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# GUIDELINES TO ENHANCE RECALL AND RECOGNITION OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT STRATEGIES

## ABSTRACT

*Product placement is used to break through the marketing communication clutter that viewers are exposed to daily. It refers to the inclusion of branded products into, for example, television programmes or movies. A product placement strategy should be meticulously chosen to enhance the placement's effectiveness and to live up to marketers' expectations of conveying the brand message to the target audience, or at least creating awareness of the brand. Product placement strategies include prominence, verbal mentioning of the product, interaction between actors and the product, partial display of the product, and the combination of audio and visual clues pertaining to the product in the placement. This study explored the effectiveness of some of these strategies in creating recall and recognition. By means of the Tobii Eye Tracker device, respondents were exposed to scenes in soap operas, each containing different types of product placement to explore their recall and recognition of the placed products. The findings confirm that product placement has a definite place in the integrated marketing communication mix. The article highlights a number of guidelines by which a marketer or marketing practitioner could improve the likeliness of a placed product or brand to be recognised and be recalled.*

**Keywords:** product placement; product placement strategies; Tobii Eye Tracker; integrated marketing communication; brand integration; marketing communication; brand message

## INTRODUCTION

Product placement is becoming a valued alternative to traditional advertising (Clow & Baack 2016). Product placement, also referred to as brand integration, refers to the inclusion of branded products or identifiers through audio and/or visual means within mass media programming. However, product placement is not as simple as it sounds. Apart from the fact that it should form part of the integrated marketing communication mix, there are also different placement strategies that could be employed. As product placement is even more expensive than traditional advertising, it should not be considered an easy alternative.

This form of marketing communication should be thoroughly planned to ensure that the placement of the product is done in the most effective manner.

This article reports on a study aimed at determining the effectiveness of some of these strategies in creating recall and recognition.

## THE PLACEMENT OF PRODUCTS

Product placement is designed to influence the audience (D'Astros & Chartier 2000) by unobtrusively inserting branded products in entertainment programmes (Ouwersloot & Duncan 2008; Suggett 2016). Marketers benefit from this type of marketing communication, as viewers are unlikely to be aware of the persuasive intent of the placement – if done effectively. Directors of soap operas, on the other hand, reap the benefit of featuring a real-life branded product in a programme, as it adds a sense of “realism” to the programme, which is appreciated by viewers (DeLorme & Reid 1999: 2).

Central to the concept of product placement is the idea of adding value to the brand building strategy. According to Hong *et al.* (2008), organisations struggle to gain a competitive advantage over similar brands in the market; product placement seems to offer an alternative option in this ongoing battle.

### Different types of product placement

Marketers can choose from several forms of product placement. The visual insertion of products in a programme is the most common example. Beneke (2012) is of the opinion that a product should be promoted visually to convey a clear message to the audience. There are different ways in which the product can be visually displayed; for example, in the foreground or background. Another form of visual placement is if only part of the product or brand is visible, as it is suggested that there is better recall of a brand if a part of the name is omitted from the placement. This prompts individuals to think further of what the organisation, or the one responsible for the placement, is trying to accomplish through this “broken placement” strategy (Brennan 2008: 495).

The verbal mentioning of a brand is another placement type. Occasionally a combination of both visual and verbal presentation (Wilson & Till 2011) is employed, or the actual use of the product by the actors in the programme (Baker *et al.* 2004) is shown. Hiam and Rastelli (2007) state that marketers can benefit greatly from the fact that product placement offers the visual benefits of promoting a product; it can also demonstrate how to use the product. This can convince people of the benefits of buying the product and it can be linked to popular actors and characters to endorse the product. A final form of placement is when the storyline is written around the product (Russell 2002). Clow and Baack (2016: 308) refer to this as branded entertainment. Russell and Belch (2005) regard this type of strategy as an effective form of product placement as the product is woven into the storyline in order not to disturb the viewers and prevent them from feeling that they are forced to watch an advertisement.

## Aspects to consider in product placement

According to Karniouchina *et al.* (2011), Sung and De Gregorio (2008), and Law and Braun (2000), that an integrated approach to marketing communication proves to be most effective. In other words, brand touch points through different marketing communication techniques (such as advertising, sponsorships or direct marketing) should support product placement. The placement strategy cannot function effectively as a stand-alone marketing communication technique (Beneke 2012), but should be supported by an integrated marketing communication strategy. Laforet (2010) supports this view and suggests that consumers must be informed about the product prior to the placement (by means of exposure to advertising or packaging), so that they can recall the facts that they have already obtained of the product through other means of contact. Placing a new product (unfamiliar brand) in a programme does not have the same effect on viewers as it would have if consumers saw a product in a programme that they had previously encountered it in an advertisement or any other brand touch point somewhere else (Roozen 2008; Yoon *et al.* 2011).

It is also important to acknowledge that a product placed in a television programme has to have a level of relevance to the programme and the audience to be able to affect viewers. The relationship between the programme and the type of product promoted seems to have a significant effect as the product and programme influence one another (Alwitt & Prabhakar 1992).

Beneke (2012) adds that the setting where the product appears in the programme is important when it comes to attitude and recall. Humorous scenes that contain a placed product could have positive results, while a depressing scene that contains a placed product could cause a negative attitude or response by the viewers towards that specific product. The content and context of the product placement strategy have to be taken into consideration and be critically analysed prior to exposure to ensure that viewers receive optimum information about the brand, but also to ensure that they do not drown in a pool of stimuli. According to George (2008), a simple aspect such as colour can also have a dramatic influence on recall and recognition, therefore the marketer has to analyse in advance how the brand should appear in the programme.

A final aspect that marketers should consider is product relevance to the specific viewers of the programme in which the placement features. If targeted customers can associate with the actors and the programme, the placement will influence their attitudes and purchase behaviour, or they might reject the product (Roozen 2008).

## Challenges in product placement

Product placement is an expensive way of communicating with the target market because marketers pay according to the time slot that the product appears in the show, or the estimated success and range of the audience that the directors expect (Ouwensloot & Duncan 2008). One of the limitations of the product placement strategy is that marketers have to be satisfied with the amount of exposure they receive in the programme, which may not always meet their expectations (Cowley & Barron 2008). The director can edit the scene; hence, recognition of the product might fall short.

Another limitation emphasised by Ouwersloot and Duncan (2008) is that the success of the programme can never be established prior to the broadcast, and sometimes marketers might not reach the expected optimum exposure. It is also possible that viewers will not notice the product in the programme, or see it, but disregard it as they could feel that it is too invasive and that it interferes with the programme. It is against this background that the different types of product placement strategies and the visual impact of products placed in television programmes were explored to determine whether the viewers were able to recognise and recall the products placed in a specific television programme; in this instance, a soap opera.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative data were used in this study. The quantitative strategy entailed the Tobii 320X Eye Tracker and Tobii Studio 1.5.0 software. Eye gazes and the verbal comments of respondents were captured with a Logitech webcam while they were watching video clips in which the selected product placement strategies were utilised in two South African soap operas, *Villa Rosa* and *Binnelanders*. The respondents' verbal expressions while they watched the video clips were used to gain an understanding of their preferences and experiences with regard to product placement, and to supplement the numerical data collected by means of the eye tracker device.

The Tobii Eye Tracker determines the way in which the respondents' eyes move across the screen during each scene. The methods used to analyse the data include gaze plots, heat maps, bee swarms and areas of interest (AOI).

AOIs were identified in each scene to calculate how many respondents looked at these areas for a specific period. The results for each respondent were reflected in a different colour to differentiate them from one another. Each circle (dot) represents the fragment of time that each respondent focused on a particular area of the image. A few areas of interest were marked on each of the images to estimate the focus of the respondents during the exposure to the stimuli.

A bee swarm indicates where the respondents' focus was at a specific interval in the particular image. Each dot represents a different respondent and indicates where he/she were looking when the screen shot was taken.

After the respondents watched the video clips, a screen shot was shown to them to evaluate if they could recognise the product that featured in the scene. The respondents then answered questions regarding the milieu (setting), the actors and the product, or whatever they noticed in the image. The green areas on the images represent the areas where the least attention was focussed, and the red area where the respondents focused most.

The gaze plot was used to determine the way in which the respondents viewed the image. The numbers in the circles indicate the sequence of the eye movement while the respondents were watching the scene. The bigger the dot, the longer their eyes were fixated on a specific object in the scene.

The study population targeted was Afrikaans-speaking, third-year marketing Communication Science students at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Only Afrikaans-speaking respondents were selected, as the dominant language used in the selected soap operas is Afrikaans. The selection criteria were that the respondents had to be regular viewers of the selected soap operas. Convenience sampling was used (Marlow 2001). A total of 21 respondents participated in the study, but three of the respondents' eyes did not register on the eye tracking device and their interviews had to be discarded. The respondents participated voluntarily and gave consent for their interviews to be recorded.

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used during the interviews. There were three phases in each interview. Firstly, the respondents watched all the video clips while the eye tracker monitored their eye movements. This phase explored the visual impact of the product/brand in the scene – in other words, whether it caught the respondent's eye. Secondly, the respondents' ability to recall the placed products was tested. Thirdly, the respondents were shown still pictures of scenes in which the placed product/brand appeared and had to recognise the product/brand. To capture both audio and facial expressions, a video recording was made of each respondent's interview to facilitate analysis of their responses while watching the video clips and during the interviews. As no significant data were recorded with regard to facial expressions, only the audio data were included in the results. The data were transcribed, analysed and then linked to the eye tracker results to simplify the process of comparing similarities and differences among the responses.

The brands/products chosen are all well-known brands in South Africa that are supported by national marketing communication campaigns. Eight screen scenes were included in the study representative of:

- ◆ a product with a bright colour that is placed in the foreground (Pritt) (Figure 1);
- ◆ a product with a bright colour that is placed in the background (King Pie) (Figure 2);
- ◆ a dull product placed in the background (Pick 'n Pay No-Name brand) (Figure 3);
- ◆ partial display of the brand/logo (First National Bank – FNB) (Figure 4);
- ◆ a product that is displayed prominently in the foreground (Snowflake) (Figure 5);
- ◆ a brand that was part of a campaign (South African National Blood Service – SANBS) (Figure 6);
- ◆ interaction between an actor and the product (Skype and Acer) (Figure 7); and
- ◆ a product being used (Minute Maid) (Figure 8).



**FIGURE 1:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF PRITT

The product is placed prominently on the desk in the foreground (in the lower left-hand corner of the image).



**FIGURE 2:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF KING PIE

The brand King Pie that is placed in this scene (Figure 2) is prominent, although it is in the background (in the upper left-hand corner of the image).



**FIGURE 3:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF PICK 'N PAY NO-NAME BRAND

Pick 'n Pay No-Name products are reflected in Figure 3. The products can be seen in the background on the kitchen sink (middle of the image).



**FIGURE 4:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF FNB

In Figure 4, only parts of the FNB logo are visible. The brand can be seen in the background (in the right hand corner of the image).



**FIGURE 5:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF SNOWFLAKE

The Snowflake product is placed prominently in the foreground of the scene (Figure 5). The actress is busy using the product (in the lower left-hand corner of the image).



**FIGURE 6:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF SANBS

SANBS (Figure 6) can be seen on a poster in the background of the scene (in the upper left-hand corner of the image).



**FIGURE 7:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF SKYPE AND ACER

The brands, Skype and Acer (Figure 7), were prominently visible in this scene (in the upper right-hand corner of the image and the lower right-hand corner of the image). In the scene, the actor interacted with the product.



**FIGURE 8:** PRODUCT PLACEMENT OF MINUTE MAID

The product that is placed in this scene (Figure 8) is prominent as the actress places the can of Minute Maid on the counter in the foreground (the upper centre of the image).

A strategy where a product was not presented visually, but only mentioned verbally, was included in the study. The brand used in this strategy was King Pie. Product placement, where the storyline is built around the product, was not in the soap operas utilised for this study. This strategy could therefore not be included in this study.

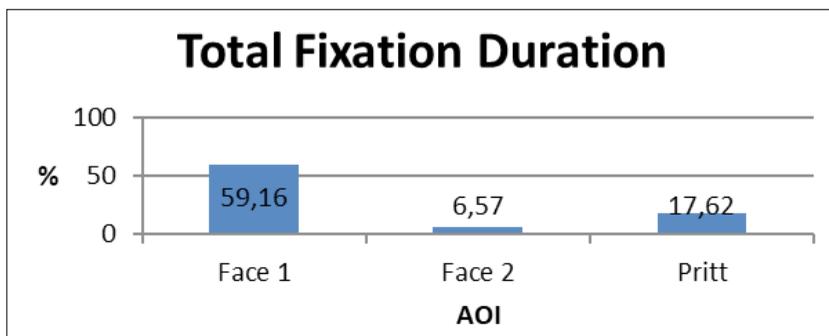
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Product placement strategy 1: Pritt

In this strategy, a product with a bright red colour placed in the foreground of the scene was used for analysis. The two actors and the product in this image were marked as AOI (see Figure 9). The results of the amount of time that the respondents focused on a certain AOI, to indicate where their interest and focus were, are shown in Figure 10.



**FIGURE 9:** AREA OF INTEREST (AOI): (PRITT)



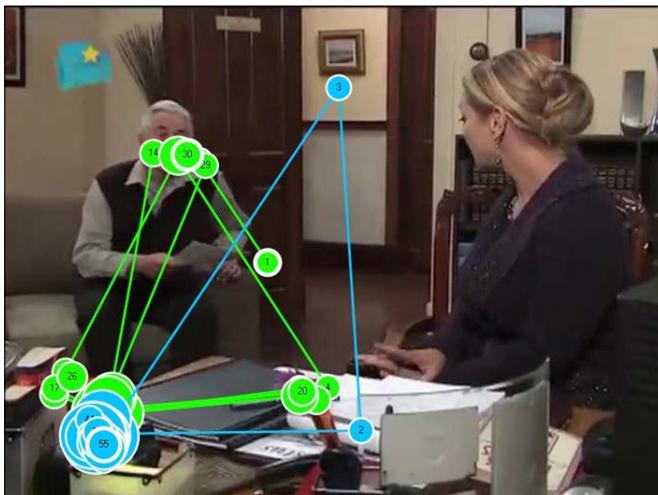
**FIGURE 10:** DURATION THAT RESPONDENTS FOCUSED ON AOI (PRITT)

Respondents focused mainly on Face 1. The actress spoke most of the time during the scene. The respondents then looked at Face 2 when the actor started to speak. As soon as the actress put the flower on the desk, the focus moved from the actors to the table and then to the product that had been placed in the scene. The respondents looked at the actors, but when there was a movement on the desk, the focus moved to the product placed in the scene. The heat map in Figure 11 reflects this observation.



**FIGURE 11: HEAT MAP (PRITT)**

There was a tendency among the respondents to look at the images in the shape of a triangle. The gaze plot (Figure 12) is only representative of two of the 18 respondents to illustrate the triangle shape in which the respondents focused.



**FIGURE 12: GAZE PLOT (PRITT)**

Most of the respondents focused on the product, on one or more of the actors, and on another object that caught their eye. The product featured in the lower left-hand corner of the image, where only two (11.1%) of the respondents were looking. Both of them were not looking directly at the product, but their focus was in that direction. Although none of the respondents looked at the product for a fixed period, the majority of the respondents (72.2%) reported that they had seen the product and recalled it when they were asked what they could remember about the scene.

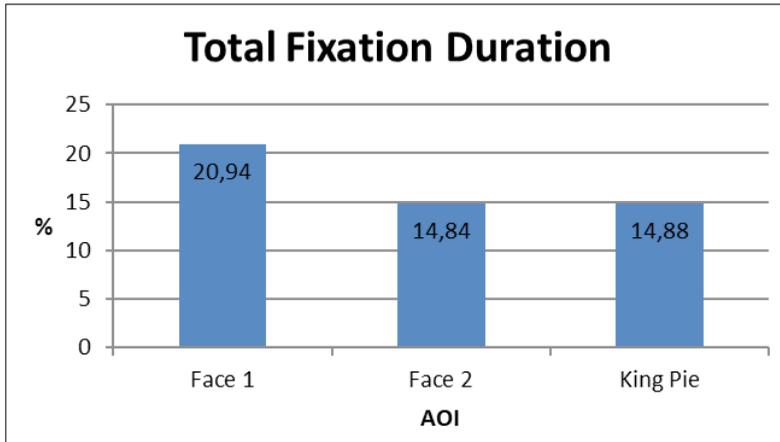
The reasons provided by the respondents why they could remember the product included the fact that they were familiar with the brand, the colour red stood out in contrast with the neutral colours that were used in the scene, and the product was prominent and easy to spot. These reasons are all supported by the literature. Karniouschina *et al.* (2011) highlighted the importance of using product placement as part of the marketing communication mix; in other words, to create familiarity of the brand through techniques such as advertising and then supplementing the strategy by placing the product in a mass media programme. More than three decades ago, Gardner and Houston (1986) had established that visual cues, such as colour and prominence, play a significant role in advertising. Three (16.6%) of the respondents could not recall the product, but as soon as they looked at the still image they recognised the product and said they remember it, but forgot to mention it. Two of the respondents could not recall the product at all.

## Product placement strategy 2: King Pie

A product with a bright colour placed in the background was used as a placement strategy in this scene. The AOI in this image were the two actresses and the King Pie placement in the background (see Figure 2). Although there was more than one placement of the King Pie brand in this scene, only the logo on the left-hand side of the image was chosen as an AOI.

As shown in Figure 13, most of the focus of the respondents was on Face 1 (20.95%), presumably because this actress did most of the talking in the scene. As soon as Face 1 shuffled the papers on the table, the focus moved to the table and then to the bright King Pie logo on the left. The bee swarm data confirmed this movement and shift in attention.

When the respondents were asked to look at the stimuli and indicate whether they could remember the placement, they remembered that the scene was shot in a King Pie restaurant. The heat map data showed that the areas on which they mostly focused was Face 1 (the actress facing the camera) and the King Pie logo. The gaze plot revealed a tendency amongst the respondents to look at the actors in the scene, then at the pies, and the fridge in the background. After the actress sitting at the table spoke to the other actress, the respondents' focus moved from the table to the placement on the left-hand side that featured in the upper left-hand corner of the image.



**FIGURE 13:** DURATION THAT RESPONDENTS FOCUSED ON AOI (KING PIE)

Fifteen (83.3%) of the 18 respondents saw the placement within the first five fixtures of the video, while three of the respondents saw the placement only after the first five fixtures (between 5 and 10 seconds) after the video started and the placement featured. Two of the respondents looked at the placement while they watched the video, but did not mention during the interview that they had seen it. A reason provided for the recall of the placement included that the respondents were familiar with the brand. The data in the gaze plot supported the respondents' statements that they had seen the placement. The strongest argument for the success of the placement in this instance again was the fact that the respondents were familiar with the brand through previous encounters.

### Product placement strategy 3: Pick 'n Pay No-Name brand

As indicated in Figure 3, the monotonous coloured Pick 'n Pay No-Name brand products were placed in the background of the scene involving two actors talking. Three areas of interest marked in this video clip included Face 1 (the actor facing the camera), Oaks XLarge (the wording on the actor's sweater) and the placement (Pick 'n Pay No-Name brand). The total fixation duration reflected that the majority of the focus was on the talking actor (47.1%). The respondents also focused on the wording on the actor's sweater (18.3%) and to the same degree on the Pick 'n Pay placement itself (18.6%). The bee swarm and heat map supported these findings. Some of the respondents (29%) only noticed the placement after they were asked whether they could recognise a placement in this scene.

According to the gaze plot, the respondents again looked in a triangular formation between the actors, the wording on the sweater, and the placement that appeared on the washbasin. Two (11.1%) respondents saw the placement within the first five seconds of the scene when the placement featured. Five (27.8%) respondents saw the placement after the first five seconds that the product was visible and 11 (28.9%) did not see the placement at all. The respondents speculated that they might not have

seen the placement because it was not very prominent, it was not colourful and visible, and the fact that they focused more on the two actors than anything else in the scene.

When asked to recall what they could remember from the scene, four (22.2%) of the 18 respondents mentioned the fire extinguisher that was behind the actor. Thus, they recalled the bright red fire extinguisher in the scene and not the placement, even though these objects were not situated far from each other. One explanation supported by Gardner and Houston (1986) could be the colour difference – the red colour drew the attention.

## Product placement strategy 4: FNB

First National Bank employed the strategy to place a partial display of the brand/logo in the scene. The three areas of interest that were tested in this image (Figure 4) were Face 1 (the actor facing the camera), Tonik (the name of the hospital cafeteria where the scene was shot), and the FNB ATM in the upper right-hand corner of the image. The total fixation duration on the actor's face was 38.4% because he was talking to the person walking next to him. The total fixation duration on the Tonik logo was 36.8%. The reason for this might be that the Tonik logo was prominent and bright green. The bee swarm data indicated that the respondents focused on the two actors in the scene, but also on the Rapid Care logo on the back of the actor's shirt. During the interviews, four respondents also mentioned the South African flag that featured on the sleeve of the talking actor's shirt. The respondents only focused on the FNB ATM when they were asked to identify the product placement that featured in the scene, but they did not pay it much attention while watching the video clip.

The heat map indicated that the respondents focused on the actor who was facing the camera and not so much on the other actor walking next to him. The detail on the clothing of the actor facing the camera also drew the respondents' attention. The other elements that the respondents focused on were the Tonik logo on the right-hand side of the image and the FNB ATM in the upper right-hand corner. Thirteen of the 18 respondents (72.2%) looked at the placement within the first five seconds that it featured and the remaining five (27.8%) only saw it after the first five seconds, or they did not see it at all. Twelve (66.7%) of the respondents could recall the FNB ATM.

The main reason provided for their ability to recall the brand was familiarity with the brand. A second reason was that the positions of the people were in a specific pattern that led the respondents to look at the FNB ATM. Two (11.1%) respondents looked at the placement during the time that they watched the video, but failed to mention it during the interview, and four (22.2%) respondents did not see the placement and could not recall it either. The respondents who did not see the placement during the scene only saw it after they were told that it was there.

## Product placement strategy 5: Snowflake

The Snowflake brand is displayed prominently in the foreground of the scene. The faces of the two actors that featured in this scene were marked as AOI. The third AOI was the placement itself (see Figure 5). The respondents focused mainly on the face of

the actress (Face 1) talking to the actor. The total amount of time that the respondents focused on Face 2 (the actor) was 29.8%. The placement was focused on for 10.3% of the total time they looked at the image. The bee swarm data (Figure 14) indicated that the movements that took place in the scene drew attention, namely when the actor took the newspaper off the table and the gestures of both of the actors while they were speaking. Due to the movement on the table, the focus shifted from the newspaper to the placement in the lower left-hand corner of the screen.



**FIGURE 14: BEE SWARM FOR SNOWFLAKE PLACEMENT**

The respondents focused on the actress after the actor took the newspaper. The focus then shifted towards the actress and what she was doing. It was clear that she was baking something and it was easy to see that she used Snowflake flour. The heat map data reflected that the respondents immediately saw the Snowflake placement when they were asked if they recognised the brand in the scene. This might be because it was rather prominent in the lower left-hand corner of the image, and is a well-known national brand in South Africa.

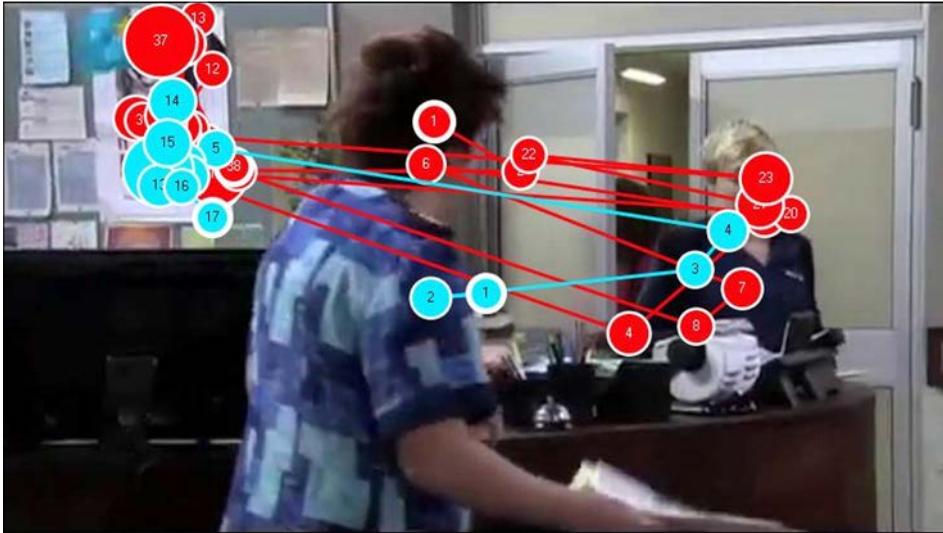
Most of the focus was on the actors and the movements they made in the scene. During the recall test, four (22.2%) of the respondents remembered the newspaper and three (16.7%) the Pick 'n Pay No-Name brand eggs that featured in the scene. Fourteen (77.8%) respondents saw the Snowflake placement within the first five seconds, when they had to recognise it. The remaining four (22.2%) only saw the Snowflake placement after the first five seconds. None of the respondents stated that they did not see the product. During the interviews, the respondents provided the following reasons why they had seen the placement: the placement was prominent, the colour enhanced the visibility of the placement, they were familiar with the brand; and they saw it because they focused on the actress and realised that she was busy with

the product. Hiam and Rastelli (2007) state that the use of a product in a placement strategy contributes to the effective observation thereof.

## Product placement strategy 6: SANBS

This product placement strategy entailed the use of a brand that was part of a campaign implemented during the time the programme was broadcast. Three areas of interest were visible in this image, namely the two actresses (Face 1 and Face 2), and the SANBS poster. The respondents focused mainly on Face 2, and even though she was not facing the camera, she spoke most of the time during the scene. The SANBS poster in the upper left-hand corner of the image received only 7.0% of the attention during the time it was visible. When the still image was shown to the respondents, they focused mostly on the poster (SANBS) in the background (in the upper left-hand corner of the image). Some of the respondents indicated that they looked at the poster because they knew the organisation. The other respondents said they looked at it to figure out what the poster was representing.

In Figure 15, two respondents' gaze plots are used to show the common tendency of eye movement among the respondents. They looked at the actresses and the items on the desk, and then their focus shifted towards the poster to identify what it was. Nine (50.0%) respondents saw the placement within the first five seconds it featured. Seven (38.9%) of the respondents saw the placement after the first five seconds, and two (11.1%) did not see the placement at all. The reasons provided why they saw the poster was because they were familiar with the specific campaign and that the word "blood" that appeared in big bold letters on the poster immediately caught their attention. These respondents could directly link the slogan with the appropriate logo and organisation that it represented, which indicated that they had been exposed to other marketing communication messages within the same campaign. The respondents also commented that it was a suitable place for that type of advertisements because the scene was set in a hospital. Alwitt and Prabhakar (1992) reported that the relevance between the programme and the type of product that is being placed has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the placement strategy. From the results reported it appeared as if the relevance of the context or the setting within which the product was placed also played a noteworthy role.



**FIGURE 15:** GAZE PLOT FOR SANBS PLACEMENT

The respondents who did not see the placement said it was because it was not very colourful and not prominent enough to have an effect on the viewers. These views and the repeated mentioning of the importance of the prominence of the product placement seemed to contrast with the findings of Matthes *et al.* (2007), who are of the opinion that the more unique, yet subtle and non-intrusive the placement is, the more effective the results of recall and recognition will be.

## Product placement strategy 7: Skype and Acer

This placement strategy entailed interaction between an actor and the product placed in the scene (Figure 7). Three areas of interest were marked in this image, namely Face 1 (the actress facing the camera), the Skype placement that was visible in the upper right-hand corner of the image, and the Acer placement that was visible in the lower right-hand corner of the image. The respondents only focused 7.7% of the time on Face 1. They focused 27.4% of the time on the Skype logo, and 22.0% on the logo of the Acer laptop that was used to communicate via Skype. The remainder of the time they looked at other elements.

When the respondents were asked whether they could recall the placement that featured in the scene, they immediately identified the Skype placement, but not the Acer placement. The respondents focused mainly on the Skype name on the task bar in the upper left-hand corner of the image. The rest of their focus was on the actress who featured in the scene and on the Skype icons in the lower half of the image. There was a tendency among the respondents to look at the actress, the Skype logo, and other elements in the scene, in various sequences.

When the respondents were asked to recognise products in the scene, only five (27.8%) respondents could identify both of the placements that featured in this scene.

Nine (50.0%) of the respondents looked at the Skype placement within the first five seconds of viewing the scene, while three (16.7%) respondents looked at the Acer placement within the first five seconds of the scene. Two respondents could identify Skype by its unique sound before they even saw the logo of the Skype placement. Six respondents (33.3%) did not see the Acer placement at all. It was stated once again that it was not prominent and that they thought that the name of the laptop would rather appear at the top of the screen and not at the bottom in the lower right-hand corner of the screen. The respondents who saw the placements said it was because they were familiar with the brands and used them. The fact that marketers should use a combination of sensory data (Hollensen 2007) in their strategies was underlined in this placement as respondents did not only react to the visual cues but the audio cues strengthened the recall effectiveness.

### Product placement strategy 8: Minute Maid

The Minute Maid placement was selected as a product being used by an actor. There were four areas of interest identified in this image, namely the actress, the Minute Maid product, and the two King Pie logos behind the actress (Figure 8). The respondents focused 11.7% of the time on the actress while she was talking and only 3.4% of the time on the placement. The remainder of the time, they looked at the two King Pie logos behind the actress for 21.1% and 15.5% of the time, respectively. Most of the focus was on the King Pie 2 logo because the entire logo featured in the image and not only half of it (as in the case of the King Pie 3 logo just above her head). This finding challenges the suggestion by Brennan (2008: 504) that a “broken strategy” is more effective.

Although the respondents focused on several objects in the scene, the focus moved to the actress when she reached for the product, looked at it, held it with the logo facing towards the camera, and reached out to pick up the straw. According to the bee swarm data, the respondents focused mainly on the can of juice in the scene, the actress' face, and the complete King Pie logo that featured to her left. Not much attention was paid to the King Pie logo that was only partially displayed.

When the respondents were exposed to the still image to test the recognition of the placement, they focused mainly on the placement (Minute Maid) that the actor in the scene put on the counter for the actress. The respondents also focused on the actress in the scene because she was talking at the time. To the left of the actress's head was a King Pie logo, which also received a great deal of attention. Fifteen (83.3%) of the respondents saw the placement within the first five seconds that the brand featured and the remaining three respondents only saw the placement after the first five seconds. Two (11.1%) respondents looked at the placement and stated during the interview that they saw the can of juice that the actor handed to the actress, but they were not able to identify the brand. One respondent did not see the placement at all and only focused on the actress and what she was saying. The reasons provided for noticing the placement were its prominence and the fact that the logo was facing the camera. The respondents were familiar with the product and some of them mentioned that the unique design of the can with the black block at the top, in which the name

“Minute Maid” appears, enhanced the visibility of the placement making it easier to recall the specific product.

Roozen (2008) and Yoon *et al.* (2011) found in their respective studies that it is important that the actor who uses or mentions the product should fit the image that the marketer wishes to communicate about the brand. However, this was not mentioned by any of the respondents, or tested in this study. This placement seemed to be the most effective of all the strategies tested in this study, as all respondents saw the placement within seven seconds. The prominent manner in which the product was used, with the label turned to the camera, appeared to enhance the recall and recognition of the brand.

## Product placement strategy 9: King Pie

The final product placement strategy that was included in the study entailed a product that was verbally mentioned in the scene, but not visually presented. In this scene there were two actors (a man and a woman) standing in the corridor of a guesthouse. They had a conversation, but the actor could not understand a word that the actress was saying because she was speaking Russian. The actress tried to explain something to the actor, but he said that he could not understand what she was trying to say, and they should rather go to King Pie.

The respondents focused on several objects in the scene, including the two actors and a picture that was hanging on the wall. In the gaze plots, it was clear that the respondents looked at various items while following the conversation between the actors. In this scene, 14 (77.8%) of the respondents were able to recall the product that was mentioned. Four (22.2%) of the respondents said they could not recall the verbal mention of King Pie because they lost interest in the conversation, as they did not understand what the actress was trying to say. Those respondents (77.8%) that could recall the product said that they caught the last sentence of the conversation because it was in a language (Afrikaans) that they understood. From these results, it can be concluded that the context of the placement plays an important role in the viewers' ability to recall it. In this particular scene, the respondents could not follow the conversation because of the language barrier. However, when the familiar brand name King Pie was mentioned, it was something that they had heard before and this might have contributed to the fact that approximately 80% of the respondents were aware of this placement.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Marketing academics and practitioners agree that it is difficult to break through marketing communication clutter. There is also consensus that an integrated approach to marketing communication enhances its effect. The results of this study suggest that product placement could be used to great effect in an integrated marketing communication mix. However, a number of aspects influence the effectiveness of placements. From a practitioner's perspective, it is important to take note of some guidelines that could enhance recall and recognition of placed products:

- ◆ The placement should be used as part of the marketing communication mix and not as a stand-alone technique. Brand familiarity should be created before the product placement strategy is used.
- ◆ Prominence and colour are elements that influence recall and the recognition of the products – the brighter the colour of the placement and the more prominent, the better the chance that the brand will be noticed.
- ◆ Recall and recognition are enhanced when the actors manipulate the viewers' eye movement towards the placement through certain actions. When the actors perform an action that guides the viewers' eyes towards the placement, they are likely to notice and remember the brand.
- ◆ The context of the scenes in which the placement occurs has an influence on recall and recognition. It is important that the colour of the placement should be in contrast to the rest of the objects in the scene to enhance ease of identification.
- ◆ Recall appears to be higher when the brand is placed in an environment that the viewers are familiar with, and if they have had a previous, separate encounter or experience with the brand.
- ◆ Preferably, there should not be more than one placement in a scene as these placements compete for the viewers' attention. When there are too many other objects in the scene, it also draws the attention away from the placement.
- ◆ When there is relevance between the context or setting and the product (for example, the blood donation poster in the hospital), it plays a noteworthy role in enhancing recall and recognition.
- ◆ Gaze motion can be used to enhance the effectiveness of product placement. The triangular gaze motion seems to benefit the placement – in other words, the placement should form one of the triangle's corners together with two other prominent objects in the scene (for example, two actors).
- ◆ When actors use the products, recall seems to be high, which underlines the effectiveness of interaction between an actor and the product placed in the scene.
- ◆ A non-visual (auditory) placement should be used towards the end of a scene, or in a scene where it is prominent.
- ◆ The placement should be visible for more than five seconds as most of the recognition only takes place after the first five seconds that the product is visible.
- ◆ The combination of more than one stimulus – for example, visual and auditory cues – should be considered in the placement as it also improves recall and recognition.

From an academic perspective, the research offers insight into the use of product placement in mass media programmes. Although the findings confirm several suggestions with regard to product placement that resulted from previous research, it adds a number of aspects that have not been identified previously. As only one mass

medium was included in this study, it would be useful to investigate the influence of different media used for product placement. For example, the use of television, cinema, novels and games can be evaluated to determine which of these may yield the best results. Although some believe that certain programmes have become saturated with product placements, marketers continue to utilise them (Clow & Baack 2016: 310). If clutter becomes too severe, usage will likely decline, but until that time product placement has a definite place in the integrated marketing communication mix.

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