

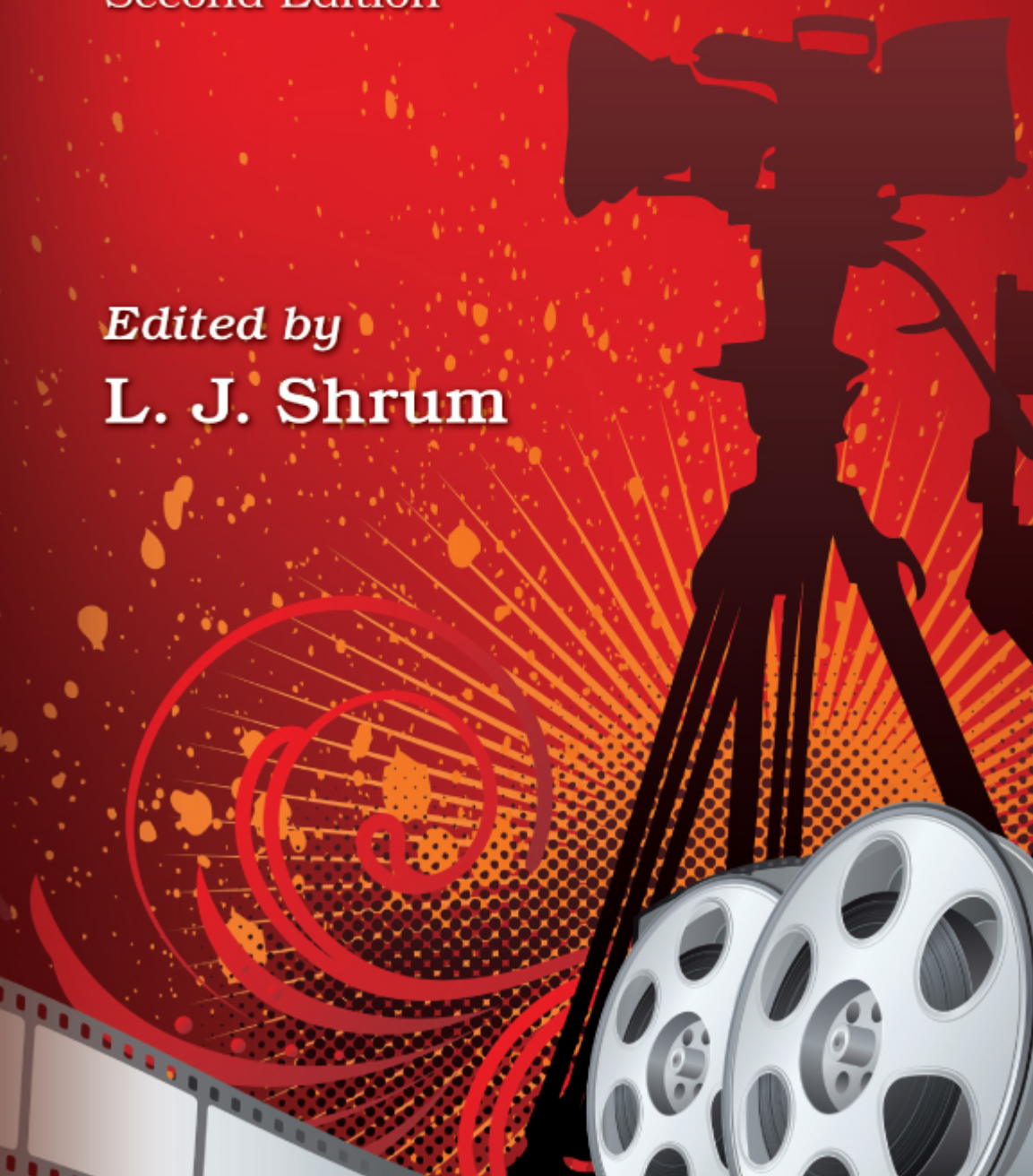
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

*Blurring the Lines Between
Entertainment and Persuasion*

Second Edition

Edited by

L. J. Shrum



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University of Texas at San Antonio

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*I would like dedicate this book to my mother, Jean, and my
late father, Joe, who always encouraged me to ask questions,
and to Tina, who has provided so many answers.*

Contents

Prefaceix

About the Authorsxi

Chapter 1 What’s So Special About Entertainment Media and Why Do We Need a Psychology for It?: An Introduction to the Psychology of Entertainment Media..... 1

L. J. Shrum

SECTION I Embedding Promotions Within Entertainment Media: Product Placement Effects and How They Work

Chapter 2 Product Integration: Current Practices and New Directions..... 11

John A. McCarty and Tina M. Lowrey

Chapter 3 As a Backdrop, Part of the Plot, or a Goal in a Game: The Ubiquitous Product Placement..... 37

Elizabeth Cowley

Chapter 4 Children’s Processing of Embedded Brand Messages: Product Placement and the Role of Conceptual Fluency 65

Laura Owen, Haiming Hang, Charlie Lewis, and Susan Auty

Chapter 5 Psychological Processing of In-Game Advertising and Advergaming: Branded Entertainment or Entertaining Persuasion? 93

Michelle R. Nelson and Martin K. J. Waiguny

**SECTION II The Programs Between the Ads:
The Persuasive Power of Entertainment Media**

Chapter 6 The Stories TV Tells: How Fictional TV Narratives
Shape Normative Perceptions and Personal Values..... 147
L. J. Shrum and Jaehoon Lee

Chapter 7 Flying With Icarus: Narrative Transportation and
the Persuasiveness of Entertainment 169
Jordan M. Carpenter and Melanie C. Green

Chapter 8 Seeing Is Believing: Toward a Theory of Media
Imagery and Social Learning 195
Karen E. Dill and Melinda C. R. Burgess

Chapter 9 Alcohol Messages in Television Series: Content
and Effects 227
Cristel Antonia Russell and Dale W. Russell

Chapter 10 Selling Beauty: The Hidden Cost to Women’s
Self-Worth, Relationships, and Behavior 249
Erin J. Strahan, Vanessa M. Buote, and Anne E. Wilson

Chapter 11 Learning Aggression Through the
Media: Comparing Psychological and
Communication Approaches..... 271
Julia A. Maier and Douglas A. Gentile

Chapter 12 Paths From Television Violence to Aggression:
Reinterpreting the Evidence..... 305
George Comstock and Jack Powers

Author Index..... 329

Subject Index..... 341

Preface

It has been almost exactly nine years since the 21st Annual Advertising and Consumer Psychology Conference that launched the first edition of this book. As the chapters in this second edition attest, though a lot has changed in that short amount of time, a lot has stayed the same. One thing that has changed is the entertainment media landscape and the role of promotion practices within the different media vehicles. Product placement seems to be even more ubiquitous and also more blatant. Attitudes toward placement seem to be less negative and more tolerant of the practice. New entertainment vehicles are being developed whose sole purpose seems to be to serve as placement and sponsorship vehicles, a trend we first noted several years ago (Lowrey, Shrum, & McCarty, 2005). Another thing that has changed is the types of entertainment media being investigated. The first edition was almost exclusively devoted to television entertainment. In this edition, we also look at effects in the context of video and other digital games.

What has not changed, however, is the nature of the effects. Regardless of the medium or the message, the effects of entertainment media content on viewers—both intended and unintended—are remarkably consistent. The preceding nine years simply provided the opportunity to expand the evidence and narrow down the underlying processes in a more comprehensive manner. Thus, as with the previous volume, this edition explores how persuasion works in entertainment media contexts, and in doing so expands the notion of what constitutes persuasion, hopefully resulting in a more knowledgeable consumer and a better-informed public.

Acknowledgments

As part of the Society for Consumer Psychology's Advertising and Consumer Psychology Book Series, I want to thank SCP for all of their support for this as well as the prior edition. In particular, I would like to thank Steve Posavac, past SCP president, for urging me to consider doing a follow-up to the first book. I would also like to thank Anne Duffy of Taylor & Francis, who has worked closely with me on this book and who

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L. J. Shrum

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Melinda C. R. Burgess is an associate professor of psychology at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. She earned her PhD in experimental psychology from Florida State University. Her research interests center on how media portrayals of women and minorities influence our attitudes about and treatment of women and minorities.

Jordan M. Carpenter is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research focuses on mind reading and its effects on persuasion. Using his Mind Reading Motivation scale, he has examined the consequences of effortful perspective-taking on narrative transportation, political attitudes, prejudice, and other contexts.

George Comstock received his PhD from Stanford University. He is the S. I. Newhouse Professor at the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. He was science advisor to the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior that issued the federal report entitled *Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence*. Dr. Comstock has previously served as chair of the Department of Journalism and Communication, Chinese University,

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Elizabeth Cowley is a professor of marketing at the University of Sydney Business School. She received her PhD from the University of Toronto and her MBA from McGill University. Dr. Cowley's primary area of research investigates the construction and reconstruction of autobiographical memory. She is also interested in deception, both marketers misleading consumers with advertising and consumers lying to marketers. Her research has appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Advertising*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Applied Cognitive Psychology*.

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1

What's So Special About Entertainment Media and Why Do We Need a Psychology for It?: An Introduction to the Psychology of Entertainment Media

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I started with the same question in the first edition: Is there anything unique about entertainment media that warrants such close scrutiny and scientific interest? Why is persuasion through entertainment media different from any other forms of persuasion, both in terms of effects and processes? If current theories of persuasion can just as easily (and accurately) account for effects that occur *within* entertainment media (e.g., TV programs, films) as they can for effects that occur *between* entertainment media (e.g., advertisements), Occam's razor would lop off the unneeded new theory devoted to entertainment media.

Although there are a number of theoretical constructs that can account for certain effects of entertainment media (e.g., situation models, source-monitoring, story schemas; Johnson, 2002), current dual-processing models have a difficult time accounting for some types of media effects, particularly those occurring during the processing of narratives. In fact, there is ample evidence that people process entertainment (narrative) and promotional (rhetorical) information differently. Thus, it is likely that the ways in which entertainment and promotion exert effects on audiences are correspondingly different. The purpose of this book is to highlight these differences by documenting the effects that entertainment media have on audiences and to illuminate how these effects occur. Both components are critical in making for a better-informed consumer and public, and this

is particularly important when the effects are often unintended but also unwanted (e.g., aggression, lower self-esteem, drug abuse, materialism, low impulse control).

The differences in processing between narrative and rhetoric are also what lead to *blurred lines* between what is entertainment and what is persuasion. In some instances, the lines are intentionally blurred by marketers who are interested in preventing some of the processes that may occur during the processing of rhetorical information (e.g., counterarguing). In other cases, the lines are unintentionally blurred because audience members do not understand the persuasive influence of entertainment media.

In sum, just as with the first edition, this volume attempts to understand (a) how is entertainment or narrative information processed? (b) is this fundamentally different from the processing of promotional or rhetorical information? and (c) if so, what are the consequences of these differences in processing on the persuasive impact of both the entertainment aspect and the promotional aspect?

ROADMAP FOR THE CHAPTERS

The chapters are divided into two parts. The first part pertains to intended effects of marketers, and focuses primarily on product placements embedded in entertainment programming, including television, film, and digital games. The second part pertains to unintended effects of the stories and games themselves.

PART I: EMBEDDING PROMOTIONS WITHIN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA: PRODUCT PLACEMENT EFFECTS AND HOW THEY WORK

Part I focuses on what I think of as the epitome of blurred lines: product placement. Product placement generally refers to the deliberate inclusion of brands in stories, usually in television programs and films. However, as several authors note, other types of media, such as video games, are also fertile ground for product placements. McCarty and Lowrey ([Chapter 2](#))

kick off the first section with a comprehensive review of the marketing practice of product integration. Product integration refers to the mixing of commercial messages with noncommercial messages. Integration thus includes not only product placements, but also other marketing practices such as sponsorships of entire programs. McCarty and Lowrey differentiate the various types of product integration, discuss a number of prominent examples (some likely to be familiar to readers, some not), provide a broad review of research on product integration effects, and discuss the future of product integration research and practice.

Cowley ([Chapter 3](#)) delves into the psychological processes underlying product placement effects. She looks at how placements are processed as a function of such factors as placement characteristics (e.g., prominence, plot congruity), viewer characteristics (e.g., involvement, connection with characters), and program format (e.g., fiction, reality programs), and integrates these different characteristics into existing persuasion theories (e.g., priming, persuasion knowledge). She also discusses the implications for public policy, how current public policy addresses concerns about consumer welfare, and the implications of current psychological theories (e.g., memory, persuasion) for the success of practices aimed at better informing consumers of placement practices. She concludes by discussing what we still don't know about placement processes and effects and avenues for future research.

Owen, Hang, Lewis, and Auty ([Chapter 4](#)) continue with a focus on product placement processing, but with a specific look at the effects on children. They review the public policy and ethical debates about product placement, and then relate these specifically to the effects of such marketing practices on children. They note that children's limited cognitive and executive functioning skills may make them particularly vulnerable to product placement effects. Owen et al. then discuss previous research, including their own, on the psychological processes underlying product placement effects on children, with a particular focus on implicit influences of product placement and the role of conceptual fluency. They conclude with a discussion of how we might teach children to understand the practice of product placement and suggestions for future research.

In the concluding chapter of Part I, Nelson and Waiguny continue the discussion of psychological processes and effects in product integration practices, but move the focus from television and film to digital games (video, computer, etc.), a fast-developing area. They look at two types of

integration: in-game advertising, which is similar to product placement, and what is termed *advergaming*, which are games specifically designed by companies to promote their brands. Nelson and Waiguny provide a thorough discussion of the relationship between these forms of brand placement and cognitive processes such as activation and arousal, emotional responses, recall, attitude formation and change, and behavioral judgments. They review the emerging research in this area, including their own, and integrate this research into existing theories of persuasion.

PART II: THE PROGRAMS BETWEEN THE ADS: THE PERSUASIVE POWER OF ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

Part II makes the shift from intended effects by marketers to unintended effects of the story creators. In [Chapter 6](#), Shrum and Lee address the different types of effects that viewing of narrative entertainment fiction has on viewers. They look at two different types of effects. The first is the effects of program narratives on normative perceptions. They discuss how television influences viewers' perceptions of what others have and do, and how the world works in general. They detail research showing that the more people watch television, the more they tend to think the world portrayed on television is indicative of reality. The second effect Shrum and Lee examine pertains to the attitudes, values, and beliefs that are cultivated by the television messages. Here, they detail research that shows that the more people watch television, the more their beliefs correspond to the dominant messages in the programs. Finally, along with detailing these effects, they articulate separate psychological process models for each and discuss research that supports those models.

Carpenter and Green ([Chapter 7](#)) delve further into the persuasive power of fictional narratives. They discuss their own research as well as that of others on narrative persuasion and the effects of narrative transportation on persuasion. Narrative transportation refers to the process of becoming completely immersed (transported) into the world of the story. They discuss the processes associated with narrative transportation, such as reduction in counterarguing, increased emotion, and the creation of vivid thoughts, and how these influence beliefs. They discuss research showing that transportation can increase persuasion, even when the narrative is

fictional. They conclude the chapter with a discussion of research on individual differences in narrative transportation and their associated effects.

In [Chapter 8](#), Dill and Burgess continue with the focus on narrative (story) processing and persuasion, but look specifically at the persuasive power of social imagery and its powerful contribution to the narrative. They argue that social imagery in the media tells very powerful stories, ones that are in fact very persuasive, and that “seeing is believing,” even if what is seen may be within the context of a fictional narrative. They review research to support their theorizing, and synthesize this research by proposing their theory of media imagery and social learning (MISL).

Beginning with [Chapter 9](#), the focus shifts from general theoretical accounts of media effects to discussions of particular types of media effects. Russell and Russell ([Chapter 9](#)) address alcohol consumption portrayals in television series. They first review findings from content analyses. Using much of their own work as examples, they document the modalities of presentation and level of plot connection of alcohol messages, and distinguish between those messages that portray alcohol positively and those that portray alcohol negatively. Next, they provide a thorough review of the empirical evidence regarding how embedded alcohol messages are processed and the impact they have on audiences’ alcohol beliefs and attitudes. A particularly intriguing finding is that audience connectedness moderates the cognitive processing and persuasive impact of messages about alcohol. Finally, they discuss the implications of this research for public health and public policy, particularly for younger audiences.

Strahan, Buote, and Wilson ([Chapter 10](#)) examine another unintended effect of both program and advertising portrayals: the effect of the media’s idealized portrayals of women on women’s feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. The authors note that the media’s portrayal of women is very consistent: young, thin, and beautiful. Although the intended consequences of such portrayals are understandable (create audience liking, associate beauty characteristics with products and lifestyles), the unintended consequences resulting from the inability of audience members to attain those ideals are troubling. The authors provide a thorough discussion of research showing that exposure to idealized media images is linked to body dissatisfaction and the basing of self-worth on appearance, which in turn influences eating behavior and interpersonal relationships.

Finally, the last two chapters look at a long-debated effect of media exposure, its effect on viewer aggression. Maier and Gentile ([Chapter 11](#)) focus on theoretical issues of how viewers may learn from the media, and how these apply to the media exposure–aggression link. They first provide a theoretical examination of psychological theories of learning, and in particular the General Learning Model. They offer the General Learning Model as a metatheory that accounts for learning at multiple levels that may interact, and in doing so, incorporate both short- and long-term processes. They also discuss uses and gratifications theory and its focus on individual differences in motivations for media consumption, and its utility for understanding media effects research. They conclude by presenting the results of an experiment aimed at merging the psychological and communication theories to make predictions about media effects on aggression.

Comstock and Powers ([Chapter 12](#)) conclude the volume with a thorough review of the research on the link between exposure to television violence and aggression. In doing so, however, they make several important departures from most reviews of this type. First, they discuss a number of meta-analyses, including some of their own, that clearly show a positive correlation between media exposure (television, movies) and aggression or antisocial behavior. They address issues of causal direction, and suggest that the case for television viewing being the causal factor is quite strong, given that both correlational and experimental research yield very similar results. Comstock and Powers also make one additional point that is important. They argue that, from their analysis of past research, dispositions such as attitudes, norms, and values are not a necessary link between exposure to television violence and aggression. Although the link has been found in a number of studies, it is also the case that direct relations between exposure to television violence and aggression have been observed. They conclude with a discussion of the implications of this reformulation for the processes underlying media effects on aggressive behavior.

Entertainment Media Is Special

As with the first edition, the primary purpose of this volume is to address at least the first part of the question posed in the title to this introductory chapter: What is so special about entertainment media? All of the chapters in this book provide a perspective on the nature of entertainment media

and how it often blends with overt persuasion attempts such as promotions. And virtually all in some manner speak to the issue of how entertainment media is processed, with the conclusion that media consumers do in fact tend to process entertainment (narrative) and promotional (rhetorical) information differently. This, if nothing else, is what makes entertainment media so special. And it is the premise of at least some of the chapters that this is also what makes entertainment media so potentially powerful. It should come as no surprise, then, that marketers would be interested in becoming part of that special processing, rather than separate from it.

Perhaps that is fine. This book does not take a position as to whether the blurring of the lines between entertainment and promotion is necessarily good or bad. But in the interest of the free flow of information and making informed decisions, hopefully the chapters in this book can at least contribute to more informed consumers who might then decide whether to provide their consent to be persuaded.

Section I

Embedding Promotions Within Entertainment Media: Product Placement Effects and How They Work

2

Product Integration: Current Practices and New Directions

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PRODUCT INTEGRATION: A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

Product integration is the practice of incorporating a product or service into a movie, television show, or other medium in return for payment of money or other promotional consideration by a marketer (Gupta & Gould, 1997). Typically, product integration has been referred to loosely over the years as product placement; in fact, the version of this chapter in the previous edition of this volume (McCarty, 2004) used the term *product placement* to refer to this integration, regardless of the level of the incorporation. Much has changed in recent years with respect to product integration or placement, and far more is known, particularly about the complexity of the practice, than just a few years ago. Therefore, following Lowrey, Shrum, and McCarty (2005) and others, in the present chapter we use the term *product integration* to refer broadly to the practice of the incorporation of a product or service into a medium under some sort of an arrangement. Product placement is a subcategory of integration where a product is mentioned or merely seen, as when a character in a television show mentions a brand or is seen using a particular brand; *product*

immersion is the term for integrations in which a product or service is an integral part of the story.* Having defined these two “levels” of product integration, in many ways, product placement and product immersion can be considered on a continuum (Russell, 1998). At one end, there are placements where a product is mentioned briefly or is visible for a moment (e.g., in the movie *The Firm*, the character played by Gene Hackman says to Tom Cruise’s character, “Grab a Red Stripe out of the fridge”—this is the only mention of this beer brand in the movie, and the brand is not clearly visible in any frames of the movie). At the other end of this continuum is product immersion, where the brand is integral to the plot of the movie, as in *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, where the main plot of the movie revolves around the two protagonists’ search for a particular fast food restaurant—the brand is mentioned numerous times, the product is visible and is seen being consumed, product features are mentioned by the characters during the story (e.g., “In fact, just thinking about those tender little White Castle burgers and those grilled onions makes me want to burn this place to the ground and rebuild a White Castle in its place.”). Somewhere in the middle on this continuum might be a placement/immersion where a product has some amount of airtime or is discussed, but is incidental to the main story, as when a Maserati is discussed by Tony Soprano and Johnny Sack in the HBO series *The Sopranos*.†

IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

An important aspect of this definition of product integration is that the product is placed in a medium in return for promotion consideration or

* The terminology used for these various practices over the years has not been consistent or always clear. For example, Patric Verrone of the Writer’s Guild of America, the union representing writers in television and movie industries, stated to the *New York Times*, “Product placement is simply putting a branded box of cereal on the kitchen table in a show. . . . Product integration is having the characters talk about the crunchy deliciousness of the cereal or provoking them to go out and tell their neighbors to buy that cereal” (Carvajal, 2006, p. 9). Thus, the distinction that Mr. Verrone makes is similar, but not the same, as the one we make here.

† Lowrey, Shrum, and McCarty (2005) discuss other practices that fall under the umbrella of product integration, specifically, placement-friendly program development, program sponsorship, and client-developed programming. These practices are all forms of product integration, as defined by Lowrey et al., but would not fall on the continuum between product placement and product immersion.

payment. Thus, the mere presence of a brand in a movie, television show, or other venue does not per se constitute product integration. There must be an arrangement between the owner of the brand and the media vehicle. We make this important distinction, which has not always been made when product integration has been discussed, because brands do appear in the stories when no such arrangements have been made. Authors of books routinely describe brands that a character uses to provide richness and realism to the character. There may not be any sort of arrangement between the author and the owner of the brands that are used in the story. Presumably, the author selected a particular brand to help paint the nature of a character, a location, and so on. For example, in Ian Fleming's novels about the famous British spy James Bond, he uses a number of different guns that are mentioned by brand name, and there is no indication that the mention of any of these weapons was a result of a relationship between the author and the brands.* Similarly, in the book *American Psycho*, a fictional story that documents the excesses of the 1980s, numerous brands are mentioned, including shirts by Ike Behar, suits by Ermenegildo Zegna, Fratelli Rossetti shoes, Panasonic, Tumi leather goods, among others. There is no evidence of these mentions being matters of arrangement; rather, they lend a sense of indulgence and materialism to the characters in the novel. Courvoisier cognac is in the title and lyrics of the rap song "Pass the Courvoisier" by Busta Rhymes. Although the sale of the cognac increased by double digits in the year of the release of the song, it was not a product placement in that there was not an arrangement made between the distiller and the artist before the release of the song (Roberts, 2002). Perhaps one of the "characters" in a recent movie that may have been assumed by many to be a paid product integration was not: Wilson in the Tom Hanks movie *Cast Away* (Maynard and Scala, 2006; Michael, 2000). A Wilson volleyball was selected for artistic reasons; the brand name needed to be one that would potentially be a name of a person in that the product becomes a character as the story progresses.

We make the point that when a brand is mentioned in a work of art when there was no arrangement between those creating the art and a brand, this does not constitute a "blurring of the lines"; the brand appearing in

* In fact, there is evidence that the Walther PPK (the handgun most associated with James Bond) was suggested to Ian Fleming by a gun expert who indicated to Fleming that the Beretta that Bond used in an early novel was a lady's gun and not one that a spy of Bond's stature would use (Rifkind, 2004).

the story, movie, television show, and so on is not encumbered by a commercial arrangement, and the creator of the art is putting a specific brand in his or her work because it “fits.” Of course, from the perspective of a viewer, whether the exposure to the brand is a paid integration or not is immaterial to its potential effect.

A second important consideration with respect to our definition is that product integration can be in a variety of media and venues. Although for years integration was discussed in terms of being in the movies and in television, product integration is showing up in all sorts of places. This has been particularly apparent in the last decade or so. In recent years, arrangements for product integrations have been made such that brands have appeared in video and online games (Jones, 2002; Nelson, 2005), music videos and/or song lyrics (Fitzgerald, 2011; Helm, 2010), and novels (Murray, 2004), in addition to the traditional outlets of movies and television shows. The increase in the number of venues in which product integrations appear, as well as the total increase in number of integrations, is likely due to a number of factors. These include (1) the growing dissatisfaction among marketers with the performance of traditional advertising (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010); (2) a growth in the infrastructure that facilitates product integrations (Russell & Belch, 2005), such as the shift of product integrations from rather informal arrangements or one-time deals to a much more formalized endeavor where firms are engaged to actively seek out opportunities for a brand to be integrated into appropriate venues; (3) perceptions of the success of previous brand mentions in particular venues (e.g., the aforementioned Courvoisier in the lyrics and title of a song has been credited with increasing marketers’ efforts to get their brands in songs (Wasserman, 2005)); and (4) an increase in the production costs of movies, television shows, music, and other artistic ventures, which has led producers of these efforts to seek methods of covering the production costs (Crisafulli, 1995; Darlin, 1995; de Gregorio & Sung, 2010; Russell & Belch, 2005). These four conditions have likely led to what might be described as a tipping point in product integration in the last decade.* What appears to be the situation is that marketers of branded products

* Although this explosion in product integrations has recently occurred, the practice has been around for a long time. The actual origin of product placement is unclear, but Newell, Salmon, and Chang (2006) indicate that it was as early as the 1890s in movies. In spite of this early use of it, it likely remained a matter of informal arrangements until the infrastructure developed to accommodate the level of activity that exists today.

and producers of entertainment are actively seeking mutually beneficial arrangements for what would occur whether or not money changed hands or other considerations took place—branded products appearing in entertainment media.* The double-digit growth in paid product integrations across all outlets for most of the years in the past decade point to this explosion of activity (Castillo, 2010); for example, in prime-time TV in the United States, there was a 9% growth in the first half of 2009 (Lowry and Helm, 2009). As new entertainment outlets develop, it is likely that marketers will creatively consider how they can integrate their brands into them as well.

A third consideration with respect to product integration is that it is often controversial. Controversies generally center around two interrelated issues: (1) the stealthy nature of the marketing communications; and (2) the extent to which the integrations affect the creative integrity of fictional or artistic material or, even of more concern, the integrity of journalistic endeavors. These concerns are interrelated in that both deal with the break in the wall that many believe should separate commercial communications from entertainment and editorial communications. Moreover, both of these issues relate to the extent to which consumers may not be receiving the communication that they expected, paid for, and so on.

With respect to the stealthy nature of the marketing communications, the concerns are that people are receiving commercial messages without being aware of their commercial nature. There have been long-standing rules and best practices regarding the identification of commercial messages as such. The payola rules of the FCC would cover product integrations for broadcast media (i.e., television and radio) and indicate that broadcast stations that “have accepted or agreed to receive payments, services, or other valuable consideration for airing material must disclose this

* A somewhat interesting variation on the typical arrangement is reverse product placement (Edery, 2006; Wasserman, 2007), where a previously fictional product from a movie, novel, etc., is later marketed as a real product. Examples of this phenomenon include Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. from the movie *Forrest Gump* and Potion, a beverage that appeared in the video game *Final Fantasy*. Probably the most unusual example of this is the restaurant chain Cheeburger Cheeburger. This chain most likely got its name from the *Saturday Night Live* skit about a diner where the grill cook yells “cheezborger cheezborger” when a patron orders a cheeseburger. This was a take-off on what a real grill cook at the Billy Goat Tavern in Chicago yelled when an order was placed. The tavern was frequented by several of the performers at Second City in Chicago who went on to star on *Saturday Night Live* (i.e., Don Novello, John Belushi, and Bill Murray) (Billy Goat Tavern, 2011), and there has been a lawsuit filed by the Billy Goat Tavern against the Cheeburger Cheeburger chain with the claim that the chain is using the tavern’s slogan (Barcella, 2003).

fact” (FCC, 2011). In print media, the guidelines of the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) define the best practices for magazines and include a clear statement that advertising must be labeled as such (ASME, 2011). In recent years, there have been concerns raised as to the extent to which these policies have been followed or enforced with respect to product integrations (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009).^{*} Furthermore, the FTC, which has broad powers of regulation pertaining to advertising in all media (not just broadcast media as the FCC does), has generally declined to regulate product integrations in movies (Campbell, 2006).

Various consumer groups have pressed for explicit alerts to viewers as to the paid promotional nature of an appearance of a brand (Bennett, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 1999). Suggestions for alerts include text scrawls across the bottom of the screen when integrations are occurring or flashing red lights during integrations (Lowry & Helm, 2009).

The potential for the practice of product integration to affect the creative integrity of fictional stories or the editorial role of nonfictional programming (e.g., news) is very real. The perceived danger in fictional stories is that the nature of the plot, characters, and so on will be influenced by those who will pay rather than by artistic considerations. For example, the fictional character James Bond drove an Aston Martin in *Goldfinger* and some of the other early Bond movies. In some recent movies of this franchise, the character has driven automobiles by BMW, a company that engaged in integration arrangements with the producers of the movies. Although the use of a BMW may not bother most who see the movie, a James Bond “purist” may find it odd that a very British spy such as James Bond would drive a German automobile that, while expensive, is potentially within the grasp of a lot of people.[†] It has been noted that product

^{*} Research has shown that consumers believe that the practice should be more heavily regulated (Hudson, Hudson, & Peloz, 2008), but there is also skepticism about the extent to which the government can regulate it (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009). There may be some merit to this skepticism. The disclosure rules for television allow a show to take care of its disclosure obligation by scrolling at the end of a broadcast rather quickly the names of the brands that received consideration; a former commissioner at the FCC argued in 2005 that this scroll was not really enough, but little has changed in this regard (Schatz, 2005).

[†] Aston Martin is a high-end British automobile; until very recently, all of the models of the brand were very expensive, hand-built automobiles that few people could afford, but would be appropriate for the British spy, James Bond, who is known as uncompromising in his tastes across numerous product categories. Although a relatively expensive automobile, the German-manufactured BMW may seem to some in the movie audience that it is not an appropriate vehicle for James Bond in that it is a German automobile and is within their purchase capability.

integration deals put uncomfortable constraints on writers (George, 2005) and as the stakes get higher, it is likely that there will be more pressures to change the creative endeavors to fit the needs of the marketers. As Gary Elliott, a vice-president of Hewlett-Packard, has stated, “We absolutely expect to have input.... We have to look at the scripts. We have an agency that understands how our products are going to be treated and how we’d be viewed within the production” (George, 2005, p. 34). The concern over the control of the artistic aspects of the story is such that the Writer’s Guild of America has denounced the practice of product integration and has pushed for a code of conduct with respect to it (Carvajal, 2006).

The potential for integrations to affect nonfictional programming is a concern as well. In fact, research indicates that the public accepts product integration in entertainment programming to a greater degree than integration in news via video news releases (Newell, Blevins, & Bugeja, 2009).^{*} Legitimate news outlets have traditionally had extremely strong norms about the separation of commercial speech from editorial speech and concerns about advertisers influencing the nature of editorial speech. As an indication of these norms, David Brinkley was criticized by other journalists for his decision to become a spokesperson for Archer Daniels Midland after he had retired from news broadcasting (Lafayette, 1998). Recently, however, there are indications that products are showing up in interesting ways in news programming. Starbucks has made a deal with *Morning Joe*, a show with a news and editorial format featuring Joe Scarborough, to be featured during the show via graphics and mentions (Stelter, 2009). Although the brand is not contributing to the news or opinions expressed, there is an implicit indication that the particular brand of coffee is endorsed by the opinion leaders featured on the show.

PRODUCT INTEGRATION AS MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Given that product integrations can vary from a casual mention of a brand in a single scene of a movie to a brand being a major presence in the story,

^{*} A video news release is a “fake” news story created by a marketer, public relations firm, etc., to appear as a regular news story.

supported by joint advertising and promotion of a movie and brand, it is perhaps inappropriate to characterize all of them as essentially the same thing. They can differ quite a bit and, most likely, the way and at what level viewers process them can vary as well. Having stated this caveat, product integrations can be compared to other forms of marketing communications in a number of ways, in that all product integrations share some common aspects with one another, but are different than other forms of marketing communications.

Balasubramanian (1994) considered product integrations as one type of a hybrid message, a combination of advertising and publicity. He considered hybrid messages as ones that are paid for in ways that are typically true of advertising (i.e., paid commercial messages in which the payer has much control over the message); however, they are “*communications that project a non-commercial character*” (italics in original) (p. 30). Balasubramanian reasoned that since these messages do not seem to the receiver to be a commercial message, they are likely processed differently from how commercial messages such as advertising would be processed.

As Balasubramanian noted, product integrations are generally paid for in some manner, just as with advertising, but integrations are not identified as paid persuasion efforts by sponsors, which makes them similar to publicity, such as news stories. Therefore, the sponsor gets the best of both of these traditional forms of communication, advertising and publicity. That is, the sponsor has some limited control over the communication (subject to editorial considerations of the movie, television show, or other venue), but the communication is not usually identified explicitly as a persuasion attempt; thus, the effort to persuade is not made salient to the audience.

In a similar discussion, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998) considered product integrations in their characterization of different kinds of marketing communications and how integrations might differ from other kinds of communications. They argued that different marketing communications can be considered along two dimensions: (a) the extent to which the sponsor of the message is disguised and the fact that the message is a paid advertisement is disguised, and (b) the extent to which the persuasive message is secondary to the main message of the communication. Product integrations can be contrasted to traditional advertising (and other marketing communications) along these dimensions. In the case of advertising, the sponsor of the product is not disguised, and the fact that it is a persuasive effort by that sponsor is generally clear to the audience. With respect to the