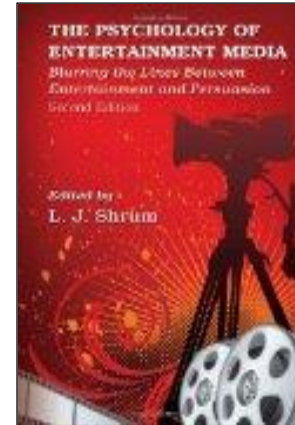


L. J. Shrum (Ed.), **The Psychology of Entertainment Media: Blurring the Lines Between Entertainment and Persuasion** (2nd ed.), New York, NY: Routledge, 2012, 364 pp., \$80.00 (hardcover).

Review by  
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An evolving digital landscape necessitates an explication of the theoretical processes that underlie how viewers experience and are affected by entertainment media. In *The Psychology of Entertainment Media: Blurring the Lines Between Entertainment and Persuasion*, editor L. J. Shrum compiles a second series of essays (following up a first edition published in 2003) that discusses the changes to—and the stability of—psychological processing of these messages.



The impetus for the second volume is to address the many new vehicles by which marketing and advertising now permeate this media environment such as digital games. Shrum highlights the continuing importance of the study of entertainment media and provides updates to many of the chapters that appeared in the first edition. These messages are processed and persuaded in unique ways, often producing unintended effects and occasionally masking intended ones.

The book provides evidence in diverse ways. Many of the chapter authors provide a review of the present literature. The authors of chapters 2 and 3 (both on defining product integration/placement), and 10 (on body image) provide coherent narratives that effectively synthesize past work. Chapter 5's author (on advergames) takes a similar approach, also providing an exhaustive table of empirical studies published on the topic (for further reading). The authors of chapter 9 (on alcohol in media) and of chapter 11 (on aggression) conducted their own studies, with chapter 9's authors using content analysis and survey methods, and chapter 11's authors using experimental methods. The authors of chapter 12 (also on aggression) take a critical look at meta-analytic research, describing the importance of the method and what we can learn from synthesizing these findings.

The analysis and introduction of theory in the book are rigorous. Many psychological concepts overlap across the chapters. For example, mere exposure (i.e., developing a positive affinity for an object due to repeated exposure) is discussed in chapters 2 and 3, and learning through conditioning (i.e., classical, operant) is discussed in chapters 2, 3, and 11. Different discussions of cognitive and affective immersion and presence are discussed in chapters 5, 7 (on narrative transportation), and 9. Some chapters are devoted to synthesizing research on a particular theory or model or synthesizing research to propose a new model: chapter 6 (i.e., accessibility model for first-order cultivation effects, online process model for second-order cultivation effects), chapter 7 (transportation imagery model), chapter 8 (introducing media imagery and social learning model), and chapter 11 (general learning model).

The volume divides the essays into two sections: intended effects (e.g., product placement) and unintended effects (e.g., programming), although the works have remarkable synergy with each other and flow naturally. Many edited volumes are most useful when assigning or reviewing standalone chapters on a particular theory or context, but unique connections can be drawn among these chapters, particularly theoretically. The book is most insightful when read as a whole.

The first four chapters build upon each other to create a compelling picture of product placement. Beginning with chapter 2, McCarty and Lowrey update the landscape of product placement research and put forth a more nuanced definition of the concept, expanding McCarty's ideas discussed in the first edition. The intentional positioning of a product or good in media (in exchange for money or some other return) can be broadly thought of as product integration. Product integration can be viewed as a spectrum, from product placement (e.g., simply seeing a product) to product immersion (e.g., making the product essential to the storyline). Next, in chapter 3, Cowley identifies the factors that make product placement successful and the mechanisms that influence the persuasiveness of product placement. Chapter 4, written by Owen, Hang, Auty, and Lewis, focuses specifically on product placement and children. Because the cognitive faculties of young people are less observant and less resistant to persuasive intent (and children lack the persuasive knowledge to make fully informed decisions), a host of ethical concerns regarding these audience members are worthy of examination. Nelson and Waiguny authored chapter 5, which focuses on product placement in digital games. Product placement may take the form of advergaming (games with product-related themes or goals) or in-game advertising (e.g., displaying billboards or props with logos). This chapter examines the unique mechanisms that change the nature of engagement with product placement in games, such as interactivity and telepresence. Taken together, readers are brought up to speed on the breadth and depth of the present work and the unique ethical and policy considerations, while also dipping into the changes reflected in new media.

The volume's next three chapters place a special focus on the theory underlying entertainment media by explicating how viewers learn about our world from these messages. In chapter 6, Shrum and Lee break down the construction of social reality through media, with a special discussion of Cultivation Theory. They define cultivation outcomes by delineating between first-order cultivation effects (memory-based judgments) and second-order effects (online processing judgments). They propose different processes cause such effects. Chapter 7, coauthored by Green and Carpenter, addresses persuasion through narratives. The authors describe the concept of transportation (i.e., cognitive and emotional involvement in a story, feeling relocated to the story's events) and its relation to persuasion. Chapter 8, coauthored by Dill and Burgess, examines how viewers construct perceptions of social groups they view the media (i.e., what the authors refer to as their Media Imagery and Social Learning Theory). Viewers learn about social interaction and demographics from these media messages, which perpetuate cognitive outcomes such as biases, ideas of power, and prejudice.

The final set of chapters looks more deeply at specific contexts: alcohol, body image, and aggression research. One of the most commonly placed products is alcohol, which is the focus on chapter 9, coauthored by Russell and Russell. A content analysis was conducted, which (surprisingly) found negatively valenced portrayals of alcohol to be more frequent than positive portrayals. The authors also report an additional study they conducted, which revealed that audience connectedness positively

predicted alcohol use, and was, in fact, the best predictor of the viewers' alcohol use in real life. Chapter 10, coauthored by Strahan, Buote, and Wilson, examines how media messages propagate sociocultural ideals of the human body. The authors review how these messages have been found to relate to a series of cognitive perceptions such as women's self-worth, body dissatisfaction, and concern for others' opinions of their bodies. These images are also associated with behavioral outcomes such as desire for social isolation and restrained eating. Maier and Gentile coauthored chapter 11, which reviews the context of aggression. The authors begin by proposing a general learning model (i.e., a broad meta-model not limited to a particular domain that collapses individual learning processes). This model comprises two components: input of information and interaction with the environment. The authors then report on a study they conducted that displays how both attention and the level of processing affect the magnitude of aggression priming. In chapter 12, which concludes the volume, Comstock and Powers review meta-analytic findings on aggression and discuss the importance of employing meta-analysis to understand holistic trends (i.e., the ability to compare effect sizes). They suggest that the relationship between media and aggression or antisocial behavior is well supported, although the nature of the relationship may be complicated. For example, one does not have to possess an aggressive attitude to behave aggressively, and accessibility can sometimes predict behavior.

Reading the complete volume allows the reader to draw unique insights between the chapters. One example of an interesting link: the ideas of audience connectedness (in chapter 9) overlap substantially with ideas of cognitive and emotional involvement of stories (chapter 7), which overlap the discussion of evaluating products based on connections to characters or media figures (chapter 3). These intricate meldings of theoretical constructs throughout chapters further emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary synthesis and research. A volume such as this provides both marketing and entertainment researchers with the ability to draw connections from their own research to others in related fields.

The collection is a thoughtful and timely update of its first edition published nine years earlier, with special attention to factors in the changing media environment. Should the editor and authors venture to develop a third edition, it would be fascinating to see them build on the ideas put forth on digital games and to cover other aspects of this new media landscape. Perhaps the implications of cross-promotion and transmedia marketing could be discussed, as television, film, and games seem to increasingly converge. New trends in entertainment media research are showing changes in content (i.e., antihero narratives) and the complexity of this work beyond enjoyment, which has led to reconceptualizations of processing and effects. Hopefully a new edition could build upon some of these ideas as well. The first edition included an additional section on individual differences, which is dispersed throughout the chapters in this second edition to explain differences among particular contexts. It would also be useful to see an expansion of contexts beyond those seen here, particularly health (briefly discussed in chapter 7), politics, and representations of other ethnic or social groups (briefly discussed in chapter 8).

On the whole, Shrum's collection is a rigorous examination of the state of current research. Researchers will find the volume insightful. Moreover, enough context is given in each chapter to make the collection accessible to scholars just entering the conversation or for consumers seeking to understand more about the influence of the media environment.