

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication in Product Placement “Descendants of the Sun”

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Abstract

This study is intended to find out the meaning behind verbal and non-verbal communication in product placement in Korean drama, *Descendant of the Sun*. Conducting this study, I apply the theory process of signification proposed by Saussure (1974) and Chandler (2007) and Kinesics proposed by Birdwhistell (1970). The subject of this study is verbal and non-verbal communication in product placement in Korean drama *Descendants of the Sun*. The data was collected through video media from AsianNet.com and several resources. The findings of this study showed that verbal and non-verbal communication in drama *DOTS* creates the meaningful messages to its viewers. The findings also show that almost everything in the product placement, possibly have communicative purpose to its viewers. This study also found that non-verbal expressions are generally used to support the verbal communication and it is central to interpersonal relations because non-verbal cues are generally important in emotional communication. On the other hand, verbal communication is central to official or formal relationship. Moreover, the verbal and non-verbal communication in product placement mainly have communicative purpose to encourage, inform, persuade even change the opinion to its viewers to buy, use and know more about the products and services.

Keyword: interpretation, product placement, verbal and non-verbal communication

Introduction

The world has changed to become a global market where it is more competitive and consumer-oriented. Every product has to show its uniqueness and advantageousness to the society to reach the international marketing community. The important element to be successful in this era is the innovation and creativity, an important process that every company in the world have to do and maintain. In the advertisement, the company wants the product to impress the people or society. On the other hand, the customers want to select the best from the best product. So, here the gap makes people think about the innovation and creativity, to be different from other products. The innovation and creativity in the advertisement can be the turning point of the profitable or unprofitable of one and other product. Besides, advertising also has a purpose to inform and communicate to people about the product such as the price, availability, features, qualities and services and also to persuade and convince them to buy the product by offering the superior advantages of using the product.

Advertising is treated as the most powerful weapon to beat the competition effectively. It enables the firm to respond to the competitors strongly and to build and improve the brand image of its product. Terence A. Shimp (2009), one of the creative ways to market the product is through product placement, a form of advertising in which branded products and services are noticeable within a film or drama production with large audiences. Product placements are presented in a way that will generate positive feelings towards the advertised brand and are implemented, mentioned, or discussed through the program. This enables the audience to develop a stronger connection with the brand and provides justification for their purchase decision.

The writer would like to analyze the product placement in the Korean drama, *Descendants of the Sun*. *Descendants of the Sun* (2016) is a South Korean television series, which was a major hit in South Korea and received immense popularity across Asia.

There are at least 10 product placements in the Descendants of the Sun which is divided into several scenes in the drama but this time the writer will pick up 3 product placement randomly, namely Hyundai, Cheong Kwan Jang, and Snickers. All product placements in drama are as follow:

1. The product placement of Laneige.
2. The product placement of Korean Ginseng Corp.
3. The product placement of The Hyundai Motor Company.
4. The product placement of dal.Komm Coffee.
5. The product placement of Subway.
6. The product placement of A P S Express INC.
7. The product placement of Samsung Electronics.
8. The product placement of Orion Choco Pie.
9. The product placement of Snickers,
10. The product placement of Hotel-Combined.

This thesis aims to do research on verbal and non-verbal communication in product placement that is used by several companies in Korean drama Descendants of the Sun (DOTS) to build image and attract people to buy the product. For that purpose, the research is directed to answer following questions:

1. How are the meaningful messages in the product placement created to influence and attract people through verbal communication in Korean Drama DOTS?
2. How are the meanings in the product placement reinforced by non-verbal communication in Korean Drama DOTS (body language, facial expression, displays of emotion, the use of actors and actresses, etc.)?

The objective of this research is to reveal how the several big and successful companies like Samsung, Laneige, Hyundai, Korean Ginseng Corp, Orion Company and other company are trying to convey their campaign message throughout their product placement in drama the Descendant of the Sun.

In answering the questions the writer set in this study, the writer uses process of signification namely connotation and denotation as his main theories. Furthermore, the writer uses features in metaphor theories such as simile and analogies from Berger's (2010) to analyze Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication. The writer also uses and applies Daniel Chandler's (2007) theory about connotation and denotation to analyze Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication. Lastly, the writer also use the kinesics theory from Ray Birdwhistell (Birdwhistell, 1970) to analyze Non-Verbal Communication only.

Methods

This study uses descriptive qualitative approach to get and analyze the data. The writer chooses qualitative because it is primarily exploratory research. The writer doing the research about the verbal and non-verbal communication analysis of product placement in the Korean-drama "Descendant of the Sun" and then trying to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions based on the theory that applied to answer the research question. The research questions about the meaningful messages in the product placement are created through verbal and non-verbal communication and the meaningful messages in the product placement.

To collect the data, the writer did some steps as follow:

1. Firstly, the writer collect all the product placement in Korean-drama, Descendent of the Sun, with some criteria:
 - The brand of the product is easily visible.
 - There is verbal or non-verbal communication in the product placement.

2. Secondly, the writer screenshot or recording the verbal communication (conversation, language, text information about the product) or non-verbal communication (the sound, picture, settings, body gesture, facial expression, etc.) and took a note about the interaction and analyzed the meaning.
3. Then, the writer did the analysis and reported the findings.
4. Finally, the conclusion will be discussed.

Findings and Discussion

There are several verbal communications that are divided into 16 episodes in the product placement of DOTS drama.

The first product placement is Hyundai Motors, a South Korean multinational automotive manufacturer headquartered in Seoul, South Korea. The product placement of Hyundai Motor has an interpreted meaning that the product are **worthy** even the customer has to spend all their money to get the car and the product like Hyundai Avante is **highly recommended** for the couples. The meaning can be seen from the verbal communication that happen during the product placement, such as “I haven’t thought about that. But I will buy a new car.” (*Appendix 6.13*). This is the response of the Ha Ja-Ae statement about the important of saving money rather than buying the new car (*Appendix 6.12*). Although the female character remind the male character to be wise spending all his money, the male character is still persistent to buy the new car. The conversation in this couple finally conclude that both of them agreed to spend the money to buy the new Hyundai car.

The non-verbal communication in Hyundai’s product placement is intended to show that Hyundai is a “**muscle**” or **strong car** which can challenge the hardest nature’s condition. The connotation as a strong car can be seen through the plot in the story, where Doctor Song Sang-Hyun uses her car to defeat the “bad guy” and although the car has been broken because of the crash, it can still move to safe area.

The second product placement is the body supplement; Cheong Kwan Jang Red Ginseng (CKJ). The connotation of CKJ Red Ginseng product placement is that CKJ Red Ginseng is such a attractive product. The message is that CKJ Red Ginseng that is more attractive than chocolate cookies. It can be seen from the beginning of the story when the Captain persuades his sergeant to open the package by using “Chocolate Cookie.” when the sergeant opens the package, the captain looks very surprised, that is probably because the inside of the package is CKJ Red Ginseng, which is beyond the captain’s expectation. Another interpreted meaning is The CKJ Red Ginseng is the luxurious product.

As for the non-verbal communication, the kinesics meaning is Cheong Kwan Jang Red Ginseng as delicious and more attractive product rather than chocolate cookies. The delicious meaning can be seen through the body movement and eye contact while Captain Yoo Si-Jin consumes the CKJ Red Ginseng. Captain Yoo Si-Jin put his hand which holds the Red Ginseng higher than his mouth, in order to consume all the Red Ginseng. It also shows the emotion of Captain Yoo Si-Jin which is enthusiastic to consume the CKJ Red Ginseng. When Captain Yoo Si-Jin knows that the package contains CKJ Red Ginseng, he moves rapidly to make sure that it is really CKJ Red Ginseng. It shows the value of CKJ Red Ginseng is more attractive than chocolate cookies.

The third product placement is Snickers chocolate bar. The message from the product placement snickers is delicious, precious, and easy to handle that will discuss more in 4.2 non-verbal communication’s part. The message can be seen from the verbal communication when Captain Yoo Si-Jin asks why Sergeant Seo Dae-Young eats it alone, the Sergeant answers it coolly by saying that one snickers is not enough to share, although actually he bought two and eat it all. It can lead to the interpretation that actually Sergeant does not want to share his snickers because probably Sergeant thinks that the Snickers is delicious or even precious.

The non-verbal communication of Snickers product placement through the body movement and appearance such as the situation, place, and dresses shows that Snickers is practical and delicious snack. The message can be seen through kinesics such as gesture, body movement and the connotation of product placement. The practical snack means that Snickers can be eaten anytime & anywhere regardless the situation in surrounding. Sergeant SeoDae-Young in product placement act in the formal and

important situation like guarding the very important person (VIP) guest and when Seo Dae-Young has a short break time, he uses it to eat snickers rather than eat other snack or food. It probably shows the connotation meaning that Snickers is practical snack, no takes long time to enjoy it.

Conclusion

In both verbal and non-verbal communication in product placement Descendants of the Sun. The writer concludes that through creative, innovative and unique branding strategy in product placement, it creates the meaningful message to its viewer. Product placement in Descendants of the Sun creates an advertisement which plays with the process of signification such as denotation, connotation as well as kinesics and also metaphor, especially to iconize the success of the company through a mere consumption of the product. By picturing each of the product placement as a unique, attractive, luxurious, reliable, highly recommended, powerful, helpful, the branding strategy of each product placement aims to offer a display of superiority in the social group to the viewers.

In the product placement such as Cheong Kwan Jang Red Ginseng and Snickers the verbal expression is used mostly to change the reality to be perceived by the viewers through stressing on the innovative, creative or even new idea behind its product. Moreover, the verbal expression is also used to make viewers aware of the advantage using product or services in product placement by pointing out its strength points such as muscle and safety car in Hyundai, practical snack in Snickers and also as luxurious product in the CKJ Red Ginseng. Through the branding strategy, each of product in product placement verbally aims to encourage audience become fully aware that the product has superior values because of its advanced features, specifications, and strength points.

In the product placement, the non-verbal expression is used mostly to boost the message and the value of the product that have been mentioned in verbal expression. In the product placement such as Hyundai, the company stressing the message that the car is reliable by giving the illustration that the car is used by official state which determine the car is well secured and well protected. Through that method, each of product in product placement aims to evoke the sense of consumerism as well as sense of exclusivity within the mind of the audiences who seeks to display a social superiority within the social group, such as in the product placement in Hyundai and Samsung, which provide the consumer non-verbally message of “exclusivity, recognition, access to privileged information such as in Samsung Pay and prestige value in Samsung S7” (Tynan et al, 2010, p.1161) through its brand power where consumer can display a “social superiority” and affluent lifestyle through its consumption (Roper, Caruana, Medway & Murphy, 2013).

Product placement has never been a mere communication medium whose purpose is limited only to introduce or to promote some products. It is more than that; its usage is complex, not just a mere marketing tool designed only to inform people about the product and persuade them to buy the product. Product placement can also be used to encourage people to do something, introducing new concept, and imprint certain image and/or perspective to the mind of the audience regarding the product and/or the company. The practice of using product placement in drama Descendants of the Sun, underlines Harris’s (2004) statement which explains that product placement tries to affect or alter the reality of the audience, in the sense that product placement is designed based on several theories to establish a new image or perspective regarding a certain product. Product placement are turning people towards a product or service by providing a positive feeling and information that goes beyond simply calling people’s attention into it (Percy, 2005, p.4). In the Descendant of the Sun drama, the type of the product placement is integrated explicit brand. The product in the product placement can be seen visible and also integrated to the story in the drama (Astous & Seguin, 1998).

Throughout this writing, the writer is fully aware that this writing is far from perfect. The writer believes that to get full understanding of the hidden message in the product placement, the scale of analysis should be broader. It is suggested to use more films or drama to analyze the same product in other film or drama product placement. Finally, the writer hopes that this study can be a starting point for those who want to explore or conduct the study of interpretation about product placement.

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