
Does Synergy Work? An Examination of Cross-Promotion Effects



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This experimental study was designed to examine the effectiveness of cross-media program promotion. The results showed that the employment of coordinated television and print program promotions led to higher attention from audiences, improved message recall, higher perceived message credibility, more positive attitudes toward the promotion, more positive attitudes toward the program, and greater viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions. By incorporating cognitive variables such as attention, memory, and attitudes, this study bridges a gap in the existing literature on broadcast promotion and has the potential to aid networks, media practitioners, and academic researchers to a better understanding of cross-media promotion effects.

In the 1970s, Fred Silverman, a programmer for ABC, NBC, and CBS said, “fifty percent of success is the program and fifty percent is how the program is promoted” (Bedell, 1981, p. 141). A continuing belief in promotion’s significant role in today’s television programming means network broadcasters have dramatically increased their use of on-air promotions during the past decade. According to previous studies, American broadcast networks were collectively airing more than 30,000 promotions a year; and the Big Four (ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX) were collectively surrendering \$4 billion each year in advertising revenues to carry these promotions (Eastman, 2000).

However, on-air promotion alone is not a sufficient tool for attracting an audience in the face of ever-increasing competition from cable, satellite TV, and the Internet. Broadcasters must employ an integrated marketing promotion approach to maintain and expand their markets. Consequently, cross-media promotion has become a commonly applied strategy because it not only enables networks to reach their audiences, but also utilizes the intrinsic values of each medium (Eastman, Ferguson, & Klein, 2006; Wright, 1981). According to Competitive Media Reporting, ABC spent almost \$4

million on program promotion in *TV Guide* in 2002, NBC spent \$2.6 million, and CBS spent \$3.6 million (Granatstein, 2002).

Contemporary promotion practice has stimulated scholarly research on program promotion. Researchers have attempted to describe characteristics of a promotion and measure its contributions to program ratings (Eastman & Bolls, 2000; Eastman & Newton, 1998; Eastman & Otteson, 1994; Walker, 1993; Walker & Eastman, 2003). The effectiveness of program promotion has been tested by measuring the salient features such as position, construction, type, and familiarity of a promotion (Eastman & Bolls, 2000; Eastman & Newton, 1998, 1999; Eastman & Otteson, 1994). However, most studies on promotion have looked at network television on-air practices. Little research has been done on cross-media promotion, which has been employed in the electronic media industry for decades.

In addition, most promotion studies have commonly used ratings as the major dependent variable to measure promotion effects. The few available studies that addressed cross-media promotion issues also adapted this measurement. For instance, Tang (2006) suggested a synergy effect in cross-media promotion after finding a positive correlation between the frequency of a new network program’s exposure in *TV Guide* and the program’s ratings.

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However, such a behavioral approach cannot provide a precise insight into the causal relation between the audience's exposure to promotion and viewing behavior. Many environmental factors other than program promotion *per se* such as program genres, lead-in and lead-out ratings, and program schedules may influence program ratings. Thus, the advantage of experimental studies is in isolating effects of specific variables by controlling others. In addition, there is a need to incorporate new dependent measures for research on television program promotion. Therefore, this study used an experimental approach to examine the effectiveness of cross-media promotion. By incorporating cognitive variables such as *attention*, *memory*, and *attitudes*, this study bridges a gap in the existing literature on broadcast promotion and has the potential to aid networks, media professionals, and academic researchers to a better understanding of cross-media promotion effects.

Literature Review

Both advertising and program promotions are intended to influence audience decision making. However, advertising targets purchasing decisions, whereas promotion spots are directed toward influencing viewing decisions (Eastman & Bolls, 2000). Nevertheless, communication researchers believe that program promotion research can borrow advertising theories because advertising and program promotions share some similarities. Based on this logic, it is feasible to extend the cross-media advertising theories, such as synergy, to the investigation of the effectiveness of cross-media program promotion.

Synergy is an important concept that many advertisers apply in their media plans. Originating from integrated marketing communications studies, *synergy* has been defined as "the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effect" (American Heritage, n.d.). It is related to, but not the same as, the effect of repeated exposure to a particular message. In an advertising setting, researchers believe:

An advertisement is usually viewed more than once. The effect resulting from repeated exposure to the same advertisement is called the repetition effect and is assumed to be the incremental effect of each additional advertising exposure. The effect resulting from exposure to coordinated advertisements is called the synergy effect. (Chang & Thorson, 2004, p. 75)

Grass and Wallace (1969) initially found that the introduction of a visually new commercial increases viewers' interest level. Viewers would pay more attention to a slightly different commercial than the same repeated one. Later scholars further emphasized this type

of synergy and suggested that a reinforcing effect may be produced when the same message, with variations, is presented to consumers. Brock, Albert, and Becker (1970) claimed that people paid greater attention to new information than a previously encountered message. McCullough and Ostrom (1974) also found that repetition with variations led to a significant positive effect on the viewer's cognitive response activity.

In addition, several studies have directly or indirectly suggested that conveying messages through different media not only can reach different audiences but can utilize the intrinsic values of each medium (Wright, 1981). Harkins and Petty (1981) found that the increase in the number of message sources strengthened information-processing activity. Chang and Thorson (2004) also found that coordinated television and Web advertising resulted in higher attention, higher perceived message credibility, and a greater number of total and positive thoughts compared to repetitive single-source ads.

Among all the cross-media synergy practices and research, television and print have received the most attention because of their unique characteristics. Television, a truly mass medium, has an enormous audience. By advertising in different time slots on different television programs, advertisers can reach a wide variety of individuals (Katz, 1995). The medium is capable of provoking strong emotional responses. However, television advertising needs to be strengthened regularly because it is easily forgotten. Moreover, the pacing of television does not allow the audience to learn complex or detailed content or make very many personal connections with it; in contrast, print allows a reader to use analytical mental processes to absorb the material and make deeper personal connections to the ad content (Perse, 2000). Therefore, television and print advertising can be a "golden combination" that advertisers and communicators have frequently used when planning their multimedia activities.

Congruent with industry practices, a couple of academic studies have demonstrated the synergy effects of television and print cross-media advertising. A mixed study that was conducted in six countries in 1991 strengthened the belief that a mixed-media schedule is more effective than television or print alone. The study investigated the communication value of print and television both separately and combined and found that adding print to a television campaign produced richer and more complete communication (Confer & McGlathery, 1991).

In addition, Naik and Raman (2003) built a model that enabled advertisers to estimate and infer the effectiveness of synergy in multimedia communication. They suggested that synergy existed when television and print advertising were used in consumer markets. Moreover,

Edell and Keller (1999) examined the effects of coordinated TV–print advertising campaigns and found that a coordinated television and print media strategy has led to improved memory performance and greater information processing than either television or print media alone.

Hypotheses

This study investigated synergy effects for cross-media promotion of a television program. In particular, we attempted to discover whether applying a coordinated television and print cross-media program promotion campaign would result in higher attention, higher perceived message credibility, improved memory, more positive attitudes toward the promotion, more positive attitudes toward the program, and greater viewing intent by the audience compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

The following hypotheses were proposed:

- H1: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in higher attention from audiences compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.
- H2: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in higher perceived message credibility compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.
- H3: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in improved message recall compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.
- H4: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in more positive attitudes toward the promotion compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

According to the program promotion studies, promotions can govern audiences' attitudes and viewing intent of a program. How an individual audience feels about the program promotion directly influences how he or she feels about the promoted program (Eastman, 2000). If the audience likes a program's promotion, they are more likely to have positive attitudes toward the program, and—it is hoped—they are more likely to watch this program as well. Therefore, two additional hypotheses are warranted:

- H5: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in more positive attitudes toward the program compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

- H6: Applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in greater viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Method

A between-group experiment was conducted to investigate synergy effects of cross-media promotion. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following four media exposure conditions: (a) PP: two exposures to the target print promotion; (b) TT: two exposures to the target television promotion; (c) PT: initial exposure to the target print promotion, followed by an exposure to the target television promotion; and (d) TP: initial exposure to the target television promotion, followed by an exposure to the target print promotion.

Stimulus

The experimental stimuli consisted of three news stories, two program promotions (including one target promotion and one filter promotion), and five advertisements in both video and print versions. Because prior knowledge might influence audience perceptions of the information (Celsi & Olson, 1988), program promotions unfamiliar to the participants were selected as the stimuli for this study. Additional criteria for the promotions selected called for promotions of programs that had similar ratings, genres, production quality, and broadcasting schedules on the same channel. These criteria were necessary because ratings, genres, production quality, schedule, and channels could influence audience's perceptions of program promotions and programs (Eastman, 2000; Eastman & Newton, 1998; Walker & Eastman, 2003). Finally, two drama promotions were selected in a pretest from a pool of 10 promos for programs airing on BBC America. One of them was randomly assigned to the target program promotion for this study, and the other was randomly assigned to the filter program promotion.

The inclusion of news stories, advertisements, and the filter promotion was to simulate, to a certain extent, a natural promotion-viewing environment and to avoid biases from social desirability. Based on the content that the researchers captured from BBC America, a professional video editor was hired to produce the video stimuli, and a professional graphic designer was hired to create print stimuli based on the visual elements that appeared in the corresponding news footage, commercials, and program promotions.

Participants

This study recruited 173 participants from a large Midwestern university by offering them extra credit ($n = 121$) or cash compensation ($n = 52$). An independent t -test did not find a significant difference between the extra-credit group and the cash-compensation group in terms of their responses. There were 118 female and 55 male participants in the experiment. Their ages ranged from 18 to 56, with a mean age of 23.7.

Procedure

Prior to the experiment, all participants attended a consent presentation that informed them about the experiment, procedure, and their right to withdraw at any time. Each participant was also asked to read and sign a human participant consent form. During the experiment, 84 of the participants were randomly assigned to the repetition conditions (PP = 39, TT = 45), and 89 were randomly assigned to the cross-media conditions (PT = 44, TP = 45). In each condition, three news stories, five advertisements, and three program promotions were shown. The target program promotion randomly appeared at either the beginning or the end of a television advertising cluster, in accordance with the common practice in the industry.

In the PP condition, a piece of print news was shown first, followed by a filter print ad, the filter print promo, and the target print promo. Then, another piece of print news was shown, followed by four filter print ads, and the target print promo. Finally, the third piece of print news was shown.

In the TT condition, a piece of TV news was shown first, followed by a spot cluster with a filter TV ad, the filter TV promo, and the target TV promo. Then, another piece of TV news was shown, followed by another spot cluster including four filter TV ads, and the target TV promo. Finally, the third piece of TV news was shown.

In the PT condition, a piece of print news was shown first, followed by a filter print ad, the filter print promo and the target print promo. Then, a piece of TV news was shown, followed by a break with four filter TV ads and the target TV promo. Finally, another piece of TV news was shown.

In the TP condition, a piece of TV news was shown first, followed by a three-unit cluster with a filter TV ad, the filter TV promo, and the target TV promo. Then, a piece of print news was shown, followed by four filter print ads, and the target print promo. Finally, another piece of print news was shown.

The experiment took approximately 40 min to complete. The participants were asked to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire after being exposed to all

stimuli. The time between the last exposure to the target program promotion and questionnaire completion was the same for all conditions (Edell & Keller, 1999). After participants completed their questionnaires, they were informed about the nature and the goal of this experimental study.

Measures

To test the cross-media promotion effects, the questionnaire included items measuring the following variables: attention, memory, perceived message credibility, attitudes toward the promotion, attitudes toward the program, and viewing intent. In addition, prior program knowledge, participants' demographic information, and media usage history were collected in the questionnaire.

Attention has been defined as the extent to which a medium engages audiences and allows them to be active in the communication process (Allen, Kania & Yaeckel, 1998). In this study, a three-item, seven-point semantic differential scale was used to measure attention (attentive/neglectful, catchy/uninteresting, and impressive/unimpressive; $\alpha = .853$). To measure the perceived message credibility, participants responded to another three-item semantic differential scale (credible/not credible, believable/unbelievable, and reliable/unreliable; $\alpha = .863$). In addition, attitude has been defined as the number of positive thoughts generated by audiences when they are exposed to a media message (Chang & Thorson, 2004). Therefore, to describe the general attitudes toward the promotion and the attitudes toward the promoted program, a third three-item semantic differential scale was used (likable/unlikable, appealing/unappealing, and good/bad; attitudes toward promotion: $\alpha = .870$; attitudes toward promoted program: $\alpha = .922$). Moreover, a fourth semantic differential scale (likely to view/unlikely to view, probable to view/improbable to view, and preferable to view/not preferable to view; $\alpha = .956$) was employed to measure viewing intent, which has been defined as what an audience plans to view (Chang & Thorson, 2004).

In addition, before answering the semantic differential scales, participants were asked to write down the program names and broadcasting schedules, including the day of the week and time of the day, of the promoted programs to measure the variable memory.

Data Screening and Analysis

Proper data screening procedures were applied before the data were analyzed. Researchers used *explore* and *Q-Q plot* in SPSS for data screening. Missing data were

replaced by the means. Independent *t*-tests were used to test the differences of program promotion effects between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the repetition conditions (PP and TT). The critical value of these tests was .05.

Prior Knowledge Check

Among the 173 participants in this study, none of them reported that they ever watched the program promotions or the promoted television programs. Therefore, all the responses were included for the analyses.

Results

Attention

This study found that applying coordinated television and print program promotions resulted in higher attention from audiences compared to using repetitive single-source promotions, $t(171) = 2.897, p = .004$ (see Table 1). In addition, statistical analysis showed a significant difference in attention between cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the TT condition, $t(132) = 2.366, p = .019$ (see Table 2); and a significant difference between cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the PP condition in terms of audience attention, $t(126) = 2.292, p = .024$ (see Table 3). There was no statistical difference in attention from audiences between the PP condition and the TT condition, $t(82) = .115, p = .909$.

Table 1. The Differences Between Repetition Conditions (PP & TT) and Cross-Media Conditions (PT & TP) on Attention, Credibility, Memory, Attitudes Toward Promotion, Attitudes Toward Program, and Viewing Intent

Variable	Media Exposure		<i>t</i>
	Repetition (PP & TT)	Cross-Media (PT & TP)	
Attention	3.7181	4.2998	2.897**
Credibility	4.1826	4.6034	2.119*
Memory	0.8331	1.0527	2.303*
Attitudes toward promotion	3.8613	4.5435	3.365**
Attitudes toward program	3.8946	4.6406	3.593**
Viewing intent	3.2935	3.8387	2.112*

Note. PP=two exposures to the target print promotion; TT=two exposures to the target television promotion; PT=initial exposure to the target print promotion, followed by an exposure to the target television promotion; TP=initial exposure to the target television promotion, followed by an exposure to the target print promotion.

*Difference is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). **Difference is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Table 2. The Differences Between the TT Condition and Cross-Media Conditions (PT & TP) on Attention, Credibility, Memory, Attitudes Toward Promotion, Attitudes Toward Program, and Viewing Intent

Variable	Media Exposure		<i>t</i>
	TT	Cross-Media (PT & TP)	
Attention	3.7331	4.2998	2.366**
Credibility	4.1336	4.6034	1.938
Memory	0.8669	1.0527	1.604
Attitudes toward promotion	3.8534	4.5435	2.831**
Attitudes toward program	3.7113	4.6406	3.718**
Viewing intent	3.1851	3.8387	2.070*

Note. TT=two exposures to the target television promotion; PT=initial exposure to the target print promotion, followed by an exposure to the target television promotion; TP=initial exposure to the target television promotion, followed by an exposure to the target print promotion.

*Difference is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). **Difference is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Table 3. The Differences Between the PP Condition and Cross-Media Conditions (PT & TP) on Attention, Credibility, Memory, Attitudes Toward Promotion, Attitudes Toward Program, and Viewing Intent

Variable	Media Exposure		<i>t</i>
	PP	Cross-Media (PT & TP)	
Attention	3.7008	4.2998	2.292*
Credibility	4.2392	4.6034	1.475
Memory	0.7941	1.0527	2.287*
Attitudes toward promotion	3.8715	4.5435	2.628**
Attitudes toward program	4.1062	4.6406	2.107*
Viewing intent	3.4185	3.8387	1.299

Note. PP=two exposures to the target print promotion; PT=initial exposure to the target print promotion, followed by an exposure to the target television promotion; TP=initial exposure to the target television promotion, followed by an exposure to the target print promotion.

*Difference is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). **Difference is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Perceived Message Credibility

Applying coordinated television and print program promotions resulted in higher perceived message credibility compared to using repetitive single-source promotions, $t(171) = 2.119, p = .036$ (see Table 1). However, an interesting finding was that there was no significant difference among participants' perceptions of message credibility between cross-media conditions and the TT condition, $t(132) = 1.938, p = .055$ (see Table 2); and there was

no significant difference between cross-media conditions and the PP condition as well, $t(126) = 1.475, p = .143$ (see Table 3). The results indicated modest support for H2 that applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in higher perceived message credibility compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Memory

Memory was significantly improved by applying coordinated television and print program promotions compared to using repetitive single-source promotions, $t(171) = 2.303, p = .022$ (see Table 1). The study found a significant difference in memory between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the PP condition, $t(126) = 2.287, p = .024$ (see Table 3). Although the trend was in the right direction (mean of cross-media: 1.0527; mean of TT condition: .8669), the study did not find a statistically significant difference between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the TT condition, $t(132) = 1.604, p = .111$ (see Table 2). There was no meaningful difference between the TT condition and the PP condition, $t(82) = .492, p = .624$. In general, these results supported H3, that applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in improved memory compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Attitudes Toward the Promotion

There was a significant difference between cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and repetition conditions (PP and TT) in positively altering an audience's attitudes toward the promotion, $t(171) = 3.365, p = .001$ (see Table 1). The study also found a significant difference between cross-media conditions and the TT condition, $t(132) = 2.831, p = .005$ (see Table 2); and a significant difference between cross-media conditions and the PP condition in influencing audience attitudes toward the promotion, $t(126) = 2.628, p = .010$ (see Table 3). There was no statistical difference on participants' attitudes toward the promotion between the TT condition and the PP condition, $t(82) = .065, p = .949$. These results supported H4, that applying coordinated television and print program promotion will result in more positive attitudes toward the promotion compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Attitudes Toward the Program

Audiences attitudes toward the program were significantly improved by cross-media promotions compared to

single-medium promotions, $t(171) = 3.593, p = .0001$ (see Table 1). The study also found a significant difference between cross-media conditions and the TT condition, $t(132) = 3.718, p = .0001$ (see Table 2); and a significant difference between cross-media conditions and the PP condition in influencing audiences attitudes toward the promoted program, $t(126) = 2.107, p = .037$ (see Table 3). There was no statistical difference in participants' attitudes toward the promoted program between the TT condition and the PP condition, $t(82) = 1.275, p = .206$. These results strongly supported H5, that applying coordinated television and print program promotion will result in more positive attitudes toward the program compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Viewing Intent

Furthermore, this study found that applying coordinated television and print program promotions resulted in higher viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions, $t(171) = 2.112, p = .036$ (see Table 1). The study also found a significant difference in viewing intent between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the TT condition, $t(132) = 2.070, p = .040$ (see Table 2). Although, again, the trend was in the correct direction (mean of the cross-media condition: 3.8387; mean of the PP condition: 3.4185), the study did not find a significant difference between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the PP condition, $t(126) = 1.299, p = .196$ (see Table 3). There was no difference between the TT condition and the PP condition on participants' viewing intent, $t(82) = .635, p = .527$. Overall, these results supported H6, that applying coordinated television and print program promotions will result in higher viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study was designed to test the effectiveness of cross-media program promotions compared to reliance on single-source promotion. The primary findings of this study were that applying coordinated television and print program promotions resulted in higher attention from audiences, improved memory, greater perceived message credibility, more positive attitudes toward promotions, more positive attitudes toward the promoted programs, and higher viewing intent compared to using repetitive single-source promotions. Overall, this is strong evidence of the need for television programmers to coordinate cross-media promotion campaigns that can reach target audiences across the various media they consume.

Promotion is critical to a program's success throughout its lifecycle. Thus, it is important for networks and local stations to develop effective promotion strategies. Regardless of the strategic audience goal for a particular campaign—acquisition of new audience, retention of existing audience, or other concerns—the results of this study suggest that cross-media promotions have the ability to help managers break through the very cluttered media environment. Cross-media strategies will be more effective than single-source approaches. Although the common wisdom related to the importance of on-air promotion for launching a new program is not without merit, the synergistic effect of cross-media promotion results in greater attention to messages by the audience; and subsequently will deliver more positive attitudes toward the promotional message and the promoted program. This improvement in attention, memory, and attitude lead to higher viewing intent (and should ultimately deliver greater viewing) compared to using repetitive television or print promotions alone. In addition, programmers aiming to provide reminders for the audience of existing shows will want to apply cross-media promotion strategies to better capture audience members' attention and enhance the effect of messages about the show within that target.

By examining the differences between applying cross-media promotions and using repetitive single-source promotions, this study also expands our theoretical understanding of program promotion. Ratings are the major dependent variable that most previous researchers have used when studying program promotion (Eastman, 2000). However, many factors affect ratings. Networks can vary in overall ratings. Lead-ins and lead-outs have significant impact on ratings. Thus, ratings vary by the season of year, time of day, and day of the week (Eastman, 2000; Eastman & Newton, 1998; Walker, 1993; Walker & Eastman, 2003). Therefore, although previous studies have indicated the effectiveness of certain program promotion strategies, they have not provided consistent and precise insight into the causal relations between features of promos and message impact (Eastman, 2000). Most previous research has also used only on-air promos as the basis for the independent variables (e.g., Eastman & Newton, 1998; Eastman & Otteson, 1994; Walker, 1993; Walker & Eastman, 2003).

This study filled a gap in the existing literature by investigating several audience variables including attention, attitudes, memory, viewing intent, and credibility and testing the causal relations between program promotion and its impact on audience's perceptions. In addition, by employing an experimental design, this study allowed the researchers to observe audience reactions to program promotions and to test the cross-media promotion effects more directly.

However, this study only measured a relatively narrow set of programming and in a limited context. Beyond the implications of the results for promotion theory and for media practitioners, there were several unasked questions as well as a few unexpected results that suggest the need for future studies. There was, for example, no significant difference found in participants' memories between the cross-media conditions and the TT condition. We speculate that visual images and the emotional connection to the television spots may trigger vivid short-term memories for the audience, making it easy for participants to remember the information in the short period of time during the experiment. Memories may be also dependent on attention and the total exposure time. Therefore, future studies should further explore the relation between attention and memory; in particular, the question of long-term effectiveness of messages in the various media.

In terms of viewing intent, there was no significant difference between the cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the PP condition, which suggested that repetitive print promotions might also result in relatively high viewing intent. The unique characteristics of print media may explain this intriguing finding. Print media are notable for allowing an audience to take as much time as needed to review information and make personal connections to the advertising and promotional content, which means viewers linked something in the content of the stimulus to something in the content of their own life (Krugman, 1971; Perse, 2000). Therefore, it is reasonable for audiences to generate relatively high viewing intent by making personal connections to the repetitive print promotions. Indeed, this may explain the long-standing importance of print campaigns to television promotion efforts.

No significant difference was found for perceived message credibility between cross-media conditions (PT and TP) and the TT condition, and between cross-media conditions and the PP condition. This result might be due to the characteristics of experimental studies *per se*. In the experimental labs, participants might have assumed that the stimulus message was designed for this particular study. Message credibility may be influenced by other factors such as source credibility and production quality. In addition, building trust takes time. Continuous exposures may help to improve the perceived message credibility. Because the participants had no previous knowledge of the source and only brief exposure during the experiment, their ability to judge credibility was limited. It would be valuable to test the relation between source credibility and message credibility in future longitudinal studies on program promotion.

As is the case with all experiments, this study has its limitations. The study involved two drama promotions.

The genre of the promoted programming could have an effect on results. One should be cautious about generalizing the findings of this study to promotion viewing for other types of programs. In addition, the participants in this experiment do not represent the total population (e.g., no children or older adults). Although researchers did much to increase the validity of this experiment, a natural viewing environment cannot easily be duplicated in an experimental setting. The unnatural viewing environment may cause participants to react differently.

Therefore, it would be valuable to conduct subsequent research on programs with different genres to see how well the results can be replicated with varied stimuli and with different viewing environments. Future studies could also examine the information-processing model and test whether repetitive single-source promotions and cross-media promotions may utilize different information processing routes. In addition, examining the multiple-source effects using other promotional settings such as Web, radio, and both stationary and rolling billboards is recommended. Finally, studies comparing results from various schedules featuring combinations of television, radio, print, and the Internet would be an interesting follow-up to this study. Indeed, seeking the most effective mix of two, three, or more promotion platforms to effectively increase attention, attitude, and viewing intent, as well as ratings, would be an extremely valuable guide to future industry practice.

Despite these remaining open questions, this experimental study on cross-media promotion did find that significant synergy effects existed for television and print cross-media promotions. In an increasingly fragmented media environment where even tiny, incremental audience gains can be significant, these results are important building blocks for program managers and academic researchers.

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