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# Research in Media Promotion

Edited by  
Susan Tyler Eastman

Indiana University



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## PREFACE

This book is the first in a series that will focus on research about program promotion. Once disdained in news and television programming, but long of prime concern in the radio business, effective promotion had become strategically important for the television industry by the mid-1990s as a result of intensified competition on the domestic and international fronts. The next frontier, without question, will be the online medium, and promotion will be particularly crucial to success on the Internet and its offshoots and successors. It is now a truism that the greater the number of competitors, the more critical effective promotion becomes.

This book brings together a decade of scholarly studies and trade articles published in a wide range of journals and magazines with the goals of providing a forum for discussion and fostering more research that utilizes promotional materials. In both theory and application, a great quantity of additional research is needed to understand promotion's range of effects in the three media on-air, print, and online. Moreover, the short length and special characteristics of on-air promotion makes it ideal for many studies of cognitive processes. Most of the original studies reported in this book are exploratory rather than theory testing only because so little has been accomplished in this area so far, but it is expected that these studies will provoke follow-up studies and new investigations that will be contributed by the book's readers to subsequent volumes. The impact of program promotion on ratings has surfaced as a new variable in the arena of programming research, supplementing but not supplanting such tra-

ditional concerns as inheritance and audience-flow strategies. Promotion research is likely to receive even more industry attention in the coming decade and become the direction of much fundable scholarly research.

The first people to thank for their enormous contributions to this book are the authors who reviewed a wide range of literatures and conducted original studies for their chapters: William J. Adams, Robert V. Bellamy, Jr., Andrew C. Billings, Paul D. Bolls, Joseph G. Buchman, Douglas A. Ferguson, Walter Gantz, Charles A. Lubbers, Gregory D. Newton, Elizabeth M. Perse, Robert F. Potter, Nancy C. Schwartz, Paul J. Traudt, and James R. Walker. Then I also want to thank Glenda C. Williams for her enthusiasm about the proposal and finished product and for her useful suggestions for polishing the text. Lastly, I want to thank Lawrence Erlbaum Associates' Acquisition Editor, Linda Bathgate, the production editor, Mary F. Martis, and the copyeditor, Kevin Gilligan, for their commitment to this new series and their attention to the details that make the book a polished and reliable source for researchers.

SUSAN TYLER EASTMAN

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

William J. Adams is an Associate Professor in the School of Journalism & Mass Communication at Kansas State University. His BA is from Brigham Young University, his MA from Ball State University, and his PhD from Indiana University. He has published extensively as a journalist and scholar, especially focusing on network television programming for prime time. His work includes chapters in the area of television and movie programming in four editions of *Broadcast/Cable Programming: Strategies and Practices* (Wadsworth, most recently, 1997) and on promotion in *Promotion & Marketing for Broadcasting & Cable* (Focal Press, 1999). He has also published articles in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, the *Journal of Communication*, and the *Journal of Media Economics*. Professor Adams brings considerable expertise with television programming and marketing to his analysis of the means and methods of promoting movies and syndicated series on television.

Robert V. Bellamy, Jr., is an Associate Professor of Media Studies in the Department of Communication at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. His BA is from Morehead State University, his MA from the University of Kentucky, and his PhD from the University of Iowa. His current research interests include television programming and promotion, media globalization, media and sports, and the impact of technological change on media industries. He has published several articles about network branding, U.S. media economics and institutions, and international media communication. His work has appeared as chapters in several books, most re-

cently in *Promotion & Marketing for Broadcasting & Cable* (Focal Press, 1999) and *MediaSport* (Routledge, 1998) and such publications as the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, the *Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of Sports & Social Issues*, and *Journalism Quarterly*. Professor Bellamy is coauthor of *Television and the Remote Control: Grazing on a Vast Wasteland* (Guilford, 1996) and coeditor of *The Remote Control in the New Age of Television* (Praeger, 1993).

Andrew C. Billings is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech and Communication Studies at Clemson University. His BA was in Education and his MA and PhD in Speech Communication at Indiana University. He served as director of Indiana's award-winning forensics team for many years and coached the 1998-1999 team to third place in the National Forensics Association tournament. His research focuses on issues of gender and identity in sports announcing and promotion and in public speaking. Professor Billings has published in the *Journal of Sports & Social Issues*, *Ecquid Novi*, *The Forensic*, and *National Forensics Journal*.

Paul D. Bolls is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. His BA is from Montana State University, his MA from Washington State University, and his PhD from Indiana University. His research analyzes cognitive processing of media, including applications to television programming and promotion, especially utilizing laboratory experiments with physiological measures. Professor Bolls has published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Communication Education*, *Communication Research*, *Media Psychology*, and the *Journal of Marketing Communication*.

Joseph G. Buchman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Business Management at Utah Valley State College, and he also teaches in the Multimedia Communications Technology program there. His BS is from Indiana University, his MS from Purdue University, and his PhD from Indiana University. His research and teaching focus on communication technologies, especially radio news, talk, and promotion. Professor Buchman authored the chapters on commercial radio promotion in two editions of *Promotion & Marketing for Broadcasting & Cable* (most recently, Focal Press, 1999), and he coauthored two editions of *Broadcast & Cable Selling* (Wadsworth, most recently, 1993). He has published primarily in the trade press, including articles on radio, the Internet, and legal issues in *Next* and *Virtually*

*Alternative.*

Susan Tyler Eastman is Professor of Telecommunications at Indiana University in Bloomington. Her BA is from the University of California at Berkeley, her MA from San Francisco State University, and her PhD from Bowling Green State University. She is senior author/editor of six editions of *Broadcast/Cable Programming: Strategies and Practices* (Wadsworth, most recently, in press for 2001) and three editions of *Promotion & Marketing for*

*Broadcasting & Cable* (most recently, Focal Press, 1999). Professor Eastman has published over a hundred book chapters and articles, many of which focus on the structural, content, and industry factors affecting promotion of programs in television, radio or cable. Her articles have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, the *Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, the *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, and the *Journal of Research and Development in Education*.

Douglas A. Ferguson is Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at the College of Charleston. Formerly, he was Chair of the Department of Telecommunications and Assistant Dean for Resources and Planning in the College of Arts & Sciences at Bowling Green State University. His BA and MA are from Ohio State University and his PhD from Bowling Green State University. Early in his career, he was program director of NBC-affiliated WLIO (TV) and a station manager. He coauthored *The Broadcast Television Industry* (Allyn & Bacon, 1998) and was coeditor/author of *Promotion & Marketing for Broadcasting & Cable* (Focal Press, 1999) and *Broadcast/Cable Programming: Strategies and Practices* (Wadsworth, 1997, in press for 2001). Professor Ferguson's scholarly work has been published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Communication Research*, *Journalism Quarterly*, the *Dowden Center Journal*, and *Communication Research Reports*. He has authored several chapters on aspects of information technology and currently teaches, researches, and writes about the Internet and other new media technologies.

Walter Gantz is Professor and Chair of the Department of Telecommunications at Indiana University in Bloomington. His BA is from Brooklyn College, his MA from the University of Michigan, and his PhD from Michigan State University. His research has focused on the media's impact on families, including children, on the diffusion of information, on audiences for sports, and on television advertising and the family as the audience for public service messages. He has also published a study about television promotion. He is coauthor of *Desert Storm and the Mass Media* (Hampton, 1993). Professor Gantz's articles have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences*, the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, *Journalism Quarterly*, the *Journal of Communication*, and *Health*

*Communication.*

Charles A. Lubbers is an Associate Professor of Journalism & Mass Communication at Kansas State University. His BA and MA are from South Dakota State University, and his PhD is from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His research and teaching specialty is public relations, especially the marketing of television and other media to the industry and to

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Gregory D. Newton is an Assistant Professor in the H. H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma. His BA is from Northern Illinois University, his MA from Northwestern University, and his PhD from Indiana University. His specialty is radio, including programming, promotion, and law. In addition to industry experience at several radio stations, he has been Associate Editor of the *Federal Communications Law Journal* and has published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, the *Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of Radio Studies*, and the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*. Many of Professor Newton's studies have explored the structural factors affecting the promotion of television programs.

Elizabeth M. Perse is an Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Delaware, Newark. Her BA is from Northwestern University and her MA and PhD from Kent State University. Her current research and teaching focus on the uses of newer communication technologies and on investigating cognitive and emotional dimensions and aspects of activity and involvement. In addition to more than 35 book chapters and journal articles, she has coauthored 2 textbooks *Communicating Online* (Mayfield, 1998) and *The Mayfield Quick Guide to the Internet for Communication Students* (Mayfield, 1998) and is completing a book on media effects for Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Professor Perse's articles have appeared in such journals as the *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, and *Human Communication Research*, and for 3 years she was the Review and Criticism Editor for the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*.

Robert F. Potter is an Assistant Professor of Telecommunication and Film at the University of Alabama. His BA and MS are from Eastern Washington University and his PhD from Indiana University. Prior to his academic career, he served as promotion director for radio stations in the Pacific Northwest. His research and teaching have focused on the cognitive processing of media, particularly experimental studies of imagery and processing of radio commercials and radio messages. Professor Potter has published in the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Media Psychology*,

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Nancy C. Schwartz is an Instructor in the Department of Telecommunications and a doctoral candidate in Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her BS is from Ball State University and her MEd from Arizona State University. She has 18 years of teaching experience accumulated in the American public schools, the Department of

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Paul J. Traudt is an Associate Professor of Mass Communication in the Hank Greenspun School of Communication at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. He has a BA from the University of Colorado, an MA from the University of Utah, and a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin. He teaches, writes, and consults in the area of the processes and effects of mass media and evolving communications technologies. He has published and conducted research across the spectrum of programming and audience concerns, including the use of remote control devices on the part of cable viewers, qualitative ethnographies of family decision-making processes and television program viewership, and survey-based analyses of the audiences for public and government access television. Professor Traudt's recent publications include a study in the *Journal of Media Economics* on programming and audience factors related to donors to public radio and a chapter on interactive television in *Communication Technology Update* (Focal Press, 1998).

James R. Walker is Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. His research has focused on the impact of remote control devices on television viewing behaviors and the television industry, on television programming practices, and on the effectiveness of television program promotions. He has published over 20 articles in national and regional journals, including the *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Journalism Quarterly*, *Communications Law Review*, and the *Journal of Popular Culture*. Professor Walker coauthored *The Broadcast Television Industry* (Allyn & Bacon, 1998) and *Television and the Remote Control: Grazing on a Vast Wasteland* (Guilford, 1996) and coedited *The Remote Control in the New Age of Television* (Praeger, 1993).

# I

## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH ABOUT PROMOTION

*This half of the book provides a framework for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand research to date about program promotion on television, radio, and online. The first chapter consists of practical background on industry programming and the conventions of promotion, and it introduces the terminology of the field. The second chapter supplies a theoretical background by detailing the passive and active conceptual approaches. The third chapter reviews what has been researched so far about structural aspects of on-air promos, summarizing what has been learned about the variables contributing to the salience model. The fourth chapter turns to the topics of sex and violence in the content of on-air promotion. And the fifth and last chapter examines the topic of media branding. Taken together, these five chapters will help readers new to the field to understand published articles about promotion, as well as the chapters in the second half of the book. In addition, three of the chapters in Part I contain original studies to be added to the literature they review.*

## 1

## Orientation to Promotion and Research

Susan Tyler Eastman  
Indiana University

Fred Silverman, the legendary programmer for CBS, ABC, and NBC in the 1970s, has been quoted as saying, "Fifty percent of success is the program and fifty percent is how the program is promoted" (Bedell, 1981, p. 141). He meant that capturing high ratings is not just a function of program scheduling and appeal, but is also a function of how the audience is told about the programs. On-air promotion has become a big-budget item for the U.S. television industry, occupying airtime that could otherwise be sold for commercials, and print and online promotion incur costs with no direct return. Moreover, the marketing of images has become one of the central concerns of program suppliers. NBC has spent billions of dollars linking itself to the Olympics, for example. Such leading broadcast and cable networks as Disney (owner of ABC and ESPN), Time Warner (owner of CNN), General Electric (owner of NBC), and Westinghouse (owner of CBS), as well as Japan's AsiaNet and Murdoch's Star Network, among others, are devoting enormous financial resources to developing the value of their brand names around the world. The industry's professional association for those in the business of media marketing, Promax, now holds annual conventions in South America, Europe (England), and Asia, as well as in the United States conventions that swell annually in the number and prominence of their participants. More savage competition, rising program costs, and the rapid growth of the Internet have been spurs to increased concern about media marketing around the world.

Industry analyses show that the proportion of time devoted to promotion has been growing in the last decade. An hour on ABC or NBC carried 5 more minutes of promotion in 1999 than it did in 1989 (Associated Press, 1999). On average for the six broadcast networks, the amount of promotion now exceeds 41/2 minutes an hour in prime time and many more minutes in some other dayparts (Fleming, 1997).

### Changes and Expectations

It is an industry truism that the best program without promotion has no audience. At heart, promotion on-the-air, online, and in print is the way that stations and networks announce the availability of their programs, but promotion does much more. It creates a mood, identifies a provider, and generates attitudes that reach far beyond a single program. Although promotion can be seen as a mere adjunct to television and radio programming, conceptually, it is a subset of the larger arena of marketing of products and images via advertising and is related to, but not identical with, publicity and public relations. But in the media business, promotion refers particularly to the on-air, online, and print activity of media outlets, and it has a particular characteristic not commonly associated with other products: Not only can programs be promoted externally in television and radio guides and on billboards and other signs, programs can be also promoted within and adjacent to other programs on the air.<sup>1</sup> On-air spots (*promos*) are widely thought to be the most valuable kind of self-advertising possible and are unique to the broadcast and cable industries. It has been estimated that the U.S. broadcast networks were collectively airing more than 30,000 promos a year by the late 1990s (see Eastman & Newton, 1998a). To carry those promos, the Big Four were collectively foregoing as much as \$4 billion in annual advertising revenue they might have earned — unequivocal evidence of the importance they assign to on-air promotion.

The study of promotion is not merely about how the industry reaches viewers and listeners, however. Promotional messages are short bursts of communication that can be examined for their implications about basic processes of communication. They can be studied for what they reveal about how human cognition works, how social persuasion works, and how cross-national images are created and embedded in world culture. Nonetheless, a knowledge of contemporary strategy and practice in tele-

<sup>1</sup> The term "promotions" with an "s" is used more widely in the advertising