Introduction: What is Advertainment?

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

Factors Fueling the Growth of Advertainment

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

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