

“Show us your moves”: trade rituals of television marketing

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the professional culture of television marketing in the UK, the sector of arts marketing responsible for the vast majority of programme trailers and channel promos seen on British television screens.

Design/methodology/approach – In research approach, it draws on participant observation at Promax UK, the main trade conference and award ceremony of the television marketing community. Developing John Caldwell's analysis of the cultural practices of worker groups, it uses Promax as a site of study itself, exploring how a key trade gathering forges, legitimates and ritualizes the identity and practice of those involved in television marketing.

Findings – Its findings show how Promax transmits industrial lore, not only about “how to do” the job of television marketing but also “how to be” in the professional field. If trade gatherings enable professional communities to express their own values to themselves, Promax members are constructed as “TV people” rather than just “marketing people”; the creative work of television marketing is seen as akin to the creative work of television production and positioned as part of the television industry.

Originality/value – The value of the paper is the exploration of television marketing as a professional and creative discipline. This is especially relevant to marketing and media academics who have tended to overlook, or dismiss, the sector and skills of television promotion.

Keywords Production culture, Promax, Promos, Television marketing, Trade awards, Trailers

Paper type Research paper

During the 1990s and 2000s television marketing in the UK became increasingly professionalized. Responding to the challenge of capturing attention within a multichannel environment and of reaching audiences across a proliferation of digital platforms, television promotion transformed into a concerted branding discipline as broadcasters sought to position their programmes and channels in a competitive media environment (Johnson, 2012). In the last two decades, television companies have come to rely on internal marketing departments (such as 4Creative in the case of Channel 4) and external agencies (like Red Bee Media in the case of the BBC and UKTV) for their specialism in promotional screen work[1]. Such departments and agencies are responsible for the majority of teasers, trailers, promos and idents that appear within television junctions. At the same, these intermediaries have also become central to creative forms and processes associated with multiplatform promotion. Red Bee Media, for instance, produces 5,000 television promos and trailers a year for the BBC and



UKTV, but has also developed expertise in television companion applications, emergent digital forms that facilitate audience interactions with TV programmes on “second screens” such as tablets and mobile phones.

Once a year, the professional community of British television marketers gathers for its major trade conference and award ceremony, Promax UK. While the conference is aimed largely at entry-level and mid-level staff, the Promax awards are a gala event in the television marketing calendar attended by junior staff and senior management. This essay is based on our own attendance at the Promax UK conference and award ceremony in November 2012[2]. Part of a wider project on the “promotional screen industries” based on fieldwork with advertising and media agencies, broadcast promotion specialists, film and television marketing departments, movie trailer houses and digital media companies (Grainge and Johnson, 2015), Promax UK provided a sense of television marketing as a socio-professional community. According to Tim Hughes, co-chair of Promax UK’s executive committee (as well as being On-Air Marketing Director for Discovery Networks UK), “people would probably think [television marketing] is quite a small industry, but it’s not, it’s huge in the UK. Every TV company has an in-house team, every TV company to some extent works with agencies, and we’re looking at a market that’s got nearly 600 channels. All of those channels have been branded, all of those channels have promotions” (Hughes, 2012). By attending talks, panels and the culminating black-tie award ceremony at the Hilton hotel in London’s Park Lane, we were offered a particular vantage on the trade rituals of television marketing.

In his analysis of the production culture of contemporary film and television, Caldwell (2009) proposes a critical model for thinking about “media production work worlds” (p. 200). Rather than focus on macro-level corporate activities or the textual forms that we see onscreen, Caldwell directs attention to the cultural practices of worker groups. He writes:

Work worlds are important cultural expressions and sociological activities in their own right. They are composed of professional communities and subcultures that undertake many of the activities that other social groups do: 1) to forge and remake their identities; 2) to legitimate their significance and value to neighbouring industrial communities; and 3) to interact ritualistically in ways that allow them to survive and prosper (Caldwell, 2009).

This provides a framework for examining the Promax UK conference and awards. As a trade gathering, Promax acts as a site that forges, legitimates and ritualizes the identity and practice of those involved in television marketing. In what follows we take the Promax conference/awards as a site of study itself. Based on participant observation, our approach is similar to the field research undertaken by Avi Santo (2014) on the trade body LIMA, the main organization for the licensing and merchandizing profession. Attending trade conferences and participating in educational programmes held by LIMA in the USA, Santo observes that such events not only keep members informed about new developments in the licensing market, but also become a means of bestowing career capital – teaching success stories – and of transmitting industrial lore. In a similar vein, Promax UK keeps media marketing professionals informed about current trends, but also acts as a vehicle for peer recognition and for transmitting television marketing lore. We explore this in two ways – by examining Promax UK as a professional gathering and by considering a particular example of promotional work (4Creative’s *Meet the Superhumans* trailer) that was especially lauded at the award ceremony in 2012. Critically, we are concerned with the rituals and creative values that

underwrite the self-identified task of “driving audiences to networks, stations and content brands” (Promax BDA, 2014). This supplements the perspectives offered in this special issue by helping to locate television promotion as a sub-sector of arts marketing with its own disciplinary challenges and opportunities.

Promax and the socio-professional world of television marketers

The UK is sometimes seen as an international leader in the field of television marketing, especially in areas such as motion graphic design. However, Promax UK is part of the global trade association PromaxBDA. As a trade body, Promax was established in the USA in 1956 as a non-profit, membership-driven association for promotion and marketing professionals working in broadcast media. In 1997, it partnered with the Broadcast Design Association (BDA) to become PromaxBDA. By its own account, “PromaxBDA leads the global community of those passionately engaged in the marketing of television and video content on all platforms, inspiring creativity, driving innovation and honoring excellence” (Promax BDA, 2014). Furthermore, PromaxBDA is “the leading global resource for education, community, creative inspiration and career development in the media and media marketing sectors” (Promax BDA, 2014). With members drawn from more than 65 countries, annual conferences take place in “Europe, Arabia, USA, Asia, Australia, Africa, New Zealand, South America and the UK” (Promax BDA, 2014). As can be seen from this list, Promax licences two separate events in the European region, Promax Europe (held in March) and Promax UK (held in November). While the former tends to attract senior-level management as a site for agency-client deals, the latter is more focused on promoting and teaching TV marketing skills and communicating a professional work ethos to junior staff starting out in the profession.

Within the UK, Promax is run by an executive committee of directors who work for agencies and broadcasters and volunteer their time to manage the organization and help it to promote and teach skills within television marketing disciplines. In 2012, this included registered directors from companies including Addiction, BDA, Discovery, Knifedge, Sky and Turner, and a further set of executive members from the companies ATNE UK, BBC, Channel 4, Channel 5, FOX International, ITV and Red Bee Media[3]. Promax UK provides a regionally specific context and forum for the socio-professional aims of the wider Promax community, the conference, in particular, striving “to bring people together and to inspire creativity” (Hughes, 2012). At the conference we attended, the language of creativity was key. While creativity can be seen as the lingua franca of advertising and the promotional industries (McStay, 2013), it was articulated through a particular lens at Promax. In short, TV marketing was positioned as being intrinsic to television production rather than external to it; the discourse of creativity stemmed from an inscribed sense of the Promax community being “television people” as opposed to just “marketing people”. Avi Santo (2014) argues that trade conferences, especially those with a training or educational dimension, help practitioners learn “how to be” in the profession, as much as “how to do” the job. It is with this insight in mind that we can examine in more detail how Promax UK forges and ritualizes a sense of “how to be” in the television marketing world.

This can be seen to begin with the spatial and thematic organization of the conference itself. When we attended Promax in 2012, the conference was divided into two spaces in the hotel in which it was held. This included an informal and creative space upstairs and a more traditional space for panel talks downstairs. The focus on creative skills and inspiration in the upstairs space is perhaps not surprising given that

a significant proportion of the attendees were creatives engaged in the practice of writing and producing short-form promotional work. It also speaks to an industry that is adjusting to the changes wrought by digital technologies. As Tim Hughes (2012) claimed:

The industry used to be bigger. The BBC used to have a massive department [...] now everyone is much more multiskilled. So it used to be about the tricks of the trade. There used to be a lot about what's the latest bit of kit? How do you do this? What's the best in sound design? What's the best in direction? Now it's more about creative inspiration.

In the upstairs space participants were explicitly invited to “get involved” in a multitude of activities. Alongside more conventional show-and-tell sessions, such as demonstrations of new technologies like a 3D printer, were zones focused on creativity, play and competition. In one area delegates could play the slot car racing game Scalextric, courtesy of Universal Publishing Production Music, with trophies awarded to the winners of each race. Elsewhere attendees could make felt holders for their mobile phone or take up some needles and learn how to knit. “*The Ring*” (in association with Spark and Rumble audio design) was a space in which delegates were invited to team up with other participants and compete to make the best radio ads around unusual themes such as “selling guns to nuns”. Finally, there was a large table where participants had to construct something out of Lego in response to a word pulled out of a (Lego) hat, with the best creation being awarded a prize at the end of the conference (Plates 1 and 2). In some respects this upstairs room offered a form of professional training, particularly in the activities focused on skills and information of direct relevance to promotional work, such as creating a radio ad. Indeed, Tim Hughes suggested to us that the fees for attendance at the conference tended to come out of companies’ training budgets. Yet what was on offer here extended well beyond skills-based training for creatives involved in promotional work. Constructing an environment where individuals are encouraged to demonstrate their ability to be creative by making things out of Lego or learning to knit suggests an industry keen to position itself as a site of creative work. Here creativity itself is being flaunted and celebrated by an industry often tainted by the negative associations attached to



Plate 1.
“Expressing
competition through
Scalextric, Promax
UK, 2012”, photo by
authors

Plate 2.
“Expressing
creativity through
Lego, Promax UK,
2012”, photo by
authors



marketing and promotion as distinctly uncreative sectors of the cultural industries. For instance, media scholars like Georgina Born (2004) have argued that the introduction of marketing to the BBC in the 1990s offered a threat to creativity, particularly when used “to batten down and curtail the particular and expansive imaginative engagement required by good programme-making” (p. 301). Laments about creative imagination, or its lack thereof, extend to popular representations of television marketing. Also focusing on the BBC, the satirical television comedy *W1A* (2014) lampoons the brand obsessions of the Corporation in the early 2010s and the inane efforts by marketing and PR consultants to update and “app-ify” the BBC’s logo[4]. Rather than depict promotional work as a professional discipline requiring creative acumen, marketing is seen in these portraits as limiting and vacuous in creative and imaginative terms.

Promax UK actively works to counter this sense of creative marketing torpor, legitimating the significance and value of broadcast promotion to television and marketing communities alike. While we were informed by one seasoned Promax participant that the conference theme was “creativity” the conference programme denied the existence of any theme at all. It stated, “Our theme this year? Well, there is no theme. It’s just Promax, pure and simple. Who we are and what we stand for – which is bringing the industry together collectively to be inspired, to learn from each other through collaboration and bring out our best through competition”. The room upstairs seemed to embody this industrial identity, with its emphasis on playful creativity, collaboration and competition. Indeed, the emphasis on creativity extended beyond the upstairs room and imbued the entire rhetoric of the conference itself. The signposts throughout the conference were large cut-outs of famous icons, from Buzz Lightyear (“To Promax Registration and Beyond”) to Muhammad Ali (“Edit Like a Butterfly, Render Like a Bee”) (Plate 3). Even the conference programme included a page of colourful stickers that delegates could add to the front of their name badge to indicate their main reason for attending (“A new job”, “The food”, “Whatever I can get”, “My boss made me” and “Swingers party”). Giveaways from the conference sponsors – which included a high number of music publishers and audio libraries promoting music for use in promos and trailers[5] – further developed the rhetoric of

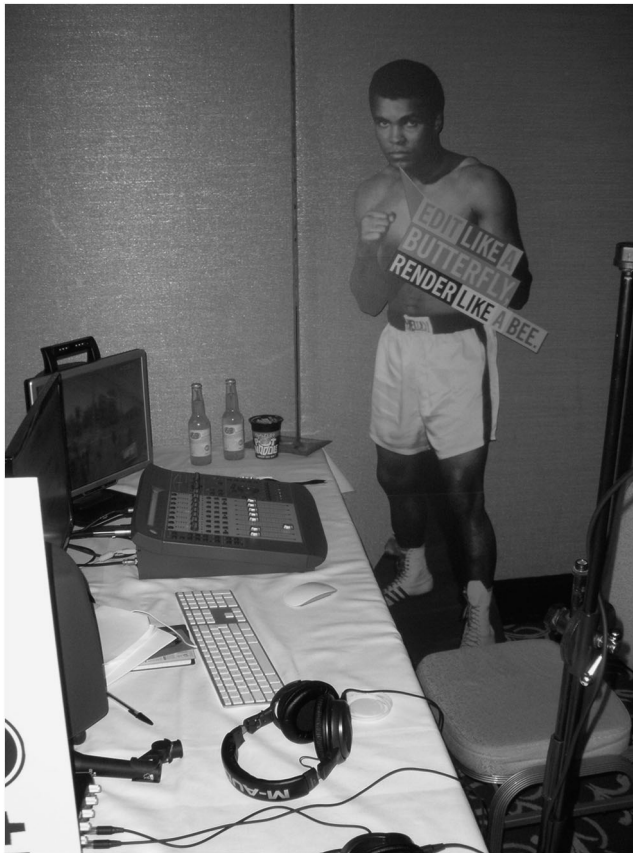


Plate 3.
“Edit like a butterfly,
render like a bee,
Promax UK, 2012”,
photo by authors

playful creativity. While a conference bag included the usual range of branded sweets, mugs and fridge magnets, delegates were also given miniature musical instruments such as harmonicas, kazoos and tambourines (by Warner/Chappell Production Music) that encouraged impromptu busking between panel talks.

In contrast to the upstairs space, downstairs offered a more traditional conference experience where delegates could sit and listen to panels on a range of topics. This included panels that looked “inside” creative and design practices, those which explored market trends, and those which examined professional relationships. It is worth briefly detailing these panels to get a snapshot of the concerns of television marketing professionals as curated by Promax UK in 2012. In the first area, while the panel titled “Show Us Your Moves” explored “the brand challenges, the creative solutions and executions” used for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, another on “The Dark Art of the Title Sequence” offered “a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes of an experimental, influential and exciting industry at the vanguard of graphic design”. Meanwhile, a session on “The Clip-Based Movie (& Other Adventures)” paired Asif Kapadia, the director of the documentary *Senna* (2010), with film critic Jason Solomons to discuss “the process and reasoning” behind the exclusive use of archive material and voice-over in Kapadia’s documentary. This latter panel engaged with conference interests

in filmmaking, accompanying notices for the Promax “short film festival” running throughout the first day showcasing “films made by TV people”. In these examples, looking inside creative and design practice meant showing an interest in film and television production more generally, especially those practices (such as clip-based filmmaking and audiovisual shorts) that resonated with the craft skills of promo design.

Assuming a different focus, another set of panels in the downstairs space explored marketing, media and production trends. This ranged from discussions on the use of transmedia technologies such as second screens and social media, to the influence of fans, to the cultural significance of particular television series (in this case Scandinavian drama). Meanwhile, a panel made up of network marketing directors and creative directors from three different television companies (ITV, UKTV and Discovery) examined professional relationships, taking “an honest look at some great creative and marketing marriages from successful couples”, and providing perspectives on “how to keep creative relationships fresh when the demands on us all increase”.

In different ways, each of these panels offered tutorials on “how to do” the job of television marketing, as well as “how to be” in the professional field. It is suggestive that not all panels focused on marketing practice *per se*. As we have noted, the Promax conference constructed television marketing as being part and parcel of television’s wider systems of creative production. “How to be”, in this sense, sometimes became a question of creative attitude and temperament in this world. For instance, in “The Dark Art of the Title Sequence” a veteran title sequence designer (Richard Morrison) explained the process of title design but also reflected on the creative “mind-wandering” needed to find ideas and the collaboration required to work with directors. With a different focus, “Let’s stay together” discussed the nature of work between creative and network marketing directors while also explaining the importance of moving beyond adversarial thinking, in particular “outdated, old-school advertising ideas of us and them” (Reemah Sakaan, Network Marketing Director of ITV).

Across all panels, there was a focus on experts sharing their personal experience, which was given significant weight. This presented disciplinary knowledge in a certain way as compared to the protocols of an academic conference. There was little expectation that knowledge should be backed up by wider evidence, and there was also reticence on the part of the audience to ask questions. This points to a fundamental aspect of what John Caldwell (2008) calls the “industrial self-reflexivity” revealed at trade events. At an academic conference, questions act as a type of currency; they form part of “how to be” in the academic field and are a basis of the reflexivity of scholarly work itself. This is less the case in the television marketing industry, which is not to imply that the work created within this industry is not based on evidence-led research. Neither is it to suggest that this industry does not ask questions or prize those members of staff capable of answering those questions. However, it does point to the different status that knowledge has within this industry. At Promax, knowledge was a functional property – what do I need to know in order to create great marketing work? It is perhaps no surprise in this regard that the Promax award ceremony recognized, above all, creativity in the campaigns produced rather than the knowledge and research sitting behind those campaigns.

The Promax awards are especially revealing of the way that television marketing constitutes itself as a field of practice. While the disciplines that Promax teaches and promotes have lots of crossover with other marketing events such as D&AD (the UK body representing advertising excellence in “Design and Art Direction”), the Promax awards are designed to reward the disciplines of television marketing. In 2012, this

comprised 40 award categories. As well as categories for best promo (originated and clip-based within the genres of drama, entertainment, factual, sports, children's, film, leisure and lifestyle, and news and current affairs), Promax had awards for specific craft skills (production, directing, graphic design, scriptwriting, sound design, music, editing) and for campaign execution (print, cross-media, launch, sponsorship, idents, on-air planning). Responding to the changing demands of the multiplatform era, new categories had also recently been introduced that addressed the burgeoning relationship between television and digital media. This included "Best game or app", "Best promotion for a website or interactive service" and "Best use of digital media". Although these digital categories would overlap with those introduced at major advertising festivals such as the Cannes Lions and movie marketing ceremonies like the Key Art Awards, Tim Hughes (2012) spoke frankly to us about his discomfort with the "Best Game or App" Promax category, commenting that "best game or app is not something that is particularly a TV skill". He went on: "Generally you go out and commission that from an outside source for your campaign [...] there are other people who award, or reward, that as far as I'm concerned". As revealed here, the prize categories within professional awards maintain boundaries within industry practice, just as they have the potential to test, and ask questions, of the parameters that construct marketing disciplines. The idea of there being such a thing as "TV skill" is central to the rhetoric of Promax, even if such skills are being redefined and reconfigured with television's growing integration with digital media (Bennett and Strange, 2011).

In professional terms, winning a Promax Gold is a significant means for practitioners to gain recognition and peer approval. Accordingly, the composition of those attending the award ceremony was different from the conference. Here, it was the core members of the teams who had been nominated for awards that attended, accompanied by some of the more senior staff who, at least in the case of one company (Red Bee Media), were designated with the specific responsibility of buying a bottle of champagne if anybody on their table won a Gold award. While awards like Promax act as a form of currency that recipients can use in their own career trajectory, they also become important to companies themselves as a means of generating new clients and maintaining existing client relationships.

In the rituals of the conference and award ceremony, Promax UK made visible some of the values underlying the television marketing sector, in particular the way that professional communities express their own values to themselves. Promax painted a picture of an industry especially concerned to express the centrality of creativity to its own professional practice. Mark Deuze (2007) suggests that, as a tactic of media work, peer recognition and awards are "not only a way to take responsibility for one's own professional identity, but also serves as both an economic and artistic survival tool in an otherwise complex, unpredictable, rollercoaster industry" (p. 241). In shoring up the professional identity of Promax members, there was a strong sense of a community positioning itself as being a part of television's creative culture. In transmitting industrial lore, it became as important at Promax for practitioners to be interested in television production trends (such as Scandinavian drama) or to make their own short films as it was to grasp the latest developments in second screen marketing. For an industry whose creative output depends on collaboration within teams with different roles and expertise (from account managers and strategic planners to editors and designers) and between teams and clients themselves, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of the conference and the dinner focused on social interaction. Yet in a highly competitive industry where reputation (for individuals and companies) is central, competition and competitiveness

was also actively encouraged. If the Promax conference functions as a form of training for staff within the industry then part of what is being taught here are a set of professional values in which creativity stems from playfulness, collaboration, competition and the practical application of knowledge.

Meet the Superhumans

The clear winner at the Promax awards in 2012 was a 90-second trailer called *Meet the Superhumans* made by 4Creative to promote Channel 4's coverage of the London Paralympic Games. This swept the board of awards, winning Promax Gold in the categories of Best Direction, Best Editing, Best Long Form, Best Launch and Best Sports Promo (Originated), and also picking up the People's Award, a prize based on a vote for "best promo of the year" among delegates at the Promax conference. In addition, the wider paralympic campaign devised by 4Creative won Best On-Air Campaign (TV Promotion) and was awarded Promax Silver awards in the categories for Best Cross-Media Campaign and Best On-Air Media Planning. By the end of the award ceremony, *Meet the Superhumans* and the Paralympic campaign were instrumental in helping Channel 4 to win the prestigious Promax Gold for "Channel of the Year".

Meet the Superhumans provides a different way of examining how Promax UK forges a sense of professional identity and practice within the television marketing community. In many ways, the trailer became a benchmark for UK television promotion in the year we attended. As such, it is worth briefly analysing the promo to see what kind of creative marketing work was ascribed with value in the early 2010s. Fittingly, the promo became a focus of discussion on the very first panel of the Promax conference, "Show us your moves". As previously mentioned, this panel addressed the variety of marketing challenges and campaign strategies that were developed by marketing practitioners for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. The panel's participants included the BBC's marketing manager for London 2012, the head of marketing for Channel 4, the head of team management and the chief strategy officer for the ad agencies BBH and the McCann Group, and the brand manager for Team GB. The Olympic and Paralympic Games were of central interest to the professional community of UK television marketers because the London Games not only offered the biggest television audience of the new millennium, but were also widely described as the first "digital Olympics" (Royal Television Society, 2013). As a global media event (and branding bonanza), the Olympics gave rise to a host of multiplatform marketing opportunities. And yet, while brands from the BBC to British Airways sought to integrate digital technology and socially networked communication into their media marketing strategies, the promotional form celebrated at Promax – voted "best in class" across six major awards – was a traditional broadcast trailer.

Although London 2012 may have been a digital experience for many – the BBC reported 106 million requests for online video content during the Games (Garside, 2012) and Channel 4 made extensive use of websites, apps, social media and online video to give its Paralympic coverage a strong transmedia dimension – the Olympic and Paralympic Games were still, according to the Head of Channel 4 marketing, James Walker, "very much an old-fashioned TV experience". In other words, it was a "linear, live television experience [...] watched with family and friends" (Walker, 2012). *Meet the Superhumans* became the anchoring text for Channel 4's coverage of the Games. Promoted in the press before transmission and broadcast at 9 p.m. on Tuesday 17 July across 78 television channels, the trailer gave an instant signature to Channel 4's identity as host broadcaster,

and also created clusters of meaning around the channel's tone of approach to disability. Within Jonathan Gray's (2010) typology of media paratexts, the trailer functioned as an "entryway paratext" to Channel 4's Paralympic coverage, a promotional form that framed and set expectations of the Paralympics as a media event (p. 35).

In representational terms, *Meet the Superhumans* showcases the physical strength and resilience of a range of British Paralympic athletes against the thumping soundtrack of Public Enemy's "*Harder Than You Think*". It does not shy away from their disabilities, but represents each athlete as "superhuman". As the film's director Tom Tagholm explains, "we really didn't want to shoot around the particular physical attributes of these athletes and their disabilities. We wanted to absolutely embrace all of that – their stance, the ways they've adapted to their sport, the ways that they use their bodies" (Channel 4, 2012). The film not only confronts fears and prejudices about the physically disabled body, but also asks the audience to reflect on the cause of the disabilities, depicting a bomb exploding, a car crash and a pregnant woman hearing the news that her child will be disabled. This moment, coming in the middle of the film, humanizes the "superhumans" without undermining the broader representation of them as exceptional athletes. While ostensibly a film designed to promote Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics, this promo does much more, challenging assumptions about disabled sport and presenting disability as a story of strength, power, resilience and ability. This was designed to express Channel 4's aim "to make people not worried about talking about disability" (Walker, 2012). As a brand text, the trailer was accomplished in creative terms but also effective in the way that it reconnected with Channel 4's original institutional remit to represent minority voices.

The promo was lauded at Promax for its striking aesthetic and affective function in Channel 4's wider Paralympic campaign. While *Meet the Superhumans* was first broadcast before the Olympic Games, it went back on air in the window between the Olympic and Paralympic Games, accompanied with the tag-line "thanks for the warm up". The Promax Silver awards for Best Cross-Media Campaign and Best On-Air Media Planning were, in part, recognition of the innovative way that the wider Paralympic campaign was paced and placed in relation to a live and unfolding media event. The Promax Gold awards were reserved for the creativity of the *Meet the Superhumans* trailer, however. For all the use of websites, Twitter and social media in Channel 4's Paralympic marketing – the campaign going on to win a BAFTA for digital creativity in 2013 – it was the television promo that was ascribed with greatest value at Promax UK. While games, apps and websites were certainly acknowledged at the 2012 awards, the runaway Promax winner was a promotional text that demonstrated the core skills of trailer making.

In creative terms, the trailer exemplified the art of the broadcast interstitial, what John Ellis (2011) describes as a "class of television output" that stands out "from programmes because they are designed for multiple repetition in the same broadcast space" (p. 64). The Executive Creative Director of Red Bee Media, Charlie Mawer, describes the craft of television promos in the following terms:

In some ways, the same disciplines that you need to make an engaging programme you need to make an engaging thirty seconds – it's still about the craft of storytelling. It's still about engaging people from the first five seconds. In our world, it's about the first five seconds. Have you got a compelling image that is going to make people not hit the remote button because they're in a junction and they can flick around for three minutes before something else starts? Are you telling them something they haven't heard before or asking them a question that demands them to think? (cited in Grainge, 2011, p. 90).

Meet the Superhumans exemplified this principle of short-form storytelling. It not only offered compelling images and music, it asked questions that obliged people to think. Generating significant coverage within popular media, the promo delivered a powerful representation of disability that welcomed repeat viewing, motivated media sharing (the trailer received one-and-a-half million views on YouTube before the Games began), and required significant skill in filming and editing to achieve its impact in 90 seconds.

Like other cultural industry sectors, the television industry is negotiating a complex adjustment to the digital era, including a reconfiguration of the “promotional practices and measurement techniques increasingly necessary to gauge marketing success in the digital space” (Holt and Sanson, 2014, p. 1). While the era of “connected viewing” will no doubt continue to alter the landscape of marketing in the television industry, the craft skills needed to produce effective trailers – short-forms that stand out within linear television but that also lend themselves to being shared across platforms – remain central to Promax. *Meet the Superhumans* epitomized the creativity of the interstitial promo in an Olympic year that was seen as key to the performance of the British media and marketing industries more generally. Specifically, the text was held up by TV marketing practitioners as an example of the capacity for television promos to be intriguing, intellectually stimulating and beautiful in their immediate channel branding function, and in their broader cultural status as media texts.

Marketing work is often maligned in discussion of contemporary television output, sometimes seen as invasive or as something that programme makers can just as easily do. The derision of such work frequently stems from a perception of the creeping centrality of promotional practice to the operations of contemporary television organizations, marketing often seen (both by academic and media practitioners) as a potential threat to the creative autonomy of those who make entertainment media (Davis, 2013, pp. 98-111). However, what risks getting lost in the resulting dialectic between “marketers” and “creatives” is the importance placed on creativity, originality and peer recognition by members of bodies like Promax. Indeed trade gatherings like Promax ask us to take television marketing seriously as a professional and creative discipline. The conference and awards provide a site where professional values are forged, specialist skills are put on show and the status of television marketing is legitimated in discursive terms. As a trade ritual, Promax UK inscribed a sense of “how to do” the job of television marketing as well as “how to be” in the professional field. In this Promax members were constructed as “TV people”; the creative work of television marketing was seen as akin to the creative work of television production, and positioned as part of the television industry. It is perhaps no surprise, in this respect, that primacy was given to the craft skills of trailer making and interstitial promotion within its award system. While there was not an available sticker for our own reason for attending Promax UK – “research grant”, “intellectual curiosity”, “academic fieldwork” – our participant observation of this trade gathering suggests a field of promotional screen work whose professional challenges and contexts of production deserve the same close attention as the television and broadcast industry that it serves.

Notes

1. Red Bee Media is atypical because most of television’s promotional screen materials are produced “in-house” within the marketing departments of broadcasters, networks and studios. Red Bee was formed in 2005 from a commercial subsidiary of the BBC with a creative division that was established out of the corporation’s design and presentation teams (Johnson and Grainge, 2015, pp. 67-76). From its formation in 2005 until December 2015 Red

Bee held the contract to produce the majority of the BBC's promotional content, effectively acting as an external supplier of work that would previously have been produced by the corporation's in-house marketing team. From 2016 the BBC will be taking most of its clip-based promotional work in-house again.

2. This work was based on research supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Grant Number AH/J006475/1).
3. These companies are a mix of creative agencies (Addiction, Knifedge), large communication agencies (BDA), specialists in digital and broadcast promotion (Red Bee Media), and broadcasters (BBC, Channel 4, ITV, Fox, Discovery, Sky, Turner).
4. Network brand redesigns, such as those mocked in *W1A*, are usually taken on by companies and departments like Red Bee Media and 4Creative.
5. This included Universal Publishing Production Music, Felt Music Library, Imagem Production Music, Spark+Rumble Audio Design, Deep East Music, EMI Production Music, The Funky Junkies, West One Music Group, ML Music Library, and Warner/Chappell Production Music.

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