Preface

Branded entertainment is the insertion of a brand within an entertainment property in such a way that the line between entertainment and advertising becomes blurred. Blurring the lines between advertising content and editorial content, branded entertainment is gaining momentum within marketing communications strategy, providing both advertisers and consumers with highly engaging branded media content that benefits them in a synergistic manner. On the one hand, consumers can access free entertainment content such as branded online films, branded video games (advergames), branded books, branded comics, or branded music. On the other hand, advertisers can reach committed audiences that are seeking fun and target them with branded messages in a less-intrusive advertising context. In the form of these hybrid-type messages, advertisers can develop engaging brand communications providing entertainment value for consumers. This entertainment value can increase time exposure to the brand, enhance consumer attention to the message, and improve brand recall and brand attitude for those brands embedded in branded entertainment products. Branded entertainment is typically developed in an increasingly convergent media environment in which consumers easily switch from one medium to another through a wide range of different screens that include television screens, computer screens, and mobile devices screens such as mobile phones or tablets. Switching from one screen to another allows media consumers to consume media content at their convenience (i.e., benefiting from the ubiquitous consumption—anytime, everywhere—allowed by mobile devices). Branded entertainment also develops in a developing transmedia context in which different media and different formats are used to provide consumers with a meaningful narrative universe that expands branded storytelling across different media languages and styles. By using transmedia branded entertainment, advertisers can develop an online branded film to be webcasted via the Internet; then, advertisers can expand the branded narrative through an advergame to be played via mobile phone; and finally, the narrative can be continued through a branded comic via print media. By diversifying multiple contact points to the brand and the message, advertisers can increase the likelihood of reaching the targeted consumers. Advertisers can also generate different consumer engagement levels while the consumer is moving from one medium to another, priming consumers’ convenience and media characteristics.

Branded entertainment implications for brands, media, and consumers emerge from different areas including branding, marketing communications, marketing effectiveness, media content, consumer behavior, legal frameworks, and ethics. Regarding branding, branded entertainment provides new ways to develop brand personality and brand values using storytelling and branded narratives. Branded entertainment also employs new ways to target integrated marketing communication and new ways to measure marketing communications effectiveness. From a media point of view, branded entertainment is contributing to the development of new media approaches, such as brandcasting, as opposed to tradi-
tional broadcasting, in which brands are the owners and funders of the entertaining content distributed by media. New relationships among media, producers, advertisers, and advertising agencies are also shaped in this branded entertainment framework. With respect to consumer behavior, branded entertainment changes the way in which consumers traditionally have consumed both media and advertising content. Additionally, consumer behaviors with regard to forming attitudes and persuasion toward a brand can be impacted such that the brand is perceived to be more fun, enjoyable, even thrilling when a consumer experiences it via some form of branded entertainment. By integrating brand messages into branded entertainment, advertisers are using an old successful strategy that can be traced back to the beginning of mass media and that was prominent before the advent of the 30-second television commercial – and before the subsequent clear division between editorial content and advertising content. Integrating brand messages into branded content can help advertisers avoid some negative consumer behaviors such as zipping and zapping while at the same time increasing the perceived value of brand messages. Contrary to negative consumers’ reactions to traditional promotional tools, such as TV advertising, in many cases consumers actively seek out branded entertainment with the goal of participating with it for entertainment purposes. These consumers are willing to oblige the use of brands in these media due to the realism they provide and the thrill of getting to “know” the brand in a different manner.

From branded online communities to branded user-generated-content, branded entertainment involves highly interactive, ubiquitous, and engaging relationships between brands, brand messages, and consumers. Branded entertainment also necessitates new legal frameworks satisfying and protecting all agents involved in these new creative endeavors. Ethical concerns also arise when brands are targeting special audiences (e.g., children that are not as aware of the persuasion attempts and commercial intentions of these branded communications). The need for regulation of these kinds of hybrid messages will be a priority in the near future.

This book is targeted to both academicians (e.g., students, professors, and researchers) and practitioners (e.g., advertisers, media and advertising agencies) interested in gaining a better understanding of how branded entertainment works and how branded entertainment can improve marketing communications. In doing so, the primary goal of this book is to provide a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to branded entertainment focusing on research priorities recognized by the Marketing Science Institute and other professional associations, such as the Brand Content Marketing Association. Keeping that goal in mind, this book represents a novel approach to marketing communications presenting different ways to approach branded entertainment and introduces multiple different types of branded entertainment formats, from advergaming to user-generated-content and transmedia branded messages, in a wide range of contexts that include television, the Internet, and video games. This holistic approach includes different social, psychological, and marketing theories and methodologies used to analyze branded entertainment in the context of the entertainment industry, the pharmaceutical industry, and the fashion industry.

To achieve this primary goal, this book is structured as follows: first, an approach to branded entertainment history and conceptualization is provided in Section 1, “Conceptualization of Branded Entertainment.” Dr. Martí-Parreño, Dr. Ruiz-Mafé, and Dr. Scribner provide an overview to branded entertainment from an historical approach in Chapter 1, “Branded Entertainment: Past, Present, and Future.” The origins, conceptualization, and different genres of branded entertainment, from branded films and branded mobile apps to branded video games or advergaming are addressed in this chapter. Examples of branded entertainment across different media are highlighted. The authors also highlight some of the primary trends in branded entertainment. Finally, ethical concerns and legal issues related to branded entertainment are also discussed. In Chapter 2, “A Classification of Branded Entertainment Based on Psychological
Levels of Processing,” Dr. Bermejo-Berros provides a classification of the different manifestations of branded entertainment based on the manner in which they elicit consumers’ psychological processes, activating their cognitive and emotional resources to experience entertainment, create brand value, and make a positive mental imprint in the consumer’s mind. As a result of the analysis of current advertising campaigns from this perspective, this classification distinguishes four levels of processing that allow for a thorough understanding of the current manifestations of branded entertainment and opens new ways of studying advertising effectiveness. In the conclusions, Dr. Bermejo-Berros highlights five key aspects of branded entertainment at the present related to the elicited psychological responses, the modes of the relationship that are generated, culture, society, and advertising effectiveness. In Chapter 3, “Author as Franchise Product: Edgar Rice Burroughs Inc. and Tarzan™ as Historical Branded Entertainment,” Dr. Freeman explores the historical relationship between the branded media entertainment of Tarzan and the rise of consumer culture in the 1920s and 1930s. The chapter takes a focused look at the successful transmedia licensing of this property across pulp magazines, comics, and radio, reflecting the growing brand-franchise logic throughout the business landscape of America at that time. Brand linkages between these different media products in which consumption of one product leads to the consumption of another are also addressed. Using the “stepping stones” metaphor, Dr. Freeman analyzes the brand linkages between different media products and how these brand linkages are developed.

Section 2, “Brand Entertainment and Gamification,” is focused on the use of digital video games from a branded entertainment perspective. In the first chapter of this section, Chapter 4, “A Theoretical Model for the Study of Persuasive Communication through Digital Games,” Dr. de la Hera Conde-Pumpido presents a theoretical model for the study of how persuasive messages can be conveyed through digital games. Using theoretical triangulation, Dr. de la Hera Conde-Pumpido proposes a theoretical model that may facilitate the study and implementation of persuasive strategies within advergames from a new and unique perspective. Subsequently, Dr. de la Hera Conde-Pumpido applies the proposed theoretical model to conduct in-depth content analysis of seven Spanish and Dutch advergames. Eleven persuasive dimensions through three levels of persuasion arise from Dr. de la Hera Conde-Pumpido’s analysis allowing researchers and practitioners to better understand how persuasion can be accomplished through digital games.

In Chapter 5, “The Role of Online Social Interaction in the Recommendation of a Game Brand Community,” Dr. Veloutsou, Ms. Dessart, and Dr. Arvaniti focus on the growing role of consumer-brand communities in the online context and in particular brand communities in online strategy games. The chapter explores the loyalty of community members toward other members as expressed by their willingness to recommend the online community externally. Using data collected from 384 gamers, the results suggest that the strength of the relationship with the game brand and the need to socialize are good predictors of brand community participation, as expressed by the brand community engagement and the brand community identification.

In Chapter 6, “Deep and Shallow Gamification: The Thin Evidence from Marketing and Forgotten Powers of Good Games,” Dr. Liebrero, Dr. Møller, and Dr. Marin critically analyze the brief history and current evidence base for gamification and discuss which central dimensions of good games are not easily replicable in non-gaming contexts. Departing from academic psychology and practical game design, this chapter calls attention to the framing and structuring aspects of games that encourage people to be active problem solvers, socially engaged conversationalists, and explorers of varied possibility spaces, rather than drones motivated by points, badges, and leaderboards through simpler behaviorist or utility-economic means. Dr. Liebrero, Dr. Møller, and Dr. Marin develop the notion of a continuum
from deep to shallow gamification, and its implications on the future of the phenomenon, providing examples from education, online marketing, and citizen science engagement.

In Chapter 7, “Product Placement in Video Games: Image Transference among Emotions,” Dr. Küster, Dr. Vila, Dr. Hernández, Dr. Canales, and Mr. Castillo analyze brand image transfer from video games to brands. Using a concept map technique, the authors analyze the role of emotions evoked by video games in an image transfer framework providing an examination of the differences between types of product placement and their effects in the image transfer. In doing so, the antecedents that cause emotions in a video game and the differences of using one type of product placement or another are also addressed.

“Applications of Branded Entertainment” are addressed in Section 3.

In Chapter 10, “How Branded Entertainment Shapes Consumers’ Brand Attitudes: Evidence from an Advertiser-Funded Program,” Dr. Verhellen, Dr. Dens, and Dr. De Pelsmacker investigate how consumers’ brand attitudes are influenced by an advanced form of branded entertainment: the Advertiser-Funded Program. Based on prior work on brand placement, hybrid advertising, and branded entertainment, a model is constructed that captures the interplay of four key determinants of brand attitudes: program liking, viewing frequency, involvement with the program and program connectedness. Results indicate that liking of the program is transferred to brand attitudes. This effect is complementarily mediated by connectedness with the program, but not by viewing frequency or program involvement. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for theory and practice, and provides an overview of potential avenues for future research.

In Chapter 11, Dr. Alguacil-Jiménez, Dr. Calabuig-Moreno, Dr. Núñez-Pomar, and Dr. Crespo-Hervás present a case study in the context of public sport services in “Brand Perception and its Relation to Perceived Performance of a Public Sports Service.” This chapter analyzes users’ perceptions of the image of the service and its relationship to some performance indicators such as quality of service, satisfaction and future intentions using a structural equations model.

In Chapter 12, “User-Generated Content: Concept, Typology, and Marketing Outcomes,” Dr. Martí-Parreño, Dr. Scribner, and Dr. Ruiz-Máfé analyze the effects of prosumers’ actions on marketing communications. Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory approach, two main types of advertising content created by prosumers (spontaneous content and marketing-oriented content) are identified. Five marketing communication outcomes of User-Generated Content (credibility, message distortion, loss of control on the message valence, involvement with the message, and virality) are also examined. Implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed.

In the last chapter of the book, Chapter 13, “Involving Customers through Co-Creation: An Approach from the Fashion Industry,” Dr. Pardo-Cuenca and Dr. Prado-Gascó analyze co-creation processes and value co-creation in the fashion industry. Although brands such as Adidas, Nike, or Lego have experience with branded online platforms that allow consumers to customize their products and allow co-creation and consumer involvement in product development this chapter provides a novel approach to co-creation processes in the fashion industry. In taking a focused look at fashion as a cultural phenomenon linked to the historical and social evolution, Dr. Pardo-Cuenca and Dr. Prado-Gascó analyze co-creation in the fashion industry as a means of customer value creation highlighting implications for self-identity, self-concept, and sense of belonging through communities of co-creation. Future research areas are addressed, including the need to better understand both virtual communities and physical communities in the developed of co-creation practices.

Branded entertainment represents a great opportunity for brands and media content developers in today’s media landscape such that editorial and advertising content is increasingly mixed. This book
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provides students, teachers, researchers, and key agents in branding, marketing communications, and media with important highlights about: 1) what branded entertainment is, 2) the historical evolution and main types of branded entertainment (e.g., branded films, advergames, branded applications, branded User-Generated Content), 3) case studies of branded entertainment across different industries such as the pharmaceutical industry, the fashion industry, and the entertainment industry, 4) new approaches of measuring branded entertainment effectiveness, and 5) key aspects of ethical and legal issues related to the use of branded entertainment within marketing communications.

The research presented in this book represents a unique approach to branded entertainment and how branded entertainment can be used as an effective marketing communication tools. This collective body of work represented in the following chapters provides an innovative approach to a wide range of branded entertainment formats that can be successfully used to engage consumers in new, value-added marketing communications. By analyzing the potential of branded entertainment as an increasingly important marketing communications tool, this book points out future directions for branding, marketing communications, and the evolution of media content that will help researchers and practitioners find promising areas for business and research.

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