



Advertainment: Fusing Advertising and Entertainment



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Introduction: What is Advertainment?

The term advertainment was coined to reflect the increasingly intertwined connections between advertising and entertainment. It refers to promotional practices that integrate brand communications within the content of entertainment products. Brand communications are now present in the content of a broad range of entertainment vehicles, including TV and movies²¹, radio shows, songs and music videos, video games, plays, and even novels¹. The increased mingling of advertising with the entertainment world has generated a slue of newly coined terms to reflect these trends, such as hybrid advertisement² or the “Madison and Vine” expression, reflecting the physical intersection of the advertising industry’s New York City hub, on Madison Avenue, and the entertainment hub on Vine Street³. To this end, Advertising Age magazine sponsors a yearly Madison & Vine conference where the latest trends in branded entertainment are reviewed and discussed⁴. Many factors are contributing to advertisers’ increased interest in and use of advertainment techniques.

Factors Fueling the Growth of Advertainment

Advertainment has grown mainly in reaction to the increasing advertising clutter, escalating advertising costs, and the reduced effectiveness of traditional advertising messages. Consumers are exponentially exposed to commercial messages but at the same time they are finding new ways to avoid them. An In-Stat/MDR survey found that 54.3% of consumers claim to skip 75-100% of commercials⁵. In 2004, a Knowledge Networks study concluded that 47% of viewers switch channels while watching TV⁵. The same study also determined that the proportion of viewers doing other activities while watching TV - such as eating, reading, or using the internet - increased from 67% in 1994 to 75% in 2004⁵.

The above statistics do not account for the impact of new technological advances which are giving consumers more control over how

they consume entertainment, and making it increasingly easy for them to avoid commercial messages. With the introduction of Personal Video Recorders (PVRs), also referred to as Digital Video Recorders (DVRs), such as TiVo or Replay TV, consumers can not only more easily fast-forward through commercials but they can now also easily skip them altogether with a PVR’s auto-skip function. A Forrester Research’s study of PVR usage by 588 users in the US found that 60% of their time, on average, was spent watching programs that were pre-recorded or delayed, which in turn resulted in 92% of commercials being skipped. Thirty percent of respondents said they watched no commercials at all⁶.

With viewers’ attention to TV advertising declining, major brand advertisers (top 130) responsible for \$20 billion in ad spending per year are losing confidence in the effectiveness of TV advertising⁷. According to a 2006 survey by the Association of National Advertisers (USA) TV Ad Forum, 78% of advertisers expressed a loss of confidence in the effectiveness of TV advertising. These numbers present serious concerns for the marketing and advertising industries, and one fifth of industry leaders believe the PVR will lead to the death of the traditional 30-second spot⁵. As the convergence of TV and the internet continues, consumers will only gain more control over what they see and when they see it⁶. So advertisers are looking at alternatives such as branded entertainment within TV programs (61%), TV program sponsorships (55%), interactive advertising during TV programs (48%), online video ads (45%) and product placement (44%)⁸.

Although advertainment is gaining in popularity, it is not new and there is a long history of such intermingling between content and advertising. In order to understand how and why advertainment

works today, a turn to its historical roots is necessary.

A Historical Perspective

Marketers' approach to using entertainment content to promote their products dates back to the use of branded products in motion pictures⁹. This practice was variously termed "publicity by motion picture"¹⁰, "co-operative advertising"¹¹, "tie-in advertising"¹² and "trade outs"¹³, or even "exploitation"¹⁴. It represented a cooperative venture between a media maker and a manufacturer, in which on-screen exposure of a product, off-screen endorsement by an actor, or a combination of those were traded for paid advertising and unpaid promotions by the manufacturer¹⁵. The use of tie-ins became standardized in the 1930s. The Walter E. Kline Agency in Beverly Hills provided studio executives with multiple-page lists of products available for on-screen use in motion pictures, including Remington typewriters, IBM tabulating machines, Singer sewing machines, and General Electric appliances⁹. Products were offered rent free in return for publicity stills for use in manufacturers' advertising¹⁶.

These tie-in promotions benefited multiple players in the filmmaking and distribution industry. For the motion picture producer, they delivered free props. For the manufacturer, they provided in-theater exposure for products to a captive audience and the chance for the product to be associated with well-known actors on- and off-screen. In addition, they provided the marketing option to use footage or publicity stills from the movie in the company's outside advertising. For the motion picture distributor, this "as seen in the motion picture ..." early form of cross-promotion provided zero-cost advertising for the motion picture. Many of the same benefits apply today.

The practice eventually evolved into sponsor-owned programs, where

manufacturers had full control over how their products were portrayed. Starting in the 1930s, consumer product manufacturers invested in the production of radio programs to reach their target audiences¹⁷. This phenomenon was particularly visible in the "soap opera" genre, a term that actually testifies to the blending of advertising of actual soap products and programming. Similarly, radio programs were developed directly by detergent companies, notably Procter & Gamble, to promote their brands by integrating them into the scripts. When soaps emerged on TV in the 1950s, the close connection between programming and advertising continued and marketers maintained direct control over the shows' storylines and creative design¹⁸. Advertising agencies produced shows like "The Colgate Comedy Hour" and "Texaco Star Theater," in which a chorus line of dapper gas-station attendants opened each show by singing the Texaco jingle ("Oh, we're the men of Texaco, we work from Maine to Mexico") before introducing the host, Milton Berle¹⁹.

The practice of show sponsorship began to decline as advertisers realized they could better reach their target markets by spreading their advertising budgets across many shows rather than by spending it all on one²⁰. Since the mid-1980s, however, the trend has reversed and advertisers are now again trying to tie their brands to entertainment vehicles. One factor that fostered the unprecedented proliferation of product placements and campaigns tied to movies occurred during the 1980s and early 1990s²¹ was the use of Reese's Pieces to attract the alien in the 1982 hit movie *E.T.*. The success of the movie and the placement led to an increase in awareness of the brand as well as sales increases of 65%²².

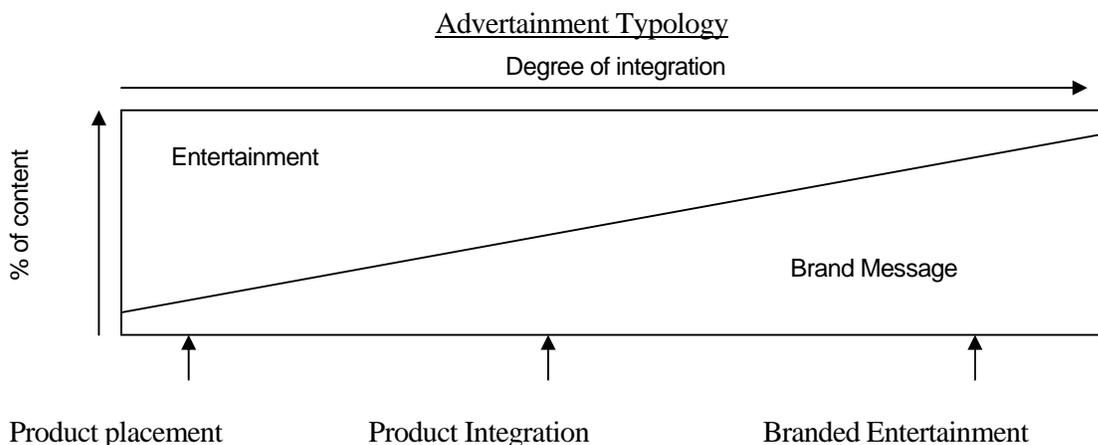
Nature of Advertainment Messages

Advertainment can be classified based on the degree of integration of the brand in the entertainment content, represented below on the horizontal axis. The simplest form is product placement, where the brand is

simply added to existing entertainment content. At the other end is branded content or branded entertainment where the brand actually guides the development of the entertainment content so the content is

developed around the brand. In the middle is product integration. This section describes

each type and provides specific examples of each.



Product Placement

The term product placement is defined as “the purposeful incorporation of a brand into an entertainment vehicle”²³. It epitomizes the blurring of the lines between advertising and entertainment. In audiovisual media, placements can be categorized based on their modality of presentation: visual or audio. The visual appearance of brands is justified by the need to create realistic settings for movie or TV sets. According to records available on www.brandchannel.com, an average of 18 brands was visually placed in the roughly two hundred top movies released between 2001 and 2005. During the 2004-05 TV season, more than 100,000 product placements appeared on the six broadcast networks, an increase of 28 percent from the previous season, according to Nielsen Media Research²⁴. According to Nielsen Product Placement research, the most common form of product placement in 2005 was a simple spot in the background of a show or the brand used as visual prop in the program²⁵. Visual placements are common in video games, where they usually take the form of hoardings, billboards and traditional signage placed throughout a game - for example, on the sides of buildings in a motor sport game, which essentially mimic real-life advertising spaces²⁶.

Audio mentions tend to have more impact because they imply an endorsement by the

celebrity. For instance, the popularity and reputation of many talk show hosts can make a simple mention of a product on a talk show extremely successful. For example, Crazygazer.com, an online shopping mall, donated a plasma TV set to the *Ellen DeGeneres Show*. On her show, Ellen gave the TV to a California Firehouse, mentioned the website on the show, and allowed the logo to appear on screen²⁷. As a result, traffic on the Crazygazer website increased 40% after the episode²⁷.

Product Integration

Product integration refers to a more extensive product placement where the product actually plays a role in the plot of an episode. Product integration is increasingly present in both scripted and reality TV programs. A study by TNS Media found that, in the fourth quarter of 2005, reality programming had an average of 11:05 minutes per hour of brand appearances as compared to just 3:07 per hour for scripted entertainment programming, such as sitcoms and dramas²⁸ (see Appendix 2). Some reality TV shows, such as *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart* contained up to 35 minutes and 51 seconds of brand integrations per hour²⁸. In scripted programs, products are written directly into the plot line of a particular episode, and often times marketers have some control over how their product is portrayed. In an episode of *Desperate*

Housewives, one of the lead characters takes a job as a spokesmodel for the Buick Lacrosse²⁴. Taking it one step further, Campbell's Soup integrated its brand in an episode of *American Dreams* where the storyline involved student Patty Pryor entering a national essay writing contest sponsored by Campbell's Soup. To parallel the episode, Campbell's created an essay writing contest for students between the ages of 13 and 18, who competed to win a \$100,000 scholarship²⁹.

Product integration deals require close collaboration between producers and marketers. Traditional TV networks are forging closer ties with sponsors. For example, FX President John Landgraf built a relationship with Dino Bernacchi, Pontiac's former advertising manager, who now oversees product integration for GM³⁰. Pontiac partnered with an FX's TV series called *Dirt* where a tabloid editor played by Courteney Cox is seen driving a black Pontiac Solstice GXP convertible. The initial sponsorship deal called for the Solstice to appear in three episodes but it ended up appearing in eight³⁰. Product integration in the content of a TV series provides a novel way of showcasing product attributes and benefits. In the Pontiac-FX partnership, Bernacchi suggested a story for the series about material found in the trunk of the Solstice and the roadster was featured in a chase scene³⁰. The Pontiac Solstice pre-sold 1,000 cars in the first 41 minutes after the show²⁴. Similar success stories have been seen with integrations in *The Apprentice*. Within the first 20 minutes of being featured on *The Apprentice*, Crest received 4.3 million visits to Crest.com, 80,000 requests for samples, and 25,000 submissions of marketing ideas⁵. Similarly, within 3 hours of appearing on *The Apprentice*, Ciao Bella ice cream was the third most searched item on Yahoo!, and by 5 p.m. the next day the product was sold out in all stores that carried it⁵.

Product integration deals also allow opportunities for cross-promotions. For example, Procter & Gamble, owner of the Herbal Essences brand, cross-promoted the launch of its brand's new television

campaign with a placement on the WB's program *What I Like About You*. In the program, the lead character competes against a friend to be in a Herbal Essences commercial²⁴. The television commercial features artist Jacyn Maria singing her single "Rock You Senseless" and the artist also cameod in an episode of the program. The episode (named "Split Ends") included the storyline of two actresses competing for the chance to star in an Herbal Essences ad.

Branded Entertainment

Branded entertainment is the type of advertainment that allows for the greatest product involvement, much like the 1950's sponsor-owned shows¹⁷. These types of advertainment are typically funded by the marketer and co-created with entertainment producers the driving force behind content creation is the showcase of a specific product or brand. This type of advertainment has been considered "the single biggest messaging shift...[which will] truly converge the worlds of Hollywood and Madison Avenue."⁵

BMW's short films released online in the summer of 2001 are often credited as one of the first modern forms of branded entertainment. For *The Hire* series of BMW films, the German company hired top Hollywood directors such as Wong Kar Wai and Ang Lee and recognizable talent such as Madonna to be featured in the films. Each film revolved around a central character, The Driver, the world's best at transporting people or things out of dangerous situations. Naturally, The Driver uses a different BMW in each film to complete his mission. The films were hosted on a new BMW Films website as part of a pull strategy, where consumers would seek out information about the brands themselves, instead of a push strategy where they are just told about the brand.³¹ The company wanted consumers to visit the website and seek out BMW by choice instead of just skimming over cars ads on TV or in magazines. Instead of spending marketing dollars on traditional marketing expenses such as media purchases, the majority of the budget was spend on the film production. The films were so successful in attracting attention and buzz

that the website registered more than 13 million hits after 12 months. BMW claims that it needed around three million film views in the first year of the campaign to attract the same amount of brand impressions as a traditional campaign. But the website traffic proved far higher than expected and after 12 months, there had been 13 million hits. To date, BMW claims the films have had 69 million visits.

In TV programming, branded entertainment is much more intense than product integration, as the involvement of the brand usually lasts over an entire series. For instance, the reality TV program *Style Me With Rachel Hunter*, a WE series in which 12 aspiring stylists compete for \$10,000 and the chance to dress Rachel Hunter at a red carpet event, is sponsored by L'Oreal and Payless Shoe Source, and their products are incorporated into each episode³². Yet another example of branded entertainment in reality TV is *On the Road*, a Spike TV series created by Alliance (a unit of ad agency Grey Global focusing on advertainment) for the Kia Spectra³³. This series features 8 contestants competing to be the best “gofer” on a Sugar Ray summer tour in hopes of receiving a job offer at Lava Records. In each episode, contestants drive Kia Spectras.

Scripted TV programs may also serve as branded entertainment. For example, *ESPN Shorts*, a series of brief episodes of a TV movie aired during *SportsCenter* were created to showcase a particular brand. One such ESPN Short was titled *The Scout*, and ESPN aired 90-second chapters of this 6-minute film³⁴. *The Scout*, created by BrightHouseLive, was presented by Craftsman at Sears, with the main purpose to incorporate Craftsman into the story and to have Craftsman enhance the storyline in return³⁴. The film, in which a baseball scout discovers a prospect who is mowing the grounds of a stadium with a Craftsman mower, was created to “find the right balance between storytelling and selling”³⁴.

Videogames have also been branded in this fashion, leading to the advergaming model in which agencies or game developers create short, simple online games that revolve around the brand, and create an

‘entertaining’ environment for the consumer³⁵. Videogame platforms for advertainment efforts are especially suited when companies’ target audiences match the game playing segment major demographic of young males. Some companies have taken the advergaming model even further by developing their own game around their products. For instance, Burger King has developed three Xbox games featuring ad characters and based on three of the most popular video game genres - racing, action and adventure²⁶. For example, in a boxing game entitled *Fight Night Round 3*, Burger King, ESPN, Staples, Everlast, Under Armor and Dodge have been visually and/or orally integrated into the game as they are clouted as sponsors of high level boxing bouts and players also fight to win enough money to purchase sponsored fighting accessories (e.g., better boxing gloves) for their character.

Branded entertainment is fast evolving into on-demand content, involving the very technology that heightened the urgency for advertainment—Video-on-Demand and PVRs. The first video-on-demand channel, “Freezone,” was created by Cox Media for “long-form advertising, advertainment, and sponsor-supported TV content”³⁶. Freezone was initially launched to 185,000 digital customers, and featured content such as 1-minute cooking tips from Kraft, and a 13-part 10-minute reality series created by Diet Coke³⁶. It also offered an interactive response feature, through which viewers could request more information and one that allowed companies to directly measure the results of their investment. For example, when Buick used Tiger Woods in an on-demand feature for its Ranier SUV, direct response rates for ads averaged 4.4%, twice as high as direct mail efforts³⁷. Many more marketers have flocked to this type of advertising, including Pfizer, Fidelity Investments, Anheuser-Busch, Kraft, Radio Shack, and BMW³⁷.

Even TiVo, often cited as being the very demise of traditional advertising, is in the process of developing long-form branded content programs. In collaboration with Starcom Mediavest Group, TiVo has

developed an on-demand advertising system which gives consumers control over when they see marketing messages³⁸. Messages are aimed at viewers based on what they search for, what they watch, and their geographic location. Viewers are offered other incentives such as sweepstakes and discounts to increase interest. TiVo offers performance-based pricing models such as price-per-click and time-per-view, similar to those used by Google³⁷. This model fits PVR consumers' behavior: the average TiVo user makes 350 different clicks per day, indicating that they are very active and engaged.

Executives on both sides of deals involving this type of long-form branded content agree that this has become an extremely lucrative option for advertising. TiVo President Marty

Yudkovitz argues that “TiVo can be used not just to skip ads but to enhance them—with targeting, long-form content, audience measurement, and interactive capabilities”³⁹. Indeed, TiVo has seen rates of 10-15% for campaigns run through TiVo Showcases of branded entertainment and consumers' interactions with these marketing message averaged between 2 and 4 minutes³⁸. This form of marketing can have measurable marketing results, as illustrated by a TiVo showcase for an automaker that was viewed by 16% of TiVo users and led to 1,200 test drives³⁸. Because it gives consumers the “ability to pull advertising based on their specific needs, user state, or mind-set,” advertising on demand is viewed as the future of advertising⁵.

How the Advertainment World Works

A direct consequence of the increased popularity of advertainment is the boom of a specialized product placement industry⁴⁰. Product placement is practiced by more than one hundred companies internationally⁴¹. The institutionalization of the industry is evidenced by such professional trade associations as the Entertainment Marketing Association (EMA) whose association members include placement agents, studio representatives, and marketers. A review of EMA membership reveals that in North America, product placement firms are mainly located in the Los Angeles area, hub of the entertainment world, and in major advertising centers such as New York, Chicago, and Toronto⁴².

Because the formalized development of the product placement industry is relatively recent, there is diversity in the types and sizes of agencies that handle placements, the companies that use them, and the ways the studios are organized to deal with them. EMA estimates that approximately 58 specialized product placement agencies exist in North America. In addition, the association involves 7 studios / production companies and lists 17 active client members, ranging from Anheuser-Busch and Starbucks to Mac Cosmetics and Marriott⁴².

There are many additional players, from integrated marketing communications agencies that have an entertainment marketing department to companies involved in product placement to various degrees. In fact, the number of advertising agencies now developing branded entertainment divisions is proliferating⁴³.

The world of advertainment includes three main types of players: the production side, the agency side, and the client side. Each is reviewed here.

The Production Side

These are the producers of entertainment content, such as TV and movie studios, music production companies, or videogame makers. In the audiovisual arena, the bases for identification of potential for inclusion of product placements are scripts. Studios send scripts to clients whose permissions are legally required to use these brands in their scenes, either directly or through the intermediary of product placement agencies. Movies generally include between 100-150 brands that need such permissions²³. Decisions on whether to include a branded product and choices of which brand to include are sometimes made by the directors,

producers, or actors. Their criteria for selection are generally driven by artistic needs or the desire to make the story realistic.

Increasingly, an objective for using product placements is financial. This may come in various forms. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules prohibit payment for placements on TV shows but not in other media, such as movies. However, even on TV, the regulations do not prevent other forms of agreements between producers and advertisers. TV has in fact become a primary medium for placements as evidenced by *Survivor* or *The Apprentice*. A common form involves the provision of the product as payment, similar to trade deals made in the media industry; that is, providing products and services in return for having the product shown at no direct cost. This form of payment reduces production costs and overhead. These types of barter have led to many now iconic placements such as the Klein bicycle on *Seinfeld*.

A major limitation of simply sending products out to a placement agent or directly to the producers is that it provides limited to no control over how the brand is ultimately portrayed. Of course, producers must take into account existing contracts with advertisers to avoid conflict of interests but this is always clear cut. For instance, Domino's Pizza sponsored a task in a 2005 episode of *The Apprentice* in which teams developed and sold a new type of pizza⁴⁴. Domino's used the episode to unveil its American Classic Cheeseburger pizza in an ad that starred Mr. Trump as the company's new pitchman, saying, "It takes my two favorite foods-pizza and cheeseburgers-and blends them together. I've tried this product and it's fabulous." Unfortunately, rival Papa John's trumped Domino's by airing a 30-second spot during the episode promoting its new meatball pizza. In the ad, Papa John's founder John Schnatter quips, "Why eat a pizza made by apprentices when you can call the pros at Papa John's?" Even though NBC knew that Domino's would be sponsoring

the episode, they still allowed the company's rival to purchase an ad in 64 major markets.

Another concern on the production side is the potential violation of creative and artistic freedom associated with increased commercial content.¹⁹ Producers sometimes turn down placement deals. John Wells, *The West Wing*'s executive producer, declined an offer from a car manufacturer that approached him with specific story ideas to weave one of its cars into the show's storytelling.¹⁹ Some creators of television shows worry that the commercial impulse could turn storytellers into shills and keep more provocative fare off the big networks. For instance, during the 2005 Advertising Week in New York, television writers protested outside a panel about branded entertainment, demanding more say in any such deals as well as a cut in the profits from them.

The Client Side

The companies that use product placements to promote their products and/or brands range from small to large Fortune 100 corporations. Clients sometimes review scripts provided by their agents or directly by the production companies. Their perspectives often differ from agents' because they have to consider the placement as part of their overall brand strategy. However, given the relative novelty of advertainment, it is not always clear who in the client organization has responsibility for it. In fact, organizations that do not think of product placement as a fully integrated component of their strategic marketing activities but rather as an accessory tool, often delegate such responsibilities primarily to their agents.

The Agency Side

Analogous to advertising agencies, placement agencies serve as the intermediary between the production side and the client side. These agencies are paid a fee for their

services and essentially become agents for the producers⁴⁵. The primary basis for participation in this industry for the agency is to receive direct monetary compensation. Many of today's placement agents started as prop masters on the studio side and realized the opportunity for an intermediary to streamline and improve the communication channels between the two sides; hence the many agency start-ups in the 1980's.

Some companies now coordinate their product placements in house but many use an intermediary agency that has closer links to the entertainment world. In many instances, agencies are provided with advanced copies of these scripts which are reviewed for placement opportunities, matching existing clients to these opportunities, and / or seeking new participants. Because placement agents are not trained as brand managers, their criteria

for deciding whether one of their clients' brands is appropriate for a particular medium is often more opportunistic than strategic.

The product placement industry is evolving from a simple means for studios to cut costs and marketers to expose their products to a more sophisticated industry in which product placement agencies are increasingly assuming the role of traditional advertising agencies. At the same time, traditional advertising and media agencies are beginning to incorporate product placement in their services. Major holding companies are increasingly adding entertainment consultants and public relations powerhouses to their portfolios: Omnicom Group purchased entertainment consultancy Davie Brown, and Publicis said it is exploring the Hollywood entertainment-marketing sphere⁴⁶.

Strategic Marketing Implications of Advertainment

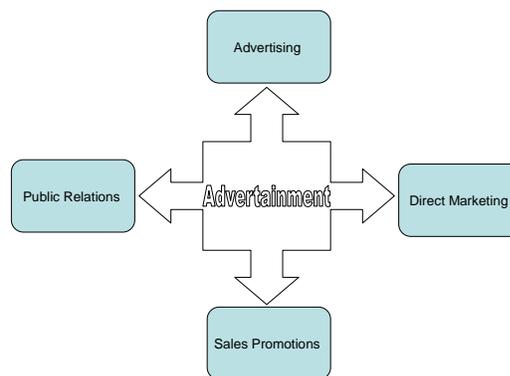
Advertainment efforts should have stated strategic objectives so their impact can be assessed with specific and measurable results. Only when objectives and metrics are linked can a marketer fully leverage the advertainment effort.

Setting Advertainment Objectives

As advertainment gains acceptance and interest, it is being treated less as a tactical tool and is increasingly integrated with other communications mix components. As a promotional tool, advertainment practices should serve a specific function in the overall communications program. Their role should be delineated in a well integrated marketing communications program, with specific objectives established. In reality, there is often little strategy behind product placement and integration efforts and objectives are commonly stated in anecdotal terms²³. One reason for the lack of strategy is that many of those responsible for placements see themselves as serving a specialized function, not as brand or communications managers. As a result they often have a difficult time

expressing exactly what role advertainment plays in the communications mix.

Advertainment's Role in the IMC Mix



Advertainment efforts can have a strategic role in a fully integrated promotional campaign. There is no question that developing objectives and evaluating the effectiveness of advertainment efforts is easier when they are associated with other, more familiar components of the IMC mix. Whenever advertainment is used to initiate a theme for a more traditional advertising campaign, advertising objectives and effectiveness measurement tools can be

used. Since cross promotions are becoming more common to enhance product placements and integrations in movies, advertainment can be assessed with sales promotions methods. Advertainment can also serve as the backbone of a public relations campaign, to generate word of mouth or press coverage. For instance, in what was named a “Top 5 Marketing Events in 2004,” Oprah gave away 276 Pontiac G6 cars to car-deprived audience members⁴⁷. The stunt cost GM at least \$7 million but resulted in more than 600 TV news stories, and the words “Oprah” and “Pontiac G6” rose to the ranks of Yahoo! and Google’s top 10 most requested search terms⁴⁷. In the end, the advertainment-based PR campaigns resulted in Pontiac selling more than 16,000 G6 models in 2004⁴⁷. Finally, the increasing opportunities with interactive television and internet-based campaigns allow the use of direct marketing tools to evaluate the impact of advertainment, especially when a direct response component is built into the advertainment campaign.

Measuring Advertainment Impact

One of the main difficulties related to advertainment lies in measuring impact. Aside from branded entertainment, which can be measured by the number of people who watch the program or download the game, measuring the effectiveness of product placements and integrations is far more difficult. Key indicators such as audience reach and frequency are often next to impossible to obtain⁴⁸. Some argue that the minimal cost of standalone placements does not necessarily warrant much attention be paid to the returns⁴⁹. As the industry matures and opportunities for large scale placements and integrations grow, valuation systems will be needed. However, so far, there is little sophistication in this realm and value—like effectiveness—assessment is essentially still very much subjective and anecdotal evidence prevails, mainly with a biased focus on success stories²³. In a 2005 Association of National Advertisers survey of marketers, 40% of the survey’s respondents thought

there ought to be an industry standard measurement for branded-entertainment deals, but 80% of those involved in advertainment said they are forging ahead on their own and assessing the impact of their branded-integration efforts themselves⁸.

Product placement may be one of the few areas where academic research and practitioners’ knowledge are at the same level. Despite recent academic research addressing the effects of product placement on consumers^{50, 51}, industry practitioners have only recently started to develop tools to systematically assess placements’ effectiveness. Many in the industry have been reluctant to adopt any such measures. Product placement agencies do not advocate any form of measurement thereby avoiding being held accountable for their performances²³. Many agents simply provide clients with recordings of the final cuts which display the brand as evidence of their work. Some clients have been convinced that it is not possible to get accurate measures; others are simply satisfied with impressions and/or ego involvement objectives.

A number of firms are competing to develop key measurement formulas in an attempt to establish an industry standard. While many of these (Nielsen Media Research, Deutch/iTVX, among others) focus on the monetary value of the placement and/or media equivalencies, others (IAG Research, NextMedium) rely on outcome-oriented assessments including recall, association, and other consumer responses to the placement⁵². Capitalizing on clients’ wishes to determine their placements’ ROI, companies providing valuation services have proposed a series of factors that should be considered in determining the value of placements. Such factors usually include placement characteristics (e.g. screen time, character building, etc), context characteristics (competitive messages, opportunity for distraction) and audience characteristics (size, demographics). Most of the valuation models compute factored impressions as a function of media

impressions (Nielsen ratings for TV or box office + video + cable viewership for film) and as a function of the “level” of the placement itself. Such levels are determined

based on exposure and potential for recall with more prominent placement and/or auditory placements perceived as better.

Hierarchy of Effects	Advertainment Example	Objective	Metric
Cognitive Stage	Simple product placements	Generate brand awareness	Recall Top of mind awareness
Affective Stage	Placements or integrations linked to a celebrity	Implied Endorsement	Brand attitude & image Purchase Intention
Behavioral Stage	Fully integrated advertainment or product placement tied to promotion	Incite interest and trigger purchase	Direct response (promotion redemption, website visits) Sales

Different metrics for measuring effectiveness should be used depending on the advertainment objective. The dependent variables proposed range from awareness and recall to demonstrated purchase behaviors. The potential role of advertainment in the communications strategy depends on the level of integration of the brand in the entertainment content. Whereas simple product placements are often treated as ad hoc bonus branding efforts, more complex branded entertainment efforts can become the centerpiece of an integrated marketing communications campaign, leading directly to sales. The hierarchy of effects theory provides a useful framework to link advertainment objectives with their likely impact on consumers and to identify what metric to use to measure that impact. The theory consists of three stages, each focusing on different types of impact on the audience. The cognitive stage focuses on developing awareness and simple product placements, even on their own, can generate exposure for brands. The affective stage focuses on attitudinal effects, the development of positive brand attitudes. Finally, the behavioral stage focuses on actions and purchases. Behavioral effects can be evaluated more readily when placements

are combined with a cross promotions, using direct response tools.

Strategic Issues: Lack of Control

Because of the nature of advertainment, getting a brand in the content of a TV program or movie often means that the end result is out of the control of marketers or the placement agents. Even expensive advertainment deals do not guarantee what the final product will look like. A famous case is the Reebok placement in the 1996 movie *Jerry Maguire*. In exchange for Reebok’s agreement to plan and execute a \$1.5 million promotional campaign, TriStar promised specific in-film placements of the Reebok name and products⁵³. When Reebok first read the *Jerry Maguire* script in December 1995, executives loved the story and felt it reflected Reebok’s own philosophy that the basic passion for winning creates the possibility to win. In the draft script initially read by Reebok, Tidwell makes certain negative comments about Reebok. For example, the script included a scene where Tidwell complains that he wasn’t “getting no love from Reebok” and where he “boils down” his Reebok story to “Fuck Reebok. All they do is ignore me.... Always have!” Notwithstanding these negative references to

Reebok, the original script contained an uplifting commercial rolling with the end credits. Yet, the commercial was cut and never made it to the final film and, to make matters worse, the film's disparaging comments about Reebok stayed. As a result, Reebok sued Tristar Pictures for breaking a product placement deal and, although in the end, Reebok won, the *Jerry Maguire* movie with its disparaging comments about Reebok remains.

The lack of control is especially common for placements in unscripted TV programs. Because of the nature of reality TV, marketers do not have complete control over how their product is represented in the show and this can be detrimental to the brand. Dairy Queen's involvement in a 2005 episode of *The Apprentice* was listed among the worst advertainment efforts that year. In this episode, contestants were asked to create a mascot for Dairy Queen's Blizzard ice cream product. However, no Dairy Queen store or Blizzard product was shown in the entire episode⁵⁴. Similarly GM sponsored an episode of *The Apprentice: Martha Stewart* in which contestants competed to design the best dealer showroom display for the 2006 Lucerne; however, throughout the episode contestants traveled in Mercedes-Benz vehicles and limousines⁵⁴. Companies such as Reebok, Ericsson, and Dr. Scholl's paid over \$4 million to be included in scenes of an episode of "Survivor" where they played a limited role²⁴.

Another instance was a 2005 episode of *The Apprentice* in which team members were to create 30-second ads for Unilever's new cucumber-infused Dove Cool Moisture Body Wash, a deal that cost more than \$1 million⁵⁵. One of the teams created an ad so dreadful it was quickly dubbed vegetable porn; the offending ad showed a female chef lovingly stroking a cucumber held by a male colleague who ends up picking another man over her. The other spot was not much better: a jogger rubs the body wash all over his face in mid-stride, and wipes it off with a towel. Dove executives did not see the ads until the

show aired, so they had no idea of the content⁵⁵.

The lack of control is directly related to the nature of the entertainment industry, where producers do not want to be dictated what their content should include. As a result, some companies are developing their advertainment content outside of the main entertainment content, mainly through digital extensions. For instance, Mindshare, the agency in charge of deodorant Degree's advertainment, worked in partnership with Fox's program *24* to create a series of episodes that will be only available on the web on a Degree-sponsored site. They engaged the show's creative staff and created a new character around whom they developed and filmed original stories involving the brand. This ensured that the final content was exactly as suited the brand.⁵⁶

Strategic Issues: Pricing

In the early days of product placement, placement deals were often considered "value-added propositions" and considered free. Today, product integrations and branded entertainment are much more elaborate, and therefore more costly, sometimes even too costly. A 2005 survey of marketers found that 79% of major marketers believed that branded entertainment deals were overpriced⁸. These more elaborate advertainment forms are also creating some difficulty because they involve so many partners (producers, media, advertisers) that sorting out who is responsible for what aspect of financing can be tricky. In some cases, advertisers use different agencies for promotions and media and sourcing funding from both can be tricky⁵⁷.

Given the difficulty in assessing effectiveness, it is also hard to assign a price to a placement. Some attempts have been made at comparing placements to a traditional TV commercial but that approach has many limitations because the two promotional tools are very different. Others

suggest comparing it to publicity and using tools from the public relations arena. For instance, Multivision, Inc. estimated that a spot on *60 Minutes* constituted the highest value of product placement, totaling

\$414,355⁵⁸. The same study further found the approximate publicity value of product placement on *The Today Show* to be \$230,207⁵⁸.

Mini Cases

Wilson the Volley Ball in *Cast Away*

The 2000 Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away* is a famous example of product placement. It portrays Federal Express prominently throughout the movie occupying an entire 15 minutes of screen time⁵⁹. More interestingly, it uses a Wilson volleyball as the main character's companion on the deserted island where most of the movie occurs. The Wilson brand first appears when, marooned on the island, the main character opens a FedEx package and discovers the volleyball. He later tosses the ball away out of frustration from not being able to start a fire but he eventually finds it again, notices his blood-stained hand print on the volleyball, and, giving the handprint the rough contours of a face, draws two eyes and a mouth on the volleyball, creating Wilson the character who becomes his companion for the remainder of his stay on the island. The Wilson brand was on screen for over 10 minutes and mentioned in the film 37 times⁵⁹.

This case is enlightening about product placement in movies because of two key reasons. First, the choice of Wilson was not a commercial decision but one based on the creative requirements of the movie. The unpaid placement is typical of the creative industries, where artistic decisions are often made independently from commercial ones. The result is one of the most organic brand appearances in a movie and many lessons can be learned from this example. The Wilson brand is unobtrusive and fits logically on screen and in the dialogue. Wilson becomes a character. Second, *Cast Away* is interesting because the inadvertent placement of the brand in the movie gave rise to a new product and cross promotion,

after the fact. Although Wilson's appearance in the movie was accidental, the commercial success of the movie was such that the Wilson Sporting Goods decided to promote a special volleyball in June 2001 named after the film character, Wilson the Volleyball, and packaged with a blood-stained handprint reminder of the movie. Wilson Sporting Goods teamed up with Twentieth Century Fox to promote the movie's release in DVD.

Korean Mini-Series Promote South Korean Tourism

Product placement in Korean miniseries has not only improved the exposure of Korean products, but it has strengthened South Korea's attractiveness as a tourist destination. The film locations for the miniseries have become popular destinations for tourists from Asian countries where the programs are popular. Korean TV miniseries have overtaken Japan miniseries in popularity in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Singapore and in turn the number of tourists coming to Korea has grown steadily from 1999 to 2004⁶⁰.

South Korea is famous for creating artificial scenic locations for its miniseries and no expense is spared in creating sets or filming at a variety of scenic locations. The stories also allow the promotion of Korean history and culture. For example, *Jewel in the Palace* (Dae Jang Geum) describes the striving history of a legendary girl who becomes a royal physician and "Queen Myeong Seong" presents the lifetime of South Korea's most outstanding female politician in Korean modern history. "Queen Myeong Seong" is filmed in Gyeongbokgung, the first principal palace in ancient Korea and the greatest among five ancient palaces in Seoul.

The Dae Jang Geum Theme Park, based on this miniseries, is open to tourists and fans and has become a very successful tourism destination. The outdoor set has been restored to how it looked at the time of filming and a theme park has been added that offers, in addition to the existing facilities, a variety of events and programs for visitors to see, enjoy and experience. Tourists can partake in many exciting events, such as riding Korean palanquin, trying on traditional Korean costumes, throwing arrows into a large jar, experiencing the flogging a criminal would have received, playing archery games, etc. Visitors can also pose for photos with standing posters of miniseries characters.

A Tool for Social Marketing: Edutainment

Advertainment is also used to communicate social messages and the use of entertainment to educate audiences with prevention messages is increasingly popular in social marketing campaigns. This technique, called entertainment-education or edutainment, has been used mainly for health-related messages, such as drug and alcohol abuse prevention or HIV-AIDS prevention.

Edutainment is quickly gaining ground as a strategy for social change⁶¹. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the use of edutainment techniques has grown throughout the 1990's to tackle important issues such as gender equality, family planning, or sexual responsibility. As many existing initiatives show, this approach is increasingly used to address the HIV-AIDS crisis in Africa. *Soul City*, in South Africa, is an acclaimed TV series that serves as a vehicle for addressing

social issues and that has successfully affected audiences' knowledge and behavioral norms about HIV-AIDS. UNICEF's *Sara* initiative is another great example for educating young girls about the risks of HIV infection and other AIDS-related issues through the use of a comic book (and later animation) character that the girls can relate to and learn from.

In the US, the integration of health and social content into TV programs is more recent⁶² but demonstrates heightened "awareness of the creative community as to its importance in shaping attitudes and behavior"⁶³. Such efforts pay off; for instance, the integration of a message about HIV testing in an episode of *The Bold and the Beautiful* motivated viewers to seek additional information and consider altering their sexual behaviors⁶⁴.

There has, however, been some controversy over the inclusion of anti-drug messages in the storylines of TV series⁶⁵. In 1998, the US Congress passed a law authorizing the federal government to purchase anti-drug public service announcements from networks that would donate as much time as the government purchased (National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign). Under a program of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, participating networks were allowed to resell advertising time already paid by Congress if they incorporated anti-drug storylines and dialogue into their programming⁶⁶. Despite the government's good intentions, concerns have been raised about the legality, constitutionality and morality of the program⁶⁶.

Do's and Don'ts

Do Combine Entertainment and Relevance

Whether for education or advertising purposes, for advertainment to be work, it must be entertaining but also relevant. The story must revolve around an idea that illuminates a brand and its point of difference in a compelling way⁶⁷. Simply grafting a corporate tagline onto an existing

entertainment program that has nothing to do with the brand will not work. If the brand is organically weaved into the plot, advertainment can seem seamless.

For instance, Home Depot struck a deal with *Survivor* to incorporate the retail store into an episode in a way that demonstrated both functional and emotional value⁵. In that

episode, competing tribes built their own shelters using tools and products from Home Depot. This form of integration not only captured viewer awareness of Home Depot, but also associated Home Depot with the ability to build things for yourself, the personal satisfaction of creating new things, and the importance of having shelter.

The rules for successful advertainment are to some extent the same ones as for traditional advertising. The challenge of compressing an idea into a 30-second execution is replaced with the equally daunting challenge of extending an idea so it remains relevant and attention-holding in advertainment format⁶⁷. This is why advertainment, especially the branded entertainment types, is moving back into the hands of the creative communications agencies that can provide creative insight and that also have the marketing know-how.

Do: Enhance A Simple Product Placement With A Promotion

Combining low level product placements with promotions can be a very effective way to leverage the impact. Product placements can have varied levels of impact on consumers. ITVX, a New-York based company which measures the effectiveness of product placements, cites that an individual placement can have anywhere from 20% of the impact of a traditional TV spot to an impact five times higher⁶⁸. To ensure the impact of a background placement, it is worthwhile to consider tying to a promotion or public relations effort.

Andrea Edmunds of PoshTots, a manufacturer of upscale nursery décor, experienced both low and high levels of impact from a product placement on the show *Friends*. In an episode in which Ross and Rachel return home with their new baby, the PoshTots furniture in the background was barely noticeable⁶⁹. However, Edmunds was able to turn an overlooked product placement into an extremely successful PR effort by sending a still image of the placement to media outlets. The photo appeared in over 200 publications, causing sales of the depicted item to double in 60 days.

Do Tie Brands with Aspirational Celebrities

There is a general consensus that advertainment can bring strategic benefits linked to the implied endorsement obtained from having a brand associated with a celebrity. By building an association with a celebrity, product placements and integrations benefit from the credibility and trust that the celebrity brings to the brand. For instance, Oprah commands much respect and credibility amongst her audience. Because of her widespread popularity, publicity on her show can mean significant results for marketers. Whenever she selects a book for the "Oprah's Book Club," it quickly becomes a best seller. The book "A Million Little Pieces" sold 85,000 copies in four days after Oprah talked about it on her show⁷⁰. AG Jeans saw similar results, with average daily sales increasing from 12 to 260 pairs at Nordstrom alone the day after Oprah mentioned their brand. When Oprah went fitness crazy, books by her chef and her personal trainer became nationwide hits. Marketing experts now routinely refer to this as the "Oprah Effect."

The tie can also be suited to the character in the program, as opposed to the celebrity in real life. For instance, Reebok's initial interest in the movie Jerry Maguire discussed earlier was based on the "aspirational qualities" of the character in the movie. In an early letter to Bruce Pustin, one of the film's co-producers, Reebok noted that it actively pursued associations with persons of who "like (character) Tidwell, don't play with their heads with an eye towards the money . . . they play with their hearts because they want, and need, to win." ⁷¹ Similarly the renaissance of the Cosmopolitan martinis was attributed to their association with the sexy characters of *Sex and the City* with whom many viewers connected and became inspired by their New York City lifestyles.

Don't Overdo it

This is the only and most important piece of advice. Product placement, product integration and branded entertainment work best when the brand is organically woven into the entertainment content. When it is

not, advertainment can be perceived as “gratuitous and transparent”⁵. A commercial breaks viewers’ suspension of disbelief. This applies whether the content is a TV program, a movie, a song, or a videogame. Highly intrusive commercial messages in content can backfire. Overt persuasive attempts may not only turn off consumers but they are usually counterproductive as consumers, aware of the persuasive attempt, can more easily counter argue it and defend themselves against it⁷². For instance, product placement intrusions in videogames that have the potential to corrupt game play are considered sacrilegious amongst gamers⁷³. Therefore, it is important to insert the brand in places that are already part of games’ scenes.

It is also important not to make a subtle placement obvious by tying it to a traditional advertising campaign around the entertainment program. A study by Nielsen Product Placement indicated that combining a product placement with a TV commercial can increase recognition but lower

consumers’ intentions to purchase the brand⁷⁴.

Intrusion is of course a subjective matter and product integration deals such as Coca Cola in *American Idol* have generated opposite reactions. Throughout each episode, judges sip from Coke cups, while contestants wait patiently in the “Red Room”—complete with a giant red couch. In *Life After the 30-Second Spot*, Jaffe asserts that Coca Cola is in the “better camp for their immersive and holistic brand wrapping,” citing that they had the first-mover advantage, and that their sponsorship is consistent with their brand positioning and strategy⁵. However, other commentators have found Coke’s aggressive participation in *American Idol* to be blatant to the point of insulting the viewer and *American Idol* has been accused of being “crass and inappropriately overt”⁷⁵. Some have asserted that such efforts are misbegotten because “as soon as a consumer detects that they’re watching a commercial, not a show, you end up in a worse place”⁷⁶.

Legal and Ethical Issues

Hidden Persuasion

Some controversy has arisen over the potential disguise associated with advertainment practices. Gary Ruskin, executive director of Ralph Nader-affiliated Commercial Alert says that advertainment represents the commercial takeover of every nook and cranny of our lives and culture³³. The watchdog group filed complaints with the both FTC and FCC, seeking clearer viewer notification of brand embedding. To date, the government has taken no action.

The distinction between editorial content and advertising is especially problematic in news or semi-news programs, where the content is taken as information and the paid relationship is not disclosed to consumers. For instance, James Oppenheim, Child Magazine’s technology editor, was paid by Kodak to mention the My ABC’s Picture Book on talk shows including *The Today Show*⁷⁷. Oppenheim also praised products from Atari, Microsoft, Mattel, Leapfrog, and Radioshack. While on *The Today Show*, Oppenheim discussed products made

or sold by 15 companies, 9 of which were former clients, and 8 of which had paid him for similar integrations on local talk shows in previous years⁷⁷. The controversy surrounding such deals has pushed programs to set stricter guidelines for guests who appear on the show. For example, Bride Magazine executive editor Cynthia Hornblower was prohibited from bringing Crate and Barrel products with her during her appearance on *The Today Show*⁷⁷.

The potentially hidden nature of advertainment techniques has raised special concerns for young audiences. Although the FCC has strict rules on advertising in children’s TV programming, including a limit on the number of spots per hour and a ban on using show characters in ad breaks, it does not have any rules regarding product placement. Of particular concern is the fact that TV shows featuring products linked to obesity such as sodas and fast food, are among the most popular with children⁷⁴. Placements for alcohol brands congregate in shows with audiences that skew heavily toward underage viewers.

Regulation

Advertainment is sometimes referred to as stealth marketing, because it blurs the line between publicity, the circulation of messages for free in the hopes of further dissemination without attribution of source, and advertising, the paid circulation of messages with attribution⁷⁸. Advertainment is viewed as problematic because it often conceals sponsorship although the message is actually paid.

Advertainment falls in a grey area of regulation. Mainly, this is because today's sponsorship disclosure laws focus on yesterday's technology and fail to operate in the electronic media⁷⁸. The only legislation that can be loosely applied to product placement dates back to when Congress first required broadcasters to identify their sponsors in the 1927 Radio Act. The principle that audiences are entitled to know who is trying to persuade them was continued in section 317 of the 1934 Communications Act. Although the FCC upholds this in rules that say there should be on-screen disclosure of paid-for product placements in TV shows, usually in the end credits, these are not strictly enforced. As a

result, advertainment efforts go largely unregulated. The FTC also has regulations in place designed to prevent unfair or deceptive brand communications, especially to children. However, this largely covers advertising and the FTC argues that as product placement does not make "objective claims" about a product, it falls outside these rules and no on-screen advertisement disclosure is required.

Consumer advocacy groups such as Commercial Alert are lobbying for stronger regulation, arguing that the few rules that do exist are systematically violated. They also claim that the line between TV programs and infomercials has become blurred and that product placement "is deceptive because it flies under the viewer's skeptical radar. Product placements and script write-ins can be so subtle that viewers fail to identify them as a veiled commercial.

Finally, it is no secret that, in product categories such as alcohol and tobacco, where direct advertising for the product is highly regulated or even illegal, product placements and other advertainment forms can serve to bypass government or self-imposed industry regulations⁷⁹.

Conclusion

Estimating the monetary size and scope of the advertainment industry is a difficult task because many product placement deals are unpaid or undisclosed. However, there is no doubt that advertainment is growing and will continue to grow. The overall value of the global product placement market, including the barter/exposure value of non-paid placements, grew 27.9% to \$5.99 billion in 2005⁸⁰. The growth of product placement continues to significantly outpace that of traditional advertising and marketing and global paid product placement spending is forecasted to continue growing to reach over \$14 billion by 2010⁸⁰.

Yet, the relatively high cost of some of the advertainment deals combined with the lack

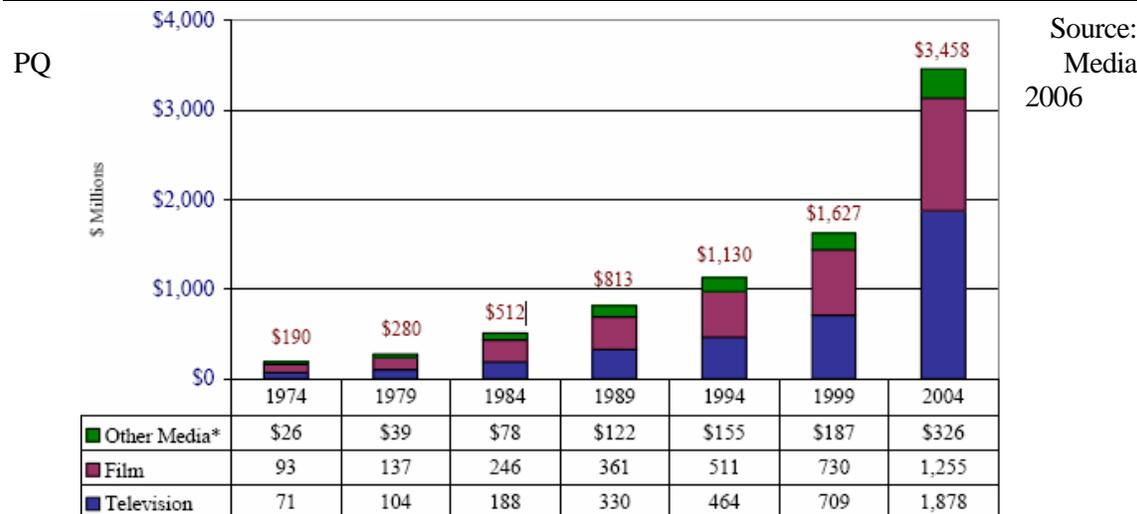
of standard measurement tools also point to major limitations to advertainment compared to more traditional, and better-understood communication tools. In addition, whereas the initial rationale for advertainment was to break through commercial clutter, product placements and integrations have now become so prevalent that they too are creating clutter. Instead of being outside the content, clutter is now creeping up inside entertainment content⁷⁴. This irony has been noted in the advertising industry but, so far, little has been done to limit the amount of product placements in programs. Some executives in the advertainment industry believe that the decline in ratings of heavily branded entertainment programs and the cancellation

of some of the major ones, like *The Apprentice*, are in direct proportion to the amount of advertainment in them. Although this is a recent and yet for certain trend, some companies, including the major players in advertainment such as Coca Cola⁷⁴, Procter & Gamble or Unilever⁸¹, are beginning to react to this new form of clutter by rethinking their marketing initiatives. Advertainment will continue to evolve as advertisers look for better and more effective ways to communicate with consumers.

prototype that was introduced inside a videogame to allow people to actually experience the look, the sound and the handling before there was even a working prototype available.⁸³ Entertainment and advertising are not just intersecting. They have fused.

The growth of advertainment has led to much speculation and uncertainty over the future of the industry. It has become such a popular tool that there is now talk of reverse placements: brands that would make their debut in an entertainment vehicle and then be introduced to the real world, such as the restaurant chain Bubba Gump Shrimp Company that was created after the 1994 Forrest Gump movie⁸² or the BMW M5

Appendix 1: Product Placement Spending in Media



Source: Media 2006

* Magazines, Newspapers, Videogames, Internet, Recorded Music, Books, Radio
Source: PQ Media

Appendix 2: Advertising vs. Placements on Television

Source: TNS Media Intelligence (Q4 – 2005)

Top Programs: Brand Appearance Time	Minutes:Seconds Per Hour	
	Brand Appearances	Ad Messages
PRIME TIME: REALITY		
The Apprentice: Martha Stewart	33:51	16:32
Biggest Loser	23:08	16:14
The Apprentice (Donald Trump)	21:15	16:55
Amazing Race: Family	19:40	16:14
Fear Factor	17:11	16:46
PRIME TIME: SCRIPTED		
King of Queens	18:13	16:49
NCIS	15:56	15:43
Yes, Dear	10:44	17:02
Half and Half	10:58	17:41
All of Us	8:34	17:17

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