

The Role of Product Placement in Serial Storytelling⁴.

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Abstract

In the last decades, TV series have increasingly become an ideal platform for product placement initiatives due to their relatively quick production process and the variety of advertising opportunities they offer through sound, visual or integrated placements (Russell, 2019). Moreover, in recent years, streaming platforms have further promoted this form of communication by creating serialized content that resonates strongly with younger audiences, who tend to favour non-traditional media (Li, 2023). The continued increase of global revenues further underscores the success of product placement, with projections anticipating a surge to \$29 billion in 2023 (Navarro, 2023). This reflects a notable increase of over 12% compared to the preceding year. In this context, the paper aims to analyse product placement in the series *And Just Like That...*, the sequel to *Sex and the City*. In particular, it will focus on two antithetical cases: the so-called “negative placement”, which occurs when the inclusion of a brand or product is linked to a narrative element detrimental to the image of the brand itself, and “positive placement”, a promotional strategy that instead enhances the appeal and visibility of the featured product within the narration.

Keyword: Literary Cities; Morocco; Spanish Literature; Orientalism.

Introduction

Product placement, i.e. the practice of deliberately inserting brands or products for promotional purposes within audiovisual narratives such as films, TV series, reality shows, music videos or video games, emerged in the United States in the 1980s as an autonomous form of brand communication⁵, although the audiovisual industry had already used similar techniques in previous decades through formulas such as exploitation and “tie-ups” (Codeluppi *et al.*, 2020). Lowrey *et al.* (2005) use the term *product integration* to refer generally to the practice of incorporating a product or service into a medium on the basis of some

⁴ The paper is the result of joint reflection and ongoing discussion among the authors. Nevertheless, Geraldina Roberti is credited with the authorship of the introduction and paragraph 3, while Ariela Mortara contributed to paragraphs 1 and 2. The conclusions were jointly written by both authors.

⁵ As Sharma and Bumb (2022, pp. 104-105) recall, “the term product placement was coined in the 1980s after the exponential increase in the sales of Reese’s Candy, which was subtly referred in the movie ‘E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial’ by Steven Spielberg”.

sort of agreement; *product placement* is considered a sub-category of integration in which a product is mentioned or simply seen; finally, *product immersion* is the term for integrations in which a product or service is a part of the story⁶.

In the context of increasingly sophisticated branded entertainment strategies, corporate advertising and marketing managers have adopted new integrated communication tools to reach their target audiences more effectively. This involves combining commercial messages with increasingly spectacular entertainment content. Product placement appears to address the needs of advertisers seeking innovative ways to promote their products in competitive markets, as well as broadcasters looking for additional revenue streams⁷.

According to PQ Media (2022), the global value of product placement increased by 12.3% year-on-year to almost USD 23 billion in 2021. In this scenario, TV placement remains the main source of value at over USD 16 billion, followed by movie placement at almost USD 3 billion. In addition, according to the same source, digital platforms become the fastest growing sector with an increase of 16.3%, underlining their rising importance in the advertising market⁸.

Gupta and Lord (1998) assert that types of product placement can range from *audio only*, in which the name/logo of a brand is mentioned in dialogue without showing the product on screen, to *visual only*, in which a physical product or brand is prominently shown to the audience without any relevant message or sound in the audio track to draw attention to it, to *audio-visual*, the most effective way, which combines the previous two by showing a brand and at the same time mentioning the name or delivering a brand-related message in audio form⁹. Fundamental to the communicative effectiveness of the advertising message is the congruence of the brand's integration into the narrative. This refers to the writers' ability to make the product's presence in the scene credible and consistent with the events depicted; as Kumar writes (2017, p. 176), "[consumers] prefer it when these product placements are hard to notice or when they do not distract them from the storyline. Therefore, marketers need to bring out unique ways to grab a viewer's attention towards their product placements without causing disturbance to flow of the plot. Otherwise, the brand/product may leave a negative impression in the minds of the viewers". Under these conditions, product placement proves to be an essential marketing communication tool and strategy,¹⁰ influencing media consumers to develop positive brand attitudes and increase brand recognition, according to the logic of "people must not notice it, but they must remember it" (see Stringer, 2006).

This ability of product placement to enhance the value of a brand by making it more appealing in the eyes of the audience is also functional in providing additional purchase motivation for consumers, as it allows them to leverage the emotion and involvement generated by the narrative to increase the attractiveness of the brand, avoiding more

⁶ More generally, Russell and Belch (2005) define product placement as the purposeful incorporation of a brand into an entertainment vehicle.

⁷ As Gupta and Lord (1998) recall, when Reese's Pieces candies were featured in the 1982 movie *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*, sales of the product increased by 65% in the three months following the film's release.

⁸ For these data, see <https://www.pqmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PQ-Medias-Global-Product-Placement-Forecast-2022-2026-Executive-Summary.pdf> [last accessed 04.08.2024].

⁹ Russell (1998), in turn, identified three types of product placement: screen, script and plot. On this topic, see also Kumar (2017).

¹⁰ In this regard, also Sharma and Bump (2022, p. 112) emphasize the importance of seamlessly integrating the product into the narrative: "with the growing importance of sophisticated technology, the task has become easier for marketers for planning the product placement right at the time of inception of the film".

invasive forms of advertising. In fact, according to Soba and Aydin (2013), audiences feel that products or services that are integrated into a TV shows or films have a higher value than similar products or services advertised in other forms of media. Indeed, even if it hard to determine the impact of a single communications tool on sales, especially if the company is using an integrated approach (Soba and Aydin, 2013), the recent example of the placement of Birkenstock sandals in several scenes of the film *Barbie* (2023), testifies to the tool's effectiveness.. According to the online shopping platform Lyst, the film release led to a 110% increase in searches for the Arizona Big Buckle model, worn by Weird Barbie (played by Kate McKinnon), in less than a week¹¹.

As Maccari (2016) points out, placement has long since *colonized* the various media contexts, from cinema to television or the Internet. Indeed, if initially it was mainly Hollywood movies that adopted such advertising methods, in the last twenty years television series have also been recognized as the ideal space for product placement campaigns, allowing companies to showcase their products in narrative contexts with significant emotional impact. The length of the story and the flexibility of the plot offer companies numerous opportunities to seamlessly integrate their products into the episodes' narrative. In addition, with an increasingly global audience, TV series allow brands to reach millions of viewers worldwide, giving them an international stage where showcase their products.

In such a composite scenario, the paper aims to analyse the dynamics of product placement within the television series *And Just Like That...*, produced by the US television network HBO from 2021 as a sequel to the extremely popular series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004, HBO). Specifically, the article will focus on two antithetical forms of product placement, namely "positive" and "negative" placements. The term "positive placement" refers to the strategic placement of a product or brand within media content in a favourable or beneficial context with the aim of increasing brand awareness, improving brand perception and ultimately driving sales by using the power of storytelling and visual media to connect with audiences (Kumar, 2017). Instead, "negative placement" can refer to either an unfavourable effect resulting from overly prominent placement (Cowley and Barron, 2008) or instances where the product or brand is represented in a negative context (Redondo, 2012).

1. *And Just Like That...*

And Just Like That... is a television series that has captured the attention of audiences worldwide since its premiere on December 9, 2021, on the HBO Max channel. Meant to be aired as a miniseries, after the ten episodes of the first season, whose finale was released on February 3, 2022, the show has been renewed for a second season of eleven episodes, which began on June 22, 2023, and ended August 24, 2023. Additionally, a third season is in the works and is expected to premiere in 2025 (Felt, 2024).

And Just Like That... present itself as a revival and a sequel to the famous *Sex and the City*, which was produced for the pay-tv cable channel HBO, running from 1998 to 2004 for six seasons, comprising 94 episodes in total (Fritsch, 2005). The sequel show follows two not so much successful films: *Sex and the City*, released in May 2008, and *Sex and the City 2*, which

¹¹ See <https://tg24.sky.it/spettacolo/cinema/2023/07/27/-barbie-birkenstock-> [last accessed 30.07.2024].

premiered in May 2010. Taking place 11 years after the occurrences depicted in the 2010 film, the women of *Sex and the City* navigate their journey from a liberated and friendship-filled existence in their 30s to a more intricate reality of life and friendship in their 50s. Specifically, the show focuses on the lives, relationships, and experiences of three of the original four women navigating the complexities of love, friendship, and career in the setting of New York City. Indeed, the series is centred on the ever-fashionable, columnist and writer Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) now co-hosting a podcast about sex and gender roles, on pragmatical and witty Miranda Hobbes (Cynthia Nixon), who transitions from her previous career as a successful lawyer involved in company law to become an advocate for social justice studying for a master's degree in human rights at Columbia University, and on the ever romantic Charlotte York-Goldenblatt (Kristin Davis), depicted as a devoted mother and wife, committed to her family but struggling with her daughter Lily exploring her gender identity. Samantha Jones (Kim Cattrall) does not appear as a main character; her absence is explained within the storyline as she has moved away from New York City to pursue a new chapter in her life. However, Samantha's influence and past relationships with Carrie, Miranda, and Charlotte are referenced throughout the series, shaping the characters' experiences and interactions even in her absence.

When *Sex and the City* emerged in the 1990s, it shook up numerous societal norms, particularly within the American context. It boldly celebrated and prominently depicted women's sexual desires, marking a significant departure from prevailing attitudes of the era. Romance and the unabashed portrayal of the sexual experiences of the female protagonists were the central theme (Antonucci, 2023). After thirty years, *And Just Like That...* continues to explore many of the themes and topics that were central to the original series, like relationships, sexuality (Giomi, 2005), female empowerment and friendship, but encompasses also issues as gender identity and aging. Since the main characters are facing the realities of aging, they are also on the quest for self-discovery and reinvention in a very fragile time of their life. The protagonists grapple with questions of identity, purpose, and legacy, reflecting on their past experiences and contemplating their futures.

As a sequel to *Sex and the City*, *And Just Like That...* has generated significant buzz and anticipation among fans of the original series even if the expectations were often not met. According to Berman (2022), just the first episode focused on the death of John James Preston – otherwise known as Big (Chris Noth), the husband of the central protagonist Carrie Bradshaw – is “introducing an element of tragedy that never quite meshed with the more familiar, breezier story lines”. While *Variety* reports that the show has achieved success in viewership and holds the title of HBO Max's most-streamed series ever (Guerrero, 2022), some fans have engaged in a phenomenon referred to as “hate-watching”. They continue to watch the show despite harbouring negative sentiments, potentially driven by their fondness for the original series (Tayshete, 2022). Indeed, according to most critics (Navlakha, 2023), the show's first season was quite disappointing, failing to replicate the fascination of its forerunner. Plot developments frequently felt forced, lacking the humour and the lightness of *Sex and the City* and instead inducing cringe. The three protagonists, without the presence of the most unconventional personage of Samantha, are now joined by characters of Hispanic, or African-American or even Indian origin, in what was originally a predominantly white universe: Che Diaz (Sara Ramirez) a non-binary comedian, Dr. Nya Wallace (Karen Pittman) a law professor at Columbia University, Seema Patel (Sarita Choudhury) a New York City's real estate agents, and documentarian Lisa Todd Wexley

(Nicole Ari Parker). The four new characters interact at different levels with the original three expanding the original relational network but failing to recreate the atmosphere of *Sex and the City*, most of all the new show groaned under the weight of ten years' worth of exposition. Critics are quite harsh also for the second season defined as "even more lavish and unreservedly ridiculous than its first go-around" (D'Souza, 2023), even if the show offers a deeper characterization of the new cast members and captures more closely the essence and vivacity of *Sex and the City*.

2. The positive product placement in *And Just Like That...*

As mentioned above, serial narratives within television programming provide an ideal platform for brands to engage in product placement activities. Associating a protagonist of a series with a product or brand allows advertisers to capitalize on the positive feelings that viewers develop towards the character over the course of the narrative, resulting in a highly favourable return on investment. Furthermore, product placement appears to be less susceptible to some of the drawbacks associated with traditional advertising methods, as noted by Gistri (2008). These drawbacks include viewer impatience due to the overabundance of commercials on television and the tendency for viewers to switch channels during commercial breaks.

In *And Just Like That...*, as in the original *Sex and the City* series, the brands mentioned in several episodes – from Manolo Blahnik and Jimmy Choo shoes to Apple products and Gucci or Louis Vuitton bags – have consistently used product placement as part of their corporate communication strategy. In addition, many of these brands have chosen both series to launch special editions of their products¹².

The echo effect created around the consumer products featured in scenes from *And Just Like That...* has a positive impact on the brand awareness, often leading to significant increases in sales. For example, the orange Valentino dress worn by protagonist Carrie Bradshaw in the final episode of the first season, *Seeing the Light* (Ep. 01x10), resulted in a 194% increase in requests for long orange dresses and a staggering 1.085% increase in requests for "Valentino dresses" within just 24 hours of airing¹³.

If, as we have seen, the staging of items that are the object of desire for millions of viewers is a recurring element within the episodes of *And Just Like That...*, this presence also serves to define part of the identity of the protagonists themselves, making it explicit through the construction of their personal and recognizable style. As Gibson writes (2021, p. 2),

The central character, Carrie Bradshaw, is presented to the audience through her love of fashion and, in particular, Manolo Blahnik shoes (or as Carrie calls them in both *Sex and the City* and *And Just Like That...*, her 'lovers'). Carrie's blue wedding shoes are the narrative thread for Big's proposal, their marriage, and ultimately Big's death, where the shoes are destroyed on the bathroom floor [...]. But the shoes are not merely a plot device, they are

¹² This is evident, for example, with the Fendi Red Sequin Bag featured in the episode *The Last Supper Part One: Appetizer* (Ep. 02x10) of *And Just Like That...*

¹³ For these data, see <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/and-just-like-that-finale-fashion-valentino-dress-searches-increase-1235062613/> [last accessed 30.07.2024].

a living brand, a character in each scene. As Big himself forewarns in an earlier scene, “Those blue shoes are the whole ball game”¹⁴.

Similarly, the pink Chanel dress that Charlotte insists on buying back for her daughter Lily in the episode *The Real Deal* (Ep. 02x02) symbolically represents the romantic and traditional soul of the woman, which only at the end of the episode comes to accept the girl’s change of style (and interests).

From this perspective, we can observe how product placement in the series serves both as a tool to describe the personalities of the characters and as a presence that adds realism and authenticity to the overall setting, as in the episode *Bomb Cyclone* (Ep. 02x06), which was partly filmed in the real Apple Store on New York’s Upper East Side¹⁵. In this sense, the presence of clearly recognizable brands within the series contributes to the credibility of the narrative, as it helps to better define the socio-cultural context in which the protagonists operate¹⁶. According to Gibson (2021), such narratives always consciously and explicitly engage with the *cultural zeitgeist*, highlighting trends, brands and other cultural elements. For example, in the episode *Tragically Hip* (Ep. 01x05), Miranda, one of the protagonists, is shown sitting on a sofa surrounded by boxes clearly marked with the Amazon Prime logo; interestingly, a book found in one of these packages serves as a catalyst, prompting her to reflect on her alcohol addiction problem. This is why, as Codeluppi *et al.* (2020) also point out, product placement can be considered, in all respects, both a commercial communication and, at the same time, a tangible representation of a cultural system well contextualized in time and space.

But the use of this communication tool also allows the showrunners to exploit the symbolic value of consumer goods to highlight character growth or emotional change, as in the first episode of the second season of *And Just Like That...*, *Met Cute* (Ep. 02x01): the presence of an item of clothing, such as the Vivienne Westwood wedding dress worn by the protagonist for the second time¹⁷, acts as a real narrative device, allowing Carrie to demonstrate that she has begun to overcome her grief over Mister Big’s death in a tangible way. The sentence that ends the episode (“And so I repurposed my grief”) is in fact one of the turning points of the plot, as it allows the character to express her will to move on and take control of her life again, marking a concrete beginning to the second season of the series.

Finally, the integration of a product into a fictional narrative allows scriptwriters and showrunners to operate on several levels (Borello *et al.*, 2008). This ranges from the symbolic, linked to the semantic halo that surrounds certain brands, to the affective/empathetic, enabling better characterization of the personalities and facilitating audience identification, to the cultural, linked to the possibility of using the brand to represent with greater authenticity and immediacy the universe in which the protagonists of the story move. As we have seen, such a “positive” promotional strategy often proves

¹⁴ Ep. 01x01.

¹⁵ As Peikert (2023) recounts, this served as a form of acknowledgment of the series’ popularity, as Apple had never previously allowed a show to film scenes in its stores.

¹⁶ Commenting about the results of a survey on a sample of Italian consumers, Nelli (2009, p. 80) writes: “this study identified a segment of respondents which expressed the liking of the presence of existing brands in a movie and the belief that this presence establishes movie scene authenticity, enhances the entertaining experience, helps to finance interesting movies, aids in character development, and does not reduce the artistic value of the movie”.

¹⁷ The dress was worn by Sarah Jessica Parker’s character in the 2008 film based on the *Sex and the City* series.

successful it can have a beneficial impact on a specific product and its popularity, potentially leading to profitable spin-offs in terms of sales. However, after an episode of a series has aired, unforeseen events can occur that put brands in a difficult position, forcing them to face reputational crises and damage to their image. We will delve into this topic further in the next section.

3. *And Just Like That...*, he is dead!

In literature the concept of “negative product placement” encompasses various scenarios. Cowley and Barron (2008) use this expression mainly to identify the effect of the communication tool inserted in a program that is well known and liked by viewers; they conclude that “prominent placements can negatively impact brand attitudes of viewers who report high levels of program liking” (Cowley and Barron, 2008, p. 89), whereas a positive attitude towards the brand can be achieved in viewers reporting lower levels of program liking. Thus, for these researchers “negative” refers to the effects of the insertions for spectators. For Nunlee *et al.* (2012) negative product placement describes the communication activity of a company that “instead of [...] seeking to create a positive image of their products in consumers’ minds [...] seeks to have consumers disassociate from competitors’ products, by associating competitors’ products with negative role models or negative reference group members” (Nunlee *et al.*, 2012, p. 11). They link the practice of negative product placement with that of stealth marketing¹⁸ as companies involved in it prefer to operate discreetly. Finally, Redondo highlights that “at times scripts require brands to appear in negative contexts that sponsors instinctively reject for fear of having their product’s image damaged” (Redondo, 2012, p. 622). That mainly happens because the companies’ desire to place their brands in very appealing conditions (in order to elicit positive sentiments in the viewers) clashes with producers’ needs to place them in more realistic situations, coherent with the plot as probably happened with the Peloton case we are about to examine.

Indeed, as already mentioned, in the first episode of *And Just Like That...*, the husband of Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker), James Preston also known as Big (Chris Noth), dies in Carrie’s arms on the floor of the bathroom, suffering from a stroke while getting in the shower after a 45-minute exercise session on a Peloton bike, coached by his favourite instructor Allegra (played by a real Peloton instructor, Jess King) (Mack, 2021). Therefore, Peloton shares dropped by 11% overnight (Gibson, 2022), although the company was already suffering a fall in their sales following the big success of the lockdown months of 2020 (Kurutz, 2021).

According to Peloton’s spokesperson, they knew the company’s stationary bike would be used in the show, allowed the presence of one of their instructors, but were not informed about the actual plot, maybe because there was not a formal product placement contract encompassing money exchange (Pisani and Graham, 2021).

The Peloton debacle presents itself as an “excellent” case of negative product placement, where a brand appears in a negative context that could damage the product and the brand image. Indeed, according to Redondo (2012), negative placements are expected to gain

¹⁸ Roy and Chattopadhyay (2010, p. 70) argue that “stealth marketing refers to undercover, covert, or hidden marketing. Due to a low level of visibility, the target is unaware of the marketers’ actions, at least to some degree”.

more attention and thought than positive placements, since they are less common, and rarity seems to make negative stimuli more potent (Fiske, 1980). Specifically, *intrinsic negative placement* refers to all those representations directly linked to the technical characteristics of the product and its attributes, casting a negative light on the quality and functionalities of the product or service that the company offers; while *extrinsic negative placement* occurs when the brand's image is diminished by social stereotypes or common prejudices. In this case, the negative content is only peripherally related to the brand, thus viewers are less motivated in processing the information and the placement might actually have a positive outcome inducing nonuser of the brand to try it (Redondo, 2012). But, since the Peloton placement is *intrinsic*, it acquires a meaningful relevance for viewers, thus strongly motivating them to carefully consider the eventual negative consequences of engaging with the product and leading them to develop a less favourable perception of the brand. Moreover, the backlash of Peloton's negative placement was particularly harsh because the brand already suffered from some reputational problems due to an accident involving one of their treadmills that led to the death of a six-year-old boy, some months prior to the debut of the show, while another incident involved a three-year-old child stuck under the same type of machine (Taylor, 2021).

In order to counteract the effects of the negative product placement, Peloton spokespersons initially accused mister Big of having led an unhealthy lifestyle leading him to the unavoidable accident, then posted on YouTube¹⁹ a commercial that was announced on Twitted with the text "And Just Like That... He's Alive" (Gibson, 2022). The ad, edited in a single night, without involving either the writers of *And Just Like That...* or HBO, features Chris Noth flirting with the Peloton instructor Jess King, discussing the possibility of a new ride because "life is too short" not to do it, while a voice-over narrates the benefits of cycling for the heart, lungs, and circulation, as well as the reduction of the risk of cardiovascular disease (Damiano, 2021). However, after a few days, Peloton revoked the commercial from its social platforms. The cancellation came after reports of allegations against Noth by two women were published in "The Hollywood Reporter"; the girls detailed incidents of sexual assault they claimed to have experienced, one in Los Angeles in 2004 and the other in New York in 2015. The women, who requested anonymity, said they came forward after learning that Noth would return to play the role of Mr. Big (Corriere del Ticino, 2021).

Commenting on the Peloton debacle, the show's director, Michael Patrick King, explained "well, we knew he was gonna have a heart attack. So, the Peloton had nothing to do with the heart attack. The Peloton is a thing [though] that people have now, right? It reflects [modern] society. I wanted something to show that Mr. Big was current"²⁰. Thus, the specific insertion of Peloton was useful to the plot in order to enhance the realism of the show (der Waldt *et al.*, 2007) and to make it more appealing to the audience even if elicited a negative reaction in viewers' mind.

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCuhM-LPLVk> [last accessed 30.07.2024].

²⁰ Excerpt from an interview with Michael Patrick (in Taylor, 2021).

Conclusions

Despite the rise of other forms of communications fostered by the overwhelming presence of social media platforms, i.e. the growth of influencer marketing, the increasing investments in product placement testify the pivotal role of this tool for brand and products. The ability to integrate products into a compelling narrative that engages and excites audiences offers a means to partially mitigate consumer disaffection towards traditional advertising. This is achieved by transferring the positive emotions evoked by the characters portrayed to the products featured.

Product placement is subtle and therefore does not distract the viewer's attention from the main content of the programme or film, thus the interweaving of product placement with entertainment programmes ensures the audience's concerted attention, leading to commercial returns.

Thanks to increasingly sophisticated communication technologies, product placement can be planned at the conception stage of a film or TV series. This allows the producer and director to seamlessly integrate the product into the storyline without disrupting the main plot.

Among the different carries, television series have become an increasingly favoured platform for product placement initiatives, thanks to their rapid production schedules and the diverse advertising opportunities they afford, including auditory, visual, and integrated placements (Russell, 2019). *And Just Like That...* makes no exception, hosting product placements for very different brands: some of them inherited from its predecessor *Sex and the City* (Manolo Blahnik, Jimmy Choo, Fendi) some others, like Peloton, used to contextualize the show and make it more relatable to reality. However, occasionally the inclusion of a product in an episode can have unexpected consequences, even to the point of negatively impacting the brand.²¹ According to Peloton spokesperson statements, the negative placement in which the brand had incurred could be the consequence of an unclear contract between the company and the productions. After the turmoil generated by the death of Mr. Big and the attempt to regain the favour of the publics through the commercial "He's alive", Peloton has stated it is not going to file legal action, and HBO maintains that Mr. Big's death was caused by his unhealthy lifestyle and not the Peloton ride (Paul, 2022).

While numerous empirical studies in the field of product placement have concluded that it is effective in influencing media consumers to develop positive brand attitudes and increase brand awareness (see, among others, Karrh *et al.*, 2003; Brennan and Babin, 2004), the Peloton case underlines the importance of carefully considering the narrative context in which a brand is placed. This is critical to maximizing the promotional impact of its presence while minimizing the risk of backlashes.

We can conclude that *And Just Like That...* is a paradigmatic, albeit unique, case study illustrating how product placement can enliven the cultural discourse around a show, its mediation and reception, influencing both narrative and production aspects. In this sense, the centrality that a series assumes in the cultural debate can affect, positively or negatively, the brands that appear in the different episodes and contribute to the identity characterisation of its protagonists.

²¹ As Daugherty (2005) points out, in many cases the company has limited control over how the brand is incorporated or portrayed in a story or scene.

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