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## Product placement as a rising marketing communication activity: an assessment on television serials

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### Abstract

Product placement which has gradually increased in importance especially with globalization and competition, which has intensified in recent years, is a marketing communication activity which has started to be frequently employed in television serials, cinema industry, computer games and books. In this study, the general characteristics of product placement as a marketing communications practice shall be discussed and how such practice is employed in the most watched Turkish television serials shall be scrutinized through examples.

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*Keywords:* Product placement, marketing communication, exemplary practices

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### 1. Introduction

The priority target of products and brands is to differentiate from their competitors. For this target, marketing communications and advertising professionals and scholars had found many ways to be different and they are still trying to find in today's competitive world. Because of the increasing competition and need of differentiation with clutter and chaos of communication messages there is arising the problem about effectiveness and efficiency of marketing communications applications. Although there is several applications in the area, very little of them can be reached to the consumer or audiences because they didn't planned by strategically

Traditional marketing communications and advertising techniques can't be effective to attract consumers anymore. However, in spite of the many new marketing communications channels used to attract consumers, television is still very important media for communicating with consumers and audiences. Product placement is also very old strategy like television which is one of the oldest communication channels. Product/brand placement strategy had been studied by scholars and researchers intensively in recent years in the world and also in Turkey.

After Radio and Television Supreme Council Act, which became effective in March 2011, released product placement, the application that there are many similar examples in the sector draws attention. According to Mediacatonline, 1349 product placements were seen to be achieved in 6 months between June and December 2011 and 31% of which had taken place in serials, 11% in woman programs and 58% in other programs. (<http://www.mediacaonline.com/Home/HaberDetay/?haberid=54390>, 2012).

With the facts that the importance of traditional advertisement applications have gradually decreased, the part of television in human's life has increased and Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) has released product placement, it is seen that product placement application is intensively used especially in Turkish TV serials. In this

context, the purpose of the study is presenting in examples how product placement is used in accordance with which strategies.

## 2. Literature analysis: Product placements from past to present

Reducing the effect of traditional advertising has concluded to find new ways to differentiate products and brands. Advertising professionals have found many different and new communication channels such as internet, social media, mobile marketing etc. Product placement is also one of the important and new differentiation strategies for products and brands which is also a respond to the need to break through advertising clutter in unique (Wilson & Till, 2011, p.373) and the way to have more effective brand image.

Actually product/brand placement issue is not a new application in professional area. But although product placement is exist for more than 70 years, more than half of the studies on brand placement effects were published in the last five years. (Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2009, p.439). It is important to understand its increasing importance in academic research area

Karrh (1998) indicated that product/brand placement is the important topic for research on. The importance of this topic has three reasons (Karrh, 1998, pp.31-32):

- Brand placement is increasingly important in practice. The process of paid brand appearances has become a big business.
- Brand placement represents an interesting and changeling area for research.
- Brand placement carries important social and legal implications. The practice has been the subject of both legal challenges and calls for restraint

Reijmersdal, Neijens and Smit (2009) emphasizes that brand placement definitions in literature are diverse. Some definitions relate to all brand appearances in media. Other definitions are more restrictive such as Russell and Belch's (2005, p.74) product placement definition. According to them (Russell & Belch, 2005, p.74) product placement is "the purposeful incorporation of a brand into an entertainment vehicle". It means that the application of product placement is not coincidence; it is planned by advertisers or media producers.

Reijmersdal, Neijens and Smit (2009, p.430) stated that kind of product placement' content is "created and under control of someone else other than the advertiser, such as a journalist, production company, or a filmmaker. The advertiser can pay to have its branded product featured in the content. Examples are theme features in magazines, branded products seen on the set of films or television programs, and billboards in video games". Karrh define product placement as "the paid inclusion of branded products or brand identifiers, through audio and/or visual means, within mass media programming" (Karrh, 1998, p. 33). Product placement also defined as "branded entertainment" (for example Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Lehu, 2007). As such in advertainment concept it is possible to adopt its two manifestations for product placement as a "branded entertainment" (Kretchmer, 2004, p.39): a) the advertisement is the entertainment, b) the entertainment is the advertisement.

Product placement literature is growing because of the subject' importance and its effectiveness as a communication strategy to reach consumers and audiences. D'Astous and Berrada (2011, pp.45-46) stated that the literature about product placement can be divided three groups of studies:

- First, studies have been conducted to assess people's attitudes towards the practice itself.
- The second group of studies have centered on examining the factors that impact on the effectiveness of product placement as regards usual consumer response variables such as recall and recognition, attitude towards the brand or towards the placement, and purchase intention
- The final group of studies have looked at managers' opinions about product placement in movies as a unique marketing communication technique

Product placement literature has several research subject such as product placement' effect on brand image (Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2007), perceptions of consumers (Craig-Lees, Scott & Wong, 2008), consumer response (Nelson, 2003), cross-cultural challenges (Lee, Sung & Gregorio, 2011), sport video games and ethics (Kim & McClung, 2010) Hollywood cinema and heroic brand images (Galician & Bourdeau, 2004). According to Reijmersdal (2009) brand placement has a positive effect on brand memory, but it can affect attitudes and behavior

without memory of the placement. It means that brand placement has implicit effects on consumers (Reijmersdal, 2009).

Variables for Placement Value Assessment	Role in Marketing/ Communications Mix	Measures of Effectiveness
<u>Placement Characteristics:</u> Amount of time on screen Size and visibility (foreground or background) Modality of presentation (visual versus audio) Level of plot connection: Interaction between product and actors Product usage by character/star Implied or direct endorsement Creative quality	<u>Stand Alone Placement:</u> Brand exposure Source association Branding/brand image Stimulating interest Bypassing regulations	<u>Stand Alone Placement:</u> Memory (explicit or implicit) Perception of fit Attitude toward brand
<u>Context Characteristics:</u> Competitive images on screen Distraction/lack of distraction factors Match with entertainment image	<u>Integrated Placement:</u> Publicity Public Relations (Internal or External) Cross-Promotions Sales Promotions Interactive Television New-Product Launch	<u>Integrated Placement:</u> Publicity generated Standard PR measures (internal and external) Positioning studies Sales Promotion redemption Trial measures Number of consumers who purchased or showed interest (on internet or at point of purchase) Tracking studies (internal and external)
<u>Audience Characteristics:</u> Demographic profile of the viewing audience Audience size (potential exposures) Rating for exact minute of placement occurrence Audience size based on syndication and reruns Media equivalencies CPM Sponsorship equivalencies		

**Figure 1:** Assessing Product Placement Efforts

**Source:** Russell & Belch, 2005, p.89

One of the main important issues about product placement is measuring of its effectiveness. Russel and Belch (2005) propose an assessment model for product placement efforts as can be seen Figure 1. According to them in assessing product placement value there is three main variables has to be noticed: Placement characteristics, context characteristics and audience characteristics. Additionally product placement can be seen two different types as stand alone placement and integrated placement. These placement types have to be measured different ways, too.

Hofer (2012) indicated that the product placements can be seen in two types:

- *Corporate Placement:* Here company names and distinct services are presented. Due to a high degree of substitution among different services, this type of product placement is a very vivid and descriptive way of making a service understandable for consumers.
- *Image Placement:* Image placement is a special type of product placement where the plot of the movie is tailored to convey a distinct message and to influence public image of a region or organisation. One of the most interesting examples image placement is the movie Top Gun. When the movie was in the theaters, the number of volunteers for the US navy rose rapidly. Other typical examples are soap operas with a special setting.

Product placements can be seen in television programs, movies, video games etc. According to D'Astous & SeÂguin (1999, pp.897-898) in the case of television sponsorship product placement strategies can be classified three main types:

- *Implicit Product Placement:* An implicit product placement is one where the brand, the firm or the product is present within the program without being formally expressed: it plays a passive, contextual role. For instance, in a quiz the participants and the host wear clothes with the sponsor's logo; in a series, a scene occurs in a C & A store. Thus, in an implicit product placement the logo, the brand name or the name of the firm appear without a clear demonstration of product benefits.
- *Integrated Explicit Product Placement:* A product placement is integrated explicit whenever the brand or the firm is formally expressed within the program: it plays an active role. For instance, in a quiz the questions asked to the participants concern the sponsor's products; in a series, a Pizza Hut pizza is delivered in a scene where everybody is starving. In this type of product placement, the attributes and benefits of the product are clearly demonstrated.
- *Non-Integrated Explicit Product Placement:* A non-integrated explicit product placement is one where the brand or the firm is formally expressed but is not integrated within the contents of the program. The sponsor's name may be presented at the beginning, during or at the end of the program; for instance, "This program (or segment) is (was) sponsored by the Ford Motor Company". Or it may be part of the program's title: for instance, Kraft Cinema

The other classification of product placement types on television is following (<http://www.mediacatonline.com/Home/HaberDetay/?haberid=54390>, 2012):

- *Scenario Integration:* Product or service use both actively in scenario flow and put into words slogans and life sentences about product or service.
- *Active Product Placement:* Using product or service actively in scenes
- *Product Promotion and Gifts:* Especially in giveaway/quiz shows, product or service give as a gift to the participants and/or promote the product or service
- *Audio Product Placement:* Product or service doesn't show in a scene. There is only placed verbal expression about product or service
- *Inactive Product Placement:* Product or service shows in scene but they don't use

In addition these types of product placement there is came across product placement in media digital as another type in television programs

### 3. Product placement applications in Turkish television serials

In this part of study, it is tried to examine that in what way product placement is used in some defined TV serials. Ratings of serials had surveyed in the first place and 4 serials which had had the highest rating results especially in last month were defined in the direction of decisional sampling method. The serials can be listed as;

- Adını Feriha Koydum (Show TV)
- Kuzey-Güney (Kanal D)
- Yalan Dünya (Kanal D)

The following serials were evaluated in different time periods and it was tried to examine which product and services and also in what ways had been integrated in TV serials.

In the serial named "Adını Feriha Koydum" which tells about a truth of Turkey, a super's family who lives under the shadows of shining life of Etiler and their struggle for life are subjected. Feriha's, who enters her dream world after starting a privileged university as a scholarship student, and her family's life and the events happening to them are told. Super's beautiful daughter has become the princess of her transitory life that she has created by leaving her real world and young girl's new world, which has been built around a white lie, has come to the point to swallow her family and everyone around her in time (<http://adiniferihakoydumdizi.com/adini-feriha-koydum-konusu.html>, 2012).

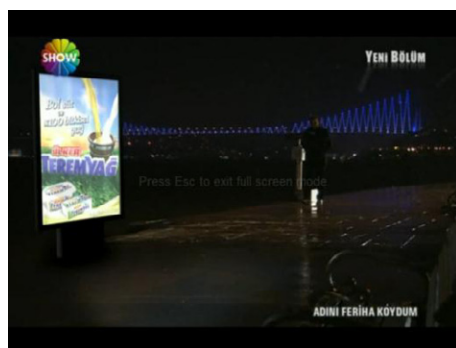
It takes attention that product placement application has been carried out in different ways. In February 3, 2012 air dated episode, BRC Autogas Systems was placed in the scenario. It is a different application in the name of

product placement that Feriha's twin brother Mehmet, who is one of the main characters, works in a dealer allied with BRC Autogas Systems. The product was integrated with the scenario and it became a part of it. Another remarkable point was that BRC Autogas Systems had met with viewers in later parts with reference to necessity of repeating a message for 7 times at least in order to make it stick in the mind. In February 10, 2012 air dated episode, product placement about BRC Autogas Systems was digitally used in an outdoor shot. During the phone call between Emir's mother and Feriha's sister-in-law, the product was digitally placed on the road which Emir's mother was walking on. The interesting point was that the product was seen in following 2 scenes and it had remained on the screen more than 5 seconds in one of the scenes.

In February 17, 2012 air dated episode, several different product placements attracted attention. In this episode, product placements about PTT, Teremyağ, BRC were subjected. The product placement about PTT was attached to the scenario script and active product placement was used. In this context, PTT actively took place in scenes, mailman who came home was seen about 40 seconds with his uniform. Especially this type of product placement has a structure that does not annoy viewers and make them feel like they watch “advertisements”.



In the same episode, there was a product placement about Teremyağ. This application which met with viewers as digital product placement was showed in 3 sequential scenes. It was especially interesting that last scene was quite long.



In the same episode, there was also a product placement of BRC Autogas Systems.

In February 24, 2012 air dated episode, product placements of BRC Autogas Systems, Turk Telekom's campaign named Lokum were given place. There was a digital placement of BRC Autogas Systems. It was tried to be imprinted on viewer's mind by using the placement repeatedly in 3 minute's time gaps.



A digital product placement was used about Lokum campaign of Turk Telekom in the same episode. After following 8-9 minute's time gap, it was tried to relay the service of Turk Telekom to the viewer with a conversation which was attached to scenario. The conversation was between Feriha's twin brother (Mehmet) and Feriha's sister-in-law. The sentences are below:

*Sister-in-law: Internet is an ocean... various colours, models... if we had Internet, we would choose any colour and model, there is no home left without Internet but we even do not have a computer yet...*

*Mehmet: You really suppose that Internet is just enough, there are some other things like modem etc., everything is about money...*

*Sister-in-law: I have searched that... There is a campaign of Turk Telekom which is named Lokum... Modem, connection, Lokum site are all included...*

In this application, actors mentioned about the product in person and tried to rise awareness. It is a really important fact that people who are named as stars use the product. "If an actor or actress who is loved by the consumer buys the brand, purchasing tendency will increase"(Sarıyer, 2005, p.221).



It attracts attention that there are many product placements about several car brands in many scenes of the serial named "Adını Feriha Koydum". In these scenes, actors adventitiously use the same x car brand and logo of those cars is reflected to the screen. This application is named as active product placement.

Another TV serial in which product placement is intensively used is Kuzey and Güney. In this serial, the subject shapes upon two brothers who have different characters. Also lives of their family and people around them meet with viewers as parts of the story.

In January 4, 2012 air dated serial named Kuzey-Güney, digital product placement of Linens was given place in an outdoor shot. In a street scene, a product placement about Linens- Home Beauty Center was attracted attention at the moment a car was passing. In Kuzey-Güney, product placement is intensively used especially in outdoor shots.

Product placement is subjected especially in its early weeks frequently in the serial. Kuzey-Güney takes place in top five serials\*\* in an Internet survey about the serials in which product placement is used.



In December 21, 2011 air dated episode, a digital product placement was used again in an outdoor shot. While Zeynep and Cemre, characters of the serial, were walking on the street, a great, remarkable product placement about Karaca was used.



In December 21, 2011 air dated episode, the other placement was a chocolate advertisement of Eti. In the application which met with viewers as a digital placement, it was seen that the attention was tried to attract especially on the advertisement



\*\*Top five serials: 1. Çocuklar Duymasın 2. Öyle Bir Geçer Zaman ki 3.Kuzey Güney 4.Adını Feriha Koydum 5. Yalan Dünya (<http://www.reklam.com.tr/reklam-yazilari/urun-yerlestirme-cok-sevildi/289>, 21.03.2012)

Digital product placement was usually subjected. However, placements of 2 products especially met with viewers in a different way. One of them was about Coca Cola. It was an active product placement that was integrated in the scenario. In one of the scenes, Kuzey's friend Ali served Simay and Cemre Coca Cola to drink. The fact that the product is used is all important in terms of consumers' tendency to the product.



Stated application was integrated in scenario as a conversation in October 19, 2011 air dated episode. There were such sentences in the conversation between Kuzey's mother Handan and her daughter-in-law Simay:

*Daughter-in-law: Your perfume smells so good...*

*Handan: It is not perfume, but softener...*

*After the conversation Simay took the towels near Yumoş bottle in hand and tried to feel their fabric and softness in this scene.*



Product placements (active product placement) about several car brands were used in the serial named Kuzey-Güney. Especially, Kuzey's friend Ali changed his car as required by the scenario and started to use a red Hyundai after that. The logo of the car met with the viewers in the scenes that Ali showed up with his car.

“Yalan Dünya” which is written by Gülse Bırsel has had rapidly increasing ratings and become one of top five serials since the day it was featured on Kanal D on January 13, 2012. The serial, which is about two different families who live in an apartment in Cihangir and have to share the same terrace, attracted attention with its cast and sense of humour. We see that product placement is frequently used in Yalan Dünya which has become to be mentioned most often in a short notice. In the studio which was created in İstiklal Street, characters who walk around Cihangir and Taksim, pass by or shop with the stores of some companies like Bellona, KFC, Turkcell, Denizbank, Saray Halı, A101. Although it is a newly featured serial, Yalan Dünya which has been in the top serials in which product placement is mostly seen, has also become an issue with the penalty fine of Radio and Television Supreme Council at the same time. RTÜK specialists who had searched about product placements, ascertained that



same 6 product placements were applied against the legislation in episode 4 which was aired on February 3, 2012 and recorded that the stated product placements were used between lap dissolves for 4 to 11 seconds\*.

Rıza, one of the main characters of the serial, frequently draws money from Denizbank. The fact that Beyaz is the one who acts in commercial films of Denizbank attracts a great deal of attention on Denizbank



Nurhayat (Gupse Özay), who has the role of Rıza's fiancée, went shopping from store of Saray Halı (Saray Carpet) in episode 6. This application showed up as a product placement which was attached to the scenario. Nurhayat, who was seen with the boy carrying the carpet which she bought from the store for 5 seconds, came across with Rıza and told that “she had gone shopping for completing her marriage portion and bought her carpet”. A similar scene to the one in episode 6 was seen without a conversation in episode eleven, this application provided to attract a great deal of attraction on the product.



Tülay (İrem Sak), another character, is the one who consistently walks around the same street. It is seen that A101 store frequently takes place as a digital product placement and it remains on the screen for a long time. In episode 4, while Tülay was walking around the famous street, she entered the store after hanging out in front of it and stepped out with an ice cream in her hand. Viewers had seen the sign of the store for 20 seconds.

\*Supreme Council determined penalty fine of 310 thousand TL for Kanal D because of the fact that the channel violated the 3<sup>rd</sup> clause of 13<sup>th</sup> article of the law numbered 6112 which arranges product placement and repeated the violation (<http://magazin.milliyet.com.tr/ooo-cok-sert-/magazin/magazindetay/25.03.2012/>)

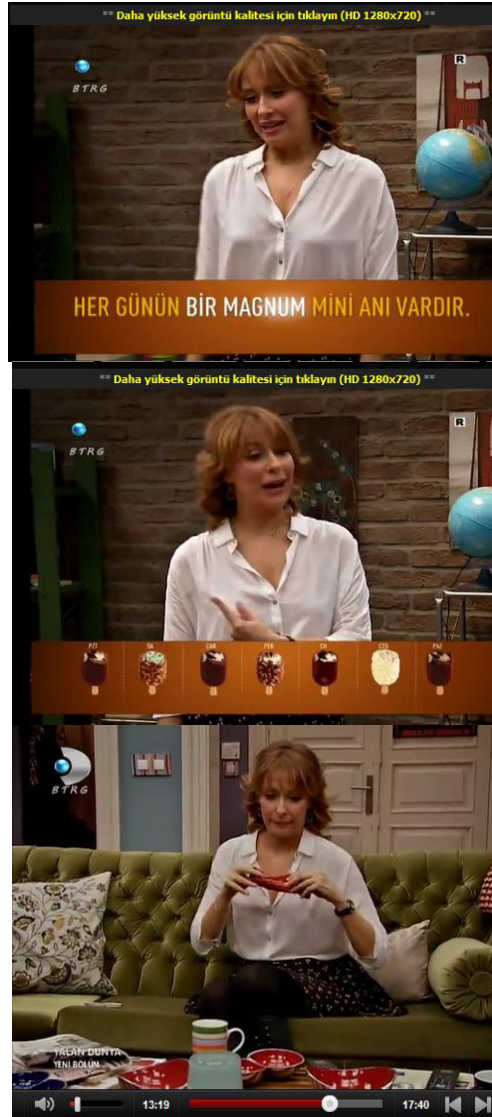


Afife (Gönül Ülkü), who is the eldest character of the serial and grandmother, opened fast food package that she ordered from KFC and it led into another scene. Afife did not want to share her chicken even though her grandchildren insisted. The scene in which KFC was integrated in the scenario had lasted for 11 seconds. KFC store also meets with the viewers as a digital product placement in each episode.



Another brand which was used in Yalan Dünya in which the recent product placement applications were mostly seen, was Magnum. Using the brand of Magnum in episode eleven in the scenario for 28 seconds was so long that

could be found exaggerated by the viewers. We firstly saw the brand of Magnum as a banner. Right after that Deniz (Gülse Birsnel), the main character of the serial, went to the kitchen and took a Magnum package from the fridge and got an ice cream, she opened the package in the living room and started to eat. We should point out that there is a risk of causing a negative perception from the point of viewers because of the fact that the brand is placed in the scenario for so long.



#### 4. Conclusion

The facts that the importance of traditional advertisement applications have gradually decreased, the part of television in human's life has increased and RTÜK has released product placement within the frame of some rules by changing applicable law in 2011 imply increasing tendency about product placement applications.

The fact that the difference between product and services are in tendency to decrease forces businesses to stick their products and services in consumer's mind in terms of different strategies. Postmodern consumer does not lean

towards commercial films and when they are predominantly used, they use their power of changing the channel. In this context, “Product placement forces professional communicators to integrate products and their messages into programs and their contents for reaching viewers who use their remote control in order to escape from commercial messages” (<http://www.danismend.com/kategori/alkategori/filmlerin-parlayan-yildizi-urunler/>, 2012).

The main purpose of product placement is providing recognition about product or service, sticking them in consumer's mind and increasing its memorability. The main point after all is providing to comprise positive feelings about the brand.

Product placement was released by the act of RTÜK which became effective in March 2011. As a result of this law, it has been seen that firms have started to prefer product placement by intensively heading for different program formats. According to Mediacatonline, 1349 product placements were achieved in 6 months between June and December 2011, and of such placements, 31% took place in serials, 11% in woman programs and 58% in other programs (<http://www.mediacaonline.com/Home/HaberDetay/?haberid=54390>, 2012). The remarkable point within the framework of datas is that product placement is intensively used especially in TV serials. From this viewpoint, the purpose of the study is presenting in examples how product placement is used in accordance with which strategies. In this connection, as a result of a rating survey, 3 Turkish TV serials are seen to use product placements in different strategies frequently and Adını Feriha Koydum, Kuzey-Güney and Yalan Dünya were analysed with decisional sampling method based on different times.

There are many ways of product placements like the ones which are integrated in the scenario, digital placements etc.. It is generally seen that the applications obey the rule which was determined by RTÜK to use 4 product placements at most in serials; in each episode, it is clearly stated that product placement is used in some parts of the episode.

It is also seen that RTÜK seriously continues to control and sometimes gives penalty fines or applies sanctions because of the fact that some programs violate the rules about product placement. One of these penalties is that Supreme Council determined penalty fine of 310 thousand TL for Kanal D (Yalan Dünya) because of the fact that the channel violated the 3<sup>rd</sup> clause of 13<sup>rd</sup> article of the law numbered 6112 which arranges product placement and repeated the violation recently (<http://www.aktifhaber.com/yalan-dunyaya-cok-agir-ceza-577072h.htm>, 2012).

Although there are positive effects of stated applications now, there also are some concerns about the subject. Engin Başaran, the Chairman of Consumers Association (TÜDER), underlines that there consistently is a commercial atmosphere apart from advertorials, especially children and young people are inclined to high and unconscious consumption. Another point which is emphasised by Başaran is that advertisement must be distinctive. However, the fact is carried to a different point with applications which are integrated in the scenario, although it is stated that product placement is used in the program. (<http://www.haber3.com/dizilerdeki-urun-reklamina-tuketici-tepkisi-tuketici-dernegi-genel-baskani-ba-751820h.htm#ixzz1pZEKLSJR>, 2012)

As a result, product placement which is intensively used in Turkish TV serials will continue to get positive reactions and arouse publishers' interest because it does not cause brand pollution, overemphasize on product or service, in short it does not have a commercial atmosphere.

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