

## Product placement analysis in three Netflix original series

*Análisis del emplazamiento de producto  
en tres series originales de Netflix*

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Advertising has encountered an obstacle with the proliferation of platforms like Netflix and this has sparked a boost in product placement. Through a content analysis, this exploratory study examines the use of product placement in three of Netflix' original series to understand how it behaves on this platform. The results indicate that it is a settled formula, but that the type of location or the number of brands is determined by the plot. Likewise, the fact that the audience is not restricted to a specific country seems to favor the presence of global brands.

**KEYWORDS:** advertising, Netflix, product placement, video on demand, content analysis.

*La publicidad ha encontrado un obstáculo con la proliferación de plataformas como Netflix y esto ha provocado el impulso del emplazamiento de producto. Mediante un análisis de contenido, este estudio exploratorio examina el uso del emplazamiento de producto en tres series originales de Netflix para comprender cómo se comporta en esta plataforma. Los resultados indican que se trata de una fórmula asentada, pero que el tipo de emplazamiento o el número de marcas están determinados por la trama. Igualmente, que la audiencia no se restrinja a un país concreto parece favorecer la presencia de marcas globales.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** publicidad, Netflix, emplazamiento de producto, video bajo demanda, análisis de contenido.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Video on demand: the transfer of audiences*

Brands are currently facing increasingly demanding consumers, who reject invasive commercial communication, which induces advertisers to adopt forms of communication that allow creating a connection with the consumer (Arbaiza Rodríguez & Huertas García, 2018). Added to this is that technology is changing the rules of the game, since the notable increase in the digital supply challenges the established conventional media, especially television, print media and the external media (Torras i Segura, 2015). Likewise, the popularization of computers and mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, in the last decade, has made it possible to consume multimedia content anywhere and at any time.

In this context, video on demand platforms such as Disney +, HBO, Amazon Prime Video or Netflix, among others, emerge. These platforms work with a monthly subscription service that allows access to a large catalog of films, series and documentaries, without including ads. Although conventional television still maintains large audiences, and is the medium with the highest penetration over the entire population, there is a considerable transfer of audience to video on demand platforms (Guerrero Pérez, 2018). Globally, it is expected to go from \$ 39 trillion in 2019 to \$ 87 trillion in 2024 (Research and Markets, 2020).

Ultimately, audiences in the digital age are increasingly fragmented and the logic, mode and time of television consumption have changed (Fernández, 2013), which represents a challenge for advertisers and for the entities that measure audiences (Callejo-Gallego, 2019). The streaming in a subscription model such as Netflix has not only created a new form of entertainment, but also a new type of audience (Neira et al., 2020) that directs their audiovisual experience and manages it from a large and unorganized supply. Content personalization and internationalization contribute to creating global and profitable “taste communities”. So, for example, Netflix relies on global niche audiences. Currently, the entity has identified more than two thousand communities of audiovisual tastes, which exceed the geographical circumscription, and for which it adapts its programs, production, dubbing, marketing and advertising (Shattuc, 2020).

This ecosystem has complicated the evaluation of the audience measurement indicators that conventional television uses and that have traditionally been the key indicator used by advertising brands. In this sense, Netflix uses an internal system, in which viewings are weighted in terms of retention and capture, and an external system, close to traditional systems, but in which it offers global audience data without subjecting them to external audits (Neira et al., 2021).

The difficulty posed by this scenario for conventional advertising has led to platforms such as Netflix or HBO to use product placement (Suárez-Cousillas et al., 2019), an advertising formula that has also been driven by the relaxation of the regulatory framework for the audiovisual sector in areas such as Europe (Martínez Otero, 2019).

### *Product placement and its definition*

Product placement is a widely used communication tool since the origins of audiovisual content. In cinema, the first reliably documented product placement is attributed to the Lumière brothers with the Sunlight Soaps poster (Lehu, 2007). Embedding brands in movies is not only beneficial for advertisers. According to Delorme and Reid (1999), for the viewers it facilitates the immersion in the story and the identification with the characters because they use the same brands as them, and for the production companies it compensates the production costs of a film. In this sense, Méndiz (2002) affirms that in the United States it is possible to finance up to 10% of the total cost of the film.

Today there is no consensus on its definition, but several authors have made proposals to facilitate its understanding. The problem with the term *product placement* is that it can be misleading, as placements are not limited to just products. Placements can be product, either the packaging, gadgets, or merchandising; brand, such as corporate signs, social headquarters, or promotional posters; or service, company, organizations, etc. (Del Pino & Olivares, 2007). For this reason, Karrh (1998) proposes the use of the term *brand placement*, because it better captures the reality of the practice. As defined by Steortz (1987) product placement refers to the practice of including a brand name, product, packaging, signature, and other trademark in a movie, television show, or music video.

For Karrh (1998), however, this definition is not entirely accurate as it does not include the economic transaction on which it is based. Product placement, in the strict sense, requires that the presence be paid, agreed, consented, strategic, scheduled or planned (Del Pino & Olivares, 2007). Balasubramanian (1994) considers product placement as a hybrid message, a technique halfway between conventional advertising and publicity (the free appearance in the media). The only thing that differentiates both techniques is that the first is a type of content in which the placement is produced, it is a fiction and not an informative content and, therefore, the viewer's attitude or mental state is different (Victoria Mas et al., 2013). Nevertheless, as Karrh (1998) and Gupta and Lord (1998) point out, this definition limits the fields of action to film and television productions. A complete definition must contemplate the placements that occur in any other audiovisual or literary work, such as television series, video games, literature or music, and even live musicals (Balasubramanian et al., 2006).

### *Studies on product placement*

The initial studies on product placement focused on obtaining data on brand recall and how it could influence the purchase decision. According to the studies by Gupta and Lord (1998), prominent placements, i.e., clearly visible to the viewer because they last thirty seconds, have a greater impact on memory than an advertisement of the same length. This difference is due to the fact that, in the placements, the encounters with the brands take place in an entertainment environment, so the willingness to accept them is greater. Similarly, a mention of the product without a screen presence seems to be better remembered than a visual placement without verbal reinforcement.

Following this line of study, Brennan et al. (1999) introduced the exposure time as a variable. Their results indicated that the recognition rates in a subtle placement, that is, in the background or far from the focus of attention of the scene, do not increase with more exposure time. However, in prominent placements it does have an effect on memory, as long as the total exposure time does not exceed ten seconds. Therefore, it seems that saturation is not beneficial for a brand, but the quality of the placements is. Further research, such

as that of Dens et al. (2012), Marchand et al. (2015) and Chan et al. (2016), support that the greater the prominence of the placement, the worse the attitude towards the brand or product, since viewers perceive that audiovisual content is being interrupted by advertising. Osborne (2016) also concludes in his study carried out on the series *House of Cards* (2013-2018) that the brands that are placed both ways, visually and verbally, are remembered more than if they only use one of the two modalities.

Interest in research based on explicit memory has decreased over the years since, according to Babin and Carder (1996), increasing brand recall is not a determining factor on the attitude towards the brand or on the purchase decision. Similarly, both Law and Braun (2000) and Auty and Lewis (2004) conclude that the effects on explicit memory do not bear a linear relationship to the purchase intention. The effects on the brand image are produced from the implicit memory, in other words, regardless of whether the viewer remembers having seen the placement, their attitude towards the brand will improve and they will be more likely to purchase the product in the future.

Content analysis has been used extensively to analyze the role of product placement. Some of the most relevant works are those carried out by Méndiz (1998, 2006), Victoria Mas (1999), Baños and Rodríguez (2003), and Del Pino and Olivares (2007).

The variables that are most repeated when classifying placements are: location, position, prominence, type of placement or stimulus, and proximity. Depending on the aim of the study, some authors use some variables or others for their classification. The studies conducted to measure the effects on memory, such as those of Gupta and Lord (1998) or Brennan et al. (1999), use variables that determine the placement visibility, such as exposure time, proximity, modality (visual or verbal), etc.

The integration of the placed product with the plot is done by the separation between *on-set* (with involvement in the action) and *creative* (independent of the action) placements. Some of the content analysis that include this variable are those of Karrh (1994), Avery and Ferraro (2000) and D'Astous and Chartier (2000). The latter delved into the integration of the brand and introduced a subjective variable:

the obviousness of the placement. This variable addresses that, in some circumstances, the persistence of a placement or the way it is presented can reveal its commercial intentionality regardless of whether it is well integrated into the scene.

Steertz (1987) differentiates placements by their visual or auditory modality. In the case of visual placement, he distinguishes between the position and the association of the brand with one of the characters. Along these lines, Stratton (1992) adds the popularity of the actor who interacts with the brand, and Troup (1991) the distinction between leading character and supporting character as an influencing factor on the brand. The broadest classification is the one used by La Ferle and Edwards (2006): leading character, supporting character, extra, celebrity guest star, or expert. For greater precision, Ferraro and Avery (2000) stressed the importance of the role (good, bad) that the character plays, as well as the context in which the placement is located, which can vary according to the type of program, series or film.

Another aspect also addressed is the use of fictional brands in fictional environments (Simancas González & García Hidalgo, 2016), which can later be marketed in the real world and can even be useful to test new product concepts and generate interest in a product before its release (Patwardhan & Patwardhan, 2016). An example of this is the Nike sneakers based on the mythical ones shown in *Back to the Future II* (1989) that were developed and marketed as a result of the involvement and recognition of the audience, and which have been an example of the generation of transmedia content through advertising (Álvarez Rodríguez, 2020).

Based on the above, this research aims to explore the use of product placement in three popular Netflix series, as most studies have focused on researching placement in movies (Chan et al., 2017; Gundle, 2020; Redondo et al., 2018; Redondo & Bernal, 2020; Song et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2016; Yee Chan, 2016). However, the format of television series presents differences that play in favor of the product placement technique. The main advantage is that its longer duration allows a greater number of placements. At the same time, this duration makes it easier for viewers to bond emotionally with the characters (Avery & Ferraro, 2000) and, therefore, with the brands they consume.

Laban et al. (2020) take an approach to the study of the product placement in the series comparing Netflix original series with those that are not, and concluded that the former contain more product placements. Nevertheless, as far as we know, there are no studies that analyze the presence of brands between different Netflix original series.

Netflix has been chosen because, in 2021, the US platform has more than 200 million subscribers worldwide (Netflix, 2021) and is present in more than 190 countries (Heredia-Ruiz et al., 2021). Likewise, the greatest differential advantage of Netflix is the offer of its own content: in 2019 it invested 15 billion dollars in original productions, and in 2020 17.3 billion will be used for this purpose (Meier, 2020). One of the main advantages offered by creating your own content is that the production company can freely manage the brands that appear in its series. In this way, agreements can be reached with advertisers so that their brands are placed in different series or movies on their platform. Ultimately, this study aims to help understand how the product placement behaves on this platform.

## OBJECTIVES

Taking into account the change in the consumption habits of the audiences in favor of payment platforms without advertising, it is of interest to analyze the use of product placement to know how brands are becoming known within this new paradigm. Therefore, this study focuses on the analysis of this advertising technique in three popular Netflix series. More specifically, it seeks in each of the series, and globally:

- To identify the brands that are placed and their frequency of appearance.
- To describe the category of real products being placed.
- To observe the way in which placements are usually produced based on the following variables: nature, exposure time, dimensionality, integration, proximity, role of the character, interaction and valence.

- To compare whether the brands that appear are in more than one series.
- To observe the role of fictional brands in the series analyzed.

## METHODOLOGY

To carry out this study, three series of Netflix's own production in the United States have been analyzed: *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019, hereinafter OITNB), *Jessica Jones* (2015-2019, hereinafter JJ) and *House of Cards* (2013-2018, hereinafter HoC). The study is based on the first season of each series, which consists of thirteen chapters of approximately 50 minutes in length, that is, a total of 32.5 hours of audiovisual content. The series have been chosen for being Netflix originals and having a large audience according to data from the company Symphony AM (Longridge, 2016). In addition, they are three series of different genres and aimed at different audiences, which allows us to have a varied sample: OITNB is a *dramedy* set in prison that brings together a range of women from a very diverse background and normally excluded from television; JJ is a mystery series starring a superhero from the Marvel universe who works as a detective; and HoC is a political thriller that shows the lack of scruples to achieve power.

To perform the study, the content analysis technique was used, a systematic tool that allows identifying and typifying various categories (Martí Parreño, 2011). In the first place, the analysis sheet was prepared based on twelve variables, structured in three blocks. Subsequently, the coding was carried out during the viewing and the necessary revisions were made until the contents were duly registered. The study was performed in the following order: JJ, OITNB and HoC. Once all the frequencies of the variables had been registered, in a second phase, the analysis was conducted to contrast the similarities and differences.

The analysis sheet was made based on the following variables:

1. General data: episode number, exposure time, advertised company or product, product category, nature (real or fictional brand).
2. Form of presentation: modality (visual, auditory or audiovisual), integration (on-set or creative), proximity (focal or peripheral),



dimensionality (product or print), prominence (prominent or not prominent).

3. Link with the character: interaction (interactive or non-interactive), character (leading character, supporting character or extra), valence (positive, negative or neutral evaluation).

The variables used in the study are summarized below:

### *General data*

- *Exposure time.* It is the sum of the seconds in which a brand appears in a fiction. This variable influences brand recall and helps us distinguish a prominent placement from a subtle one. There is a direct relationship between on-set placements and the increase in recall as long as said placement does not exceed 10 seconds. Regarding the creative placements, Brennan et al. (1999) concluded that advertisers will not be able to improve brand recall if said element remains static in the background of the scene, regardless of the exposure time.
- *Advertised company or product.* Identification of the company or product being advertised.
- *Product category.* It is about grouping the placements by the category of the product or service offered by the brand in order to show those sectors in which more or fewer placements are made. The data can be related to the theme of the fiction to see if it has any relationship with the audience of the series.
- *Nature.* It is the distinction between fictional brands and brands that exist or existed in reality, by which they are likely to be consumed (Parreño, 2011).

### *Form of presentation*

- *The modality.* It can be visual if the product, service or brand appears on camera, or auditory if one of the characters or a voiceover mentions the brand. It is also possible that a specific sound, such as a registered sound, is classified as an auditory placement, without explicit mention of the associated brand (Parreño, 2011).

- *Integration* (on-set or creative). When a brand appears simply as background accessories on the scene, they are considered creative. On-set placements are the ones that have a lot of prominence, either because it is a main actor who makes an implicit use of it or any product placement is the center of the scene.
- *The proximity*. According to Gupta and Lord (1998), the focal or peripheral placements differ in that the former are clearly displayed on the screen. The product is distinguished by its brand, either because the brand and/or logo are clearly displayed or because it is a product whose own characteristics make it unique against the competition.
- *Dimensionality*. It allows to know if the placement has taken place because a product of a brand has appeared or if it has manifested itself in another of its possible representations, such as a printed poster, a screen or a T-shirt. Mentions of brands have no place in this classification (Parreño, 2011).
- *Prominence*. For Avery and Ferraro (2000), the prominent placement can occur for the following reasons: it is clearly visible on screen; it is an important part of the development of the plot (including placements that help understand the location or date on which the action takes place); products or brands are present for a long time (more than two seconds on screen or mentioned more than twice in an episode); they link to a character, especially in a positive way.

#### *Link to character*

- *The interaction*. According to Gupta and Lord (1998), interacting with a brand encourages attention to it and strengthens the bond between the brand and the character.
- *The type of character*. For this variable to be evaluated, there must have been a mention or an interaction in the case of visual placements. According to the classification by La Ferle and Edwards (2006), the character's roles are: leading character, supporting character or extra.
- *The valence*. It is the positive, neutral or negative assessment of the brand placed that is produced by the context of the action or by a judgment made by one of the characters.

## RESULTS

### *Brands that are placed and their frequency of appearance*

Adding the data from the three series, a total of 235 brands and 578 placements appear (Table 1). The percentage of real brands is 86%, which indicates the extent to which advertising placement is present in fiction. The highest percentage of real brands takes place in OITNB (90.7%), followed by JJ (88.5%) and HoC (79.3%). Our hypothesis about the difference we find in HoC is that it may be difficult for a real brand to want to appear in a series like this as it addresses political corruption and boundless ambition. The most placed real brand is Apple (78 times, 13.5% of the total), followed far below by Samsung (21 times, 3.6% of the total) and Blackberry and CNN (13 times each, 2.2%).

With respect to fictional brands, they consequently appear more in HoC than in the other two series (20.7% compared to 9.3% of OITNB and 11.5% of JJ). In OITNB, seven fictional brands are used and four of them are especially involved in the development of the plot: *Urban Tales* (the radio show in which the main character's husband participates), Neptune (a service they use to smuggle objects into the prison), PoPi (beauty brand owned by the leading character) and Clean Masters (cleaning service in which one of the inmates worked). In HoC we find a total of 17 fictional brands, mainly from the media. Moreover, some of these are essential to the development of the story, such as *The Washington Herald* and *Slugline* newspapers, or the natural gas company Sancorp. JJ features nine fictional brands and two of them are especially relevant in the plot, one for being the brand under which the leading character works, *Alias Investigations*, and another for being her sister's radio show, *Trish Talk*. Probably, the fact that a brand is associated with the character, such as the company for which he or she works, can be too obvious advertising. Therefore, fictional brands seem to play the role that real brands do not want or should not assume.

As for the number of placements, 75.6% corresponds to real brands, while 24.4% corresponds to fictional brands. Interestingly, of the 437 real brand placements counted, 207 are in HoC, representing 47.4%. Therefore, in this series there is less presence of real brands, but the number of appearances is more abundant.

TABLE 1  
NUMBER OF REAL AND FICTIONAL BRANDS AND PLACEMENTS PER SERIES  
(PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL)

Series	Nature	Number of brands	Number of placements
OITNB	Real	68 (90.7%)	103 (85.8%)
	Fictional	7 (9.3%)	17 (14.2%)
HoC	Real	65 (79.3%)	207 (68.8%)
	Fictional	17 (20.7%)	94 (31.2%)
JJ	Real	69 (88.5%)	127 (80.9%)
	Fictional	9 (11.5%)	30 (19.1%)
Total	Real	202 (86%)	437 (75.6%)
	Fictional	33 (14%)	141 (24.4%)

Source: The authors.

### *Categories of product placements*

As shown in Table 2, the highest percentage of products placed is distributed among electronic equipment (27.9%) and media (24.4%). Nevertheless, this distribution is different between the three series. In OITNB, the media category stands out (34.2%), while electronic equipment predominates in HoC (34.9) and JJ (26.8%). Also relevant in JJ is the presence of beverages and vehicles (14.6%) and in OITNB food (18.3%). Within beverages, 39.5% corresponds to soft drinks, 23.3% to beers and 37.3% are alcoholic beverages with more than 20 degrees of alcohol content.

TABLE 2  
PERCENTAGES OF THE CATEGORIES OF PRODUCT PLACEMENTS

Category	OITNB	HoC	JJ	Total
Electronic equipment	11.7	34.9	26.8	27.9
Media	34.2	27.9	10.2	24.4
Service company	4.2	14.3	16.6	12.8
Beverages	8.3	3.3	14.6	7.4
Food	18.3	1.3	2.5	5.2
Entities	-	4.7	1.9	2.9

Category	OITNB	HoC	JJ	Total
Websites	2.5	2.7	1.3	2.2
Restaurants and coffee shops	3.3	2.7	0.6	2.2
Vehicles	1.7	4.3	14.6	6.6
Tobacco	0.8	1	-	0.7
Clothing, footwear and accessories	4.2	0.7	1.3	1.6
Toys	3.3	0.3	0.6	1.0
Cleaning products	0.8	-	2.5	0.9
Personal care products	5	-	0.6	1.2
Machinery and equipment	0.8	2	1.3	1.6
Shop or supermarket	0.8	-	2.5	0.9
Medicines	-	-	1.9	0.5

Source: The authors.

### *How the placement of real brands is produced*

The way in which the placement is presented has focused on real brands because they are the majority and so that the sample was homogeneous. Overall, 73.5% of the placements are visual; 22.7% are auditory, and only 3.9% are audiovisual. The difference between visual and auditory placements is maintained in HoC and JJ (Table 3), while in OITNB the differences are not so marked and the distribution is more equitable between the two modalities: 48.5% the visual placement, and 46.6% the auditory. Audiovisual placements, that is to say, with image and sound at the same time, are exceptional, only 4.9% in OITNB, 4.4% in HoC, and 2.4% in JJ. This low presence may be due to the high complexity involved in this placement, as it is difficult for the visual presence of the brand and the verbal reinforcement by any of the characters to be justified in the plot.

Most placements last between 3 and 5 seconds (34.8%) and this duration is similar in the three series: 42.6% in OITNB, 31.4% in HoC, and 36.4% in JJ. The average exposure time is four seconds. Apple is the brand with the longest total exposure time in all three series: ten minutes and 13 seconds. Secondly, the CNN network stands out, which is only present in HoC and adds a total exposure time of four minutes and 97 seconds. Thirdly, Acer appears a total of two minutes and ten seconds in the JJ series. Next on the list are Dell, one minute with 20 seconds,

and Blackberry, one minute with 18 seconds. In the case of Dell, the seconds are divided between the three series analyzed: in OITNB and JJ it is placed for 18 seconds, while in HoC it is exposed for 44 seconds. The rest of the brands placed do not exceed the minute of exposure.

Among the 338 visual and audiovisual appearances, 90.8% showed the brand or brand name on the real product. The alternative media are, above all, advertising posters or vending machines and represent 9.2% of the studied placements. In OITNB, 94.6% were screen printed brands on the product itself, compared to 5.4%, which was made in an alternative way. In HoC 93% of the visual and audiovisual placements were made in the same product, and only 7% were made on another medium. In JJ product placements are also in the majority: 85.6%. Although in this series there are many more overprinted placements than in the other two series analyzed: 14.4%.

Of the 338 sites, about three-quarters (74.3%) are on-set placements, i.e., the product has a direct implication with the scene. In OITNB 80% of the placements are essential for the scene, in HoC they are essential in 75% and in JJ 70.3%. These results suggest that when a brand appears on the screen it is for the needs of the plot.

In all three series we can observe the same trend regarding the proximity of the placements to the camera. Although they are fairly evenly matched, just over half of the placements have a notable presence. In OITNB it is 54.5% versus 45.5%; in HoC 57% against 43%; and in JJ the division is exactly 60% and 40%. This is a result worth considering to measure the prominence of the placements, because if the brand occupies a small space within the frame it can even go unnoticed.

In most cases, there is interaction between characters and brands (68.9%). If we distinguish the individual data of each series, HoC and JJ show very similar data: 64.9% and 66.1%, respectively. OITNB stands out again as only 12.7% of the placements were classified as non-interactive. Among the interactives, most are linked to a supporting character (56.6%), and to a lesser extent to the leading character (39.1%). Only the remaining 4.3% of the placements are linked to an extra. JJ is the series in which we see the leading character interacting on the most occasions with a brand (58.1%), followed by HoC (39.8%) and, far below, OITNB with only 8.3%.

For the three series, most of the placements were classified with a neutral valence: 66% in OITNB , 91.8% in HoC, and 95.3% in JJ. It is remarkable how OITNB breaks the trend and shows 27.2% of placements in which the brand is valued positively.

	OITNB	HoC	JJ	Total
Nature of placements				
Visual	48.5	78.7	85.0	73.5
Auditory	46.6	16.9	12.6	22.7
Audiovisual	4.9	4.3	2.4	3.9
Time on screen				
1-2 seconds	33.3	22.1	28.2	25.9
3-5 seconds	42.6	31.4	36.4	34.8
6-10 seconds	11.1	21.5	21.8	19.9
More than 10 seconds	13.0	25.0	13.6	19.3
Dimensionality				
About the product itself	94.5	93.0	85.6	90.8
Overprinted and others	5.5	7.0	14.4	9.2
Integration				
On-set	80.0	75.0	70.3	74.3
Creative	20.0	25.0	29.7	25.7
Proximity				
Focal	54.5	57.0	60.0	57.6
Peripheral	45.5	43.0	40.0	42.4
Interaction with the character				
None	12.7	35.1	33.9	31.1
Leading character	7.3	25.9	38.4	27
Supporting character	78.2	37.4	22.3	39
Extra	1.8	1.7	5.4	2.9
Valence				
Neutral	66.0	91.8	95.3	86.7
Positive	27.2	3.9	2.4	8.9
Negative	6.8	4.3	2.4	4.3

Source: The authors.

*Brands placed in more than one series*

Seven brands have been found that include at least one placement in the three series: Apple, Dell, LG, VISA, MasterCard, Google and Wikipedia.

- Apple is one of the most prominent brands and not only for its exposure time, but because it has a presence in all three series, although unevenly distributed. 95.23% is concentrated in HoC: nine minutes and 35 seconds of exposure.
- Dell's presence in all three series is shared. Appearances occur because a supporting character interacts with a computer from the brand. In all three series we find interactive placements of more than ten seconds.
- LG has a disparate presence in all three series. In HoC, it has a very prominent visual placement of 42 seconds, in which the protagonist interacts with a television in which the brand clearly appears. In JJ, it is a supporting character who uses a mobile device and the brand is clearly visible for eight seconds. However, in OITNB there is a much less prominent (two-second) appearance in a single episode.
- VISA and MasterCard, although they are competition between them, the two brands are displayed simultaneously in all the placements found. They are peripheral visual placements, two to seven seconds long, not prominent. They occur when a scene takes place in the public premises and in the background a sign is shown indicating that payment by card is allowed.
- Google also appears in all three series, but with a lower frequency. Six of the seven placements are auditory and all of them performed by a supporting character. The vast majority of them are produced in HoC (five), while JJ and OITNB have only one.
- Wikipedia. Only one placement can be found in each of the three series. In HoC, it is a visual placement of a second, while in OITNB and JJ a mention is made.



## CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims to help better understand the use of the product placement technique in Netflix original series. In line with the results of Osborne (2016) and Laban et al. (2020), our data confirm that product placement is a widely present resource on this platform. One might think that, in a fictional universe, fake brands would be the most abundant. Nevertheless, they only account for 14% of the total and 24.5% of the placements. These data indicate the extent to which the brands are present in the fiction series analyzed and the degree of exposure to which the viewer is subjected with this type of advertising. Although the number of brands is similar between the series, the number of placements varies, with HoC accumulating by far the most, with almost half of the real brand placements computed.

Electronic equipment is the most placed product, followed by the media. Depending on the series, service companies or food products, vehicles, and beverages, especially alcoholic ones, also stand out.

The brands placed in the three series are different, although seven coincide: three of electronic equipment (Apple, Dell and LG), two of financial services (VISA and MasterCard) and two Internet services (Google and Wikipedia). The number of Apple appearances is highlighted both in the number of times it appears and in the time it occupies, especially in HoC, which seems to justify suspicion about a possible hidden deal between Apple and Netflix that was echoed by several media.<sup>4</sup>

The way in which the placement occurs, visual or verbal, yields one of the most surprising results. The data obtained in HoC and JJ contrast greatly with the OITNB data. In this series, the percentage of visual placements is very similar to that of auditory ones. We know that it is an extraordinary case because it not only differs from the other two series studied, but also from the findings obtained in previous studies conducted by Ferraro and Avery (2000), La Ferle and Edwards (2006) or Laban et al. (2020). The explanation lies in the limitations of the scenario where most of the plot takes place: a prison.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, in Bedigian (2013).

Therefore, the scarcity of visual placements has been compensated by a marked number of mentions of brands.

We can deduce from the data obtained that Netflix, in addition to the revenue from subscriptions, has consolidated the product placement formula, adapting it to the needs of each plot and a global audience. Proof of this is the presence of internationally recognized brands such as Apple. Furthermore, the relaxation of the legislation on the placement of products in territories such as Europe means that inserts of alcoholic beverages can be used. As for the use of fictional brands, most seem to occupy the place that real brands cannot because they are too closely linked to the definition of the character, such as their place of work. Some of these brands less involved in the plot, however, could make the leap from the narrative world to the real world, a path that, as far as we know, Netflix has not yet explored.

The main limitation of the study is that some of the categories of analysis, such as prominence, valence or integration, are too general and could be better specified in future studies. Likewise, although very different series have been chosen for this research in order to have an overview, the sample should be larger in order to draw general conclusions. Other aspects that remain to be addressed for future research are the economic implications of brands using the placement and what the market trends are in this regard. It could also be verified how the exposure of brands affects viewers of these series, if it changes the degree of knowledge they have about them or their opinion. Another possibility would be to study what is the optimal number of placements and how many are a counterproductive amount as it seemed to happen in the case of Apple in HoC. To sum up, more research is needed to achieve accurate data on product placement.

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