is regularly mentioned by the movie's characters may have an influence on the audience's purchasing decisions. Balasubramaniam et al. (2006) devised an algorithm to predict the likelihood of an occurrence.

Hypotheses Development

Plot Integration and Consumer Purchase Intentions

According to previous studies, it can be asserted that when a placement is well-connected, it garners significant attention and interest from viewers (Russell, 2002). The feasibility of this approach lies in the ability of a product placement storyline to establish a subtle and seamless connection with the movie's narrative. By doing so, it effectively imbues the product with a character-like presence within the film. If this persona is skilfully developed, it has the potential to captivate and engage viewers, thereby garnering their attention. Consumers exhibit a desire to establish a connection with the items included in the narrative, particularly when they possess a significant degree of influence. Consequently, the effective integration of brand or product placements into the storyline of a film can have an influence on consumers' intention to make a purchase (Kristanto & Brahmana, 2016). According to Srivastava (2020), individuals have a preference for affiliating themselves with items that are strategically integrated into the narrative of a story, particularly when these products possess a significant degree of influence. This phenomenon serves to persuade

consumers to make a purchase or establish a lasting memory of the product or its location. According to the research conducted by Zaki et al. (2019), it has been observed that the target market in Asia exhibits a greater receptiveness towards marketing materials that effectively integrate emotional engagement with a coherent narrative. Regrettably, the situation differs within the Malaysian setting (Omar et al., 2017). Therefore, as studies on product placement towards consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia are limited, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H_1:   Plot integration has a significant and positive relationship with consumer purchase intentions.

Audio Placement and Consumer Purchase Intentions

The dimension manifests itself when a character within the film articulates the product audibly. The impact of audio placement is influenced by three key factors, as identified by Russell (1998). These factors include the context in which the brand is mentioned, the frequency of brand mentions, and the significance of the brand name or its importance. The impact of auditory information surpasses that of visual information due to its ability to be processed by individuals even in the absence of direct visual stimuli, such as television screens or movies. There is a heightened level of interest among individuals regarding the dialogue exchanged by the characters. The study conducted by Nordin and Baharom (2018) examined the level of awareness regarding product placement in Malaysian films within the specific context of Malaysia. There is no further evidence to support audio placement in the Malaysian setting. Based on the aforementioned empirical evidences, it is proposed that:

H_2:   Audio placement has a significant and positive relationship with consumer purchase intentions.

Visual Placement and Consumer Purchase Intentions

Visual-only product placement is used in the foreground or background of a movie scene. The product receives some TV time. Product, logo, billboard, or other visual brand identifiers in a film or television programme without sound is termed visual-only product

placement. Branded items, employed as props, establish the setting in which the tale is situated (Russell, 2002). The more the audience sees the product in the backdrop, the more frequently the products appear in the background, the more they will recognise it and the more it will impact their buying intentions. In the Malaysian context, visual-only product placement has not been researched specifically. As such, there are more studies conducted in general perspectives, leaving behind a "huge research gap" in product placement visual placements that are yet to be investigated. Therefore, it is posited that:

H_3: Visual placement has a significant and positive relationship with consumer purchase intentions.

Plot Integration, Brand Recall, and Consumer Purchase Intentions

According to Parengkuan et al. (2020), brand recall occurs spontaneously amongst audiences primarily due to their experience viewing movies with products integrated into the plot or storyline. Whenever we see a brand or product being utilised in a movie, we immediately recognise it. For example, when you talk about the movie Top Gun, the Ray-Ban aviator glasses immediately come into the minds of the audience. When you come across goods that you are acquainted with, consumers will always remember the product and then be more inclined towards buying the said product. Whenever the necessity to purchase the type of product does arise, the products that audiences are able to recall are the ones that would influence the audience's consumer purchase intentions. The ability of the customer to recall the brand does mediate the consumer purchase intentions more successfully towards the brand. Furthermore, brand recall studies have been used as a predictor in the Malaysian context. The research by Balakrishnan et al. (2012) investigated brand recall as an independent variable to determine loyalty and purchase intentions. However, there are still limited studies and comprehension on the mediation effect of brand recall between plot-integrated product placement and customer purchasing intentions, even though there is evidence that there is a relationship between plot-integrated product placement and customer purchasing intentions. Drawing on the empirical supports, it is purported that:

H_4: Brand recall significantly mediates the relationship between plot integrated product placement and customer purchase intentions.

Audio Placement, Brand Recall, and Consumer Purchase Intention

According to Srivastava (2020), there are many types of modalities of product placement that marketers or organisations can use to promote a particular brand within a movie or television programming. One of the successful methods of product placement is audio-only placements. This placement involves the product being verbally mentioned by the cast of the movies or even radio programming. One of the most famous examples of audio placement is in the movie White House Down, where Jamie Fox mentioned to one of his attackers, "Get your hands off my Jordans," referring to the Nike Air Jordans. In fact, Sauer (2011) added that audio placements resulted in higher placement recall. Rossi et al (2015) further supported auditory inputs stimulate separate areas of the brain, allowing information to be coded differently. Therefore, brand recall enables the audience to reflect and remember these types of placements in the movies so that their purchase intentions can be motivated toward` the product. Nevertheless, research by Smit et al. (2009) found that out of 354 product placements examined, 57.8 per cent were solely visual and 17.6 per cent were purely aural. Brand recall is the important link between both audio placement and purchase intentions. Hence, it is posited that:

H_5: Brand recall significantly mediates the relationship between audio placement product placement and customer purchase intentions.

Visual Placement, Brand Recall, and Consumer Purchase Intention

According to the findings of Russell (2019), a visual-only placement refers to the presentation of a product in the background, either through creative placement, such as street billboards, or on-set placement, such as featuring food brands in kitchen scenes. The concept in question is referred to as screen positioning. The positioning of screens is contingent upon factors such as the frequency of appearances on the show, the camera angle, and other related considerations. According to Homer (2009), visual product placement may increase brand recall and brand recognition. Balasubramaniam et al. (2006) stated that the more frequently a product appears in a film, the higher the brand recall. Brand recall is an essential strategy for influencing customer purchase intentions. Liu et al. (2020) reported that purchase intentions are the most reliable predictor for marketing professionals in predicting customer buying behaviour. In the context of Malaysia,

visual placement was only studied in a general manner in the research by KPD Balakrishnan et al. (2012), Omar et al. (2017), and Kit and P'ng (2014), who have all studied product placement in a generalised manner and not modality specific. Therefore, as studies on product placement towards consumer purchase intentions in Malaysia are limited and due to scarcity in modality-specific placement studies in the country, the following hypotheses were proposed it is posited that:

H_6:   Brand recall significantly mediates the relationship between visual stimuli for product placement and consumer purchase intentions.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The Tripartite Typology of Product Placement (Russell, 1998) is supported by the Theory of Planned Conduct (Ajzen, 1985), which is based on the aforementioned study framework. The theory of planned behaviour explains that behavioural intentions examine how a person's behaviour is influenced by a variety of factors, such as how frequently a person views or is exposed to a specific event, such as product placement, and how likely it is that activity will have an impact on their purchase intentions. In this instance, viewers' purchasing intentions are likely to favour the product placement observed the more they are exposed to the various modalities of product placement, such as narrative integration, aural stimuli, and visual stimuli.

Figure 2

Research Framework for Research
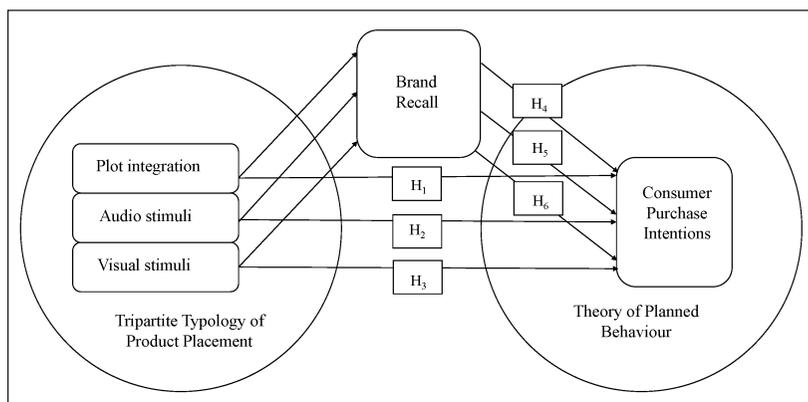
METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Process

The data utilised in this study was obtained from individuals who attended movie screenings in different states within Peninsula Malaysia, with the exception of Perlis and Kelantan due to the absence of operational theatres in those regions. The decision of sample size is a vital aspect in generalising study findings. The determination of the sample size in this study followed the established guideline proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which has been widely recognised by researchers in the field of social sciences (Wahab et al., 2019). A total of 513 questionnaires were compiled out of the 600 questionnaires sent, resulting in a response rate of 85.5 per cent.

The research employed stratified sampling, a kind of probability sampling, to ensure the proper representation of recognised moviegoers from theatres in Peninsula Malaysia and the corresponding demographics. In addition to the survey, a preliminary part was included for moviegoers to provide clarification on the study objectives and ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the collected data (Mukesh et al., 2013). The research employed stratified sampling, a form of probability sampling, to account for the distribution of moviegoers from different states within the overall population of moviegoers. This approach involved dividing the population depending on the cinemas in each state, facilitating the sampling procedure. In addition, a random sample of proportional size was obtained from a stratified sample. This methodology was employed to select individuals in a random manner from a set of discrete categories by dividing them into distinct levels or strata and randomly selecting individuals from each stratum.

The sample consisted of 531 respondents (Females = 283, 55.2%; Males = 230, 44.8%). Respondents came from various states: Kedah 8.2 per cent, Pulau Pinang 10.3 per cent, Perak 16.6 per cent, Selangor 15 per cent, Negeri Sembilan & Melaka, 8 per cent, Johor 13.8 per cent, Pahang 9.9 per cent, Terengganu 1.9 per cent, and Federal Territory 3.3 per cent. Meanwhile, most respondents hold full-time employment status (52. %). In addition, by race, Malay respondents consist of 36.5 per cent, Chinese 34.9 per cent, Indian 26.9 and other races 1.8 per cent.

Table 3

Sampling Size According to States

States	Population	%	Respondents	B	C	I	O
Selangor	5,411,324.00	26	170	118	38	10	1
Johor	3,318,283.00	16	105	73	24	7	1
Pulau Pinang	1,520,143.00	8	52	36	12	3	1
Perak	2,258,428.00	11	72	50	15	5	1
Negeri Sembilan	997,071.00	5	33	23	7	2	1
Pahang	1,443,315.00	8	52	36	12	3	1
Kedah	1,459,994.00	7	46	31	10	3	1
Melaka	788,706.00	4	26	18	5	2	1
Perlis	227,025.00	1	7	4	1	1	1
Terengganu	1,015,776.00	5	33	23	7	2	1
Kelantan	1,890,098.00	9	59	41	13	4	1
Total	20,360,213.00	100	655	452	148	44	11

Note: Please note that the abbreviations B (representing Bumiputra ethnics), C (representing Chinese ethnics), I (representing Indian ethnics), and O (representing other ethnics) will be used in this discussion. The data presented in the table was derived from the population statistics of Peninsula Malaysia, categorised by states and further disaggregated by different ethnic groups.

Approaches to the Research Population

The research population demographic was Malaysians of various ethnicities who went to see Hollywood films of their choosing. As moviegoers left the cinemas, the researcher contacted them at random, described the research, and asked for their agreement to participate. After receiving their agreement to participate, the participants were given a survey form to complete and return to the researcher. Throughout the data collection period, the same procedures were used. Since the data were obtained in the general audience space within the movie theatres, there was no need to acquire authorisation in writing from the cinema operators.

Sampling Methods

This section focuses on the research sampling methods. To collect data from selected respondents, this research used a survey form.

The targeted demographic was Malaysians of various ethnicities who attended movie theatres (cinema). Based on Sekaran and Bougie's (2010) sample model, the current population of Malaysia is 32,047,692, according to the latest DOSM (2018). Because this research focuses on multi-ethnic Malaysians, the overall population split by ethnicities is Bumiputra (62.6%), Chinese (20.8%), Indians (6.9%), and others (1%). The researcher chose Peninsula Malaysia as the main research base since cinema operators in Malaysia confirmed that the bulk of cinemas or Cineplex's in the country are situated throughout Peninsula Malaysia. With this knowledge, the researcher may better gather data and contact the target population. Having access to many moviegoers would allow for better research outcomes.

Table 4

Operating Cineplex's by Numbers in Malaysia

Region	Total Cinema Venues
Peninsula Malaysia	147
East Malaysia	21
Total	168

Note: FINAS (2020).

This research focused on multi-ethnic moviegoers in Peninsula Malaysia. For the research, a typical moviegoer is necessary since they must be exposed to the distinctive sound and visual elements used by filmmakers and marketers to increase brand recall. With Dolby Stereo, DTS effects, and Panavision visual effects, these gadgets are only available in movie theatres. The research sample includes multi-ethnic Malaysian moviegoers. The exclusion of data from the states of Kelantan and Perlis was attributed to the absence of cinema establishments in these regions. The data were obtained from individuals who had just finished watching a movie and were leaving the cinema.

Sampling Stage 1: Stratified Sampling Method

This study has two components. First, stratified percentage sampling estimates Malaysia's 32,047,692 population. Second, stratified samples yielded a proportionate random sample. This approach uses

strata or levels to randomly choose individuals from defined groups. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) said each tier has a unique person. Stratified samples can be produced by dividing the population into groups, analysing each group separately, and then sampling from each group usinga stratified approach by ethnicity, gender, and other related factors. Sampling was conducted for each population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Sampling Stage 2: Random Sampling Method

The study's second stage involved a collection of techniques for determining an appropriate research sample for a given topic. A baseline sample is one example. Those who fulfil the baseline criteria would be selected as samples. Due to the accessibility and proximity of the persons to the researchers, this sampling approach was utilised to collect data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The random sampling method selects samples at random using some type of random selection. This technique provides an advantage in that all appropriate persons have the option of picking a sample from the full sample space. As a result, it is time-consuming and costly. The advantage of doing survey research is that it ensures that the sampled group is as representative as possible.

Table 5

Adapted Source for Questionnaire

Construct	Adapted From	No of Item
Plot Integration	Barroso (2011)	4
	Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012)	4
Audio Stimulation	Barroso (2011)	4
	Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012)	3
Visual Stimulation	Barroso (2011)	4
	Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012)	3
Brand Recall	KPD Balakrishnan et al. (2012)	6
	Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012)	1
Purchase Intentions	KPD Balakrishnan et al. (2012)	6
	Abrahamsson and Lindblom (2012)	2

Note: Original sources of measurement for the questionnaire.

Measurement and Instrumentation

The following table illustrates the reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of the research instrument items that were adapted for this research. The sample items for each of the variables can be found in Appendix A.

Table 6

Alpha coefficient measurement and instrumentation

Summary of Items	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
8	Purchase intentions	0.782
7	Visual stimuli	0.820
8	Plot integration	0.770
7	Audio stimuli	0.732
7	Brand recall	0.782

Source: Developed for this research.

Table 7

Reliability Test

Reliability Level	Range
as excellent reliability	$\alpha = 0.80 - 0.95$
as good reliability	$\alpha = 0.70 - 0.80$
as fair reliability	$\alpha = 0.60 - 0.70$
as unacceptable reliability	$\alpha < 0.60$

Source: Developed for this research

RESULTS

Perlis and Kelantan were excluded due to an absence of operating theatres. All theatre-equipped Malaysian states were surveyed. 139 of 513 participants were from Klang Valley or Kuala Lumpur, mostly Klang Valley. Terengganu represented 1 per cent. 513 responses exceeded the G-Power sample size of 103. The study included ethnic Peninsula Malaysian moviegoers. Malays answered 187 of 513 (36.5%), Chinese replies comprised 34.9 per cent of 513 and 26.9 per cent of 513 people were Indians. There were nine non-white respondents made up 1.8 per cent of the sample. This implies Malaysians love cinema.

Table 8

Respondents Demography

		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	230	44.8	44.8
	Female	283	55.2	55.2
Age	51-60	40	7.8	7.8
	41-50	69	23.3	23.3
	31-40	144	27.1	27.1
	20-30	266	51.9	51.9
Academic Credentials	PhD	12	2.3	2.3
	Masters	23	4.5	4.5
	Degree	97	18.9	18.9
	Diploma	166	32.4	32.4
	STPM/Foundation	104	20.3	20.3
	SPM	111	21.6	21.6
Race	Malay	187	36.5	36.5
	Chinese	179	34.9	34.9
	Indian	138	26.9	26.9
	Others	9	1.8	1.8
Marital Status	Single	284	56.3	56.3
	Divorced	28	5.5	5.5
	Married	185	36.1	36.1
	Widowed	11	2.1	2.1
Employment Status	Unemployed	142	27.5	27.5
	Freelance	35	6.8	6.8
	Contract	17	3.3	3.3
	Part-time	52	10.1	10.1
	Fulltime	267	52	52
State of Origin	Kedah	42	8.2	8.2
	Penang	53	10.3	10.3
	Perak	85	16.6	16.6
	Selangor	77	15.0	15.0
	Melaka	71	13.8	13.8
	Pahang	10	1.9	1.9
	Kuala Lumpur	62	12.1	12.1
	Negeri Sembilan	45	8.8	8.8
	Terengganu	17	3.3	3.3
	Johor	51	9.9	9.9
		513	100	100

Note: The demographic information of respondents who participated in the research.

Measurement Model

The researcher utilised SMART PLS to obtain crucial statistics for data analysis. The PLS programme was used to test the research assumptions. Smart PLS is a statistical software for calculating research data. To simulate the program, SEM employs Partial Least Squares. It is one of the most reliable methods for predicting and investigating the path of a model. Smart PLS takes a reflective as well as a formative approach and multi-group analysis. The present study observed a common technique bias accounting for 38.88 per cent of the overall variance, which falls below the suggested threshold of 50 per cent, as advised by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Therefore, the presence of common technique bias has been effectively mitigated in the present study. The results derived from the measurement model, as presented in Table 1, exhibit loadings that are beyond the threshold of 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014). According to Bagozzi and Yi (1988), the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeds the threshold of 0.5. Additionally, the collective reliability score (CR) is above the minimum acceptable value of 0.7. Therefore, it may be inferred that the criterion of convergent validity has been met. The identification of multicollinearity can be achieved by employing the variation in the inflation factor (VIF). According to the findings of Hair et al. (2017), a variation in the inflation factors (VIF) value equal to or below five indicates the absence of any collinearity issue. According to Petter et al. (2007), the presence of a high level of multicollinearity among constructs might lead to an unstable evaluation process and provide challenges in isolating the specific influence of particular dimensions on the construct.

The findings from the reliability test indicate that all variables exhibit values exceeding 0.7. According to Ghozali (2014), it is advisable to ensure that reliability tests exhibit results over 0.7 in order to fulfil dependability criteria. The obtained findings fulfil the specified criteria and are deemed to be trustworthy. Discriminant validity was assessed in order to ascertain the distinctiveness of all the constructs from one another. Discriminant validity poses a concern when the HTMT value exceeds the thresholds of 0.85 or 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). According to Table 9, it is evident that all the values of the constructs are below the threshold of 0.85. Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate the presence of discriminant validity among all the constructs, with a majority of the items exhibiting different characteristics.

Table 9

Reliability of Constructs Measurement Model Analysis Results

Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE	VIF
c1pi2	0.754	0.824	0.828	0.877	0.588	1.626
c1pi3	0.802					1.993
c1pi4	0.811					1.988
c1pi6	0.714					1.511
c1pi8	0.748					1.561
c2vs1	0.831	0.815	0.815	0.878	0.643	1.998
c2vs2	0.822					1.878
c2vs3	0.792					1.694
c2vs5	0.761					1.418
c3as1	0.746	0.857	0.862	0.897	0.637	1.791
c3as6	0.818					2.066
c3as3	0.801					1.847
c3as7	0.798					1.947
c3as2	0.823					2.174
d1	0.793	0.885	0.886	0.912	0.634	2.073
d2	0.82					2.432
d4	0.802					2.09
d5	0.785					2.011
d6	0.807					2.178
d7	0.77					1.895
e1	0.789	0.918	0.921	0.934	0.638	2.296
e2	0.817					2.62
e3	0.834					2.733
e4	0.776					2.209
e5	0.861					2.985
e6	0.821					2.501
e7	0.734					1.914
e8	0.749					2.022

Table 10

HTMT Ratio Results

	AS	BR	PI	PLI	VS
Audio stimuli	0.798				
Brand recall	0.723	0.796			
Purchase intentions	0.699	0.681	0.799		
Plot integration	0.624	0.548	0.621	0.767	
Visual stimuli	0.697	0.559	0.557	0.565	0.802

The results shown in Table 10 demonstrate the presence of a positive connection as well as a mediating effect. The table presents a comprehensive and concise overview of the hypotheses, denoted as H_1 through H_{10}. Moreover, the table includes the T-statistics value corresponding to each hypothesis. When the hypothesis is determined to be statistically significant, the t-value surpasses the critical value of 1.645 at a significance level of $p<0.05$. In the context of a one-tailed test, it is seen that the t-value surpasses the critical value of 2.33 when the significance threshold is set at $p<0.01$. In the context of a two-tailed test, it is seen that the t-value surpasses the critical value of 1.96 when the significance level is set at $p<0.05$. Similarly, when the significance level is set at $p<0.01$, the t-value exceeds the critical value of 2.58. Based on the table supplied, it is apparent that there are eight hypotheses, specifically H_1, H_2, H_3, H_4, H_5, H_7, H_9, and H_{10}, which have statistical significance as indicated by the positive values seen for both the lower limit (LL) and the upper limit (UL). However, previous studies have demonstrated that the associations between H_6 and H_7 do not exhibit statistical significance.

Effect sizes and R2 values are essential empirical criteria for statistical significance when assessing the structural model. Hair et al. (2011) defined structural model analysis steps. These processes involve reviewing structural model collinearity, route coefficient significance, R2 value, impact size (f2), and predictive relevance (Q2). The researchers suggested a t-statistic threshold of 1.65 with a confidence range of $p < 0.1$. R-squared (R2) measures the proportion of variation explained by the connection between several variables. It also calculates dependent construct coefficients of determination. Ali et al. (2017) observed considerable (0.75), moderate (0.50), and weak

(0.25) R2 values for endogenous constructs. Chin (1998) classified R2 values as large at 0.67, moderate at 0.33, and weak at 0.19.

Table 11

Hypothesis Results

| Hypothesis	Beta Value	Std. Error	T Value	P Values	LL	UL	R2	F2	Decision
AS -> BR	0.584	0.073	8.052	0	0.458	0.698	0.541	0.325	Supported
AS -> PI	0.291	0.077	3.809	0	0.17	0.421	0.591	0.069	Supported
BR -> PI	0.313	0.073	4.299	0	0.187	0.427		0.11	Supported
PLI -> BR	0.144	0.059	2.424	0.008	0.051	0.245		0.026	Supported
PLI -> PI	0.244	0.055	4.482	0	0.154	0.334		0.082	Supported
VS -> BR	0.071	0.061	1.157	0.124	-0.033	0.168		0.005	Not Supported
VS -> PI	0.041	0.06	0.683	0.247	-0.062	0.141		0.002	Not Supported
AS -> BR -> PI	0.373	0.056	6.664	0	0.275	0.46			Supported
PLI -> BR -> PI	0.082	0.042	1.966	0.025	0.016	0.15			Supported
VS -> BR -> PI	0.096	0.046	2.082	0.019	0.017	0.17			Supported

Figure 4

Measurement Model
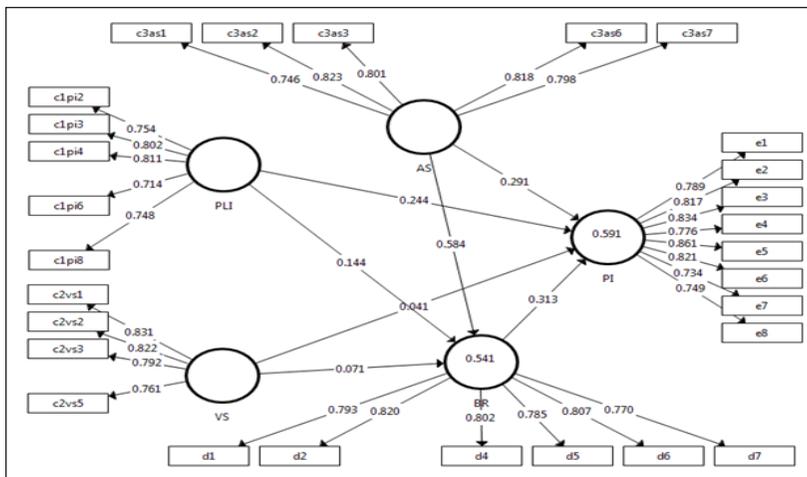
Hair et al. (2014) achieved statistical significance by employing 5,000 subsamples for the purpose of conducting consistent partial least squares (PLS) bootstrapping. The aforementioned studies provide a moderate level of R2 research, with values of 0.552 and 0.463, as depicted in Figure 4. Cohen (1988) introduced a notable model that yielded R2 values of 0.552 for BR and 0.463 for PI, both of which were above the threshold of 0.26.

The use of F square (effect size) has significant importance in the process of model selection. Figure 5 displays the values of BR at 0.281, 0.018, 0.019, and 0.863. Hair et al. (2014) discovered a significant impact. Henseler and Fassott (2010) employ the effect estimates proposed by Cohen (1988), which categorise the magnitudes as 0.02 (little), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (big). The measurements of the Structural Model were successfully achieved.

Figure 5

Structural Model
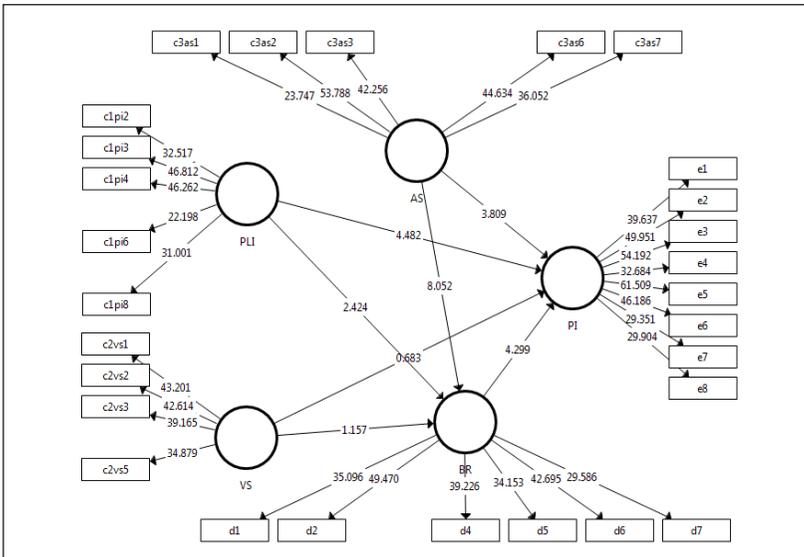
The findings of this research show that plot-integrated product placement influences customer purchase intentions in favour of the product. The fact that these items are part of the movie plots seems

to have influenced respondents' buying behaviour towards the placed products. This finding aligns with the theory of planned behaviour proposed by Ajzen (1985), which proposed that individuals' behavioural intentions are influenced by various motivating factors. These factors ultimately shape individuals' intentions to engage in specific actions. The research findings align with the study conducted by Natarajan et al. (2018), which revealed a notable correlation between product placement plot integration and sales performance.

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Audio stimulus product placement is a form of product placement employed by marketers. This type of product placement necessitates the audience's attentiveness to the movie's dialogue, as the product is discussed in the dialogue. Meanwhile, hypothesis 2 indicates audio placement has a favourable impact on respondents' purchasing intentions. The respondents reported good effects from audio placement on their purchasing intentions. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Parengkuan et al. (2020), which suggests that audio product placements have the potential to impact consumer buying decisions, particularly when the specific cinematic dialogue or placement is memorable. This also signifies the subjective norm construct of the theory of planned behaviour by Ajzen (1985), where something becomes normalised through exposure and is able to influence someone's thoughts and behaviour. Visual stimuli are another type of product placement that marketers frequently utilise, in which the object is put within the setting of the movie's elements to make it visible enough for the audience to observe.

Hypothesis 3 demonstrates a significant relationship between visual stimulus product placement and consumer purchase intentions, as confirmed through hypothesis testing. The findings show that visual placements can have a positive influence on the purchase intentions of customers. Equally important, Natarajan et al. (2018) highlighted that the presence of visual product placement resulted in a high level of stability for the visually placed product among audience members who viewed it. The merchandise is much more apparent to the target audience in this situation. This relationship supports the perceived behavioural control constructs of the theory of planned behaviour,

which focuses on the process of thinking about how easy or difficult it is to accomplish the desired action.

Product placement is indeed an important part of the successful integration of a product into a storyline. To recapitulate, since it is integrated into the plot, the merchandise becomes an intrinsic part of the film's character. In other terms, even though the product is not an actor or prop, it becomes an integral part of the movie's storyline. The test findings, as shown in Table 8, aim to provide evidence supporting the assertion that there exists a strong correlation between brand recall and purchase intentions. The findings indicate that participants' ability to remember a product placed within a storyline can affect their intention to buy the product. The present finding aligns with prior studies on brand recall, which have shown that exposure to placement activity can lead to this phenomenon (Balakrishnan et al., 2012; Coskun, 2021).

Russell (1998) and Nimri et al. (2020) have established the concept of typology for product placement that includes the use of innovative audio stimuli. The following illustration depicts the process of introducing a product during a cinematic production. Throughout the film, there are instances where a character or actor alludes to the product or mentions it explicitly. The product is not in its final physical state. As a result, when the factors of product placement and audio placement are combined, brand recall has a considerable impact on customers' purchase intentions, as shown in the findings of the mediation research in Table 8. Consumers often consider their familiarity with a product when making a purchase decision. According to Coskun (2021), viewers will acquire the skill to recognise the product that is repeatedly referenced or hinted at throughout the duration of the film. This example demonstrates a subjective norm that pertains to consumers' approval or disapproval of a particular behaviour or disagreement according to how they perceive it.

To make a product more visible to the audience, Russell (2019) embeds the product into the movie's content. The items will appear in several scenes but will not be a common narrative element. The outcomes of this research reveal that brand recall has a statistically significant mediating influence on the connection between visual stimulus product placement and consumer purchase intentions. Also,

brand recall may increase respondents' interest in visual placements in movies, increasing their purchasing intentions to investigate getting the product strategically placed in the film. These findings also support Chan's (2020) claim that brand recall, an aspect of brand awareness, affects the motivating purchasing intentions of consumers towards commodities or services depicted in movies. Brand recall, a component of brand awareness, influences customers' purchase intentions for products or services displayed in movies, confirming the perceived behavioural control constructs in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which focuses on the process of thinking about how easy or difficult it is to accomplish the desired action.

Ethnicity influences buying intentions and marketing methods, according to Pires and Stanton (2018). According to Moro et al. (2019), Malaysia's commercial market relies substantially on its multi-ethnic population. Marketing to everyone may not succeed since each race has different beliefs, cultures, sentiments, qualities, and tastes (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Nguyen and Mogaji (2020) found that ethnicity has a significant influence on purchase intentions. This aligns with the product placement tripartite typology by Russell, which involves marketing products to specific ethnic groups by identifying the appropriate approach for each group. It also extends the theory of planned behaviour by considering multi-ethnic behavioural intent. However, the application of this theory to the study of ethnicity is infrequent. This study aims to assist marketers in Malaysia in formulating marketing strategies that are tailored to specific ethnic groups. The research findings highlight the commonalities and distinctions among various ethnic groups, enabling marketers to develop targeted campaigns tailored to specific ethnicities.

In 2017, Malaysian corporations spent $1.30 billion on marketing (eMarketer, 2017). However, many organisations could not determine the appropriate marketing technique for different ethnicities. On the other hand, product placements in Hollywood movies have successfully helped audiences recall companies (Russell, 2019).

Malaysia lacks product placement research. Most studies have examined how product placement affects customer buying behaviour or intentions. However, there is no study on product placement impact and multi-ethnic moviegoers' buying intentions. Kit and Png

(2014) examined teens' shopping habits. Most research examined product placement and customer intent. Neither research examined product placement's impact on multiracial moviegoers. There was research that investigated the practice of product placement in Malaysian cinema by Nordin and Baharom (2018). In addition, another research investigated the relationship between product placement in Malaysian cinema and consumer behaviour by Omar et al. (2017).

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of product placement, brand recall relation among consumer purchase intentions and product placement among Malaysian moviegoers of various ethnicities. Brand recall is an important component of marketing as it can enable audiences to remember placements of products that they have witnessed previously, and this is crucial to determine the success of said product placement marketing. This study has established a positive correlation between product placement, brand recall, and consumer purchase intentions. The research findings indicate that brand recall plays a mediating role in the relationship between different types of product placement (plot-integrated, audio stimulus, visual stimulus) and the purchase intentions of multi-ethnic Malaysian cinemagoers. In further elaboration, it can be argued that product placement serves as a mechanism for generating brand recall. This, in turn, triggers the audience's memory, enabling them to form positive associations with the product placements depicted in films. Consequently, these associations have the potential to influence their subsequent purchase intentions towards the featured products. This finding will also contribute tremendously towards the development of literature in product placement, which could be used as a point of reference for local marketers, academics and industry to interact better with the Malaysian target audience, which consists of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The participants of the research were all people of mixed ethnic backgrounds, and they went to cinemas to see Hollywood films. This was done in order to investigate the one-of-a-kind impacts

of integrating audio, visual, and the storyline, all of which are heightened in a theatrical environment as a result of advancements in screening and audio technology. Peninsular Malaysians were the subject of the researcher's attention. The researcher focused just on Peninsula Malaysia because it is where the majority of theatres are located. The researcher was not able to include Sabah, Sarawak, or Labuan.

The researcher suggests two important future study areas. The first study will examine how Hollywood product promotion affects East Malaysian ethnicities' purchase inclinations. The second research examines the method by which product placement in Malaysian and Hollywood movies affects Malaysian shoppers. The two aforementioned areas have a significant effect on the Malaysian field of marketing.

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Appendix A: Research Instrument Items

	Plot Integration
1	The inclusion of real products in movies make the scenes more realistic.
2	The use of products makes the movies more realistic.
3	Products plays an important role in the story.
4	The products are well connected to the movie's plot.
5	I have no problem when a product is involved in the storyline of the movie.
6	The product that is placed in the movie should match in the movies.
7	I buy products that I have seen movie stars using in the movies.
8	I don't like when the product has a big part in the movie.

Visual Stimuli

1	I pay attention to the visual exposition of products.
2	The product is well integrated in movies.
3	The product interferes in the movie's plot.
4	Product position on screen distracts me from the plots of the movies I watch.
5	I have no problem with product placements that are visible in movies.
6	I like it when our favourite products are visibly used in movie.
7	I do not mind when a product appears too often in a movie.
8	I do not mind when a logo of a brand appears often.

Audio Stimuli

1	I pay attention to the audio mentioning product placements.
2	The audio mentioning the placements is well integrated in the in films.
3	The audio effects interfere in film's plots.
4	The audio effects of the placements distract my attention.

5   I have no problems with product placements which is mentioned or heard (audio).
6   I like it when a character mentions a product name in a movie (audio).
7   I don't mind when a product is frequently mentioned (audio).
8   I can accept product placements which mentions the product.

Brand Recall

1   I am more likely to remember a product placed in movies than placed in commercial formats.
2   I can remember what was said by the product that appears in movie/ what was done with the product/ where the product scene located.
3   I can recall at least one product placement in the movie I watched on the following day.
4   I can remember the product placement(s) a few weeks after I have seen the placements.
5   When a character that I like uses the product in a movie, I am more likely to remember the product.
6   When I see a particular product at a store or supermarket that had appeared in a movie, I would think of that placement scene in the movie.
7   Do you think that the repetition of a placement facilitates its memorisation.
8   Do you think that product placement in movies facilitates memorisation.

Purchase Intention

1   I would purchase products I have seen in movies.
2   Product placements in movies make me want to buy the products being shown.
3   I started using a product after seeing them in movies.
4   I stop using the product that appeared in movie after watching it.
5   I buy products that I see movie stars using or holding in movies.
6   I would like to buy the products that appeared longer in length/ frequency in movies.
7   Could the vision of product used in a film influence your purchase intentions.
8   Could your affection for a film influence your purchase decision?