

Does product integration on TV work or not?

By [Virginia Hollis](#)

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Research out of the US has been released around the impact that programme integration has on consumers, especially when in conjunction with advertising in the same programme. The findings indicate that prominent product placement embedded in entertainment continues to have a strongly positive impact on online conversations and web traffic for the brands concerned.



The new era of product placement

Kevin Levy 18 Jun 2020



The study was authored by Beth Fossen of Indiana University, and David Schweidel of Emory University. From 2015 it covered more than 2,800 placements for 99 brands. The researchers measured the volume of online word-of-mouth mentioning of the brand and traffic to the brand's website following the product placement, and it turns out that the more that people like a program the better the impact of the integration ... it's all quite common sense, isn't it?

Programme sponsorship still has a purpose

If we look at the category generally, local programme sponsorship as a media function is no longer as relevant as it once was, but it still has a purpose. In 2020, marketers need to look further than just sponsoring a programme, they need to complement the sponsorship with integration. This does not mean 'let us just hand over some money to the TV production company and sit back'.

The exposure opportunities for brands really are endless *if* there is managed integration within a quality environment to reap real rewards and ROI. The TV space in particular is brimming with possibility.

Backing up this argument is the fact that people are streaming more now than ever before, consuming TV on multiple devices, across multiple networks and at all hours of the day. This poses a huge challenge for media people who are trying to develop brand awareness campaigns, despite that TV is still one of the strongest media choices for building awareness regardless of the format it's being watched in.

We receive calls on a daily basis from production companies that have the most brilliant productions but haven't the resources to produce the content without support of brands, and they personally do not have the time to pursue brands that resonate with their content.

I don't need to tell anyone that money and budgets are especially tight right now, and this applies to the broadcasters as well. They all need quality content, so the AFP (Advertising Funded Content), or rather let's call it QFC (Quality Funded Content) is becoming really important.

For the best marketing success, true brand integration should be applied across multiple touchpoints, offering marketers and advertisers a solution and a commercial opportunity that is sustainable with real returns, no matter the medium.

Collaboration between producers and advertisers

It is important that when looking at integration into content that you do it in a way that it looks like the brand is involved with the content conversation, so to viewers it looks natural.

So, when negotiating integration weave a story that links the brand into the storyline. We, and producers, cannot do this in isolation, we need input from advertisers and their agencies to ensure that we are delivering the correct brand message, so it is an ever-evolving collaboration.

For example, take a production like the massively popular show *Family Feud* which now has a South African iteration. Integrating a fast food, beverage or even luxury brands into a project like *Family Feud South Africa* hosted by Steve Harvey may begin as a TV production, but from there it evolves into radio, digital, print, mobile, social and outdoor, providing that the brand's message compliments the medium.

These supplemental media touchpoints give brands longevity throughout the series and beyond. In this case, the show, featuring KFC, averaged over 2.1 million viewers per week among e.tv audiences, additionally influencing a change in viewership patterns over the timeslot, increasing the audience by one million people in the first broadcast and on average over the series.

YouTube enabled the show's audience to grow exponentially, with well over 44 million views – that's unheard of in South Africa – and *Family Feud South Africa* regularly trended in the top three on Twitter since the commencement of filming. The show's social media following grew with each episode. Even when the show wasn't on air, the social media posts continued, growing affinity for the show, KFC and associated brands.

Due to its phenomenal success, *Family Feud South Africa* launched on Netflix South Africa - a completely unexpected but a wonderful acknowledgement to the success of the SA show. In the first four weeks of flighting *Family Feud* trended in the Top 5 consistently.

Natural integration

This is just one example of how great media integration can elevate a brand within a natural, seamless and relevant environment. Local production invariably delivers higher audiences than international shows, the proof is in the current South African viewership figures, and in South Africa we have extremely talented production companies that have great formats open to integration on many levels.

I think that what we can all agree how imperative it is that brands continue to challenge accepted forms of connecting with customers. Brand integration needs to go beyond simple time on camera or being worked into a situation – think about how your brand can ‘live’ in content and add value to the viewer’s experience?

Brands need to connect to the consumer’s reality, across multiple touchpoints in different ways that are subtle enough not to distract, but impactful enough to get noticed and be remembered.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Virginia Hollis, co-founder of G2 Connection

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