



SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
AND MANAGEMENT
Lund University

Lund University
Department of Business Administration
Master Thesis
June, 2006

Brands Transfer of Meaning

An analysis of brands roles within product placement

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Abstract

Title: Brands Transfer of Meaning: An analysis of brands roles within product placement.

Date of the Seminar: 2006-06-01

Course: BUS 809. Master thesis in international marketing

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Keywords: Dramaturgy, Narrative Technique, Product Placement, Brands and Meaning.

Thesis purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to make a contribution, by connecting the transfer of meaning within the context of TV series. The meaning is transferred from the brand to the character in a TV series and then further to the viewer. To look at different role functions that are used in dramaturgy and narrative techniques, we will be able to see how the brand will have a specific role and thereby make the transfer of meaning more successful and effective. This role will have an important impact on product placement according to the meaning that will be transferred from the brand to the viewer, through the character.

Methodology: By looking at the transfer of meaning process that is created from the brand, an unstructured observation is applied where we observed the placement and usage of different within a specific TV series. Qualitative strategy is conducted by using a case study. In order to see how the meaning will be transferred through the brand, we have observed how the brands are placed in the context of a specific TV series, where we have chosen three brands to closer investigate their role functions.

Theoretical perspective: The main theories that are used to look at brands transfer of meaning are dramaturgy, narrative techniques and McCracken's transfer of meaning model.

Empirical data: Case study and Observation has been used.

Conclusion: This thesis demonstrates the importance of the meaning the role can transfer to a brand through different role functions. The use of the different role functions reveals the brands roles within the context of the TV series and how they transfer meaning.

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1. Introduction

In this section the readers get knowledge about the background of product placement and the popular culture that are connected to our research question. Moreover, we will explain how product placements are connected to the brand strategy and how product placement can be an effective marketing tool. Finally, we introduce our research problem, our purpose and limitations of our thesis.

Product placement is not a new marketing tool, however in the last decade there has been an increasing usage of product placements (Elliot, 2004). This trend can be explained from the need of working around new technical developments, such as possibilities to record favourite programs and thereby avoid advertising. The decreased effectiveness of traditional advertising is due to zapping and finally the consumers have become sceptical towards traditional advertising.

Vast amounts of previous research discuss the effectiveness of product placements and how to measure them, in film, soap operas and TV series. Different product placement strategies and other important considerations, when using product placements have also been studied. It is not only the product itself that will gain advantage of product placements, also the TV and film industry will boost their revenue. The increased usage of product placement arise a varieties of questions concerning this strategy. What kind of products placement are used in a specific sitcom, as well as, when are products portrayed in an episode? Where in the episode do they portray the product or brand? Is it possible to reveal a pattern in these placements, and thereby get a better understanding of product placement as a marketing tool? These questions focus on the more tactical aspect of product placement as a strategy.

By answering some of these questions, we will be able to reduce the gap between the role the products or brands play in the setting and the product placement itself. We will try to develop a new dimension in product placement, where we will use dramaturgy and narrative techniques, to explain the different roles the brands will play in different settings. This means, if the brand was a character in a series, what kind of role would the brand take? To look at the role of a brand, we will see how the placement will be able to transfer meaning to a brand. To use the dramaturgical role functions, we will make the product placements even stronger in the setting of a TV series. If the brand has an important role in the setting, the transfer of meaning between the brand and the viewer will have a better impact. This transfer will make the product placement work even more effective as a marketing tool. The transfer of meaning from the brand to the viewer will play a crucial function to make the product placement more believable and trustworthy. With the use of dramaturgy and narrative techniques we will add a new dimension to the product placement strategy. This is interesting to further investigate, since the transfer of the meaning from the brand through its role to the viewer will become even stronger, and thereby make the product placement more effective and the viewer will transfer the meaning and easier see the connection between the brand and themselves.

1.1 *Brand Strategy*

Kapferer (2004) states, “The brand is not the product but it gives the product meaning and defines its identity”. The brand’s tangible and intangible characteristics will develop the brand’s identity and will create the heritage, which will make the brand unique (Kapferer, 2004). In this thesis, we will look at different ways of using product placement within the context of a TV series. The product placement is not only about the product it is also about the brand. With product placement we mean placement of both branded products and brand names in series, and these placements aim are to contribute to the awareness of the brand. There exist different ways to look at product placement. One placement strategy is to look at the product itself. The viewer will then see the product itself and the brand might not be shown. In that case must the viewer be able to have pre-knowledge about the product to know what brand the product belongs to. Another product placement strategy is to simply look at the brand. This will exist when the brand is only visible and not the product; however, in some placement are both the product and the brand shown together. Another way to use product placement is when the product is only verbally mentioned in the setting, which means that the character is talking about a brand. These different ways of using product placement will be more discussed in the context of our thesis and in the chosen cases.

The brands are desire-inducing symbols used in marketing, and the consumption of these is vital for the consumer culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The brands that were used on the products referred earlier to the producers behind the product, however this has changed during the years (Arvidsson, 2005). In today’s society, the brands rather refer more to the context of consumption (Arvidsson, 2005), meaning how and when to use the branded product to get the most out of its value. The context of consumption is of importance, since the brands are used as key elements in the consumers’ construction of identity, both the personal and social identity.

The value of a brand is not based on the object themselves but on the equity of the brand (Arvidsson, 2005). According to Kapferer (2004), the value is based on the assets the brand has created in the heart and mind of the brand’s stakeholders. This means that the brand’s values are dependent on the meanings and functions they have in a constant changing social context (Arvidsson, 2005), and the process of meaning construction is therefore essential to the branding strategy. The management of brands has up until today been focusing on how to manage and control the consumers creation of meaning (Arvidsson, 2005). However, with the increasing use of product placements in the branding process, it seems like the companies have decreased the control over the meaning construction process and the consumers have thereby more freedom when creating a relationship with the brand. This increased freedom for consumers is also inline with the trend within the consume culture, where the consumers search for social spaces where they can construct and reconstruct their identities and create their own culture (Holt, 2002). This means that product placement can be an important tool for brand management in the future.

For the consumer to be able to create meaning to a brand they need to have a relationship with the brand, and some kind of connection is therefore necessary. To create a strong relationship to the brand and its heritage, it is crucial to balance the essence of the brand as well as to make sure it will adapt to the consumers lifestyle and everyday life. A well-done product placement should not detract the overall message of the setting and also make sure to mirror the TV series values. It must be a consistent fit between the story and the brand to make a

clear connection with each other (Brand Strategy, 2006). Storytelling is an effective way to create a feeling and make sense of the brand to the viewers. “Much of what we do when we think is actually creating stories that post-rationalise our gut instincts” (Brand Strategy, 2006). However, to use too many products will be blurring for the viewer and product placement will then lose the effect.

Consumers are driven by their emotions, how they react and take in the product placement. “The seat of emotions processes what the consumers’ sees and hear, before passing it along to the association where the thinking happens” (Brand Strategy, 2006). It is not until a story becomes established that the consumers start to think of the brand not only as raw material, but as how the story tells it should be, then the brand will stand out from other brands (Brand Strategy, 2006). This will be further discussed in chapter three, where McCracken’s model, “transfer of meaning” will be useful, to make the brand transfer a meaning through the viewers. It is crucial to create a close connection between the story and the brand. In our case, if the viewers transfer a meaning and create an emotional connection to the girls in the series “Sex and the City”, they will be more willing to use the different brands in the series since the brands will be connected to the girls. The connection to the series will determine which brands are accepted or not.

1.2 *Product Placement*

According to Nelson and McLeod (2005), product placement can be defined as products placed in media content to add realism to the media environment, provide brand exposure and persuade the consumer. Meanwhile, Stern and Russel (2004), highlight that the aim of product placement is to persuade consumers to develop favourable product attitudes. According to Panda (2004), one definition of product placement is; “when a product is placed and is involved within a motion picture, television or other media and includes a brand name, product, package, signage or other trademark”. Pervan and Martin (2002), argue that product placement is an alternative and another option for promotion, and is a more effective new way to get through the clutter of information and reach the viewer. They also stress, that it is also a way to increase and facilitate product recognition and brand recall (Pervan & Martin, 2002). In contrast to TV commercials, product placement is an integral part of the series, rather than only a commercial break-up, and works as a visibility exposure of the brand as well as increased brand knowledge (Panda, 2004).

1.2.1 The History and Development

According to Neuborne (2004), product placement is not a new phenomenon; it is almost as old as the TV itself. It dates back to the 1930’s when Proctor & Gamble started to broadcast “soap operas” on the radio, and later this was transmitted over to television.

The traditional advertising has lost its effectiveness because of costs, commercial clutter and large-scale abandonment of mainstream TV by the young people (Gloede, 2005 & Komet, 2006). The traditional 30-second advertising spot at television has lost a large part of its effectiveness (Ransom, 2004), since people are time-shifting their viewing and it has become less about deferred viewing and more about ad avoidance (Beale, 2005). The young viewers that have grown up with advertising surrounding around them have learned how to decode the

traditional advertising and not be affected by the messages. This has called for a new kind of advertising, and thereby opened for a more aggressive product placement in television than seen before.

Pervan and Martin (2002) stresses, that previous research shows that soap operas are an important vehicle for product placement. However, at the same time, soap opera view ship is down and has been for a while. According to Albiniaak (2005), the losses are steepest among women in the age of 18-34, a group that is of most interest for the advertisers. This decrease has forced marketers to find other similar series that can be used for product placements. Night time shows are a pr definition, not soap operas, even though they have similar target group. Thereby, they have become a part of the solution for the advertisers and this has opened up a market for series such as “Sex and the City” for product placements.

According to Nelson and McLeod (2005), product placements are today a booming industry with active trade associations, and script readers that actively look for possibilities to place products into TV series and film. In the year of 2005, the use of product placement in television jumped 30 percent (Greaser, 2006), which is a clear sign that product placements are here to stay as a new marketing tool. The growth has two main explanations; advertisers believe it helps to sell brands and the television firms are desperate for extra money (The Economist, 2005). Television seems to have caught up with the movies concerning the usage of product placement. Greaser (2006) stresses that the reason for this development is that TV series have much shorter production cycle compared to film and movies, and thereby the used products are easier inline with trends and popular themes and this decreases the risk of product placement for the companies. However, product placement is still considered to be more risky than conventional advertising (The Economist, 2005). It is estimated that soon 3/4 of all scripted prime-time network will contain product placements (Consoli, 2004), and therefore is it important for companies to have a good and deep understanding of product placement as a marketing strategy.

1.2.2 The Product Placement Strategies

Different product placement strategies explain different ways how a product or brand can be placed in a series. In today’s series, they try to put the brands and the products into the storyline. A typical example of such branded entertainment is Carrie in “Sex and the City” and her obsession of Manolo Blahnik shoes (Neuborne, 2004). According to Neuborne (2004) the TV show “Friends” is another program where companies are eager to get their products into the series, and there has been a tremendous demand after those products when these are visual. Product placement is not only for companies that sell to consumer, it can also be business to business that cooperate to reach out to same customers.

Steinberg (2004), highlight that a product placement can be distinguished as either verbal mentioned or a visual plug. According to d’Astous and Sèguin (1999), product placements in TV series can be classified by three main strategies, implicit, integrated and non-intergraded product placement. The first strategy is called implicit product placement, and is best defined as the product, brand or firm being present without being clearly expressed (d’Astous & Sèguin, 1999). The role of the product is passive, and it plays a contextual role in the situation. However, Pervan and Martin (2002) argue that “seen-only” placements might be more effective since they are more subtle, and thereby have a subconsciously effect on the viewers preferences. Research has shown that “seen-only” placements were the least recalled,

but at the same time they were most influential on choice (Law & Braun, 2000). The aim is to achieve an effect on the consumers buying decisions; thereby “seen-only” placements fulfil the goal of advertisers in a subtle way.

The second strategy is integrated product placement (d’Astous & Sèguin, 1999). In contrast to the first strategy; the brand or product now play an active role in the whole context and is formally expressed. This strategy demonstrates the attributes and benefits of the product for the viewers, and they thereby get both a reminder and a demonstration of the product. Pervan and Martin (2002) argue that the imagery of consumption plays an important role in the way consumers develop and apply meaning to their consumption habits, and this strategy thereby fulfils this need.

Finally, the last strategy is the non-integrated product placement (d’Astous & Sèguin, 1999). In this case the brand or the firm is formally expressed, but they are not integrated with the content of the program. The increasing trend of sponsorship of TV series is a typical example of this strategy.

These three strategies are not mutually exclusive; there can be mixtures and multiple types of product placements in a series (d’Astous & Sèguin, 1999). Some argue that, to use or/and verbally mention the product in an episode is the most effective way to use product placement (Pervan & Martin, 2002). It is also crucial to use a character that have the same cultural meaning as the product, since they are framing the product and influence it in a positive manner (Pervan & Martin, 2002). In our research, we are going to look at both implicit and integrated product placement, since they will best answer the research question. Non-integrated product placement is not an option since we have been using the DVD collection box where no sponsorship is used.

It is important to maintain congruence between the lifestyle associations engendered by a brand and the context in which it is engineered to appear (Solomon, 1994). This “fit” between the brand and the series is important for the marketers and the producers of the series. The marketers are careful not to place the brand in a setting that will somehow harm its already existing meaning. According to Panda (2004), the characters in the movie or TV series will hopefully influence the products in a positive manner and increase the visibility of a brand and how to use the product. The characters in television series are being defined in a variety of ways, also by what products and brands they use (Stern & Russel, 2004). Panda (2004) argue, “The brand should also be reflective of the class of the user or character in the film”. Therefore, it is crucial to have a good understanding of what the TV series and film values and believes are and try to match them up against the product that will be displayed (Cowlett, 2000). The brand or the product will be placed in a specific context, so its not only the information that the consumer will absorb, it is the whole setting and surrounding around the brand that will create meaning to it. As brand manager, they have to make sure to reduce the element of risk when placing brands or products in a TV series or film. The decision is not only a matter of what kind of series or film to chose, it is also essential to make sure the brand matches the popular culture, which will be the user profile (Cowlett, 2000).

The aim of product placements is the transfer meaning to the brand in a positive way, and strengthen the brands value by adding meaning to it. For the producers it is important that product placement is not “overdone”. According to Stern and Russel (2004), the product placement must be appropriate to the setting, a realistic representation of the social world. The more realistic it is, the more reliable will the viewers perceive it to be. Images presented on

TV or film will influence the viewers and then be interpreted as reality by them (Pervan & Martin, 2002). The use of real life brands helps to construct this situation, and thereby the border between reality and fiction becomes blurry. A product assortment makes more sense to consumers due to a perceived complementarity among constituent elements (Solomon, 1994), and product placement fulfils this need by showing products in a setting and context. The product placements have to build different elements of the product, since the placement will work as an explanation on how the product is going to be used. There exists different complementarily elements; functional, aesthetic and cultural (Solomon, 1994).

In our case, the series “Sex and the City” mainly have a focus on different elements of a popular culture. The consumption of the products transmits a message about the users’ social identity, so the products and brands and the consumption of the entertainment creates a situation of cultural complementarity (Solomon, 1994). All the products and brands we consume help us to create bonds with other consumers (Solomon, 1994). This bonding also applies for the construction of our identities because we bond through various identities. Since consumption “reveals” our identity, the consumption process obtains a meaning.

1.2.3 The Effectiveness of Product Placement

According to Solomon (1994), product placement might be to the most powerful marketing tool with 2.5 times better recalling rate than normal TV advertising. Rothenberg (1990), argue that “Product Placement may be the most powerful mechanism by which to insert one’s product may fit into an existing consumption constellation”. According to Hall (2004), previous research shows that younger consumer respond more and react upon product placement in movies and TV series and they are more willing to adapt to the products after they have been visible on TV. Young consumers are also used with different kinds of marketing tools and see them as a part of their every day life (Hall, 2004). Even though, Gordon (2003), argue that most people do not even notice a product placement, just because of the natural setting and also because of it is shown so fast.

Nozar (2001) highlights, that research shows that product placement is effective as long as it is not overdone. There is a fine balance that both the television producers and brand managers must take into consideration when dealing with the use of product placements. Ransom (2004) states, “The trick is to fly under the radar and not overstay your welcome, otherwise you are just perceived as a marketing effort instead of blending into the culture”. The viewers perceive the series as entertainment and not persuasion, and thereby they may not generate counterarguments. This situation may enhance the persuasive impact of the communication (Solomon, 1994).

The effect of the product placement is also dependent on the degree of connectedness a person has to the TV series. The connectedness is defined as “an intense relationship between audience and television program that extends beyond the television watching experience into individuals’ personal and social lives” (Russel & Puto, 1999). The stronger the connectedness was, the stronger and more positive was the response to the product placement (Russel & Puto, 1999). So in order to get a good result, the products should be placed in a series with a possibility to achieve this connectedness with the viewer. Research also shows differences in people’s attitudes towards product placements, national and gender aspects and the preference for branded goods have an influence (Nelson & McLeod, 2005). Panda (2004) states, “The

more positive the brand image is, the more positive is the consumers' brand evaluation towards the brand placement".

Product placement will reach a broader target market, since a traditional commercial will be showed for only a month or so in one country, compared to a TV series that will be showed thousands of more times around the world. Therefore, while traditional commercials have short-term effect, product placement has long-term effect, if it is well done (Hall, 2004). Hence, Hall (2004) highlights, if the series are using too many products it will be too blurry for the consumers to recognize the products and brands in the future. Product placement is designed to create more awareness, and will in the end affect the buying decision. The goal is to reinforce consumer awareness and brand loyalty, and is a very cost-effective way to complement traditional advertising (Nozar, 2001). Based on this, product placement should be an additional advertising strategy and not the only one.

1.2.4 Ethics in Product Placements

In our case, we will look at how the role functions in product placement will help to transfer meaning to the brand. Therefore, we need to take some ethical issues into consideration as well. It can be argued that product placement can go too far and overload the viewers with information. How far can product placement go before it is an overload of products and brands? The role the product placements will take in the setting, might take over in the storyline and will more disturb than transfer meaning to the viewer. When is the limit met where product placement will change from product displayed in a natural setting over to overload of products placed in an unnatural setting? Beale (2005) argue that product placement has always occupied a rather murky corner of the marketing mix. This is by some called "hidden advertising plugs" and has not been positively embraced by most consumers' councils (Nelson & McLeod, 2005). According to New Media Age (2005) there is no limit how much product placement can be used in a TV series, movies and other advertisements. However, there will be a limit how much the viewers will take in before it reaches the limit of overload and will then change to a negative effect (New Media Age, 2005).

Creamer (2004), argue that product placement was more skilful and trustworthy in early days, when they placed the product in a right placement where the brand made meaning to the product. However, today with too many low budget reality series, the placement will be at any place and will have no connection to the brand and thereby turn off the consumer instead (Creamer, 2004). Others argue that, this will also lead to that the consumer itself will find out that the products are placed there and will only work as a commercial message (Panda, 2004). Therefore, consumers will evaluate product placements in varieties of ways. Some consumers may respond positive towards product placement and some consumers do not like the mass market of products that will be displayed visually in the film or TV series. There will be reactions towards the level of ethical involvement in product placement according to "the commercialization of the entertainment products and intrusion in the life of the consumer" (Panda, 2004). Evaluative beliefs and ethical reactions are two categories of measure the effectiveness for different kinds of product placements (Panda, 2004).

1.3 Celebrity Endorsement and Product Placement

There are different ways for a brand manager to connect the brand or the product with a celebrity or a character. The definition of celebrity endorser is “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement” (McCracken, 1989). One way to use product placement, is to transfer the meaning of the brand or product to a celebrity or a fictive person in a film or TV series, in order to create the message even stronger and more effective. Meaning in this case, means the values and beliefs the brand will transfer to the celebrity or the fictive person. This meaning will further be transferred from the celebrity to the viewers. This transfer of meaning is crucial in our case, it enable us to see the connectedness and transfer of meaning between the brand and the character and also to the viewers.

Another way is to use celebrities in TV commercials and advertisings, to connect the product or brand to a person. The connection with the consumers will be the same for both product placements in film and celebrity endorsements in TV commercials. Therefore we decide to discuss celebrity endorsement as well and try to tie that up, in the direction of product placement in a TV series.

We are aware that it is a great difference between product placements in film and TV series compared to celebrity endorsements, however, we found a couple of similarities between the meaning of the product and the person that use and display the product, in different settings. The question is where the meaning is created. According to (New Media Age, 2005), brands need to have a good content and the product itself needs to make the viewers enjoy the product.

“You have to work through Hollywood to create a fit, where the creative that Hollywood can produce works with a brand. It has to be the right fit with the right brand and the right entertainment property” (New Media Age, 2005)

To use product placement is not only to compensate for the production costs or decrease the marketing costs for the product, it will also influence the consumer and decrease the disbelief of a products meaning (New Media Age, 2005). However, will the meaning of the product or brand, be created by the viewer? Or will the interaction in TV series create the meaning or will the meaning lie in the brand itself? By trying to answer these questions, we will use the McCracken (1989), “transfer of meaning” model in the analysis section.

It is clear that advertising and popular cultures have an influence on the young people (Ward, 1997), and by using product placement in popular series creates that these two fields are being further integrated.

1.4 Consumer Culture

Consumers are seen to construct identities and try out new roles within and in collaboration with brands, and this culture affect the construction of brand meaning (Schroeder, 2006). According to Schroeder (2006), “The interactions of identity, consumption and image represent one of the critical imperatives of contemporary consumer culture”.

According to Arnould and Thompson (2005),

“The consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social recourses, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material recourses on which they depend, are mediated through markets”.(p.869)

Arnould and Thompson (2005) stresses that, a central element for consumer culture is the consumption of “market-made” commodities and desire-inducing marketing symbols”. A definition of consumer culture is “global network where local cultures are increasingly interpenetrated by the forces of transnational capital and the global mediascape” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Meanwhile popular culture has more focus on a culture that is well liked by many people, consumer culture will be more connected to people’s everyday consumption patterns (Holt, 2002). We found that popular culture will be a part of the consumer culture. Everything that people consume might not belong to a popular culture, however products that are well favoured by many people will therefore be part of the popular culture inside the consumer culture. According to Holt (2002), the consumer culture is the cornerstone of the branding activities that will be developed through the consumers’ consumption patterns.

The girls in the series “Sex and the City” are part of a popular culture. Clothes, accessories and other products that are used in the show belong to a popular culture, since they are often well known brands and favoured by many people. This will explain a specific popular culture that will connect more to glamour and extravagance culture, which will be part of a high status consumption patterns that will also connect to the consumer culture. Popular culture has become an important factor in this meaning construction, often giving the viewers an ideal, for instance the lead character in popular series that can help them make meaning out of the brands that are used. This aspect is important to take into consideration when discussing the branding process, since it makes clear that no one is in full control of it.

1.5 *Popular Culture*

Today there is no basic widely accepted definition of popular culture (Brown & Fishwick, 1988). Research in popular culture uses different definitions; some broad and some more narrow. According to Storey (1993), there are different ways to define popular culture, both theoretical and political inflections. However, a broad and evident point to the definition of popular culture is to say that the popular culture is” a culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people” (Storey, 1993). The lack of clear definition is reflected in the research concerning popular culture showing no clear focus, and thereby a variety of areas in society are included into the popular culture. Culture itself will be defined in cognitive term as believes, values and norms of a specific social group, which share the same and disseminate the same knowledge (Brumbaugh, 2002).

The element of popularity is a central element to this culture, so it must always be demonstrated in some way (Brown & Fishwick, 1988). This leads to an important discussion concerning popular culture; how to define popularity. Should popularity be defined by hard facts such as sales numbers and number of fans, or should other elements be included as well? Popularity is also connected to people feelings towards a subject or object and these feelings can be hard to measure, since they not always can be reflected in concrete actions. It is clear

that measuring popularity can be difficult, and that brings up the question of the level of popularity. A relevant question to ask is, if there is a certain level of popularity that has to be reached, in order to be defined as popular culture. Some argue that a kind of threshold of popularity must exist, and that it may differ in different societies (Brown & Fishwick, 1988). However, if a certain level has to be acquired, then popular culture will not embrace the cases that are defined as failures. For instance, there exist movies that have flopped, but still have become a part of today's society and are being quoted by people. Popular culture is the culture of the folk and the masses, not the elite (Brown & Fishwick, 1988), and thereby should both success and failures be included into the popular culture.

Popular culture is a source of pleasure and information in the modern world (Manaker, 2002), and the modern consumer collects data concerning popular culture from various sources (Solomon, 1994). That the series "Sex and the City" is a part of the popular culture can be stated in different ways. First of all, the high number of viewers in a large number of countries speaks for itself, and the series has also achieved various awards. Also, the fact that clothes retailers are copying the characters wardrobe immediately after an episode, and the guided bus in New York showing people different locations in the series are also relevant signs on the series popularity. The "Sex and the City" series is first of all, a source of entertainment for the viewers, but also provide information about the "hottest" news concerning lifestyles and products. The information given by such series is often used by viewers to reshape their personal and collective identities, and thereby is the popular culture important for our reconstruction of our identities (Manaker, 2002). We live in a world with little stability and where changes have become a very natural part of the world, and our identities are also being constantly altered and reconstructed.

Marx's state in his theories concerning culture, that the cultural production often takes the form of commodities (Manaker, 2002). The increasing use of branded product placements in popular TV series can therefore be seen as a necessarily part of the construction of popular culture. People need objects to define themselves and the culture they are a part of. The popular culture is "mass produced for mass consumption" (Storey, 1993) and will therefore also explain what kind of products that will be defined as popular culture. Some argue that the usage of brand names in popular culture only reflects the boost of commercial content of a culture (Panda, 2004).

1.6 Problem Formulation and Research Question

When reviewing the research concerning product placements, we discovered an area that was rare in the marketing section. Research concerning the usage of dramaturgy and narrative techniques when placing a product or brand in a setting in the storyline is rare. Is it possible to define the placement as having a specific role function in the storyline? With role, we mean if the product or brand were a character in the setting, what role would the product or brand have? If so, is there a connection between the given role and the branding strategy of the products? Therefore, there seems to be a gap in product placement research concerning this area. By using dramaturgical elements, we are trying to contribute to narrow the gap in the usage of product placement and therefore be a step closer to revealing some of the different dimensions the product placement has as a marketing tool. This understanding can also help to further improve the degree of effectiveness in advertising in general. The following question will be our research question for this thesis:

- How can the role functions in product placement help to transfer meaning to a brand?

The role function will work as a crucial tool to understand the transfer of meaning to the viewer between the brand and the character that is using the brand. This will be useful when using product placement in a series, to transfer meaning and connect the brand to the viewer through the character. Products and brands that are displayed in today's sitcom are well placed and discussed. Since today's popular cultures are more aware and harder to reach than before, the brands that are displayed have a great function. It is not only the product; it is what the brand's role stands for and how it is connected to the viewer that will affect the transfer of meaning to a brand. The four girls in "Sex and the City" represent different roles and use specific brands that fit into their lifestyle. Viewers will connect to the different characters in the series and will thereby also connect to the different brands that the characters are using. That specific popular culture will be connected to the popular culture the girls belong to in the series.

1.7 Purpose

In our research we are looking for brands placed in the context of "Sex and the City" series. Our first purpose is to identify the role functions of three chosen brands both mentioned and visual portrayed, in a specific popular culture within the TV series. In this thesis, we want to get a better understanding and narrow the research gap concerning the role functions of product placement and how it transfer meaning to the brand. Is it possible to define the placement as having a specific role, such as a real character in the storyline? The definition of role in this case is if the branded product was a character, what role will the product or brand have? We will add a new dimension by using both dramaturgy and narrative technique, to see the connection of the branded products as a character of the setting in the TV series.

With our second purpose, we will discuss how the meaning will be transferred from a brand to the viewer. We will use McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model and discuss how the different stages in the model are used in the series of "Sex and the City". We will also further develop the model "transfer of meaning" between the brands, the character and the viewer and link them together into a two-way communication. By doing this, we will get a better understanding of the importance to connect the right meaning from the brand or product to the viewer through the character.

1.8 Limitations

We will only focus on one TV series, "Sex and the City" and the brands that are being used in that specific sitcom. Therefore the findings will have low level of generalizability, which means that our findings might not be able to be used in other settings or areas.

Another limitation of our thesis is, that even though we are really aware of most of the product placements in the TV series, we might not have caught all the placements when viewing the different episodes. Some placements in the series are visible products, but the brands are not shown. However, if you are aware of the brand and belong to a specific

popular culture you will notice the brand, otherwise you might not notice it at all. We are taking that into consideration when we are doing our observation. If the brand is not visible to everyone, then we will not discuss it further.

Another limitation will be our previous knowledge about the series. The authors of this thesis are doing their best to be as objective as possible when observing and interpret the brands roles, even though we really like the series before the research started. In this case, with objective we mean that we will try to look at the series, as it was the first time we saw it and try to be more critical to what we see. We will try to take distance to the series and try to be as analytical as possible. Both of us belong to the popular culture group that the sitcom is trying to reach. This can lead to some positive insights that other researcher, that is not that into the series and the popular culture, might not see. According to gender aspect, it is not only that the observation and findings might be different if a male would be the observer. We also need to take the social and cultural issues into considerations and the differences between masculinity and femininity. This means that we need to be sensitive to the different aspects of men and women.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

The outline of the thesis will be as follow. We will start with our theory that will be our tool of the thesis. In that section, we will show the reader how we tie the dramaturgy and the narrative technique together and connect it to our research question and the product placement itself. We will also discuss the different roles a brand will be able to take, if it was an actor in a TV series. Chapter three will discuss the meaning of the brand. In this section we will introduce McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model and discuss the different stages the transfer of meaning will take. This model will den be used in connection to our case. Chapter four will be the method chapter, were we have collect the data. A visual analysis will be conducted and an observation method is used to collect the data with a case study. Chapter five deals with our analysis of the observation where we highlight three cases were we explain in detail what we have observed according to the product placement strategies and role functions in the different episodes. We discuss the three different functional roles the cases will use. Chapter six deals with what we have learned from our observation and we will also discuss our new development of the two-way communication model out of McCracken's model "transfer of meaning". In this chapter, we will also discuss the gender aspect according to the chosen cases. In chapter seven we discuss further research areas within product placement. Finally, chapter eight deals with our conclusion and general thoughts.

2. Theory

In this chapter we will introduce the tools that we have used to solve our research problem and purposes. Narrative techniques and dramaturgy will be explained and also how we used these techniques when analysing the data. The reader will get a general description of the different role functions we used when examine the role the brands will take in a specific setting in the storyline.

2.1 The new Dimension

To be able to evaluate the roles of branded products in TV series we are using literature from narrative techniques and dramaturgy. There exists no sharp distinction between these two. However, one can say that narrative techniques deal with the storytelling itself, meaning how different techniques are used to tell the story (Foss, 1992). For instance, who or what kind of character is telling the story. Dramaturgy on the other hand, adds structure to the more specific type of story (Foss, 1992) and it is within these structures that the narrative techniques are used.

Literature and research in the product placement category have not dealt with the role functions of branded products in television before, and therefore we need to look outside the traditional marketing literature to find theories that can be applied to our research. By looking into a very different kind of sphere than marketing, new elements and factors will be known, and can be used in the further development of product placement theories. The use of new and different literature will help us in the creation of the new dimension in product placement.

2.2 Narrative Discourse and Technique

Narrative is defined as the spoken or written accounts of events, the actual storytelling (Oxford Dictionary). The narrative structures are different ways of telling the story to a receiver. These structures can also be found outside the manifestation of meaning that occur in the natural language (Greimas, 1977), for instance in TV series and films that make use of the same structures and use them in the construction of scenes and images. Products and brands have become an important part of the construction of scenes, and therefore can the narrative structures also be applied to them. The knowledge about the events can be received either directly from the informant or be communicated from other subjects within the narrative (Greimas & Courtes, 1976). These other subjects can be other characters that verbally and non-verbally can communicate to the viewers. Brands and products used as props in television and films might additionally have the role of communication subjects, giving the viewers different kind of knowledge through non-verbal communication. Especially branded products are being perceived to have a “voice” on its own, communicating the social role and identity of the consumers that buy the specific product.

Any form of a text can tell a story, regardless of the medium. In our research, we are looking at branded products placed in the medium of television, which can have some similarities to

product placement in movies. Since any text can tell a story, it is important to define what is considered to be a text. A traditional opinion is that a text consists of letters put together in a certain order that creates meaning, such as in books and magazine. However, the definition of text has changed and developed into a broader concept in the recent years, and today visual images can also be included in the text category (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Based on this, it is clear that images of branded products in TV series can also tell a story in themselves, without having to rely on interaction between the characters or any kind of sound. So as long as a branded product is passive but visible in an image, it can communicate with the viewers. What is communicated is then again dependent on what kind of a role or character the product or brand has. If these images can be “read” as text or should be submitted to a visual analysis is however another discussion and it will be dealt with further in our method part of this thesis.

For the receiver to be able to interpret and thereby “read” the images that are presented one must attend to their internal and external narratives (Pink, 2003) and different narrative techniques can be used for this purpose. The internal narrative of an image is the specific content of the image, and do not take the context and social setting of the image into consideration. This is the visual aspect, product characteristics and attributes, when dealing with product placement. The external narrative deals with the social aspect of the image, how the image is interpreted by the viewers. It is in this aspect the brands transfer meaning and add value for the viewers as well as for the company behind the products.

A part of the narrative discourse is the persuasive element, found in politics and advertising (Greimas & Courtès, 1976). Product placement has not been fully approved as a part of the marketing mix since some perceive it to be unethical and in some situations can border to manipulation. Manipulation has a hidden element when presenting a “true” image as something obvious and objective (Greimas & Courtès, 1976). The aim of product placement is to achieve a natural connection between the brand and the series, even though this connection is constructed and far from natural. In some cases, the placement can be done in a very speculative way and therefore border to manipulation. The viewers might not be aware of that they are actually submitted for advertising, and thereby their defenses against promotion will be down. How far product placement can go before it crosses the line to manipulation is a tricky question that opens for an ethical discussion, which is dealt with earlier in this thesis.

The content and form are other elements that contribute to the narrative structure. In the narrative audiovisual media such as television, these elements can be divided into two main factors; the plane of events and the plane of discourse (Foss, 1992). The plane of events can best be described as the whole content of the fictional world, what the characters and we can see and hear in the surroundings. The other factor, the plane of discourse deals with the used elements of form and narrative techniques, how we see and hear things in a show. In our research, we are going to look further into the element of plane of events. Products and brands play a great part in the modern lifestyles and society, and they have also found their way into television by product placements. They are used as props, either passive or active, in order to make the scenes as realistic as possible and transfer meaning to the character or the context. Product placements help to define the look of scenes and images, and thereby are part of the plane of events.

“The point of view” is also a narrative technique that affects the storytelling, and there exists a variety to choose from. In the series “Sex and the City” the main character, Carrie, is the

inside storyteller and gives a character-related point of view. This technique makes it easier for the viewers to accept that the storyteller cannot be all seeing (Foss, 1992), and thereby easier understand the “wrong” judgments characters do. At the same time, these “mistakes” are necessarily in order to create tension and drama in a series. The character-related point of view also makes the storyline more open for subjective judgments (Foss, 1992) and it opens up the possibility for the viewers to connect with the program on a variety of levels. This freedom of interpretation is also connected to the brands and products used in the series. Since the viewers are free to connect, add value and transfer meaning to their preferred brands or products on their own conditions. The companies are no longer in full control of the branding process; the value is created through interpretation of the content of the series.

Props used in a series should ideally contribute in a meaningful way to the story, and are often used as means of expression and tools of characterization (Foss, 1992). The relationship between the characters and their props is mutual. The characters are in some ways defined with the help of their relationship to products and brands. At the same time, the characters add values and transfer meaning to the used products or brands, which in the end will have an impact on the brand equity. This process will be further elaborated in the McCracken’s “transfer of meaning” model in chapter three.

Branded products used as props can play different roles; active or passive (Foss, 1992). The branded products are perceived to have an active role if someone in the series takes action because of the products help or simply if the products are present. If the branded product is a part of the surroundings and is used to make statement about the characters values or life, then it is defined as having a passive role. The role and importance of a product can overtime change, and the changes are most likely to be closely connected to changes of the characters. In the case of TV series, it might be difficult to have a sharp distinction between the active and passive roles of products or brands. This distinction is hard, since the role of the branded products could vary through the different episodes, and there is a difficult distinction between products or brands being “present” and being in the “surroundings”.

2.3 *Dramaturgy*

Dramaturgy has developed techniques to optimize the production and presentation of a drama to a specific audience (Foss, 1992), so that the communication can take place without too much disturbance and interfering of the original message and the information given there. In a society with overload of information, some dramaturgical techniques have also been used in traditional advertising, in order for the message to stand out from the crowd and make an impression. Dramaturgy is the technique considered collectively (Cardullo, 1995) that gives the story a shape and structure (Foss, 1992), and the techniques also help to achieve an effective communication as possible. Brand managers are on a constant search for new and more effective ways to communicate their products attributes and benefits. Product placement in television is an increasing trend, and one can argue that dramaturgical tools have subsequently been applied to the products and brands. Today, branded products are being placed in drama and one might say that sometimes they have a role as characters at the same level as the actors in the drama, and therefore the dramaturgical aspect can be used at products and brands additionally.

It is important that the viewers get a good understanding of the characters, in order to develop a relationship with them. A character can be described in a 3-dimensional way; by physical, sociological or psychological data (Foss, 1992). Even though not all dimensions are shown through the television screen, they are all important in the planning process to avoid flatness of the characters. When applying these character traits to the branded products in a TV series, both the physical and sociological dimensions are of most importance. Brands are used to communicate to the social surroundings, the owner's identity and image. The physical trait is important for how the visible aspects of the branded products are presented, and the sociological affects the image of the branded product.

Personal traits can be presented in numerous ways; through action, through reaction, through reaction of others and so on (Foss, 1992). Traits may also be uncovered through the characters relationship with the props (Foss, 1992), where the props give information about the characters lifestyles and values. Based on the traits, it is possible to develop a picture of the dominant intention behind the character as well (Foss, 1992). The characters can also be described based on their behavior. If their behavior are predictable and thereby can be foreseen, they are classified as closed (Foss, 1992). The opposite character is unpredictable and not surprisingly called open. These ways of presenting the character through different actions and interaction can also be used at branded products, placed in a series. How the real life characters and the other surroundings interact and react to a product or brand are ways to define the identity and image of the branded products to the viewers that might be potential consumers in the future. Therefore, it is significant that the image presented through a series is true to the branded products real identity, that way the customer expectations are met when consuming the product. A gap between expectations and actual consumption is damaging for both companies, the network behind the production of the series and the one behind the production of the product.

As mentioned earlier the relationship between characters and props is a two-way interaction, and therefore are the products and brands also being defined through their relationship to the characters. The popular characters fictional lifestyles and values can rub off to the image of the brand into the consumers mind. The viewers must perceive the relationship between the character and the brand as natural to have an effect, or else it will be perceived as false and constructed. This is a little ironic since all programs at television are constructed in some way or another and therefore can a truly genuine relationship within the context of television be hard to find.

2.3.1 Role Functions

The role places the character in the dramatic network. While characterization deals with the attributes of the specific role, the role function is describing the placement of the character. A character can have more than one role function at the time, and can also change the role function over time (Foss, 1992). Series that have run over some time have characters that are developed through various crisis and conflicts, constantly seeking their goals and dreams. Product placements used in series also changes during time; either the use of brands changes or the model from a specific brand is changed and updated. These changes have different explanations. Changing the use of brands in a series might be done to get a better fit between the character using the product and the image of the brand.

Nothing lasts forever, and the phases in the lifecycle for products are also applied to the lifecycle of brands. Brands naturally become outdated or competed out of new, “cool” brands. TV series needs to be in-touch with the popular culture and preferable two-step a head of the mass consumers’ preferences. Having the hottest brand visible in a series adds credibility to the character and a better connection with the popular culture. Placed branded products can also be upgraded to the newest model from the same brand. It is rational that the companies want to show their latest developments for their potential consumers, since product placement is such an effective marketing tool. However, the urge for flashing their newest developments must not overshadow the fact that it is crucial that it continue to be a fit between the setting, character and the placement of the branded product. If the consumers perceive the product placement as unnatural, it loses its effect. Even though the development of a character in a drama adds elements to the personal character traits, other factors also affect the character. The role function of a character can also determine the character traits (Foss, 1992). The role function and the character need to be consistent with each other in order to be perceived as realistic by the viewers. Foss (1992) describes eight role functions that often are identified in a traditional drama. These are; the principal, the opponent, the assistant/helper, the shadow, the contrast, the sympathizer, the proxy and the five-minute part role. The number and the usage of the roles will be dependent on the drama, and thereby, it exist a great variety of role functions in series at television.

By observing and interpret various use of branded products in the series of “Sex and the City”, we are interested in revealing if the brands have actual role functions in the series. An understanding of the traditional roles used in drama is thereby necessary in order to uncover the potential role functions of brands. We are not saying that the potential role function of a brand will fit perfectly into the traditional classifications of role functions, since they have been developed having human beings in mind. However, the use of these traditional functions will help us to reveal the brands role within the series. The role functions that will be of importance for our research will be further elaborated, and the use of them in our research will be dealt with in our analysis.

The protagonist has the principal role in the drama, and is the one that undergoes the biggest development and changes during the drama (Foss, 1992). These changes are the result of managed challenges and crisis (Foss, 1992), and the multitudes of those are of course dependent on the length of the drama. In the series ”Sex and the City”, one can argue that all the four main characters have the principal role. We follow them trough their personal crisis and the various characters get much of the same total airtime. On the other hand, the Carrie character has the role of the storyteller and it is about her search for the love of her life, Mr. Big, which is like a red thread through the whole story. The opponent to the principal role is the role of the antagonist. This role remains constant during the whole drama, and is the one that compels the principal role to act (Foss, 1992). In the case of ”Sex and the City”, one can argue that the “men” are the opponent, since they often are the reason why the four main ladies take action.

The shadow role has the functions of shedding some light over the development that the principal role is going through (Foss, 1992). By giving a good illustration of the changes that are occurring, the viewers will better understand the changes and the further developments. This role also helps to define the principal role, so that the viewers get a better understanding of the characters and their traits. The shadow role has often consisted of people, where the character goes through the same developments at the principal role but less radical (Foss, 1992). Within a consumer culture with high level of usage of brands, the functions of this role

can be fulfilled by strategic product placements. In season six, episode five in the series “Sex and the City” the Prada brand is written into the storyline and is fulfilling the shadow role. Carrie is bringing her new boyfriend Berger to the Prada store, and this is an act she defines to be an important step in their relationship and that is used to sheer light over their relationship.

The role of the sympathizer also helps to clarify the principal role or another characters situation (Foss, 1992), but the clarification is done in a different way. By listening, asking and answering questions, the sympathizer helps the principal role to open up. By opening up the principal role, the character will receive more sympathy from the viewers, since they better understand the character. The more information given, the better understanding is created. Stanford, Carries gay friend are sometimes referred to as the fifth woman in the series and one can argue that he has the role of a sympathizer. He knows Carrie very well, and is always there for her to confide in and to support her. There are various ways these “open-up” activities can be acted out, and it is not always required that the sympathizer needs to be a human being to fulfill this role. For instance, a diary can act as a sympathizer that listens to the principal characters reflections or a book can help to answer questions. This shows that products certainly can have the role of the sympathizer in a drama, and thereby is an alternative for product placements.

The third role that is of importance for our case, is the role function named “The Five-Minute Part”. This is a role that is not a big part of the story line, but the role functions works as a break and relief from the main story (Foss, 1992). According to dramaturgical literature, Foss (1992) argues that this role often acts as a distorting mirror for the main action, with a comic point of view. This function can help to create some contrast to main storyline, so that its content becomes clearer and make a bigger impact on the viewers. It may also help to lighten up the tone so it not becomes too serious and “depressing” for the viewers. In the case of “Sex and the City” the Weight Watchers have this role function in season five, episode four. Miranda joins Weight Watchers and this result in some comical situations and comments from the other characters. How this “Five-Minute Part” is used will be dependent on what kind of series it is, pure light entertainment or more serious drama. In connection with product placements, products can also fulfill this role. The use, thoughts or reaction towards products can be a way of ease up the atmosphere.

These are general descriptions of the role functions used in dramas. However, the distinctions between the different roles will in reality not be absolute, and sometimes there can be sub-roles that actually are combinations of the above mentioned.

3. Construction of Meaning

In this chapter we will explain the meaning that will be transferred to the brand through the characters. The viewer will transfer a specific meaning both to the brand but also to the character that are using the brand. The brand will then have a specific role connected to the character in the series. We have used McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model to explain how the meaning will be transferred into the persona in the first stage, then from the character into the brand and then finally into the viewer.

3.1 Definition of Meaning

Objects and images have a polysemic character, which means they are perceived to have more than one meaning between people (Wagner, 2002). This indicates that the process of meaning construction is very complex, since the same information can hold different meanings and the variety of these depends on the people (Miranda & Saunders, 2003). The construction of meaning is based on both the biographic of the individual and their position in the social setting (Miranda & Saunders, 2003). These two elements are important parts of an individual's reference list, which is under constant change throughout a lifetime, and it affects their cognitive process that is used when constructing meaning.

The complexity of the construction of meaning is important to have in mind when using product placement as a strategy to transfer meaning to the brand. How people perceive the meaning from the product placement is a very uncontrollable process from a brand manager's point of view. However, since product placement is too powerful to not be used at all when weighing the risks, it should be used in the best possible way to try to exclude the possibility of "wrong" judgments from the viewer. With wrong meaning judgments that are not inline with the brand company's intentions and goals.

The definition of meaning in the sociological area varies, but they all agree upon that meaning is the result of a construction (Maines, 2000). The meaning is a result of a social transaction, and is only formed when the viewers are able to respond in line with the initiator's saying (Maines, 2000). This means that if the viewers do not respond in accordance with the senders' intention, the transfer of meaning will not have occurred. In the context of product placements, this means if the consumers have a different meaning towards a brand than the company intended in the first place, then a transfer of meaning will not have taken place. This seems to be a too narrow definition of meaning in the context of product placements, since there are several examples where brands have been applied a different meaning in society than originally intended. For instance, in England the hooligans started to use the clothes from the brand Mulberry in order to hide from the police. This usage of the brand was for sure not the intended result of Mulberry's marketing communication. However, at the same time the brand transferred another meaning to the Hooligans.

Another definition of meaning would be better in the area of marketing and product placement. Meaning can also be defined as the "shared and common response, significations, intentions and goals, and in general an interpretive and representational process that underlie

human conduct” (Maines, 2000). This definition includes all kind of meanings that are a result from an active human interpretation, and includes information given from both traditional text and in a more figurative way such as signs. The results from this interpretation are not important, as long as they are based on the human activity of interpretation. This is a broader definition and includes thereby more of the tools that can be used in marketing to communicate information and values. With meaning we mean the interpretation of the use of brands in the series of “Sex and the City”. We want to better understand the roles of the brands play in the series and the transfer of meaning of the brand to the viewers through the roles.

3.2 *Movement of Meaning*

McCracken (1989) are using a “transfer of meaning” model to show the movement of meaning between the celebrity and the movement from the celebrity to the product and then from the product to the consumer. This model can also be used in our thesis to see the connection and movement of meaning between the characters in the TV series and brands, in our case within the “Sex and the City” series. The model can also show the transfer of meaning of a brand that is being used in the series and the transfer of meaning to the viewer (consumer) and also the connection between the viewer and the brand itself. The meaning of the physical and social world will then move to the product and then to consumers’ everyday life (McCracken, 1989). “The transfer of meanings from consumer products to the individual consumer is accomplished through the efforts of the consumer” (McCracken, 1989).

McCracken (1989) are using a couple of models to see how the message between the sender and source is being perceived as convincing. The viewer must be able to connect the message and the celebrity to an own connection, such as “familiarity”, “likeability” and “similarity” to make the connection as trustworthy as possible (McCracken, 1989). This will show a physical appearance and behaviour as well as similarity between the sender and the receiver of the message (McCracken, 1989). If the sender and the receiver got the same values and believes, it is easier to make the message more effective. Therefore, it is crucial to make sure the product and brand fit into the right character in the film or TV series, to make it as believable and trustworthy natural setting as possible. The different character in “Sex and the City” has strong personalities and delivers different meanings towards different branded products in the TV series. Hence, the series will reach a broader target market and popular culture.

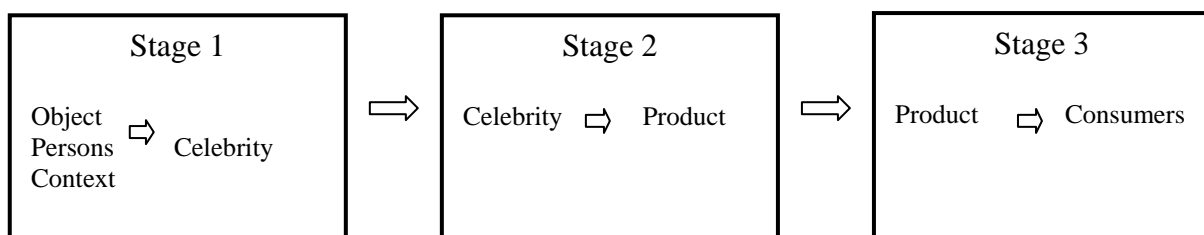
McCracken (1989) argue though, that the influence from the celebrity has only to do with the celebrity itself and has nothing to do with the product the celebrity uses. According to McCracken, (1989), if the person in an advertisement is a fictive person, the trustworthiness might not occur. However, in the case of “Sex and the City”, all the characters are fictive persons. Although, since it is a TV series, the viewer will see the characters as real persons and develop a relationship with the different characters that will build up a real life around them, and therefore will the product placement be real and believable anyway. The girls in “Sex and the City” are made up for a certain meaning and the viewer will find it useful and persuasive and someone they will be able to identify themselves with.

3.3 The Meaning of the Brand

The branded product will transfer a meaning to the viewer. It is crucial to evoke same cultural meanings when transferring it from the product to the viewer and to make the brand irresistible (McCracken, 1989). Even though the brand itself can create different meanings to different people, the brand manager will be able to try to control the meaning and will try to transfer the right message and in this case, it will occur through a fictive person. The meaning that will be chosen will also depend on the marketing plan and the brand manager team that will develop the meaning (McCracken, 1989). However, the final stage for the transfer of meaning of the brand will always lie in the hand of the consumer and their interpretation. According to Tripp, Jensen & Carlson (1994), celebrities that are favoured have a great chance to be trusted product endorsers.

After the meaning is moved into the product itself, it also needs to be transferred into consumers where the consumers need to construct the meanings (McCracken, 1989). The consumer needs to construct and form the meaning and make sure the meaning will fulfil their needs of what they have shaped in their lives, and also find out if the meaning will fit them according to age, gender, class and lifestyle (McCracken, 1989). Consumers use their meaning not only to satisfy needs and functions, but also to keep track of fashion and their lifestyles (McCracken, 1989). When the consumers meaning are constructed around the product, the movement of meaning is accomplished (McCracken, 1989).

The following model of transfer of meaning show “how the meaning moves into the persona of the celebrity, how it further moves from the celebrity into the product and, finally how it moves form the product into the consumer” (McCracken, 1989). We will be able to use the same model for branded product placements in the TV series, which we will observe. However instead of using celebrities, we will use characters and instead of product we discuss the usage of a specific brand.



(Figure 1, McCracken, 1989)

Stage 1

In the first stage in the transfer of meaning model, the celebrities receive meaning through objects, persons and contexts, and thereby create a role that will transfer the meaning (McCracken, 1989). Celebrities deliver a powerful meaning and work as a powerful media tool (McCracken, 1989). According to McCracken (1989), “Celebrities evoke the meanings in their persona with greater vividness and clarity”. This stage can also be used in product placement in a TV series or film. Since “Sex and the City” has become a really famous and well-known series around the world, it is an effective marketing tool to use four girls with different personalities and to match them with different brands that will fit

their personality. The celebrity or in our case the characters are passing along the meaning and will transfer the process to the next stage.

Stage 2

It is important to make sure the character and the brand will deliver the same message. Therefore is this second stage crucial, since if not the celebrity and the product fit together, the trustworthiness and persuasive will not occur. When choosing a celebrity for an ad or a product placement setting, it is important to make sure that the person only captures the meaning it wants to deliver and try not to bring in any unwanted meanings (McCracken, 1989). When the viewer feels the similarities and the connection between the celebrity and the product, then they will be able to move into the last stage in the movement process.

Here, in stage 2, the different girls in “Sex and the City“ communicate different meanings to the viewers. All four characters have really different personalities and these makes the product placements in the series broader and increase the varieties of brands. This is a powerful way to use product placement, since they will match the different brands into the different characters. The character will stand for a specific personality that a specific brand will match.

Stage 3

In this last stage, in the transfer of meaning, the celebrity make the customer transfer a meaning out of the product and try to develop that meaning into their lives (McCracken, 1989). Viewers use different meanings to construct their own lives and how they see the world, through class, gender, cultural, personality and lifestyle (McCracken, 1989). Therefore, in this last stage, the importance is highlighted into the meaning transfer from character into the customer itself. “The character must claim the meanings and then work with them” (McCracken, 1989).

In our case, the characters transfer meaning to the viewer. The meaning will be transferred along with the episodes, which the viewer will copy, since they want to be like the character in the series. If the viewers like the characters in the specific series, then the likelihood will be that the viewer wants to be like Carrie or one of the other girls in “Sex in the City”, and therefore will try to use the same kind of products and brands that they are using. The product placements are therefore well displayed on the various girls. The diverse brands they use will create a specific relationship to the different characters. Therefore, trustworthiness and connection to the character will create a relationship and meaning to the viewers through the different brands.

The product placement in films and TV series, compared to commercials and celebrity endorsement, make it easier to connect the character to the product and brand, since it is a more long-term relationship and the viewer will be more able to create a meaning of the setting. Another advantage of product placement in TV series and film is that the viewers have decided by themselves to watch the TV series or film, they will thereby be more willing to transfer the meaning with the character and brand.

4. Method

In this Method chapter we will introduce our strategy design, the method of our research and also explain why we use a visual analysis to see how the product will create a meaning into the storyline. We discuss the reason why we believe observation method will be the most appropriate choice of method to use for our research problem. Limitation of the research and empirical data will also be treated.

4.1 Strategy and Design

This research has a two-step purpose. The first purpose is to add a new dimension to product placement, by using techniques from dramaturgy to understand the meaning of these placements in the context of a series. This dimension will provide an understanding of the roles the brands play within the context of TV series, and thereby make a contribution to an area within product placement research that today is rare. The second purpose is to see how the meaning from the brand is transferred through the character to the viewer.

Earlier products that were used in TV series have been looked at as necessarily props, which had no close relation to the actions and drama in the storyline. With the increased weight on brands as identity tools in society, one can argue that the use of props has changed and that they have become a bigger part of the storyline today. Taking the context of the placements into consideration this research will take a closer look at what kind of roles that are used, how the roles are presented in the series and try to see the connection to the branding strategy from the company.

There are two strategies to choose from when planning research; qualitative or quantitative (Bryman & Bell, 2003). “Qualitative techniques are an array of interpretative techniques which seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2003). To be able to fulfill the purposes of this research, we as researchers have to try to reveal the hidden meaning behind the placements and try to decode why the brands have the role functions they have in the series. This means that the findings and analysis in this research will be based on our personal interpretations of the brands functions.

The object of data is the meaning of brands and how the meaning is being transferred within the context of TV series. Meaning is being individually constructed, and is the result of personal feelings, opinions and experiences. These are data that cannot be provided through any statistical data, but they are a result of interpretation and reading of visual images. Taking these elements into consideration, a qualitative strategy is the best strategy to attain this knowledge and understanding.

When doing research on a series as “Sex and the City”, some interesting reflections arise during the work. The research is about fictional characters and their lives that only exist in the series, and one can argue that we as researchers thereby are independent and distant to what is

being observed. However, this series in particular are making use of real-life locations and branded products that are an important part of the popular culture. The border between fiction and reality is thereby not so distinct anymore. The real-life brands get fictional value added in the series and this value is then again implemented into the real-life of the viewers. The brands and products that are used in the series, are also a part of our lifestyles and thereby we become connected and a part of the popular culture as well. As in social constructionism, we as researchers become a part of what we are observing, since we are studying a culture within the culture we live in ourselves.

The framework for the collection of data and analysis is mainly decided by the research design (Bryman & Bell, 2003). In the search for answers to the research question, a case study design will be applied. Case study design is an intense study of one case, and can be used for both theory testing and theory generation (Bryman & Bell, 2003). This research is taking a deeper look at the case of one popular TV series; “Sex and the City”. With the focus at one particular case, we will be able to get a deeper knowledge about the dramaturgical roles of the branded product placements taking place in that series, and how the meanings of the brands are socially constructed and transferred. The view of brands fulfilling an actual role in such series is quite new, and therefore is the research rare concerning this area of product placement and new theory might be the result of the research.

Since research concerning the relationship between roles and brands in series are insufficient, an inductive approach to the research will be taken. The use of inductive approach is also connected to the fact that the research is qualitative, and this often determines the use of inductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2003). This approach is not restrained by the existing theory, and theory generation will thereby be the outcome (Bryman & Bell, 2003). There has been conducted a lot of research concerning product placements, but the dramaturgical role of branded products seems rare. This research is using literature and theories that are new within the marketing area and adds a new dimension to product placements theories.

The boundaries between the different designs are not always clear, and case study and cross-sectional design have some similarities and can be difficult to separate. The cross-sectional design uses multiple cases with the aim of generating general statements, called a nomothetic approach (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Meanwhile, the case study has focus at one specific case to provide in-depth understanding of its unique features, an approach referred to as idiographic (Bryman & Bell, 2003). In this research, the series “Sex and the City” is looked upon as a single case of product placements. One could argue for that the episodes in the series are small cases, that put together could provide a general understanding of the product placements in question. On the other hand, the episodes are connected and the development of brands throughout the whole series is an important element, when looking at the product placements roles. The findings in relation to the role of product placements are unique for this specific series, since the brands role cannot be directly copied to another series. Based on these factors, a case study design is going to be applied to this research.

Reflexivity is often cited as the virtue that distinguishes between good and bad research (Pink, 2003), and this is also true with the reflection about the quality of the research. By using measurement such as reliability, replicability and validity, one can evaluate the research, if the researcher feels these measurements are appropriate for the research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Whatever kind of measurements that are applied onto the research, the evaluation of the generalizability (the external validity) of a case study will always be the same. The results of a case study can never be transformed into general statements since the source of the findings

are too meager; only one case. This is also a limitation in our research, since we have only looked at the character roles of brands in the series of “Sex and the City”. The findings cannot be generalized to branded product placements and their roles in other series, but can on the other hand provide a better understanding.

This research can easily be replicated, by having all the episodes available. In this research, a collection box containing all episodes from all the seasons on DVD was used, and the same kind of box is available for others. This thesis also provides the readers with a detailed description of how the observation and process was conducted, so others can replicate it (See Appendix I).

The degree of reliability in this research is low, and this is another major limitation of our research. The result of pinpointing the brands role may be repeatable, by reading literacy concerning dramaturgy. On the other hand, the construction of meaning behind this use is very individual and affected by the social context and preferences. Researchers will always provide their own version of the text and images, and therefore the data is always going to be our own personal interpretation (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The findings are based on how we interpret the use of brands, in the context of dramaturgy and the social setting. This means that our findings are in some degree subjective.

To better understand and read the images used in “Sex and the City”, tools from visual analysis, narrative techniques and dramaturgy would be applied. Since both researchers are a part of the popular culture and have seen many of the episodes from the series before, these tools will help us to make some distance to the research subject. Still with the use of all the tools available, the result of this research would not become fully objective and reliable.

4.2 *Visual Analysis and Method*

Since the beginning of the 21st century, visual anthropology and sociology have been established as academic sub-disciplines (Pink, 2003). In the development of visual sociology in the 1970’s, researchers used “live” images, such as film and videotapes, in comparison to the traditional still photography (Wagner, 2002). This development has continued, and recent books concerning visual analysis have emphasized an increased research attention to the visual dimensions of culture and social life (Wagner, 2002). These visual dimensions embrace photographs and others form of visual images in social science, including television and films.

A visual image have the strength to confirm that an object is present, for instance a product. The quote “Seeing is believing” (Foss, 1992) can be used to strengthen this fact about an image. Although, the understanding of what we see might be wrong, since the image says nothing about the context. At the same time can images not be reduced to their context alone, since they have an effect on their own as well (Rose, 2001) and therefore, when looking at an image, both the image and its context needs to be taken into consideration. How the viewer look at an image is very individual, given that this process is affected by historical, geographical, cultural and social elements and experience (Rose, 2001) that is separate from people to people. This also raises the question of what is being defined as visible. The word visibility is often connected to what the eyes see, but at the same time there is a difference between seeing and registration. The difference being that things that have been registered

have been through a mental process, where meaning has been added and some forms of categorization in the mind have taken place. People can see something without register it, and that also make it harder to remember on a later occasion.

In our research we are looking for brands placed in the context of “Sex and the City” series. These brands can be identified by the sign of logo or brand name, or being verbally mentioned by the characters in the series. These techniques make the brands visible for all viewers, also for those that have no prior knowledge about the brands or products. However, there are also brands present that have no visible brand and thereby only visible for the people that are able to “see” what kind of brands these products have. For instance, passive and logo-free use of shoes from the latest collection line from Manolo Blahnik is only visible for the people that have knowledge about the collection. This limited visibility decreases the data collection for this research. These kinds of product placements in “Sex and the City” will not have been visible to us as researchers, since we do not have any deep knowledge about high fashion and couture. Thereby, all placements will not have been visible for us and have limited our data collection.

We are going to look at how brands are visually portrayed in a specific TV series. In this research, visual means when brands are visible as a logo or brand name, or when it is verbally mentioned. The visual domain has become an important battle arena for the brands (Schroeder, 2006). With the increased focus on the visual element, television naturally plays a new and important role in brand managers’ strategic thinking. This research is looking at how brands fulfill the role of characters in a series, and these brands can be defined as signs. Semiotics makes use of signs when analyzing parts of an image, and see how meaning is constructed in a broader system (Rose, 2001). A sign is polysemic when it has more than one meaning (Rose, 2001), and one can argue that this is the case for brands as well. Brands have one identity from the company’s side, but the same brand can have a variety of images in the society. Even though the company wants to communicate one meaning of the brand, the existence of different images are based on the fact that people have different reference lists from where they transfer their own meaning. We are studying the roles of signs in images on television, and thereby a visual analysis will be the most appropriate for our research.

Pink (2003) argues that a researcher must look at both the internal “meanings” of an image, and at how the image was produced and how it transfers meaning to the viewers. Our research will try to reveal how the brands roles transfer meaning within the context. The use of various techniques from dramaturgy, narrative and product placement strategies, will help to uncover the hidden intention behind the placements, and at the same time help us to create some necessarily distance.

Modern anthropologists believe that knowledge is generated during the research. The process is an outcome of the relationship and negotiation between the researcher and informants (Pink, 2003). Having the appropriate method for the research is therefore important to be able to attain the new knowledge. For this research, the series “Sex and the City” has the role of the informant. The information given to us through images and storyline in the series will be an important part of the interpretation of brands roles in the series.

There are different methods that seem appropriate for our kind of research so an evaluation of the alternatives is in order. Both document study and observation are methods that will help us to uncover the pattern of role functions that we are looking for.

4.2.1 Document Study

Document study is the examination of documents, where the researcher tries to read the document and attain the meaning of them. What differentiates the documents are their sources, and according to Bryman & Bell (2003) they can be classified into; personal documents, public documents, official documents, mass media outputs and virtual outputs. In recent research one has been able to submit almost all subjects of study to a text interpretation, also visual images (Bryman & Bell, 2003). One can argue for that our research is a document study with a focus on the visual element from the mass media output, such as TV series.

Earlier, photography has been the natural object of study, although all visual images can be objects for this kind of research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The application of all visual images opens up for using this method when interpreting television. Television is projecting moving images towards the viewer in various formats, and these images can be the subject of a visual document study. Even though the scenery in television is constantly moving, the viewers are still receiving images. One could say that the single images are shifting so fast so they seem like a total ongoing image, and it is the brand's role in these images this research is taking a closer look at. The research's aim is to get an in-depth understanding on how a brand is placed and used in a visual image, and a document study would be appropriate. When interpreting and using visual images as a research source, it is important to take the social context into consideration (Bryman & Bell, 2003), since images are easy to construct and can give a false picture of the reality. In television, most of the images are constructed in one way or other, and this is a fact that affects the degree of authenticity and credibility of these kinds of sources.

When interpreting a document, the researcher can choose from three main approaches. These are qualitative content analysis, semiotics and hermeneutics (Bryman & Bell, 2003), but also discourse analysis has been used. For our research, the semiotic analysis would be the most appropriate one. The semiotic analysis is based on the argument that symbolic order in a culture is constructed and interpreted with the use of signs, the messages in a culture is communicated as a system of cultural meaning (Bryman & Bell, 2003). The brands and products used in a series are often used as signs with the aim of giving a better understanding of the popular culture.

4.2.2 Observation

At the same time is the method of observation also a valid alternative. Observation is used when the researcher wants to study the behavior of a participant, and tries to construct a meaning out of the participant's action. The observational approach can be described as: to watch someone, is to learn something about them, and in doing so to generate knowledge that can be later analyzed and converted into intellectual capital (Pink, 2003). As mentioned above, we want to generate an in-depth understanding of the roles of the branded product placement. This means of how the brands behave in the context of the series, and thereby the brands become the participants in this study. Observation as a method has different versions, and a natural classification of them would be: structured, systematic, participant, non-participant, unstructured and simple observation (Bryman & Bell, 2003).

In our case study, the method of unstructured observation would be the best option, where there is no use of observation scheme. The aim of this method is to record as much as possible to develop narrative account of the behavior (Bryman & Bell, 2003), and this is a good fit with our research purpose. We want to describe the roles of the brands used in the series, and see what role functions they fill throughout the series. The findings will be put into the context of a specific episode that is typical for our findings. The episode will be described in more detail so that readers easier can understand the bases for our findings. Using structured observation with a scheme would reduce our possibility to gain rich material, since the collected data would have to fit into the existing scheme. Different kind of information needs to be collected when observing, to get a whole understanding of the role of the brands. Since this is an area that has no significant existing research, we do not know what kind of information that will be revealed and needed, and the unstructured observation will therefore enable us to attain a wider specter of information.

Doing observation in this case, would mean that we as researchers would take the roles of complete observers. We will not in any degree participate in the “daily work” of the people we are observing (Svensson, 2006), which in this case is the hectic lives and consumption of the four single ladies in the series “Sex and the City”. Even though we are part of the popular culture, which is studied in this research, our involvement in the series is not profound and long enough to qualify as participation in this case.

As a conclusion, the methods as mentioned above, observation and document study are both valid alternatives that can be used in our research. Having considered both alternatives we have decided that our research is an observation. This decision is based on our perception that document study is a method used when the researcher gets in-depth with whatever is considered to be the text, while observation keeps the researcher on some more distance. Create and keep some distance to the subject of study is important for us, since both the researchers and the research subject is a part of the popular culture. The distance might help to create a more critical analysis of what is being observed. The decision is also based on the development in the sphere of visual analysis, and our opinion that this analysis will be a better alternative to attain information and knowledge about images rather than document studies.

4.2.3 Empirical Data

The empirical data was gathered by observation of the episodes from “Sex and the City”. The method of observation was partially chosen since it would help to create some distance to the series. However, during the observation we found that the distinction between observing and viewing was of more importance than one had originally thought. Since, we had already seen some episodes from the series before the research started, we paid much attention of not going back to “old habits”. This means, that the series has been viewed as a source of entertainment before, and it was important that the entrainment element was not in focus in this research.

We find that there are some important differences between viewing and observing. When people view a television series they are less critical of the content and can thereby be easier influenced. Viewers are also a more passive receiver of the entertainment compared to the observer. Event though they are a passive part in the process, they will become more involved in the series and the storyline than in an observation. When observing the element of distance is of great importance, and analyzing the content in a critical way help to create the distance.

The storyline is being broken down into smaller pieces to better understand the connection and interaction within the series, and then again put back together to get the whole understanding. Being very aware of these distinctions, we had the focus as observers when conducting this research.

Provided with the entire collection of all the episodes from the six seasons, all of them were thoroughly observed by both researchers. With the collection on DVD, it was possible to go back and forth between the episodes if needed, in order to clear up uncertainties concerning the use of brands. Since the observation was not interrupted by commercial breaks, we were able to get a good flow in the observation, meaning that we had clear focus on the placements and could easier follow the developments in the usage of them.

The observation of the whole series was conducted during a week, with both researchers present. The observation was done in a two-step approach. In the first step, all the episodes were watched carefully, and both researchers took notes when brands were visible. By visible we mean when the logo or brand name was visible in the image, or when the characters mentioned the brand name verbally. After each episode, notes were compared from the brand spotting, to make sure we had observed most of the product placements. Between the episodes, situations and other elements of interest in the episode were also discussed, having in mind we were looking for some brands that could be defined as having the role as a character.

When the first step was completed, we had a good understanding for how product placements were used in the series and the development of them. We also had a good insight if some brands had a more central role than others, and if these roles had changed during the seasons. The brand spotting notes were also helpful in this process. Based on the newly attained knowledge, we chose three brands that would help to clarify the character roles that brands played in the series. Episodes were then picked out for a second observation. These episodes were chosen because they in different ways, with their storyline, helped to clarify the role of a specific brand. The branded products could have had the same role during the series, but the chosen episode pinpointed this role in a very clear way. A description of the chosen episodes will be provided, to better understand the connection between the brand and the roles they are given in the analysis. In addition, these episodes will also reveal how the meaning is transferred from the brand to the viewer.

5. Analysis

In this section we will present the concept of the series “Sex and the City” and the outcomes of our observation. First we will discuss general product placement in the series. We have chosen three cases that we will analyse further and explain the product placement strategies, brand strategies, the role functions the brands are using as well as the connection to McCracken’s “transfer of meaning” model. Finally we will discuss the gender aspect of product placement.

5.1 This is “Sex and the City”

“Sex and the City” aired for the first time in 1998, and the series was based on the book with the same title. The program is a sitcom with soap opera elements, and it often deals with relevant social issues. The show focuses on the lives of four single girls in Manhattan, New York and the challenges they meet by being sexual active in the new millennium. Throughout the series, we follow Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha dealing with a variety of relationships in seeking for the love of their lives. As the character Carrie puts it; “*I’m looking for love. Real love. Ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can’t-live-without-each-other love*”.

Carrie is the principal character in the series. In the first season, Carrie talks into the camera when she is reflecting and uses her Mac as a tool to question different issues concerning the different episodes. Carrie is working as a columnist and writes about relationship issues and the tricky way to find the love of her life, in New York City. Even though Carrie is the main principal, the other three girls have almost as huge part as Carrie. Miranda is Carrie’s closest friend, she works as a lawyer. She is the one that is not that fashion-consciousness as the other girls. The product placement is not used on her as much as on the other girls. Samantha is THE fashionist. She loves fashion and owns a PR company. She lives in the spotlight of the life in New York City and she often wears the most expensive designers’ brands. Charlotte is the girl that works for an art gallery and is the neat, kind and timid girl. She wears a lot of fashion but more strict clothes such as Polo Ralph Lauren and goes shopping at Tiffany’s. The four main characters represent different views on relationships, and thereby the plot is set for some interesting discussions and conflicts, a necessarily element for a sitcom.

The story is set in New York City, and became famous for their active use of New York sceneries in the series. Another element that made this series so famous is that it dealt with different sexual taboos and the girls use of fashion. The reversal of the sex roles in the society can be said to be an underlying theme in the series and it is a theme that typify the postmodern culture, where the sexual desire is uppermost on the characters mind. (Stern & Russel, 2004). The last original episode aired in 2004, and the series are now re-running at different television channels in the world. During their six seasons the series was nominated for fifty Emmy Awards, and wan seven of them.

Even tough the series was, and still is, very popular among the viewers the series has also been submitted to a lot of criticism. The characters have been accused of being immoral and hedonistic, and that their lifestyles, transform women into a sexual object. Critiques also argue for that some of the issues dealt with in the series are more representing the gay lifestyle than real-life women, and that some of the issues are promoting a bad image of men. According to Turner (2001), the gay men in “Sex and the City” have a role as ambassadors

and gatekeepers of style and fashion and work as stand-ins for heterosexual relationships to the girls. The normal mans role are changing to an independent, career-driven, high status, self motivated woman that will take care of herself (Turner, 2001). The characters are really extraordinary and live an abnormal life. According to Turner (2001),

“The women in Sex and the City could loosely be described as constituting on such a minority group, as they consciously disidentify with bourgeois family values in favour of dazzling, idealized notion of fabulousness embodied in their gay sidekicks”.

“Confidence, attitude, glitter, status, wealth and style” are some words that will play a central role in the TV series “Sex and the City” (Turner, 2001). On the other hand, the defenders of the series argue that the series is realistically representing the life of urban women in America.

The evaluation of how ground breaking the series really is, must take the social context into consideration. In European countries people tend to be more open and free-minded concerning sexual issues compared to America, and therefore the series might not be conceived as ground breaking as in America.

The choice of “Sex and the City” as a case study, is based on the vast amount of product placements within the series. The series run for six seasons and that will enable us to see the different trends and development of brand placements during the various seasons. This will give us a great understanding of the usage of brands in the series. Since the researcher is also part of that popular culture that will be observed, this will be an appropriate choice of series.

5.2 *General Product Placement in “Sex and the City”*

Throughout all the six seasons of the series, the episodes have a pattern of structure that for the most of the time stays unchanged. In the first and last season there are some minor departures away from the pattern, but the episodes that we have chosen as case studies have however the “normal” pattern. The series contains a vast amount of product placement through all six seasons (see Appendix A). However, an increasing trend of product placement is shown along the seasons. The product placement is not too obvious in the series. Most of the products are placed into a natural setting, so the viewers will only notice the products and brands as something that should be there. If the viewers were not aware of the product placements, they would not notice most of the brands that is being shown during the seasons. What is visible for some people might not be visible for others, and that was a question we took into consideration when we did our observation. Some viewers might be really fashion-conscious and will see all the clothing brands and accessories brands the girls are wearing and will know exactly what brands they wear. Even though the researchers of this thesis are well aware of fashion, we might have not caught all the brands the girls are wearing or using during the episodes. So the visual placement will depend how aware the consumer are of the brands and if they belong to the same popular culture as the girls in the series do.

The series uses different types of product placements strategies. One placement strategy they use is when the product is not only a prop in the scene; it is also connected to the brand itself and is written into the storyline. An example of this, except the three cases we will discuss

more deeply further on, is when the Prada is a part of the storyline. Carrie takes her new boyfriend Berger to a Prada store. It ends up with Carrie buying a Prada shirt to Berger, that he wears at a party that night. Another product placement strategy is when a specific brand is often verbally mentioned, such as Carrie's Manolo Blahnik shoes that she always dreams about. Other verbally mentioned brands are often famous designers such as Oscar de la Renta, Dior and Coco Chanel. The most clear product placements in the series are clothes and accessories the girls are wearing. Samantha is often wearing Dior accessories and Coco Chanel earrings and handbags. Charlotte is often wearing Ralph Lauren sweaters and tops. Since the girls' greatest leisure pursuit is shopping, the bags are always very noticeable with the brands extremely visible, such as; Dior, Marc Jacobs, Banana Republic, Prada and so on. The main coffee store the girls buy coffee at, is Starbucks, the main magazine the girls are reading is Vogue and the main gift shop the girls go shopping at is Barneys and for more extravagance is Tiffany the main shop and all visual computers in the episodes are Mac. All these brands will come back in all the seasons, with an increasing trend along the episodes.

5.2.1 The Brands Role and the Transfer of Meaning in the Placements

The brands placement in the series makes some of the brands more meaningful than others; the meaning is created through the way the brands are used by the character. The Mac has a crucial role in the storyline, even though it is an object and not a real person. The role the Mac has is kind of a "friend" to Carrie, which she always can trust. This is an effective way to use product placement since the brands are put in a natural setting and it matches the values the brand got outside the show as well. In that way, the brand will get an effective product placement in a different setting compared to regular advertisements in magazine, commercials or billboards. The viewers will see the Mac in a natural setting, and thereby the disbelief will decrease and trust and awareness of the brand will increase. This can also lead to increased purchase behaviour in the future. Since the viewers will develop a good fit between the brand and the character that is using the product, then the positive effect will be connected to the brand.

Other brands will transfer a meaning through the character that is using the brand such as Dior transfer a meaning through Samantha in the "Sex in the City". Her personality expresses self-confidence and fashion consciousness. The brands and the character will connect through the same values and transfer a meaning. Consumers that connect to Samantha will therefore also connect to the brands she is using. According to McCracken's model, these different stages will explain the relationship between Dior-Samantha-and the viewers. In stage 1 in the model, Dior as a brand will be connected to Samantha and her fictive personality. In stage 2, will this further make the brand Dior and Samantha as a great fit together and express the Dior image, which will then be connected and transfer meaning to the viewer in stage 3. In this stage, Dior will have a positive effect since the viewer will feel connected to Samantha and her personality. This outcome will then be a positive effect according to Dior in stage 1 again, since the viewer has created a positive meaning out of the brand connected to the character. The new development that we add to McCracken's model, will then explain the positive effect that the viewer get out of the brand. This will then come back to stage 1, where the brand will create a meaning. If the viewer transfers a good meaning out of a brand, the brand will get a positive effect and will increase the meaning of the brand. This will also explain how the viewers interpret the image and how the brand will create and transfer meaning to the viewer as well as for the company behind the product.

5.3 *The Three Cases*

Interpretation emerges from descriptive details, and the relationship between these two elements can be defined as intricate (Schroeder, 2006). A good interpretation is based in a good description of the case or situation. We are therefore going to describe the chosen cases that we use to interpret the roles of the brands; so that the readers can get a good understanding of the context that we base our analysis on.

The major part of our analysis will focus on three cases that are highlighted during the six seasons of “Sex and the City”. We chose these three cases since they will cover three of the eight role functions that we were discussing in chapter two in the dramaturgy section, about different role functions. After our observation, we decided to select three different role functions that we will be discussing further, to try to answer the research question. To look at the different role functions, we will be able to see how the brands can transfer meaning to the viewers. This is interesting to investigate since we will then see how product placement can work as an effective marketing tool and also highlight how crucial it is, to match the right brand to the different settings and characters in the storyline. The role functions that we will discuss further are as follow: The Shadow, The sympathizer and The Five- Minute Part role functions.

Even though the product placements are increasing during the seasons, two of the three cases that we will discuss further on, are in the story line from episode one and will follow like a red thread along all the six seasons. The two main placements are the Mac computer that the principal character Carrie own from the first episode to the last. The other brand that follows through all the seasons will be Carrie’s obsession of Manolo Blahnik shoes. We chose the Mac computer since it has a huge role as a brand and is a perfect explanation of an effective product placement. We chose the shoes since it is another kind of product placement strategy. It is more about a brand the girls often verbally mentioned but the viewer will not that often being able to see the product. It builds up a magic feeling about these shoes from episode one. Finally, case number three is when Absolut Vodka introduces a new taste and the advertisement “Vodka Hunk” will be released. That episode will focus more about another character, besides the four girls. We chose this last case since it is only one episode setting and the product strategy is different according to the other two cases.

5.4 *Case One*

5.4.1 The Product Placement of Mac

The main character Carrie is writing a column for a newspaper, and each week a new theme is the content of her column. The column is named “Sex and the City”, and naturally the themes she writes about have relevance to this name. The themes she writes about for the column are also the theme for the storyline of each episode. Carrie spends a lot of time reflecting upon the different themes, and she often uses her close friends to get different inputs to the various themes. Since the four main characters are has different personalities and lifestyles, different elements, sometimes surprising elements, concerning the same theme is highlighted and discussed. When Carrie is reflecting and writing her column she uses a laptop, and the main

question for the episode is often “asked” when working at her computer. The viewers often see the main question written at her computer screen at the same time as Carrie, as the storyteller asks it out loud. The questions are different from each episode, and the storyline about the lives of all the four women in the city is connected to the questions. In the end of the episode the viewer and the column are offered an answer to the question, and the answer is based on the events in the specific episode.

With the exception of season one, the laptop Carrie is using throughout the series is a Mac. The brand of the laptop becomes visible for the first time in the 2nd episode in the 2nd season. In this case, with visible we mean that the Apple brand can be seen at the back of the laptop while she is reflecting and working on it. It is very clear when having observed all of the episodes that her Mac is an important part of Carrie's life. She is writing her column on the Mac, and brings it with her to several locations in the city and when she travels longer distances. The only time she is leaving New York without her Mac is when she moves to Paris with her latest boyfriend. However, the move to Paris shows to not be a good choice for her and she soon starts missing her life and friends in New York. One can wonder if she ever fully left New York since she left such an important element of her life, the Mac, behind. With the Mac left on the bed in her apartment in New York, she had not cut all the bonds and still had a connection to the life in New York. The close relationship to her Mac also appears when pictures for the front cover of her book are shot. On the final cover, Carrie only wears a short trench coat and the Mac and holding it in front of her. One can interpret her use of the laptop as if she is using the Mac as a guard from the outside world, and that it works as some kind of filter that she interprets the world through. She “sees” the world and her problems through the computer screen, her interpretation and solutions becomes clearer when typing them on her laptop. Talking to her friends can make her confused about the various themes, but when reflecting with her Mac she finds her way through the problems. There are additional episodes in the different seasons that help to define Carrie's relationship to her Mac laptop and where the Mac is sometimes referred to being a part of Carrie.

5.4.2 Episode 8 of the 4th Season

For the analysis of the Mac's roles in the series, we have decided to focus on an episode we feel pinpoints the relationship between Carrie and her Mac. In episode 8 of the 4th season Carrie's relationship to the Mac is written into a larger part of the storyline for that episode.

Carrie's Mac suddenly shuts down while she is typing, and her boyfriend Aiden tries to restart it with the same procedure used at PC's. However, the Mac will not restart, and Carrie almost has a nervous breakdown when she realises that she does not have any back up of her work. Carrie yelling, “My whole life is on that computer!” is defining her frustration about the situation. She and her boyfriend bring the Mac to a repair shop, rapped in a scarf and Carrie holds it close to her. At the repair shop the serviceman lets her know that it does not look good, and that they might not be able to save all the things on the hard disk. This is really bad news for her, and Carrie is annoyed that her boyfriend does not take the situations as serious as she does. Being a good boyfriend, Aiden buys a new Mac laptop and a zip drive for Carrie. But he does not get the response he is hoping for. She gets angry when he is interfering in her life, since she is used to take care of herself. At the same time she does not want to replace her Mac with a new one until she knows what happens to the one in repair. Carrie gets informed that she needs to change her motherboard at her Mac, and thereby can keep the old one. At the

same time she realises that she is afraid of letting Aiden into her life, and calls him up to become friends again.

5.4.3 The Branding Strategy of Mac

Looking at Apples branding strategy through the years, they have branded themselves as a brand that is driven by design and as being innovative. Their communication have not focused on the product attributes of their computers as most of the other computer companies have done, but they have rather positioned themselves differently with feelings and values that the Apple brand is all about.

Carrie is the character in the series that have the strongest and deepest connection to the Mac, even tough all of the characters also use the same brand for computers. The Carrie character is a woman that is very interested in design and fashion in her everyday life. Her bags, shoes, clothes and accessories are from the best and hippest designers. She attends fashion shows, and often reads Vogue magazine to keep up with the latest news. Carrie can also be described as woman that likes innovations, things that are new and hip in the city of New York. She and her friends are often visiting the newest and hottest bars and restaurants, and she likes it when things are different from the standard A4 format life. Writing a column in a newspaper about themes concerning relationships and sex must also be defined as innovative, even in New York's relative liberal society. There is a good fit between the character traits of Carrie and the Apple brand. Both are communicating innovation and design as very important elements of a product, and this fit makes the connection between them very natural for the viewers. Nobody questions that Carrie uses a Mac; it would rather been surprising if she did not, based on her values and interests.

This is a result of a perfect fit between the products of fiction and reality; both Carrie and Mac are actually products that are sold to consumers. Since there is a fit between the character and product in this case the transfer of meaning towards the viewers will be more successful. The Mac has almost from the beginning of the series been an important part of Carries life. This long-term element in the product placement will help to add some credibility to the relationship between the character and the brand, and this is very positive since the connection must be perceived as credible to have any affect on the viewers.

5.4.4 The Product Placement Strategies of Mac

The integrated strategy is the one most used in the placement of the Mac in the series and it helps to promote the attributes and benefits of the laptop and this strategy is mainly used in connection to the Mac. Carrie is using her laptop every time she is working, and thereby the Mac gets an active role in the setting. This active role allows them to show the attributes and benefits of the Mac. The laptop is easy to carry both long and short distance, since Carrie brings it with her wherever shoe goes. Often, Carrie is in her bed when reflecting upon a theme and this makes it once again clear that the Mac is flexible in its use. The clean design of the laptop is visible in all the scenes where she uses it, which makes the design an important part of the placement.

The implicit strategy is also used in the series, where the Mac has a passive role and is more a part of surroundings. All computers are in the series are Mac with the Apple brand visible.

Whenever a computer has been a part of the surroundings in the series they have been from Apple, for instance at Samantha's office, at a doctor's office and at the office at Vogue magazine, no other brands have been spotted,

5.4.5 The Role Function of Mac

Based on the whole series and by using the episode with the Mac breakdown, we would argue that the Mac has the role of a sympathizer. Even though the computer does not provide the questions and answers as described in the functions of a sympathizer, the Mac is necessary for Carrie so she can fulfill her work. When using her Mac laptop, Carrie is asking and answering difficult questions to her self. Her life is often chaotic with a lot of things happening at the same time. Somehow, one thing remains stable and can be seen as her stable pillar, which she always can return to, and that is her Mac laptop. When reflecting and searching for the answers she can confine in her Mac computer, and it is always available whenever she needs it to be. This is also why she has this massive emotional reaction and loses control when her Mac shuts down and she can not seem to get any response from it anymore. It feels like she is losing a close friend that never judges her and is one she can confide in. The strong feelings she has towards her Mac are also revealed when carrying the Mac close to her wrapped in a scarf, the Mac is no longer just a necessarily tool to do her work at. The Mac also seems to help Carrie to get some perspective on things and open up for changes. When she got the message that she needed to change the "motherboard" in her Mac, she draw a parallel to her personal life. Maybe it was time to change and let another person into her life for real, let the guard down. This is a decision that she had struggled with for some time and had a major impact on Carries life. The situations with her Mac made her see things clearer and helped her to decide upon what was most important in her life. Also in other episodes she finds the answer when reflecting with her computer, maybe it helps to see the various situations written down on a screen and that gives her some perspective.

One can discuss how good the product placement of the Mac is in this specific episode. Some would argue for that the use of Mac in the episode where it shuts down is a bad placement. The Mac stops working and the serviceman is not very service-minded when Carries shows up to get help. This episode shows a negative side about the computer, thus everybody knows all kinds of computers can shut down. However, in this case, the Apple brand is being associated to a negative experience and that is a factor that can be remembered in the future for the viewers that watch the series. On the other hand, the use of the Mac in this episode can also be viewed as good product placement. The episode reveals the strong feelings Carries has about her Mac laptop, and that she does not feel it can be replaced by any other laptop. Her Mac is something very personal to her, something that is different from other laptops. This shows the quality and uniqueness of the Apple brand.

5.4.6 The Transfer of Meaning of Mac

Applying the McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model to the case, the transfer of meaning from the Mac within the series is mostly taking place in stage 1 and stage 2. There is a 2-ways exchange of meaning between the brand and the characters. The result of this process is the meaning the viewer receives about the Mac from the series, this happens in stage 3 in the meaning transfer model.

In the case of the Mac, we would argue that most of the meaning is transferred in stage 2 when the character is transferring the meaning over to the brand. The series shows how dependent Carrie is of her Mac and most of the time its attribute is in focus; the design and how and where she can use it. Her feelings and emotions concerning her laptop are being transferred to the Mac when the viewers finally get to see what kind of brand she is using.

The Apple brand did not get visible before the second season, allowing the viewers to get to know and relate to the characters, especially Carrie since she is the main user of the laptop in the series. Thereby, when she started using Mac in the season nr two, her image was the one people had connected with and the meaning of her character automatically became transferred to the Mac. The Apple brand was strong before the series started to run and well known among most consumers. The construction of meaning among the viewers will have been effected by this fact, and thereby one can not say that the meaning of Mac for the viewers is entirely based on the meaning of Carrie. By not introducing the Mac brand in the first season the meaning construction of the character Carrie was not interfered by an already strong brand.

5.5 *Case Two*

5.5.1 The Product Placement of Manolo Blahnik

Designers and their products are important elements in the series of “Sex and the City”. The hottest designers influence the characters choices of clothes, shoes and accessories. All the four main characters are spending a lot of time and money to have the latest designs. The different characters are using different designers depending on what fits their personality the best. A lot of the scenes in the series are filmed when the girls are window-shopping or are inside the different stores. Also the character of Carrie is very interested in fashion, and she maxes out her credit card several times to be able to buy some designer products. Throughout the series it becomes clear that she has a special passion when it comes to shoes, expensive designer shoes. As she is saying in one of the episode: “It's over for me. Here lies Carrie. She had two loves and lots 'o' shoes”. Her closet is filled with shoes that are carefully placed in their boxes when she is not using them and she sometimes treats them, as they are breakable. Her message on her answering machine tells a lot about her relationship to the shoes; “I'm not home, but my shoes are. Leave them a message.” Spending about \$400 on a pair of shoes is considered to be worth it by Carrie, since the experience when wearing them is unique and special for her.

Different brands are visible and referred to, in connection to Carrie's shoe passion. Carrie is using high-heeled shoes almost all the time in the series. Whether she is Sunday walking down the streets, meeting the girls for dinner, partying or shopping she wears some kind of high-heeled shoes. Carrie is using her shoes as an important part of the outfit she is wearing. Some people wears hats, Carrie wears expensive shoes. One specific brand stands out in the jungle of used brands and was already mentioned in the very first episode of the series, Manolo Blahnik. This brand was used in the first episode to describe the lifestyle of many of the single ladies in New York. When observing all the episodes it becomes apparent that Manolo Blahnik shoes are visible on a constant basis throughout the seasons, some episodes more than others. With visible meaning that the shoes are referred to verbally by the characters, and bags and shoes are shown in various scenes.

5.5.2 Episode 9 of the 6th Season

For the analysis of Manolo Blahnik's role in the series, we are focusing on an episode that clearly defines Carrie's relationship and feelings to her Blahnik shoes. In the 9th episode of season 6, the storyline spins a lot around one of Carrie's many Manolo Blahnik pair of shoes. Carrie and her gay friend Stanford are invited to a baby shower, and Carrie is wearing her new pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes for the first time as an important part of her outfit for the night, the shoes are almost the outfit for the night. When arriving they realise that there is a house rule that makes all the guests take off their shoes, and Carrie is forced to take off her Blahnik shoes and leave them in the hallway. After the party she realises that her new shoes have been stolen. The hostess of the party, a friend of Carrie, offers to pay for them but withdraws the offer when she gets to know that the shoes cost \$485.

This incident makes Carrie wonder if she has chosen the right life style with expensive clothes and shoes, or if she should have settled down and lived a more traditional life. When reflecting upon this question, buying expensive shoes are being compared to having babies. She tries to find a solution with her friend that hosted the party, but she does not feel obliged to pay for Carrie's expensive taste and lifestyle and offers only \$200 as a compensation for the stolen shoes. This is a deal that Carrie is not satisfied with and she starts brainstorming to find a better solution for the situation. She has always bought her friend gifts when she has registered herself at a store. Carrie starts wondering when people stopped being free to be "you" and "me", and why everything has to deal with "us" in today's society. The whole situation is frustrating and not acceptable for the single girl Carrie, and she decides to do something about it. She decides that she will register herself at the Manolo Blahnik shoes store, in recognition of her just-announced marriage to her self. She only registers herself for the missing single pair of Manolo Blahnik's to \$485, and her friend has no other choice to come around and buy these pair of shoes to Carrie as a "wedding" gift. The gift is delivered to Carrie with a card saying; "Hope you and yourself will be happy..."

5.5.3 The Branding Strategy of Manolo Blahnik

The designer Manolo Blahnik has been designing and producing shoes since the beginning of the 1970 (designmuseum, 2006). His name has become synonymous with his products, and the term "Manolo's" is today used to describe expensive and beautiful shoes (designmuseum, 2006). Their advertising has been through high-fashion magazines and direct marketing to selected groups, not for the masses. After the "advertising" in the series "Sex and the City" his name and shoes have definitely become parts of that popular culture. The Manolo Blahnik brand stands for a mixture of "occasional avant-garde looks for the affluent few" with "high quality shoes that lasts forever" (designmuseum, 2006). Being a part of the popular culture and at the same time being for the "affluent few" is possible with high prices on his shoes.

It is the Carrie character that has the closest relationship to her Manolo Blahnik shoes, and thereby the product placements of Blahnik are often connected to her character. Carrie can be defined as a woman that is very modern, both in her job, her private life and her taste in fashion. She likes to push the borders and try out new things, step outside the standard A4 format of everything. Carrie is not afraid to stand out in the crowd, and dare to be different.

Looking at how Manolo Blahnik has been branded during the years, there is a good match between the character Carrie and the shoes. Both are different from the masses, and stand easily out in the crowd. Carrie is a single Manhattan girl, and this is an area not everybody can afford to live. By connecting the shoes to this area, the shoes will still be perceived to be for the “affluent few”, and thereby be inline with the general branding of Manolo Blahnik. Not everybody should be able to wear these shoes since it then becomes a product of mass consumption and not that special anymore. Both Carrie and Manolo Blahnik shoes are very modern, and their tastes in design are far ahead most others. They are both testing out new ways of putting colours and design elements together, and that is an element that is distinct for both tastes.

Since there is a really good fit between these two, the viewers perceive the product placements as honest and natural and thereby the effect of them in the public will be better. On the other hand, some would argue that Carrie as a writer living in New York can not afford spending that kind of money on shoes on regular bases, resulting in having shoes for a total of \$40.000 in her closet. This is a critique that points at how trustworthy the product placement of Manolo Blahnik shoes in the series really is. This seems to be an element that only critics are concerned with, and not the viewers. As long as the connection between Carrie and Manolo Blahnik shoes in the fictional life seems true and genuine, the viewers will accept the connection.

5.5.4 The Product Placement Strategies of Manolo Blahnik

Manolo Blahnik and his products are placed in the series with a mixture of product placements strategies; both implicit and integrated strategies have been used in the series. In the chosen episode and in some other episodes the attributes and benefits of wearing a pair of Manolo Blahnik is showed to the viewers, but throughout the series Manolo Blahnik as a brand is in focus for the product placement. When wearing a pair of Manolo shoes Carries feels great, and she uses them as the centre of her outfit. As Carrie is saying in one episode; *“Carrie: It's really hard to walk in a single woman's shoes -- that's why you sometimes need really special shoes!”* This says a lot about the shoes, since she is a girl that is very concerned about her looks and into fashion. It is almost like the message is that as long as you wear a pair of Manolo's you can wear anything else. In season three, episode three, Carrie is referring to buying a pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes as a religious experience and this add a psychological element to the brand. Others shoes might have the same quality and design, but the experience of buying them will never be copied. This also shows that the whole extended product, not only the physical one, is part of the experience of owning a pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes. The case episode also shows how seriously she takes her shoes and how fond she is of them. She is comparing the decision of having babies to the decision of being able to buy Manolo Blahnik shoes. This is a comparison that is put far out on the edge, but it shows the importance of the shoes in Carries life, and that buying Manolo Blahnik is a statement of lifestyle and choices.

The Manolo Blahnik brand is often placed by using the implicit strategy as well. The shoes can be seen with the brand name visible inside them when looking trough a store window. Some scenes take place inside the Manolo Blahnik store and thereby a lot of his products can be seen in the background of the characters. Carrie often carries bags when she has been shopping, and the Manolo Blahnik bags are easy to identify because of their large logo. These bags can also be seen carried around by extras, passing the four main characters at the street.

This way the Manolo Blahnik brands becomes a natural part of the setting and everyday life for the girls, and not at least for the viewers.

5.5.5 The Role Function of Manolo Blahnik

After observing all the episodes in this series and taken a closer look at the chosen episode, we would argue for that Manolo Blahnik has a shadow role in this drama. Carrie is often buying the shoes to feel better about her self when going through some troubling times. When there are big changes in her life she also celebrates with some new Manolo's. A classic example of this is in the final scene, in the final episode, in the final seasons. When Mr. Big calls, to let her know that they soon will live together in New York, Carrie is walking down the streets with a large Manolo bag in her hand. She also uses her Manolo Blahnik shoes to make a statement to her surroundings of how successful and beautiful she feels. In one episode she is going to meet Big's new girlfriend and she feels very unsure about the whole situation and how she will react when meeting her. Carries solution is to buy a new pair of Manolo Blahnik shoes, and afterwards she feels empowered. The use of the Manolo Blahnik shoes helps to define what kind of person Carrie is and it says something about her life.

We do not argue that Manolo Blahnik help the viewer to understand the changes in the series, as described in the function of the role. On the contrary, one might say that the use of Manolo Blahnik shoes helps to indicate the changes she is going through, making the viewers very aware that the situation is fundamental for how Carrie will act and react further out in the episode and series.

5.5.6 The Transfer of Meaning of Manolo Blahnik

As in the case of the Mac, we are applying the McCracken transfer of meaning model to the use of Manolo Blahnik shoes. In this case, it is also a two-ways exchange of meaning between the brand and the character. The shoes help to define the character of Carrie, but her character also affect the brand. In the case of Manolo Blahnik, we would however argue that most important transfer of meaning, within the series in this case is taking place in stage 1, the objects affecting and create meaning to the character. The shoes are used to define Carrie as a person; her lifestyle, her fashion style and often her ways of thinking in different situations. Important happenings, both happy and sad, are being used as a generator to buy new Manolo Blahnik shoes and define how Carrie handles the circumstances.

The Manolo Blahnik brand was mentioned in the beginning of the very first episode. So, the brand was introduced before the viewers had had the possibility to connect with the Carrie character. In this way, the brand became a tool that would help to define the character, and transfer meaning to Carrie. Manolo Blahnik was not a brand that was well known by the masses and the target group of the series. However, in the series the brand was introduced as an expensive high-fashion shoe brand for the viewers. With little prior knowledge about the brand, this was the meaning that became transferred over to Carrie; a woman that loved expensive, quality and high fashion shoes. After the series, the knowledge and popularity of the Manolo Blahnik brand has had an enormous increase. This shows that also fictional characters can transfer meaning, the opposite what McCracken argues in his model.

5.6 Case Three

5.6.1 The Product Placement of Absolut Vodka

The product placement of Absolut Vodka is a part of the storyline about the new launch of Absolut Vodka's taste and the new advertisement, "Vodka Hunk". This is a fun and light element in the episode where the main character is about Samantha's boyfriend Smith.

Samantha herself has great self-confidence and is a really independent woman that will not lose her mind for a boy. She has been dating a lot of men in her life and she is only looking for good sex. It is not until she meets Smith that she realizes that she starts to get feelings for that guy. Even though Samantha thinks it is hard to give her heart to someone else, since she is used to be independent and a secure single woman in her forties. Smith is a good-looking guy that is looking for success in his life. Smith is younger than her and he is ready to give their relationship a chance. He is taking some theatre classes and is ready to do anything to be famous and successful, however the progress is slow and Samantha is trying to cheer him up in different kinds of ways.

5.6.2 Episode 6 in the 6th Season

When Absolut Vodka introduces their new taste, Smith gets an offer to be the "Absolut Hunk". The advertisement is the theme of many types of scenery, and with funny discussions among the characters. The whole section starts with Samantha and Smith standing at Times Square looking at a huge billboard with Smith and the Absolut Vodka advertisement. At the billboard, Smith is sitting absolutely naked, with both his arms back on his neck and an Absolut Vodka bottle between his legs. The bottle is the original bottle with the Absolut Vodka text in blue. It is a white icy background and the brand Absolut Hunk text is on the bottom of the advertisement in the blue color. Next scenario is when Samantha and the girls are having lunch and are talking about Carrie and Berger's break up. Carrie tells the girls that Berger is up in Hampton, Road Island for some time to think. Then Samantha picks up a postcard from her bag and suggests that Carrie can send him a postcard. The postcard is an Absolut Hunk postcard. It is the same picture as the advertisement on the billboard.

Miranda:- "That is the most blatant agenda pushing I've ever seen".

Charlotte:- "And the most effective one"

That night Samantha is standing in a bar. Smith comes up to her and she says:

- "Guess what I'm drinking? An Absolut Hunk. You are the drink and you are delish"

Smith is worried about that the poster will give him a bad start of his career. Samantha tries to convince him that this is a perfect start for his career. Smith says:

- "Not my people. My buddies are pissed I'm selling for a liquor company. My acting class thinks that I'm a selling-out, my ma's hiding all the magazines so my grandma can't see my dick". I don't know where this is going, it would be one thing if I've get an audition".

A gay guy comes up to them and asks if he is the "Absolut Hunk"?

- "My friends and I are huge fans of you".

Samantha tries to convince Smith that this is the beginning of his career. That first comes the gay guys, then the girls and then the industry.

Later in the same episode, Charlotte has another date with a gay person. They walk down the street and talk about what kind of person they like to date. He asks if Charlotte really wants to know what kind of type he likes. They pass by a notice board where there are six posters of the “Absolut Hunk”. He turns around and points at the posters and says:
-“ *That’s the one! Absolut Hunk!*”

Charlotte and her date are standing in front of the posters and discuss the Absolut Hunk. They are standing so the Absolut Vodka brand is very visible in the background.

At the same time, Samantha and Smith are out for a walk when they pass a bus stop where the “Absolut Hunk” poster is on the side of the bus stop. Someone has painted “Absolut Asshole” on the billboard. Smith and Samantha are standing in front of the bus stop so the brand is visible behind them. Smith is disappointed of what he sees and thinks that everyone in New York thinks he is an asshole. Samantha tries to cheer him up again and tells that this business is hard and you have to be thick-skinned to survive. The couple is still talking in front of the bus stop with the brand visible in the background, when they hear a couple of school girls screaming behind them. The schoolgirls discover that it is the “Absolut Hunk” itself and start running towards him. Samantha told him that she had right: First the gays, now the girls and soon the industry. Then Smith realizes that he will be famous because of this advertisement. The episode ends with a big smile from Samantha and in the background the Absolut Vodka brand visible. A hop skip and a week later the industry followed. Gus Van Sant offered Smith a part of a model/hustle/junkie, which he happily accepted.

5.6.3 The Branding Strategy of Absolut Vodka

Absolut Vodka is the world’s third largest spirit brand (Absolut, 2006). Absolut Vodka is working really hard with their advertisement in general. They focus a lot on the message they try to reach out with and the design itself of the different arts and creative spirit in their advertisements. They use their bottles to deliver their message with the consistent message that always start with “Absolut”. Art, Fashion and Music are the three corner stones Absolut is working in the direction of. They work with fashion artist such as; Lang, Versace, Prada and Blahnik. It was not surprisingly that Absolut wanted to bring their product into the show and use it in an effective product placement in a successful series as “Sex and the City”. Given that they will reach the right target market in the show, that they should reach in their own normal advertisement as well, this will be a more effective way where the audience will be more connected to the brand.

5.6.4 The Product Placement Strategies of Vodka Hunk

According to brand strategy, is it crucial to connect the brand to the character and make sure it will have the same values and believes. The fit is crucial for the placement to make it as trustworthy as possible. In this case, is it a perfect match since Absolut Vodka is fairly cocky itself and will fit perfectly to the series and also to Samantha’s boyfriend Smith. This product placement is a perfect example of a placement that will be connected to the characters in the

show but also a part of the storyline. Even though this session is only in one episode compared to the other two cases, the placement of the product is very visible. When the characters are talking about the Absolut Hunk the viewers will see the brand really visible in the background. The product placement is fairly obvious for the viewers that are aware of product placement, since the brand of Absolut Vodka is shown an enormous amount of times in the episode. Even though the viewers are not aware that it is an obvious placement, it will still be something that everyone that is watching that episode will remember.

This placement is both verbal mentioned and a visual plug through the whole episode, the brand of Absolut Vodka is the focus of the product placement. Since the product placements are part and play an active role in the story line, the integrated strategy is the one most used in this episode with that brand. The brand is not only in the surrounding, but plays an active role in the whole story line, since Smith takes action because of the brand. The placement connects the brand to one of the characters and in that way will be natural in the whole setting. The viewers will create and apply meaning to the brand through the story. In this case will Smith be famous thanks to the brand itself. This placement strategy is effective since it will transfer meaning of the brand together with the storyline and will also create awareness of the brand. This strategy can also lead to increasing consumption habits of that particular brand from the viewers. On the other hand, this setting might get some negative impressions as well. If the viewers are aware of that Smith was an alcoholic before, then they might mistrust the brand and the series. The connection to the character and the brand might not match that well then. However, Smith mentioned in the episode that his friends are pissed that he is selling liquor for a company. On the other hand being an alcoholic and support a liquor company might also show the trust Smith has in the company.

5.6.5 The Role Function of Absolut Vodka

As mention before, product placement can be divided up in different dramaturgical roles, role functions. We argue that this “Vodka Hunk” session will fit into the “Five-Minute Part” in the dramaturgy role function. It is a part of the story line but will work as a break from the original story. This section makes the story be lighten up from the rest of the series with another character. The Absolut Vodka product will have a large focus in this episode. The both verbal mentioned and visual plug of Absolut Hunk will come back several of times during the episode. Even though it will not have as huge role as the Mac brand and the Manolo Blahnik brand, the Absolut Vodka placement will be effective in the placement since it is part of that episode. Smith greatest dream is to get into the film industry, the Absolut Vodka works as a hero in this case, since Smith will get into the industry thanks to the Absolut advertisement. Everyone knows him after the release of the new taste.

Absolut Vodka has during many years worked with the same advertising message: Absolut Spring, Absolut Citron, and Absolut Versace. The message gets through in this episode as well. It is not only Vodka Hunk that will be mentioned in the episode. On the advertisement, there is a normal Absolut Vodka bottle on the picture and they also talk about Absolut Gay and Absolut Asshole. This is typical message from Absolut; to start with the Absolut and they change to the specific message they want to deliver to its customers. Absolut keeps the same consistent message and only puts it into the storyline.

5.6.6 The Transfer of Meaning of Absolut Vodka

According to McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model, the "Absolut Hunk" brand will be connected to Smith. Smith is a young hunk that has a cocky attitude and will fit perfectly to the Absolut brand itself. This will happen in stage 1, where the meaning will transfer into the persona of the character, in this case Smith. As well as the other two cases, we would argue that main meaning transfer in this case is taking place in stage 2 in McCracken's model. In this stage the meaning will be transferred from character into the brand. Absolut Vodka connects with the same target market as Smith is in. When the viewers have constructed their own meaning that is created around the brand according to lifestyle and values, the meaning is accomplished in stage 3. The product will be connected to the audience in an effective way since the audience will increase awareness of the product.

We argue though, to further develop McCracken's model will lead to the meaning that will be developed into the persona of the character in stage 1 will be connected to the product in stage 3. This means that if the viewers create a good meaning out of the product in stage 3 this will transfer a good meaning about that brand in stage 1, in the future as well. This outcome will be the added meaning the next time the viewers are in an interaction with the brand. This brand has a different role, compared to the other two cases. This is only one part of the episode, although will be an important role of that section anyway.

6. Discussion

In this chapter we will discuss our findings based on the analysis, and our general thoughts concerning these elements. First we discuss how the product placements are used and their connection to the brands role. We are also introducing a 4th product placement strategy as an additional strategy that is used. Then we present our further development of McCracken's "transfer of meaning" model, and explain why we feel an additional arrow is necessarily in the transfer of meaning process. Finally, we discuss the gender aspects that are connected to our research and case study.

6.1 The Application of Product Placement

In our analysis we have taken a closer look at the product placements in the series "Sex and the City", with the focus on three main cases. In these cases the brands; Mac, Manolo Blahnik and Absolut Vodka have played the main roles. After observing the usage of these brands, we found that there is a mixture of product placement strategies in the series. Both integrated and implicit product placements strategies are used on all three brands, but it is clear that there is a difference in the intensity of the usage.

For the brands that are used on a more permanent basis in the series the intensity have a regular level, the brands are visible in the images or verbally mentioned within constant intervals. This steady level of intensity enables the brands to be present for a longer time without the viewers recognizing them as product placements, and thereby the effects of them are increased. The use of a steady level of intensity also decreases the risk of crossing the saturation point for product placements in the series. When using product placements the threshold effect must be taken into consideration. When the threshold for product placements is crossed, the effect of the placements are decreased and sometimes the placements start to work against the brand instead.

For brands that have a more "guest star" role in an episode, such as the case of Absolut Vodka, the level of intensity is quite different. The brands are often written into the storyline for one specific episode and thereby the level of intensity increases considerably. The brands are both visible and mentioned several times during the episode, by all the characters in different situations. This high level of intensity works for a shorter time, but would easy cross the threshold level when used for a longer time in a series. The high level of intensity makes the brand very visible for the viewers and creates an awareness of the brand. However, this strategy also makes it easy for the viewers to decode the brands role as product placement, a "hidden" advertising. This can cause the viewers to put up their filter against advertising and thereby the product placement loses its effect.

There is also a difference in how connected the characters are to the brands and the intensity in the product placements. The brands used on regular bases with low degree of intensity have often a strong relationship to the characters. In the cases of Mac and Manolo Blahnik, these are brands that Carrie has a very strong and personal relationship with. The case of Absolut Vodka is different, since neither of the main characters have what can be considered to be a strong relationship with this brand. We would believe that product placements with a strong

connection with the main character are more effective than other “distant” placements. This argument is based on the relationship the viewers build with the characters in the series over a period of time. The close relationship with the brands in the fictional world is being transferred into real world when the viewers try to get closer to the characters, by applying the characters meaning towards a brand to their own meaning.

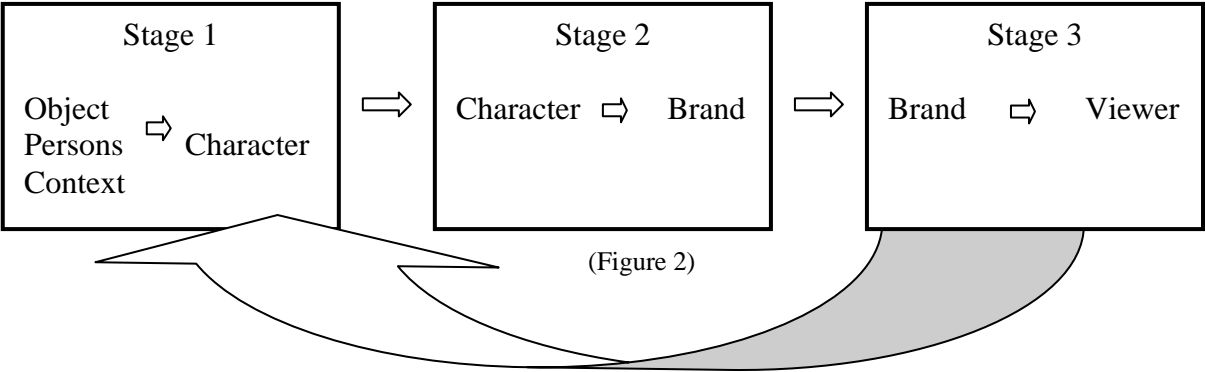
The observation of the product placements in the series “Sex and the City” made us aware that there also exists a 4th product placement strategy that has not been discussed in the literature. When looking at the episodes, it became very apparent that there were brands visible that did not get the same attention as others. Throughout the seasons of the series, the four main characters are using clothes and accessories where no brands are visible. With visible we mean products that have no brand name or logo placed on them, or brands that are not mentioned in the conversations between the characters. This is a more subtle product placement strategy that differs from the three main strategies that have been dealt with in previous research. Brand using this more subtle and discrete strategy are not recognizable for everyone, and thereby the size of the target group is smaller than with the other product placement strategies. The brands are only visible for the viewers that already have knowledge about the brands and their products, since this is the only way they can recognize the brands. One can argue that this strategy is “direct marketing”, since it has a narrow target group and mostly affects the viewers of most interest for the company behind the brand. On the other hand, the discrete use of these brands by the characters can create a feeling of mystery of the brand and create an interest to the viewers that not already are consumers of the brand. This again adds value to the brand in question.

Our analysis also shows that the brands we have looked more closely into, can be considered to have actual role functions in the series “Sex and the City”, in the same degree that the actors have the role of characters. Even though we have only been looking into three of eight roles, it is clear to us that these functions can be applied to brands within a series. The use of role functions on brands can be said to increase the impact and the effectiveness of the product placements, since the transfer of meaning be accomplished in a smoother way. We argue that the smoother the transfer of meaning is, the result of brands and the characters suddenly being on the same level concerning the role functions. Before, the characters have been on another level when it comes to role functions and used them as necessarily props. The brands and products can be considered to have been at a lower level, when it comes to the dramaturgical elements. However, by giving the brands role functions, these two factors finally meet and interact at the same level, and thereby will the transfer process be smoother and more effective.

6.2 *The new Development of McCracken’s Model*

This new development of the model will be explained with the usage of product placement in the series “Sex and the City”. Some of the brands in the series have a specific role in the story line. The different brands that are used in the series will be connected to the different characters in the series and will transfer a meaning between the character and the specific brand. To be able to connect a brand with the right character and further out to the right viewer will develop an effective marketing tool, since the viewer will then easier be transfer the meaning to the brand. The roles the brands will get in the storyline are well connected to the brands own image.

McCracken’s “transfer of meaning” model only represents a one-way communication and interaction. However, we argue that the further development of the model will create a two-way communication tool, between the brand and the viewer (Figure 2). McCracken are talking about consumers and celebrities but in our case, it will be between the viewers and the characters. We believe that the meaning the viewers transfer to the brand in stage 3 will also be connected to the way they will create and transfer meaning to brands in the stage 1, through the character that is using that specific brand. The model will then be a cycle that will go around and the meaning of the brands will always be connected to the viewers meaning in stage 3 and will further transfer meaning through the character into the brand in the first stage.



The goal of product placement is transfer the meaning of a brand. The outcome of this new development of the model will show that the meaning the viewer will transfer through all stages, will also be connected to how they will see and transfer the meaning to that brand, and the characters in other situations and surroundings. The arrow back to stage 1 shows that the meaning the viewer creates of the brand in stage 3 will have a influence how the viewer will see the brand in the future. If the viewer will create a positive meaning will this also be connected to the character that is using the brand, and will then go back to the transfer of meaning in stage 1. This means that stage 3 is both connected to series but also to the surroundings, how the viewers react upon the meaning that is created in the series. To understand this further development of the model better, we will explain this new development with the principal character Carrie and her obsession to her Manolo Blahnik shoes.

The viewer might not be aware of the Manolo Blahnik shoes compared to the Mac computer, since most people have heard and created a meaning about the Apple brand before the series. The Manolo Blahnik shoes will be introduced in episode one and will follow Carrie through all seasons. Since the shoes are a rather unknown brand, the connection between the character and the brand will create a meaning the viewers will bring along with the seasons. Compared to the Mac computer, the transfer of meaning will only be connected to viewers that will follow the series. This will make this product placement only effective if the viewer knows about the shoes. In stage 3, the viewer will transfer a meaning to the brand. The added development of the model, the arrow, will show that the viewer will transfer a meaning in stage 3, that will follow the meaning of the brand in other settings as well. It might not be in the series the next time they see the shoes, although they will connect the meaning that they created out of the series and will be influenced by the next time. In stage 1, Carrie transfers her meaning into the shoes. Since, she is really fashion consciousness and a trendy person this

shoe will fit her perfectly. This will lead to that if the viewers feel connected to Carrie in the series, they might find other brands that she is using that will create the same meaning as the shoes. Meanwhile the shoes will be connected to the series in other settings as well. Since Carrie almost create a magic feeling around the shoes and always buy these shoes when she wants to cheer herself up or if she wants to celebrate something. Viewers might get the same feeling and will be influenced by Carrie and her choice of shoes.

This model will be an important tool to help to understand the effectiveness of using the right character to the right brand and then further transfer meaning from the brand to the viewer. This will increase the effectiveness and belief of the brand in the first place and will build up a relationship to the viewer. The role the brand is given in the setting needs to be inline with meaning of both the character and the viewer.

6.2.1 Fiction versus Reality

McCracken argue though, that if the person in the advertisement is not a real person the trustworthiness and transfer of meaning might not occur. We are aware that we are using a model that is more connected to celebrity endorsement and the transfer of meaning to advertisements. However, we believe though that it will work to use the model in our observation as well. We will argue that his statement of that trustworthiness might not occur when a brand is connected with a fictive person, is not true in our case. The viewer will create a connection to the different characters that then will lead to a connection towards the brands they use. This is definitely an effective way to transfer meaning from the character to the different brands; otherwise the product placement would be a waste of money in fiction stories and movies. Based on this, one could assume that the product placement should only be used in reality series. That product placement is an effective marketing tool, also when using fictive characters is the increased popularity of Manolo shoes evidence of, and it is a sign that meaning can be transferred from fictive character to a brand.

Our argument concerning transfer of meaning from fictive persons to real persons raises the question of what is being categorized as fictive and as real. Celebrities are often being perceived as real life persons, and thereby is the transfer of meaning according McCracken without problems. On the other hand, celebrities today have a market value and get much of their incomes through endorsements. This means that their image has become an important part, if not the crucial element of their market value and one can ask how true and genuine their image really are. We would argue that also celebrities and how they present themselves actually are fictive constructions, which are influenced by the market value and the demand among viewers and thereby is the transfer from fictive persons in reality a part of the McCracken “transfer of meaning” model.

6.3 *Gender Aspect*

As mention before, research also show differences in peoples attitudes towards product placements, both national and gender aspects have an influence (Nelson & McLeod, 2005). In our case with “Sex and the City”, the products and brands that are used in the series will match the target markets demand. This will make the product placement more believable and more natural for the viewers and will therefore create a positive effect.

To answer the research question how the role functions in product placement will transfer meaning to the brand, it is crucial to take the social constructivism of gender into consideration. These aspects might differ in the products, brands and the different roles we have observed. Some might argue that these girls in the series are more connected to a man role, since they live in a way that earlier was close connected to the life of a successful bachelor. They live a rather glamorous and rich life with successful jobs, which of course women can do as well. However, the cultural differences according to other women in the same age and society might not have the same values and beliefs as these girls in that age. Since all of them are around forty and it is only Miranda that is a mother by then, the girls have more of a masculine role. They use an attitude often connected to men, and they do not care how many men they sleep with every weekend. Family life that most woman dreams about in that age, is not number one on the list, for these girls. The roles and language they use, especially Samantha will be more masculine than feminine. On the other hand, what is masculinity? It might be good to show the viewers that it is not only the men that can be successful and live a glamorous life without a family. According to Padavic and Reskin (2002) it is often true that men will be more favorable than women in the sex-gender hierarchy. This series want to communicate girl power and show that women can be successful career people as well. The stereotype might be changed and it might be time for the girls to take and believe in themselves as Samantha is doing. It might be time for a Marlboro Woman in our society (Stern, 1993), meaning that the woman can also be portrayed as a strong, powerful and independent individual as the man is in the Marlboro advertising.

On the other hand, the message of girl power is an element open for discussion. One can argue that the series in reality communicates the opposite of girl power and rather builds up under the stereotype perceptions of man and woman. Looking at the series with a critical eye, the argument of anti-girl power can be based on different elements from the series. The four main woman characters seem to use branded clothes and accessories to build up their self-confidence and self-esteem. They seem to relay on their looks when meeting new people rather than what they have on the inside. Their constant hunt for the new guys can also be interpreted as a way to get reassurance and thereby feel comfortable with themselves, and they often end up turning to the men looking for help.

The role functions we chose to discuss might also be different if it was a masculine researcher. Since we are women, we have a closer connection to Carrie and might better understand her obsession for shoes. The interpretation of the role functions and the brands perhaps would be different if it was a masculine researcher. Men might get another attitude towards the product that is placed in the show. One of the brands that are chosen for our observation is the Manolo Blahnik shoe that we possibly get more feeling and understanding for compared to men. Since the show is more target women, most of the visual product placement is matching the glamour girl in a successful and glamour life.

7. *Future Research*

In this section, we present areas within the product placement that we believe are necessary for future researcher to take into consideration. These areas will help to develop the effectiveness of product placements. The element of freedom and its influence on the product placements effect, limitations in the usage of product placement, the border between fiction and reality and ethical considerations will be treated.

After writing this thesis, it became very obvious to us that product placement as a strategy has become an important marketing tool, and will be of great importance in the future, both for consumers and managers. The secret behind the traditional marketing is out, and thereby there is need and time for new and refreshing tools. Product placement as a marketing tool differs from others more traditional marketing tools that have been dominating the marketing arena for many years.

Product placement as a marketing tool, offers the consumers more degree of freedom compared to the others, often more familiar strategies. For instance, the companies behind the brand controlled the transfer of meaning in larger degree before. Through commercials or billboards with a very specific message, there was little room for interpretation by the consumers. The transfer of meaning to the brand was more or less forced on the consumer and this resulted in very different results. Either took the consumer the message into consideration and implemented it into their evaluation of the brand. Or the result could be total rejection of the message since the matches with the consumers own meanings were too small. This means that it was hard to evaluate the effect of the advertising.

With the use of product placement, viewers are offered more freedom in their meaning construction connected with the brand. Since the transferred meaning of the brand is based on the interaction with the characters and the setting, the meaning is largely dependent on how involved the viewers are in the series and how they interpret the interaction. This means that the consumer themselves decides how much weight and meaning they transfer to the brand, and maybe is the connection to the brand stronger than by traditional advertising. The consumers can transfer the meaning that best fits with their own situation and values, and thereby are the companies not as in much control of the transfer of meaning as before. Perhaps is this freedom in the value creation a more powerful branding tool than mass branding, and the future for brand management. The use of freedom in value creation in marketing is an area that should be paid more attention to in the future. However, the secret of product placement will also be decoded in the future, and what is then the next natural step in the marketing mix?

In this thesis, we have looked at product placement within the popular culture, with the focus at a series with a relative young target group. There is no question about the effectiveness of product placements and we are well aware that it exist a variety of products and targets groups in the society today. An area for future research should be concerned with the limitations of product placement. Are there products or target groups that can not be applied to the strategy of product placement, and are there limitations in what kind of television program that can be used?

Another element for future research is the use of fictional character in the transfer of meaning process. We argue that fictional character can absolutely be used in the transfer of meaning process in addition to real life celebrities. One important question in relation to this is, how fictional and constructed can the character be? With this we mean, how much connection to the real world is necessary for the meaning to transfer over to the viewers? Some series are more distant from the real world than others, and finding the place where the border for fiction is reached is of importance for future product placements.

At last, but not least we find that ethical aspect of product placement should be further researched. Because of the nature of product placements there is a fine line between it being perceived as marketing or as hidden marketing. Dependent on how the products are used and portrayed in the series it can also border to being defined as propaganda. So, where does the ethical limit for product placement go? Is it possible to have on general limitations, or is it necessary to take the context into consideration?

8. Conclusion

In this final section we present our general thoughts and conclusions, concerning the roles the brands can have in a product placement strategy. The surprising amount of product placements in the series “Sex and the City”, and the brands playing actual roles with tight connection to their branding strategy will be dealt with. We also found that a further development of McCracken’s model necessarily, to include the whole effect of product placements and conclude with the existence of a 4th product placement strategy.

Before our research started, we were prepared that it would be some product placements in the series, except for the obvious ones such as; the Mac computer, some fashion clothing’s and the Manolo Blahnik shoes. However, it became evident for us that it was a vast amount of product placement that is used in the series and an increasing trend along with the seasons. This will explain the increasing trend of using product placement instead of traditional advertising. An outcome of this is the escalating usage of zapping and that the younger generation is overloaded with every day message and tries to avoid advertisement as much as possible. Product placement will be a more discreet and subtle way of promoting a product or a brand. To use product placement in a TV series, will create a stronger message when the products or brands are placed in a natural setting. The characters that are using the products and brands will also make the placement more effective since the viewers will transfer a meaning from the character to the brand.

The McCracken’s “transfer of meaning” model is connected to the celebrities and the transfer of meaning to advertisement and the consumers. Even though the girls in the show are fictive persons, in our case, the transfer of meaning will be transmitted in the same way. We have further developed a new step to the model. This step will explain the connection between the stage 3 and stage 1. The arrow we have added will show that the transfer of meaning that the viewer will get out of the brand in stage 3, will influence the viewers’ interpretation of the brand in the future. Therefore, we show with the added arrow that the cycle will go around. The transfer of meaning will affect the way the viewers will perceive the brand in the future.

Brands can have specific role functions in a TV series. However, there is no perfect fit since this role function is developed as having a human being in mind, instead of a brand. The role functions we are discussing, are used in dramaturgy to divide up the different roles in a setting. We found though that some of the brands in “Sex and the City” will fit to those role functions used in dramaturgy. Even though the products are not human beings, we believe that it could be a useful tool to think of when using product placement in a series. By knowing the different roles of the brand, the brand manager will be able to match the specific brand to the setting in a more effective way. Some products and brands take greater space in the storyline compared to those that are only used as props in the series. Therefore, the role function will make the brand develop an even stronger connection to the series, if they use the right role functions. Hence, the placement will be more effective if you know what kind of role the brand will have in the storyline. The Mac computer has a major role in the storyline, even though the characters in the series only verbally mentioned the Mac in one episode of all six seasons. The Mac brand is visible in all the other episodes, even though the Mac computer got a major role function into the storyline from episode one to the final episode. We believe it is necessary to develop some new role functions that will enhance the fit with the brand and thereby could result in an improved way to place products in a TV series. This will make the

product even stronger in the storyline if the role function will be connected to the product or brand instead of a real person. To develop and chose the right role function, will lead to a more effective transfer of meaning to the viewers.

When observing the product placements in the series “Sex and the City”, both in general and the specific case studies, it is evident to us that a mixture of product placements strategies is used. Both the strategies of implicit and integrated product placements are used, with differences in frequency and intensity. The combination of the various strategies creates a more complete overall impression of the brands. The use of them are connected to the role functions the brands have in the series and what kind of meaning that is intended to be transferred to the viewers.

It also became evident during the observation that a 4th product placement strategy in great extent was used in the series. Brands were present in the visual image, but were not visible by brands or were not being verbally mentioned. This is a strategy that has not got much attention in the literature and should be a natural part of the placement strategy mix in the future. Even though is has a smaller target group because of its nature, it is still an effective product placement strategy.

Based on our research we can conclude that there is a connection between the roles the brand uses and the branding strategy from the company. Hence, there must be a fit between the branding strategy and the role the brand will have in the setting. The brands that are used in the series should transfer the same meaning in the storyline as it delivers outside the series. The brands and the roles need to have much of the same characteristics and values in order to make the connection between them being perceived as natural and genuine as possible. The match between these two elements must be taken seriously and into consideration when planning product placements, both from the television company and from the company behind the brand. Product placement is an effective branding tool with profound impact on the viewers, with the main aim to transfer meaning to the viewers. This means that there also is a large risk involved when using product placement as a part of the brand strategy. If the placements are done wrong and thereby communicate the wrong meanings to the viewers, this can have a huge negative effect on the brand equity.

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Observation:

DVD collection of six seasons of Sex in the City

Appendix I

Observation of Sex and the City

Season 1

Episode 1

- Blahnik shoes mentioned in the first episode to describe the single ladies in New York
- Carrie uses 2 different computers. A big, white computer and a black laptop. But no brand is visible on either of them.
- Carrie uses shoes to describe the single ladies in New York. \$400 dollars Blahnik shoes mentioned

Episode 2

- uses a laptop, no brand is visible

Episode 3

- the computer is part of the beginning, the one she reflects with
- mentioning shoes, classifies them according to price \$ 400
- buying shoes to feel better after having sex with the wrong guy
- Dolce & Gabbana store sign is shown, with focus on the shoes in the window. She buys the shoes to feel better after being rejected at a restaurant. After they are bought the Dolce & Gabbana bag is visible in the picture when she is walking home.
- A DKNY dress is mentioned.

Episode 4

- Marlboro light mentioned.
- Banana Republic mentioned.
- GAP mentioned
- Shoes mentioned according to their price, \$ 400

Episode 5

- Dolce & Gabbana sign visible, she is buying shoes to get in a better mood
- Uses American Express to pay for the shoes
- A Gucci purse is visible
- Mentioning she(Carrie) has an addiction to expensive footwear to a French guy
- "Bring your little laptop" → shows Carries relationship to her laptop.. she do not go far away from it

Episode 6

- A scene is taking place inside the store Bed, Bath and Beyond, and the advertising for the bus is also showed at an bus passing by.

Episode 7

No Brand Visible or Mentioned

Episode 8

No Brand Visible or Mentioned

Episode 9

- mentioning Hermut Lange
- talking about expensive shoes without mentioning any brand
- Chanel suits are described as something that never goes out of fashion
- Shows the data when she is reflecting upon the question of the episode, but no brand is visible

Episode 10

- Gucci shoes is mentioned as \$ 400 shoes
- Barneys is mentioned

Episode 11

No Brand Visible or Mentioned

Episode 12

- Brands used to describe certain church people; Armani, Oscar de la Renta, Valentino

Season 2

Episode 1

- mentioning a Dolce & Gabbana party
- Carrie has been shopping and shows a bag from Clinique

Episode 2

- The Apple brand at her computer is shown for the first time!!
- Gucci brand is visible, but not mentioned

Episode 3

- American Express is described as an accessories to Charlottes dates

Episode 4

- the Mac brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the main question for the episode
- mentioning Marlboro lights

Episode 5

- Visa card mentioned

Episode 6

- the Apple brand visible when Carrie is reflecting; camera zooms out to get the logo in focus
- Prada shoes mentioned
- Warner Music mentioned

Episode 7

No Brand Visible or Mentioned

Episode 8

- The Apple brand visible when Carrie uses her laptop when reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Carrie is drinking coffee from Starbucks on the street. The brand is visible, but not mentioned

Episode 9

- The Apple brand visible when Carrie is reflecting with her laptop

Episode 10

- Carrie uses the computer without showing the brand

Episode 11

- shows the Apple brand when using the computer
- Bergdorfs is mentioned, an example of their product is shown
- Cynthia Rowly is mentioned

Episode 12

- Barneys Warehouse mentioned
- Howard Johnson mentioned
- The Apple brand is visible when Stanford uses his computer to look for a sex partner on the Internet, seems to always show the brand from the front.
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- MacDonald meal is used as a "peace gift" from Carrie when Mr. Big returns from Paris

Episode 13

- Fendi purse mentioned
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode.

Episode 14

- Starbucks mentioned
- Nestlé mentioned
- GQ mentioned
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Gucci bag visible

Episode 15

- the Apple brand visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Marlboro light mentioned
- Chips Ahoy mentioned
- Cool-Aid mentioned
- Nike mentioned

Episode 16

- Ralph Lauren mentioned

- The computers in Samantha's office are of the Apple brand.

Episode 17

- Carrie's computer is visible when reflecting, but no brand is visible
- Prada logo is visible when looking into a store window
- Laura Ashley dress mentioned when Carrie is going through her wardrobe

Season 3

Episode 1

- Barneys mentioned
- Carrie is using the computer, but the brand is not visible
- Carrie buys Jimmy Choo shoes to feel better when she is feeling depressed, the shoe box is visible later and clearly mentioned later in the same episode
- A big Christian Dior bag is visible when Carrie is sitting on her stair
- Carrie is getting "rescued" in a BMW

Episode 2

- the Apple brand is visible for a longer time when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- a jacket tag from Bloomingdales is in focus
- Later when Carrie used the computer the brand is not visible. But in the same scene whole page advertising for Apple is visible in the same scene.
- In the end of the scene the Mac is visible in Carrie's window

Episode 3

- Ogilvy & Mather mentioned
- Vera Wang mentioned
- The computer with the brand is visible, but Carrie do not use it
- The Manolo Blahnik is mentioned by Carrie as a religious experience, when she has bought a new pair. The shoes are a tool to cheer her up, and shall reflect to her surroundings and Natasha how beautiful and powerful she feels. During the whole scene the bag with the Blahnik name is clearly visible during the whole scene. Carrie holds it on her lap, and later when she is trying the shoes for her friend the bag gets it's own chair. The chair is placed between tables, so that the brand is visible. This scene can be used as an example of her relationship with shoes and Blahnik.
- A Bergdorf's dress is mentioned
- Helene Rubenstein SPA is the setting for some scenes with Samantha.

Episode 4

- The computer is used when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode, the brand is visible.

Episode 5

- Martha Stewart mentioned
- Vogue Magazine is mentioned
- Ralph Lauren paint mentioned "be careful Steve, it is RL paint..."
- Tiffany earrings is visible and mentioned

- Marlboro lights used and mentioned
- Puma T-shirt is visible on Steve. “ have fun-play basket-wear puma”
- Jennifer Lopez dress mentioned
- Christian Dior bag visible

Episode 6

- The Apple brand visible when Carrie is reflecting with her computer
- The Apple brand on her computer is also visible when Carrie is sitting in her bed, and not use the computer

Episode 7

- Looking into a Barneys window, the name visible
- Carrie is reflecting with her computer, the Apple brand visible

Episode 8

- McQueen mentioned
- Gucci mentioned
- Cartier clock given as a present to Charlotte
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- The Tiffany’s store sign is visible “ Girls dream to go to Tiffany’s”

Episode 9

- Martha Stewart mentioned
- Tiffany’s is used to buy engagement rings for Charlotte

Episode 10

- the Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode

Episode 11

- Apple brand visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- A Pepsi vending machine is visible in the hotel lobby

Episode 12

- Vera Vang weddings dresses

Episode 13

- a huge Warner Bros sign is visible 3 times during the episode
- Carrie is bringing her Mac to LA, so she can work while she is staying there
- Disney is mentioned
- The buying of fake Fendi purses is a part of the story line, and Carrie decides not to buy them - “they no longer looked real”.
- Carrie is wearing Dior rings, very visible
- The computer is in the frame when Carrie is reflecting, the camera turns around just enough to see the brand in the front

Episode 14

- Carrie is working and reflecting behind her computer, and the brand is visible

Episode 15

- A Lacoste hat is visible; an upper class lady is wearing it.

- Carrie gets robbed of the valuable things she is wearing, including her pink Manolo Blahnik shoes from last year
- Ralph Lauren is mentioned, Bigs ex is working there
- Ralph Lauren bag is visible.
- A Christian Dior dress in a long section in the end of the episode

Episode 16

- Carrie is using her computer when she is reflecting and the Apple brand is visible
- Carrie loses her Christian Dior purse when falling in the water
- Calvin Klein shoes mentioned?

Season 4

Episode 1

- shows when Carrie is working on her computer, but the brand is not visible
- Carrie is referring to her Blahnik shoes as her soul mate

Episode 2

- Ralph Lauren mentioned- Charlotte did some modelling for them as a child
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Carrie is going to wear a Dolce & Gabbana dress on the runway for a fashion show
- Vogue is mentioned
- Gucci mentioned as famous designer
- Christian Dior mentioned as famous designer

Episode 3

- the Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode

Episode 4

- Gucci mentioned
- Versace mentioned
- Carrie is using her computer when she is working, but the brand is not visible

Episode 5

- when Carrie is working the computer is visible, but not the brand
- Oreos cooking is eaten and mentioned
- Showing that Miranda also has a Mac at home

Episode 6

- the Apple brand is visible when Carrie is writing a mail to Aiden, and also later in the episode when she is reflecting
- Barneys store is mentioned
- Miranda and her Mac is in a scene

Episode 7

- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting
- A scene with Charlotte where her Mac is visible, with the brand visible.
- A Dior bag is visible

Episode

- Carries Mac is shutting down and she gets really frustrated “I have my whole life on that computer”.
- Brings her Mac to the computer support rapped in a scarf, and the Mac brand is visible during the whole scene at the support. The support is visited 2 times during this episode
- Carries Mac and her relationship to it is a part of the storyline, the Mac is no longer just used as a prop
- Carrie gets a new Mac`99 from her boyfriend “ It is like a little purse”.
- Martha Stewart is mentioned
- “People die, computer crash.. all we can do is reboot?”

Episode 9

- Carrie is bringing her Mac to the countryside, the brand visible

Episode 10

- Carries computer is visible, but not the brand
- “in style” magazine is visible?

Episode 11

- Tampax box is visible on the table as long as Miranda’s pregnancy is discussed
- “Swear on Chanel”
- Birkin Bags looked at through a store window, all the star has this bag
- Carries Mac with visible brand is in the scene when she is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Hermés mentioned
- All the girls drinks Coca-Cola during a lunch
- Lucy Liu is wearing a Dior t-shirt

Episode 12

- the Apple brand is visible while Carrie is reflecting by her computer
- Carrie holds an Manolo Blahnik bag while she is talking in the phone

Episode 13

- Carrie handle her shoes in the closet as something breakable
- Robert Cavelli outfit is visible and mentioned. “Her I was holding on to a Robert Cavelli, at the same time throwing away my relationship”.
- Starbuck store is where Carrie goes to work, both visible and mentioned. “A rest place for couples just around the corner”.
- Vaseline-Miranda

Episode 14

- Calvin Klein model
- Baskin Robbins mentioned by Samantha
- The Apple brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode.

Episode 15

- Samantha is wearing large Coco Chanel earrings, not possible to miss them
- The Apple brand is visible while Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode

Episode 16

- Samantha receives a Chanel wallet from her boss
- Carrie may be evicted “ I will be a Fendi bag lady, but homeless lady”.
- The Apple brand is visible while Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Carrie is wearing a Coco Chanel dress
- Manolo Blahnik shoes is mentioned
- Carries has spent 40 000\$ on shoes
- Tiffany mentioned

Episode 17

- Carrie start writing for Vogue
- Oscar de la Renta, Dior and Marc Jacobs, Versaces mentioned as designers
- The laptop is visible while Carrie is reflecting, but not the brand
- Many of the scenes take place inside Vogue, and all the computers at Vogue are Mac
- Fuji is mentioned
- Manolo Blahnik shoes mentioned and a rare pair of shoes from is shown when Carrie tries them on “thought they were an urban myth”.

Episode 18

- the Apple brand is visible while Carrie is reflecting, both in the start and in the end of the episode
- Carries wears a Christian Louboutins shoes with Miranda at the hospital

Season 5

Episode 1

- Carrie is drinking Pepsi at the movie
- Samantha is wearing a Banana Republic bag, and shops at Marc Jacobs to get over the break-up
- Samantha is wearing Dior earrings
- Carrie reflects with her computer, but no brand is visible
- A large red Virgin billboard is visible in the dark when Carrie is walking home

Episode 2

- the episode is starting with Carrie reflection with her Mac, the brand visible
- Samantha wears golden Coco Chanel earrings
- The Mac with the brand is reappearing a couple of times during the episode, the brand is visible

Episode 3

- Taj Mahal Casino name is clearly visible when they arrive Las Vegas

Episode 4

- Charlotte wearing Ralph Lauren sweater
- Miranda joins Weight Watchers since it is the “only way to diet”.
- Weight Watchers is a part of the storyline, and the name is being mentioned 6 times. Miranda gets a date with a man at the course, Carrie talks about the advantages of Weight Watchers

- Charlotte with her new, white Mac is visible. When Mac releases a new edition of Mac, it will be into the show. Charlotte uses the computer when looking for books at the Internet and the brand is visible for a long time.
- Vogue is visible when Carrie is reading magazines to find an outfit for the cover, and she also mentioning the name.
- Starbucks is mentioned as the place to get coffee, and is the place where Stanford met his new boyfriend
- Krispy Kreme mentioned
- Marie Claire mentioned by Carrie.
- Worldwide Express mentioned
- At Samantha's office all the computers is visible to be Mac
- When Carrie takes pictures to her book cover she is only wearing a coat and a white Mac, the brand is visible

Episode 5

- At Carries final book cover the Mac is held so that the brand is in the centre of the photo
- The publisher also uses brands at her office
- Xerox machine mentioned
- McDonald food eaten at Carries first date with Berger. Carrie is showing the mug while they discusses the strawberry shake. "Relax and slowdown".
- Carrie uses the laptop with the brand visible when reflecting upon the question for the episode
- Carrie is hiding behind "Hello!" magazine with the name visible, and the magazine is also mentioned by her boss at Vogue.
- A Chanel dress is visible and mentioned
- Marc Jacobs bag visible
- Vanity Fair mentioned
- Tiffany mentioned
- Samantha's doctor uses Mac, the brand visible

Episode 6

- The Times newspaper mentioned a couple of times
- Carrie works at Vogue
- The Mac and its brand are visible while Carrie is reflecting about the question for the episode.
- The Bergdorf Store design is visible
- Steve's Wilson basket ball visible

Episode 7

- Am- track used to get to book signing, Carrie and Samantha are passengers a couple of days
- Carrie has brought her Mac at the train, and the brand is visible while she is reflecting upon the question for the episode.
- Starbucks is mentioned: "one in every neighbourhood"
- Big Red Gum is used and mentioned
- American Airlines is used as transportation home for Samantha and Carrie

Episode 8

- Carrie uses her laptop when reflecting upon the question for the episode

- Samantha wears a black and white Coco Chanel scarf around her head, the logo is very visible
- Ralph Lauren is mentioned, Miranda's child is wearing it
- In a speech at the wedding, Dior is mentioned as the dress his wife had the first time they met.

Season 6

Episode 1

- Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen and Oscar Mayer– different designers are mentioned when Samantha is talking about how New York has changed since she moved there.
- Kahlua is mentioned
- Triscuits is both mentioned and visible. Carrie gives Miranda's child a cracker.
- Potterybarn logo visible on a sign.
- Hummer both visible and mentioned. Samantha is impressed that the man she met drives a Hummer.
- Mac brand is visible when reflecting upon the question for the episode.
- Meanwhile Carrie drinks from a Starbucks mug, the brand is visual.
- Carrie uses a payphone from Verizon
- Carrie mentioning Elisabeth Taylor twice.

Episode 2

- Barnes & Nobles mentioned by Berger
- Bed, Bath and Beyond – a small part of they storyline – the brand is both mentioned and visual. Carrie mentioned, “ I want Berger in Bed, Bath and Beyond”.
- Mentioned BBC America
- The Times is mentioned by Carrie
- Pepsi visual at a Pizza Rest.
- TiVo mentioned a couple of times in the conversation – a part of the storyline when Miranda's TiVo is broken.
- Philips brand is really visual when Miranda is trying to fix her TiVo.
- Mac is used when Carrie is reflecting, but the brand is not visual.
- Carrie mentions the Times.
- Gatorade drink visible.

Episode 3

- Ralph Lauren paint is mentioned
- Fendi is mentioned
- Versace and Gucci are mentioned when Carrie is talking to Big about Carries dresses.
- Ralph Lauren sweater on Charlotte, the logo is very visible.
- Carrie is reflecting with her Mac and the brand is visible.
- Mac brand visible when Carrie is talking in the phone.

Episode 4

- Carrie is using the Mac when reflecting, but the brand is not visible.

Episode 5

(Prada store is part of the storyline through the whole episode)

- Prada brand is both visual and mentioned. Carrie and Berger have their first shopping experience together and try clothes at a Prada store. An acceptance important step in their relationship with Berger. “Carrie wants to wear the Prada, since Prada abuse problem”.
- Prada products such as shoes, bags and shirts visible and Carrie is wearing a dress from Prada.
- Prada is mentioned when Carrie is talking to her friends.
- Carrie shows a Prada bag and bought a Prada shirt to Berger.
- Carries publisher is wearing Coco-Chanel earrings.
- Charlotte drinking Snapple in the part where she is talking about break ups.
- Carrie reflecting upon the question for the episode, Mac brand visible.
- Prada mentioned of Carrie when wearing a new Prada dress.
- Berger wearing a red Prada shirt, a gift from Carrie.
- Prada mentioned when introducing a friend to Charlotte.
- A Coco-Chanel bag is visible.
- “A gift from Prada is a hero when you are a single girl”
- Carrie does not want to be a biker girl – puts her Prada dress on.

Episode 6

(Vodka Hunk in part of the storyline through the whole episode)

- Starbucks mug visible
- Absolute Vodka Hunk – huge billboard with Samantha’s boyfriend. The billboard is in an image alone several times.
- Absolute Vodka postcard with Samantha’s boyfriend, the brand visible.
- Carrie has her Mac at a jury duty, brand visible – and uses it in her reflection and question of the episode.
- Bang&Olufsen visual
- Absolute Hunk, the drink is named after the advertising for Absolute Vodka.
- Advertising for Absolute Vodka showed again when Charlotte is on a blind date.
- Samantha and Smith are talking about the Absolute Hunk billboard.
- Molonari Dress mentioned
- Motorola cell phoned is used both by Carrie and Mr Big.
- Dolce & Gabbana mentioned
- Advertising for Absolute Hunk visual
- Note from Berger at Carries Mac with a Post-it. – The Mac brand is visible.

Episode 7

- Charlotte carries a Manolo Blahnik bag
- Mac visible with reflection from Carrie.
- Gucci, YSL, Dolce & Gabbana clothes showed and mentioned.
- Samantha’s boyfriend Smith is wearing Dior sunglasses and also mentioned by Samantha.
- Mommy and Me mentioned
- Vodka Hunk advertising visual

Episode 8

- Jeffery’s store mentioned by Stanford
- Carrie is writing her reflection on her Mac, the brand is very visible.
- New York Times both visual and mentioned.
- Starbucks mug visual.

Episode 9

- Carries Manolo Blahnik is defined as “very special shoes” and are stolen at a party, and the shoes is a part of the storyline for the episode
- Buying expensive shoes such as Manolo shoes is compared to having a baby, and Carries life revolves around shoes and not children
- Manolo Blahnik shoes and their price (485 \$) are mentioned several times in the episode
- Carries friend ends up buying her new pair of shoes, as a “wedding” present to Carrie
- Manolo Blahnik shoe box is visible several times, with the brand
- Carrie is using her computer when reflecting, but no brand is visible
- BBC America is mentioned

Episode 10

- Evian is mentioned
- Carrie is using her computer when reflecting upon the question for the episode, the Mac brand very visible
- Carries new boyfriend is using a Lacoste t-shirt, the brand is visible

Episode 11

- Manolo Blahnik bag is visible, a girl in the background is carrying it
- The Mac brand visible several times when Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode
- The Four Seasons is mentioned
- The Knicks are mentioned
- MasterCard is mentioned

Episode 12

- McDonalds is mentioned at different times in the same episode
- Samantha has got new glasses, Chanel which is both visible and mentioned
- Carrie is using her Mac when reflecting upon the question for the episode, the brand very visible
- Steve’s mum drinks Budweiser, the box with the brand visible a couple of times

Episode 13

- Google is mentioned
- The Mac brand is visible when Carrie is googling her new boyfriend
- The Mac brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting
- Google is mentioned by Carrie a couple times, her “new best friend”
- Goyard brand visible in a department store
- Barneys is mentioned

Episode 14

- Planet Hollywood is mentioned
- Bed, bath and beyond is visible
- Oscar de la Renta is mentioned
- Tiffany’s is mentioned.
- The Vogue magazine is used as source when Carrie is reading her boyfriend poetry, the magazine is visible
- The Mac brand is visible when Carrie is reflecting at her computer

- Carrie gets a new Oscar de la Renta dress from her boyfriend, he knows Oscar de la Renta.
- Carrie, wearing her new dress, and boyfriend is eating at McDonald instead of going to the opera, the brand is very visible through the whole scene

Episode 15

- Classic Vuitton mentioned when Carrie is describing her outfit
- Samantha wears a Chanel bag
- The Mac brand visible when reflecting upon the question for the episode
- The doctor's office also uses Mac, and the brand is visible several times
- Vanity Fair is mentioned
- ESPN is mentioned

Episode 16

- Vogue is mentioned
- Carrie is reflecting upon the question for the episode, the Mac brand is visible
- Samantha wearing a Dior scarf around her head, after shaving of all her hair
- Charlotte is using Mac, brand visible

Episode 17

- The New York Times is mentioned.
- The Tattle Tale magazine is mentioned by Miranda, and the magazine is visible a couple of times
- Samantha is wearing Chanel earrings
- FedEx is mentioned
- Miranda is using Mac at her home, the brand is visible
- For the first time in the whole series, Carrie is not using her Mac when reflecting

Episode 18

- Vogue mentioned, when Carrie is meeting her old boss from the magazine
- A Pepsi can is visible when Carrie is sitting by her computer and reflecting, the brand of the computer is not visible
- Vogue magazine visible as decorations on a wall
- Carrie's boyfriend reading the Daily News, the brand visible
- Manolo Blahnik shoes mentioned

Episode 19

- The Christian Dior store in Paris is visible from the front and inside, the logo visible
- Carrie returns from the Dior store, with a lot of bags with visible logo
- Miranda is eating Cheerios, the box visible several times
- Charlotte is inside Carrie's apartment, and the Mac is visible as the only thing left on her bed. *Did Carrie ever really leave New York??*

Episode 20

- Charlotte is wearing a Chanel bag
- Charlotte is shopping at Chanel store, many products with the brand visible
- Carrie is smoking Marlboro Light, the brand at the box visible couple of times
- Calvin Klein boxer visible when Smith is packing
- UGGs shoes visible, but no brand
- Steve is wearing a North Face jacket

- Steve's mum drinking Budweiser at dinner, the can with the brand visible
- Charlottes husband using a Mac at their home, the brand is visible
- A Dior bag is mentioned and visible, Carrie is mentioning it as the bag she become to love
- Charlotte is wearing a Ralph Lauren sweater, the logo is visible
- The Four Seasons is mentioned
- The Landrover brand at a car is visible
- Carrie is carrying a Manolo Blahnik bag in the final scene, when she is reflecting upon the topic for the whole series... "The most important relationship is the one you have with yourself..."
- Verizon is the visible brand at her cell phone, when the viewers get to se Mr. Bigs name for the first time.. John...

The End....