



ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT AS A GLOBAL MARKETING STRATEGY IN SUBWAY SANDWICH IN THE DRAMA MY ROOMMATE IS GUMIHO

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ABSTRACT

Subway is a fast food restaurant from America that uses a franchise concept. This research aims to determine the product placement used by Subway Sandwich as a global marketing strategy in the Korean drama My Roommate is Gumiho. In this research, the author uses qualitative methods on social phenomena by collecting data from news, journals, articles, dramas, and books to find evidence that supports product placement and global marketing strategies. However, this research focuses on analyzing Korean dramas and news articles. The findings of this research will result in a division of product placement dimensions included in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho. The result of this research is the product placement carried out by Subway in the parts contained in the drama My Roommate, which means that international audiences are increasingly able to recognize Subway products.

INTRODUCTION

Subway is an American fast-food restaurant founded in 1965 by Fred Deluca and Peter Buck. Subway restaurants introduced their flagship product in the form of sandwiches, and customers can choose the type of bread, toppings, and sauce they want; This restaurant has the nickname "made to order" (Shastri, 2021). Additionally, Subway restaurants emphasize that their products are always "fresh" and offer a variety of high-quality fresh vegetables and low-fat proteins. The author chose Subway as the product under study because of Subway's branding as fast food that is healthy and different compared to other fast food such as KFC, McDonalds, Pizza Hut, and others. Subway chooses raw materials that are good for health, encouraging people who are on a diet or want to eat healthy fast food to buy Subway (Oh, 2016).

Subway is a fast food restaurant that uses a franchise concept, which is operated by individuals who own and manage Subway restaurants in certain areas. Thanks to this statement, Subway restaurants can be built and owned globally. A global marketing strategy that makes it easier for Subway to expand abroad is to use the franchise concept. The concept of Subway as a franchise was first introduced in 1974 in Wallingford, Connecticut, and by 1981, Subway had 200 franchise restaurants spread throughout the United States (Lewis & Garnett, 2024). In 1984, Subway became an international company by expanding outside America and establishing its first restaurant in Bahrain (Subway, 2024). Subway has expanded to more than 100 countries and has over 37,000 restaurants (Subway, 2024).

Subway's expansion has also penetrated Asian markets, one of which is South Korea. In 2024, South Korea will be the country with the most restaurant outlets in the world, entering the top 10 worldwide (World, 2024). According to Colin Clark, CEO of Subway's South Korean branch, Subway chose South Korea to expand its business compared to other countries because the environment in Korea is business-friendly and strong consumer

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purchasing power is also the main reason and the process for foreign companies in South Korea is faster, easier and more transparent unlike other countries in Asia (Oh, 2016).

COUNTRY	# OF SUBWAY RESTAURANTS 2024	# OF SUBWAY RESTAURANTS 2023
United States	19,968	20,325
Canada	2,914	2,918
United Kingdom	2,135	2,164
Brazil	1,559	1,565
Australia	1,221	1,216
India	811	708
Mexico	792	778
Germany	672	657
China	611	544
South Korea	579	545

Figure 1 Number of Subway Restaurants in 2024 in the World

Source: (World, 2024).

Subway first entered South Korea in 2007, with Colin Clark as Subway International Korea Manager (Kim, 2022). At that time, Subway had not yet done product placement as a marketing strategy. Product placement being a good marketing strategy for Subway to promote its products is because Korean TV stations are prohibited from having advertising breaks during broadcasts (Berkman, 2021). The advertising strategy carried out by the South Korean Government in regulating advertising on South Korean products is contained in Product Placement Legalization/PPL Korean Broadcasting Act of 2009 (Chae & Sun, 2013). At first, the South Korean government banned its use product placement for foreign products, then in 2010 the South Korean government legalized it product placement for foreign companies who want to market their products using product placement in the Korean industry, especially in South Korean dramas and films (Herningtyas & Wardhanny, 2020).

Before 2010, South Korean government policy did not allow foreign companies to do product placement on television dramas. Subway has used this marketing strategy to support Korean drama productions, increase brand awareness, and expand the South Korean market. Then, a Subway official said that “We did our first product placement in a drama ‘Good Doctor’ in 2013 with the aim of promoting Subway naturally, including its locations and products through drama (Kim B., 2024). After Subway's appearance in Korean dramas in the drama 'Good Doctor' in 2013, Subway began to seriously carry out product placement in dramas in 2016 (Kim B., 2024). Subway often appears in Korean dramas as a form of product placement, including in the drama My Roommate Is a Gumiho (Lin, 2021) Diverse marketing activities and active use of product placement in popular dramas and the rise of K-drama culture have played an important role at national and international levels (Lee, 2024). Subway Growth in South Korea improved rapidly from opening its 100th restaurant in 2014 to 2024, when it opened 600 restaurants in just 10 years (Lee, 2024).

Subway Franchise In South Korea In 10 Years

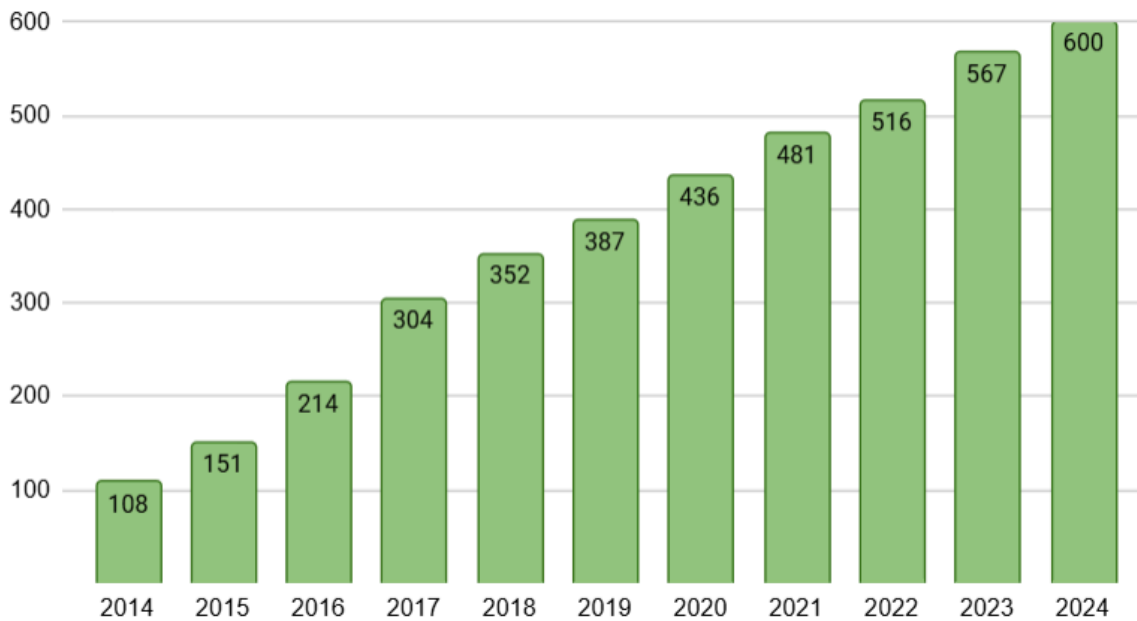


Figure 2. Subway Franchise in Korea
Source: Writer (2024)

The problem in this research is determining the global marketing strategy for Subway Sandwich using the product placement that occurs in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. This research aims to dissect the product placement used by Subway and its appearance in the drama. The challenge in this research is that the marketing carried out by Subway through the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* is expected to influence consumers globally. However, based on the author's data, research proves the process of fast food restaurant Subway expanding its business to other countries using a global product placement marketing strategy through Korean dramas. This data also shows the marketing process of Subway until it became known in South Korea and became increasingly known outside South Korea through Korean dramas. The drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* is one of Subway's drama choices to carry out its marketing strategy in 2021.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research focuses on global marketing strategy and product placement. Global marketing strategy is a process carried out by multinational companies in planning and implementing the process of utilizing their resources through the marketing mix (product, place, price and promotion) to fulfill exchanges aimed at satisfying consumers (Onkvisit & Shaw, 2009). Global marketing is a marketing activity that goes beyond national borders but also covers the global market for medium and small businesses. Global marketing also determines market segments, gathers consumers in homogeneous groups, and offers each company's products according to standards that meet consumers' desires and needs to the maximum (Hassan et al., 2003). Success in global marketing requires the study of the environment, namely factors related to the global market, and the development of a product plan according to the target environment. To launch a global marketing strategy, a company can market its products using methods such as opening a franchise so that it is easy to expand throughout the country.

Companies that often use the franchise concept are fast food restaurants. The franchise concept makes it easier for fast food restaurants to enter the global market and expand by opening restaurant branches throughout the world. The fast food system in America allows businesses to get consumers to eat quickly by offering food and beverage products to consumers quickly (Schlosser, 2012). Most of the fast food franchises that are currently global and easy to find in every country originate from America. These fast food restaurants are McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Starbucks and KFC. The rise of fast food in the US is encouraging every restaurant to expand rapidly into countries using effective marketing strategies. Fast food from the US often uses product placement in films to stimulate favorable responses from global audiences (Redondo & Bernal, 2020). The attractiveness of a product can increase due to marketing strategies through conventional advertising promotions and Product Placement. For fast

food marketers, product placement has a more profitable effect than conventional advertising (Redondo & Bernal, 2020). Because the market is global, global marketing strategies can be considered as product placement, and global brands help global companies gain profits in the global market (Ekmekçi, 2010). Subway Sandwich also pursues a global marketing strategy, similar to other fast food brands, by using product placement in Korean dramas to market its products more widely.

Because Korean Dramas are so popular globally, Subway's market is becoming more widely known. In a New York Times interview with Colin Clark, CEO of Subway Korea, he stated that product placement for popular dramas such as 'Descendants of the Sun' had a positive impact on global sales and an impact on the Chinese, Taiwanese and Singaporean markets (Berkman, 2021). Colin Clark did not provide specific figures, but Colin Clark said that the impact on customers before and after PPL was very different (Berkman, 2021). South Korean restaurant outlets have entered the top 10 rankings worldwide (World, 2024). Sales of the Subway that the main characters in the drama eat are known to have doubled, increasing sales by 10 to 30 percent, although it varies from store to store (Park, 2019). According to John Lizzy, Subway CEO, in his interview, Subway Korea's successful product placement marketing has made Subway increasingly famous in South Korea and the Asia-Pacific region, which has huge market growth potential (Noh, 2022).

One of the global marketing strategies used by fast food restaurants to be known by the global community is to use product placement. Product placement: What is done usually uses films or dramas. According to d'Astous Seaguin (1999), product placement can be interpreted as the placement of a brand or company in a film or television program in various ways aimed at promotion (d'Astous & SeÂguin, 1999). Product placement can also be interpreted as a commercial content activity in a non-commercial setting, namely advertising a product that is produced through a combination of entertainment and advertising (Fauziah & Susanto, 2023). Exposure to consumers when carrying out product placement in a film or drama can have a positive impact on consumer purchasing intentions, especially consumers who have brand awareness, attitudes and good memories of the brand being displayed (Fauziah & Susanto, 2023). A company can initiate product placement by recommending its product to a studio or TV show, or vice versa (Williams et al., 2021). The application of product placement sometimes makes the audience or audience unaware of one of the promotional elements inserted into the television program so that it is considered part of a film or drama scene.

In Korean dramas, many brands carry out product placement appropriately to market their products, from Korean national brands to international brands. According to Russell, product placement consists of three dimensions, namely the visual dimension, auditory dimension and plot connection dimension (Russell CA, 2002). Based on Russell's three dimensions, this research will examine each dimension of product placement in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. The meaning of the three dimensions of product placement can be explained as follows:

1. The Visual Dimension, defined as a type of placement that is visually based by placing product placement in the background of an event, such as inserting a brand or product into a film through creative placement by placing outdoor advertisements in street scenes or through initial placement which positions products at shooting locations, for example food brands placed in kitchen scenes (Russell CA, 1998). In this study, the author will look at Subway's position only as a visual in the drama scene.
2. Auditory or Verbal Dimension: Product placement refers to the mention of a brand or product in dialogue and consists of various levels of product placement, such as place in the dialogue, tone of voice, character of the speaker, etc. (Russell CA, 1998). In this study, the author will listen to characters mention Subway products in a drama scene.
3. The Plot Connection dimension is defined as the use of mentions or appearances of a brand that are connected to the storyline (Russell CA, 2002). In this research, the author will look at Subway's position as part of a drama storyline that is interconnected with each other.

Korean dramas are currently famous globally, making local and international companies market their products on Korean dramas. Through dimensions that Russell has in product placement, the emergence of Subway will be clearly visible through the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. The product placement carried out by Subway in Korean dramas is expected to reach a wide audience not only in South Korea, but also Korean drama fans throughout the world. (Herningtyas & Wardhanny, 2020). The popularity of Korean dramas has made the South Korean government try to promote the culture in their country through product placement in films, dramas and variety shows, which the South Korean government hopes will attract tourists visiting South Korea and the global community who will become more familiar with the country of South Korea. (Herningtyas & Wardhanny, 2020).

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive research. Descriptive research provides a detailed explanation of an event and clarifies that a phenomenon that has occurred is true. Using case studies in descriptive research is a good step for a researcher if they want to investigate the program or phenomenon they want to research in more depth. Therefore, the author wants to explain the global marketing strategy for Subway sandwiches in detail using product placement in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. In this research, the author used qualitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative data analysis has inductive analysis which is based on the data obtained. This will be developed into a hypothesis, which needs to be searched repeatedly until it can be accepted or rejected according to the data collected by the author (Wekke, 2019). Through qualitative data analysis, the author wants to prove that the success of product placement in Korean dramas can make Subway implement a global marketing strategy, not only in South Korea. Furthermore, the author uses secondary data collection techniques, which means the author uses data sources through news, journals, articles, films and books according to the topic that supports the research. Based on the data found by the author, the author searched for detailed data starting from news, journals, articles and films related to product placement, global marketing strategies, and Subway Sandwiches in South Korea and globally. The drama or film data that the writer is looking for is based on dramas related to Subway and the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*.

Therefore, in this research, the product placement used by Subway in Korean dramas will be divided into three dimensions, namely the visual dimension, verbal dimension, and storyline relationship dimension. The writer will also conduct in-depth research by collecting data through documentation and examining each drama scene to ensure it aligns with the product placement dimensions. Then each dimension discovered by the writer in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* will be divided based on the scene showing the Subway. Like the visual dimension, there will be scenes in the drama that show Subway without explaining the benefits or mentioning the Subway brand and products. The drama scene is categorized as a verbal dimension, so in this scene it will show the *My Roommate is Gumiho* characters mentioning and explaining the Subway brand or product they are eating. Meanwhile, in the plot connection dimension category, it will show a scene that Subway will be connected to the story plot of the cast of the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. Dimensions Plot Connection usually connects more than one continuous episode. A more detailed explanation will be explained in the results and discussion section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Korean drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* is a drama that aired on tvN in May 2021. This drama, starring Jang Ki Yong and Hyeri as the main characters, presents an interesting story and intense chemistry. Based on rating data from Nielsen Korea, the premiere of the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* received a good national rating of 5.3% (Nita, 2021). Apart from receiving a positive response from Korean audiences, the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* also received a good response from international audiences. Through the iQIYI application, the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* expands its audience globally by broadcasting on Wednesdays and Thursdays (Nita, 2021). The drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* presents themes of fantasy, romance and comedy and also attracts the attention of viewers who like stories about Korean mythology (*Gumiho*).

Even though this drama has a fantasy theme, Subway Sandwich has an important role; Subway often appears in several scenes of *My Roommate is Gumiho*. In this research, three dimensions of Subway product placement are seen in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho*. Product placement in the drama *My Roommate is Gumiho* can be found in the visual dimension; Subway products and logos are visually visible without mentioning or explaining Subway products. The visual dimension in episode 14 tells the story of Lee Dam (Hyeri), Shin Woo Yeo (Jang Ki-Yong), and Yang Hye Sun (Kang Han-na) who are eating at Subway. In this scene, Lee Dam invites Hye-sun and Woo-yeo to a Subway restaurant so that the two people can make up and deal with problems peacefully in the future. The Subway brand and products are seen in this episode for two minutes (iQIYI, 2021).



Figure 3. My Roommate is a Gumiho Episode 14
Source: iQIYI (2021)

Furthermore, evidence of product placement in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho is also visible in the verbal dimension; several scenes mention or explain Subway products. Subway in the verbal dimension is found in episode 11, where Lee Dam brings a sandwich to eat with Woo-yeo at home. Apart from episode 11, the verbal dimension was also found in episode 14 when Lee Dam ordered several Subway products to give to Hye-sun and Woo-yeo. In this scene, Lee Dam ordered two club sandwiches and one shrimp sandwich, honey oats for the club sandwich, and plain bread for the shrimp sandwich. In this episode, the Subway brand and products are visible for 1

minute each episode (iQIYI, 2021).

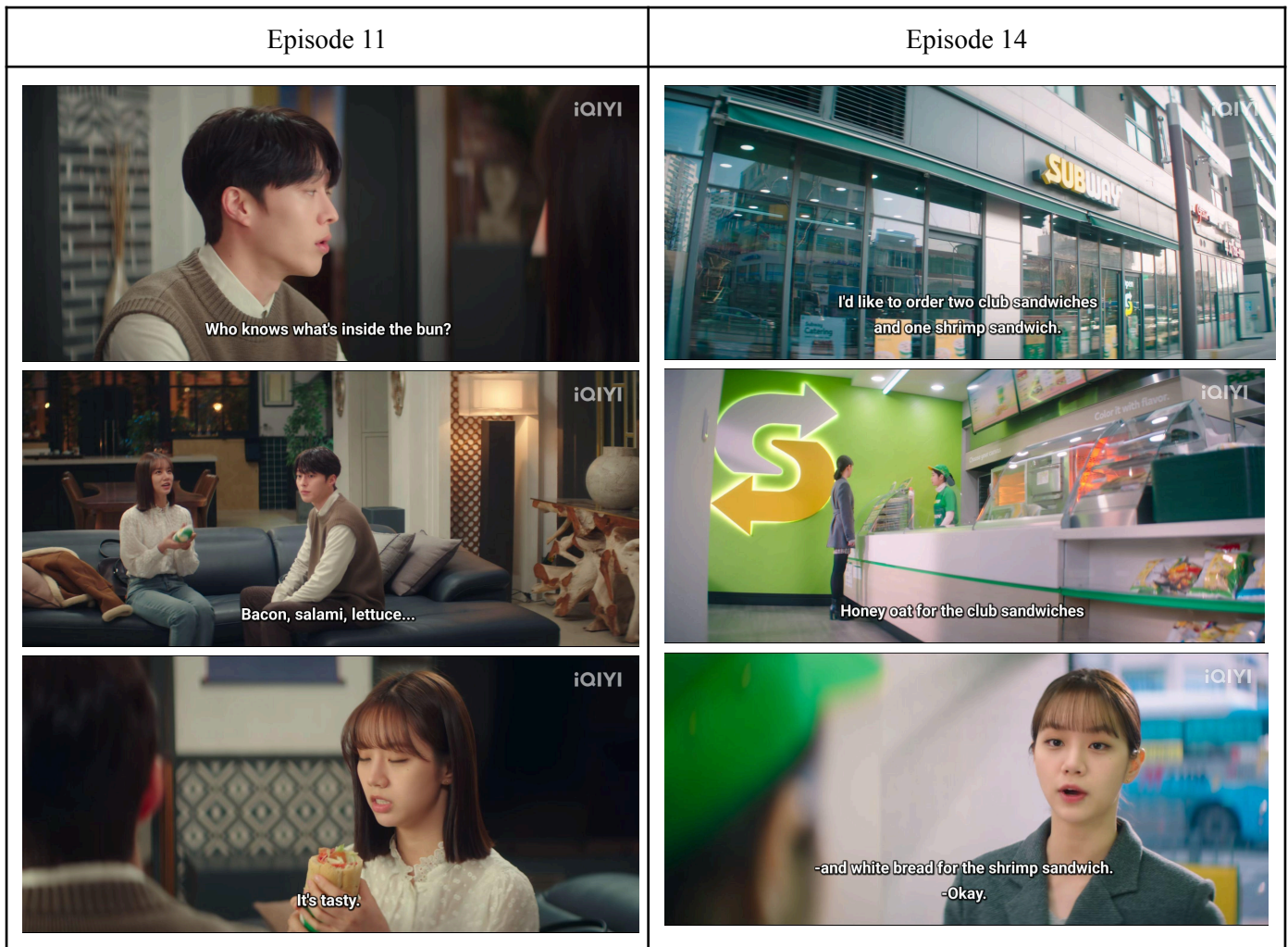


Figure 4. My Roommate is Gumiho Episode 11 dan 14

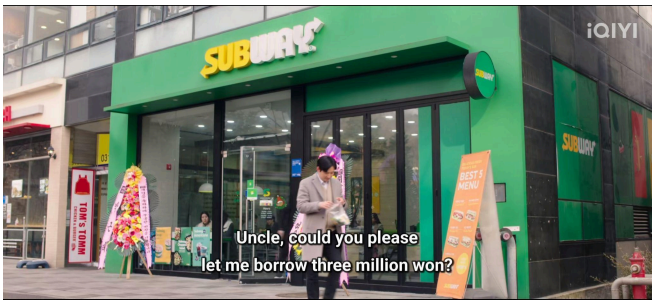
Source: iQIYI (2021)

Meanwhile, product placement in the plot connection dimension sees continuity between a brand or product and the storyline of a drama or film. In the drama My Roommate is Gumiho, Subway is part of the smooth storyline. Subway is included in the drama's storyline and can be seen in episode 11 which is four minutes long (iQIYI, 2021). In episode 11, Lee Dam received a message to do a part-time job interview at a Subway restaurant because at that time Lee Dam needed money to give to his younger brother. The connection between Subway and the drama's storyline is that the Subway restaurant is owned by Sunwoo's uncle (Bae In Hyuk), who coincidentally at that time Sunwoo needed money by borrowing money from his uncle. However, his uncle told Sunwoo to work at his restaurant and luckily Lee Dam came to do the interview. Sunwoo is a senior figure on campus who likes Lee Dam, so when he found out Lee Dam was going to work there, he finally accepted his uncle's offer to work at a Subway restaurant. After the interview, Lee Dam immediately worked at a Subway restaurant. The storyline related to Subway does not stop at episode 11, the next storyline is in episode 12 which is four minutes long (iQIYI, 2021). In episode 12, Lee Dam came to the Subway restaurant not to work, but to declare that he would quit his job to Uncle Sunwoo. Sunwoo, who found out that Lee Dam had quit his job, also quit his job. However, Sunwoo's uncle regretted Sunwoo's too obvious attitude towards and liking Lee Dam after being told by Sunwoo's uncle which made Lee Dam uncomfortable. In the flow connectedness dimension, products and brands are visible visually and verbally.

Episode 11



Sir, I was told to come for the part-time job interview.



Uncle, could you please let me borrow three million won?



Three million, my foot. I'll beat you three million times.



I opened up my restaurants two weeks ago,



-What are you doing?
-You needed money.

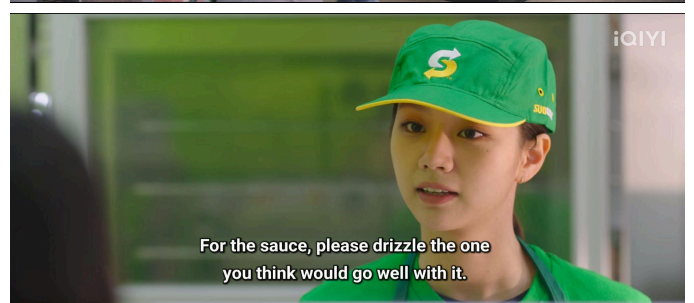


so I was going to hire new part-timers.

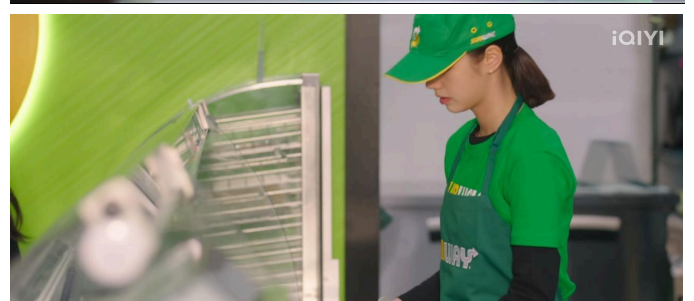
Episode 12



I'd like a chicken sandwich with extra avocados.



For the sauce, please drizzle the one you think would go well with it.



Hey, Dam is quitting.



It's because of you, right? You made her feel uncomfortable.



Did you think I wouldn't know you had a crush on her?



I'm here for the part-time job interview.



You always waited for her to come



Are you sure you can start today?



and did all the work for her.



Of course, I signed the employment contract.



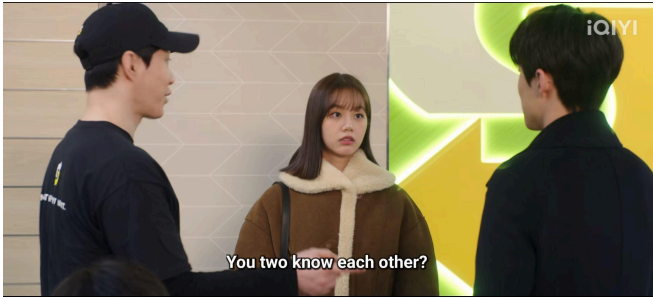
Being too nice to women only pushes them away.



It's wonderful that you're doing this for your brother.



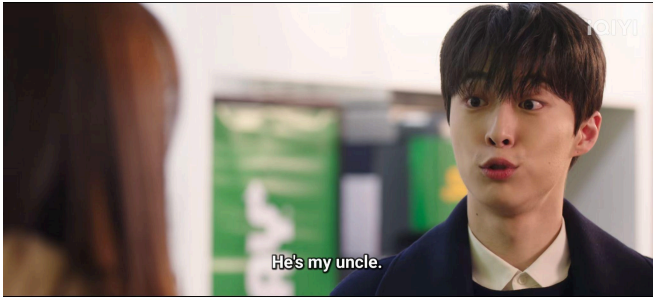
You guys made me feel awkward.



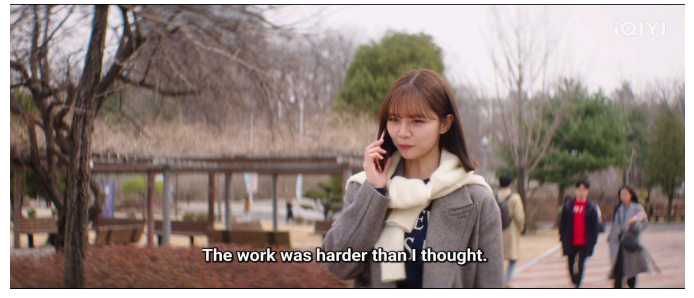
You two know each other?



She probably has someone better than you.



He's my uncle.



The work was harder than I thought.



Figure 5. My Roommate is Gumiho Episode 11 dan 12

Source: iQIYI (2021)

The relationship between the product placement dimensions contained in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho makes Subway appear frequently and is easily remembered by the audience. The presence of the Subway in various scenes of the drama is not just a background, but is also strategically included in the storyline, thus creating a stronger impression in the minds of the audience. Some global viewers can even easily remember that Subway once appeared in the drama, proving that product placement can influence purchasing decisions indirectly showing the effectiveness of the marketing strategy implemented. The drama My Roommate is Gumiho also made one of the viewers want to buy a Subway Sandwich after watching the drama. With Subway's consistent appearance through various dimensions of product placement, it is hoped that more and more viewers will be interested in trying this product and will ultimately become loyal customers. The appearance of Subway through product placement dimensions is expected to influence the audience to buy Subway.

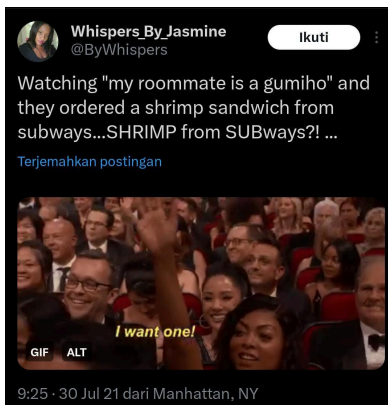


Figure 6. My Roommate is Gumiho Viewer

Source: X (2021)



Figure 7. My Roommate is Gumiho Viewer

Source: X (2021)

Discussion

Based on previous research entitled "The Influence of Product Placement and Product Attributes toward Purchase Intention of Subway Sandwich" (Fauziah & Susanto, 2023). The results of previous research explain that Subway's continuous appearance in dramas will encourage consumer buying interest (Fauziah & Susanto, 2023). In

this research, Subway must ensure product placement naturally fits into the storyline, choose characters and scenes in dramas that are relevant to the daily lives of the audience, and always maintain the quality of Subway products to maintain their appeal (Fauziah & Susanto, 2023). The product placement strategy implemented by Subway in Korean dramas to increase consumer buying interest are also implemented by various global brands as part of their marketing efforts in South Korea. Apart from Subway which does product placement in Korean dramas, there are several companies outside South Korea that use the same method as their marketing technique in the South Korean market. The brand that we usually see appearing several times in Korean dramas is Mercedes-Benz, this brand has started appearing since 2012 in the drama 'A Gentleman's Dignity' (Ahn, 2013). Product placement newest in 2024 from Mercedes-Benz in Korean drama 'Queen of Tears' (Herald, 2024). Then there is Domino's Pizza who also appeared in the drama 'What's Wrong With Secretary Kim' (Kim M.H., 2018). Apart from brands from America and Europe, Indonesia also does this product placement in Korean dramas, namely the Kopiko Candy product which first appeared in the Korean drama 'Vincent' in 2021 (Syahputra, 2022).

Based on several product brands that also do product placement in Korean dramas have side effects that benefit the brand such as Mercedes-Benz. Since Mercedes-Benz appeared in a famous drama, questions about the models that appeared in the drama increased and the number of people visiting car shows organized by dealer Mercedes-Benz also increased (Herald, 2024). This also applies to Kopiko candy products originating from Indonesia, which have also experienced an increase since doing so product placement (Syahputra, 2022). But product placement on Domino's Pizza does not have a significant impact because Domino's Pizza only appeared once in one drama (Kim M. H., 2018). Compared to the three global brands above, Subway does the most product placement in Korean dramas, namely 17 dramas according to records The New York Times (Berkman, 2021).

Meanwhile, this research discussing the drama My Roommate is Gumiho succeeded in covering a global scope because it collaborated with iQIYI as an international platform. Thus, the data found by the author regarding product placement dimensions is well divided into each episode. Each dimension has its own characteristics and is depicted in the drama. In the visual dimension, it shows that the characters will only display Subway visuals by eating together at a Subway restaurant without mentioning the Subway brand or any products that Subway has, and the storyline continues. This visual dimension lasts approximately 2 minutes, as shown in the drama. This visual dimension lasts approximately 2 minutes, as shown in the drama. Furthermore, in the verbal dimension, there is a scene that mentions Subway products when the characters in the drama are ordering food and say that Subway food tastes good. In the verbal dimension, the duration of the mention of Subway products is less than in the visual dimension, which is only 1 minute. Even though it only lasts 1 minute, the audience can see the food ordered by the main character so that the audience can imitate the order and try it at the nearest Subway restaurant. Then, the connection dimension plot is the product placement with the most Subway appearances compared to other dimensions. Plot connection has the longest duration because it is included in the storyline. In this dimension, Subway must be integrated with the storyline of a drama without reducing or adding to it. In the data found by the author, the plot connection does not stop at one episode but continues in the next episode. The plot connection in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho consists of two interconnected episodes. The first episode of Subway's appearance as a plot connection tells the story of the main character who wants to find a part-time job. He tries to find work at a Subway restaurant. However, the owner of the Subway restaurant is the uncle of one of his seniors on campus. This episode also shows a scene where the main character serves customers at a Subway restaurant. The next episode is a continuation of the main character who has to stop working at Subway for reasons related to the storyline. Product placement in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho is conveyed well based on the third dimension.

Subway, which is eaten and promoted in Korean dramas, whets the appetite of people who watch the drama, thus encouraging viewers to buy Subway products after watching the drama. Subway's appearance in the drama could also have a positive impact on the expansion of the franchise outside of Korea because global audiences can enjoy Korean dramas. This can also be seen in Indonesia, which is very famous for the Korean Wave, allowing Subway to return and open a franchise in Indonesia in 2021 thanks to Subway's product placement in Korean dramas, while Subway has withdrawn from Indonesia since 2000 (Noh, 2022). A shop customer told local media that he really wanted to try Subway because he often saw it in the Korean dramas he often watched (Koh, 2021). He also admitted that he had looked for information about Subway in Indonesia several times, but couldn't find it. After hearing the news that the outlet would reopen, he decided to come. Meanwhile, other visitors expressed their desire to taste the flavors usually enjoyed by the main characters in K-dramas. Even though he didn't expect the queue to be that long, he was still happy because he could finally taste it.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Subway's global marketing strategy has been conveyed well through the drama My Roommate is Gumiho. To prove this, the drama My Roommate is Gumiho is not only broadcast nationally in Korea using tvN but is also broadcast via the iQIYI application which can be enjoyed by international audiences. In this research it can also be concluded that product placement in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho is proven and is divided into three dimensions, namely the visual dimension, verbal dimension and plot connection dimension. The appearance and explanation of the Subway brand or product is conveyed according to its portion without changing the storyline and appearing excessively in the drama. Therefore, the product placement carried out by Subway on the parts contained in the drama My Roommate is Gumiho can be increasingly recognized by international audiences, and Subway is increasingly expanding its franchise wings in other countries, so that Subway's goal of global marketing with Korean dramas can be said to be successful.

This research still has several data deficiencies which only focus on secondary data based on journals, books, news and dramas. It is hoped that further research can provide a new perspective based on consumer responses to Subway product placement in Korean dramas. Apart from being based on consumer responses, future research is expected to be able to conduct research related to product placement carried out by Subway in other dramas or use other forms of product placement theory.

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