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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSUASION:
A PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE FOR THE
MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

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Kimberly O'Brien

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of the requirements for

Masters degree in Telecommunication

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSUASION:
A PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE
FOR THE
MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

By

Kimberly O'Brien

A THESIS

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSUASION: A PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE
FOR THE MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

By

Kimberly O'Brien

This thesis is the record of the production and an analysis of the use of a promotional videotape produced for the Michigan Renaissance Festival, an outdoor entertainment event that recreates a European village during the sixteenth century. The videotape was used in conjunction with a printed information package in order to secure sponsorships from businesses and to persuade them to support the Michigan Renaissance Festival. This written thesis includes a record of the production, a discussion of persuasion theory, the presentation to sponsors, and an evaluation of the videotape's effectiveness as a public relations device.

A script for the videotape is included, in addition to the information package used by the Michigan Renaissance Festival in its sponsorship presentations.

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Robert W. Savatir

Director of Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II	PRODUCING THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE.....	5
	Pre-production.....	5
	Production.....	8
	Post-production.....	15
III	SPONSORSHIPS.....	20
IV	EVALUATIONS - CONCLUSIONS.....	29

Appendices

A	SCRIPT FOR THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE OF THE MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL.....	31
B	INFORMATION PACKAGE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE.....	35
C	QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR EVALUATION OF VIDEOTAPE.....	43
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	46

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The word "Renaissance" has several interpretations, and has been used to describe everything from a period in art to a hotel in Detroit. Literally, it means a "rebirth", and is most often applied to a broad time frame in European history, roughly the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. It denotes a time of great change in art, commerce, education, and lifestyle, and is looked upon by historians as the dividing line between the medieval and modern worlds. The French historian Jules Michelet described it as "the discovery of the world, the discovery of man",¹ and, while that description may seem a bit grandiose, scholars agree that this "revolution in thought" had its beginnings in Florence, Italy, in the fourteenth century. Painting and sculpture began to show a naturalistic style, expeditions were sent to new lands, the population increased, and new methods in agriculture and education and the development of banking followed. It was a time of great change and growth in Europe.

¹ Esmond Wright, The Medieval and Renaissance World (London: Hamlyn Publishing Ltd., 1979), p. 230.

This unique and fascinating period in history is brought to life every year at the Michigan Renaissance Festival. A Renaissance Festival attempts to capture the spirit of the Renaissance era with a lighthearted approach to entertainment, crafts, and food. It is not "living history", for several accommodations to the twentieth century are made; however, it is a unique and profitable aspect of the entertainment business. A festival is an outdoor event, usually taking place in a wooded area, with dozens of rustic craft shops and food booths combining to form a replica of a European village during the Renaissance era. Entertainers in period costume stroll the dirt paths, and engage visitors in impromptu demonstrations of juggling, magic, and street theater. Merchants ply their handmade wares and villagers bow to the King and Queen as they pass by. All these elements and more combine to create an enjoyable entertainment event.

The Michigan Renaissance Festival is one of four such festivals owned by Festivals Inc., an entertainment business in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Owners Jim Peterson and David Pearson opened the Michigan Renaissance Festival in 1980 on leased land in the city of Clarkston. The festival enjoyed increased attendance every year, until it was determined its growth could no longer be contained in the 40 acre Clarkston site. In 1985, Peterson and Pearson purchased 175 acres of wooded land in Holly, Michigan, approximately nine miles north of the original festival site. Great

expansion and improvements were planned for the 1986 Renaissance Festival, and planning meetings began in December, 1985.

I began my job as the Michigan Renaissance Festival's director of public relations in 1984. My responsibilities include writing and designing press kits, press releases, and brochures, and performing radio and television interviews. It was most important that I publicize the event as much as possible, so when Peterson and Pearson suggested making a videotape of the festival, I eagerly agreed to take the assignment. I had often come up against one major obstacle in my job: many media people that I contacted did not realize the scope of the event, or, worse still, many thought we had something to do with the Renaissance Center, a high-rise hotel in downtown Detroit. I believed that a promotional videotape would be the ideal answer to the question I was often asked, "exactly what is the Renaissance Festival?"

One of the most important uses we planned for the videotape was to combine it with our printed material in a special presentation to local businesses. The Michigan Renaissance Festival had distributed discount coupons toward admission at several Detroit area businesses in the past, but this was the extent of any outside sponsorship. With the move to the new site in Holly, it became apparent that an extensive sponsorship campaign was necessary in order to publicize the 1986 festival.

I found the videotape to be a very helpful tool when contacting businesses. The complete process I used in obtaining sponsorships is presented in detail later in this report, including the basic principles of persuasion theory I utilized.

Although the primary target audience for the videotape was the business community, we found several other uses for it, including presenting it to travel groups, tourism bureaus, and civic organizations. In addition, we had tentative plans to purchase television time to show an edited version. The videotape was also shown instead of slides when I appeared on television interview shows.

Evaluation of the videotape was an important aspect in judging its success. I wanted direct feedback and comments about the videotape, in addition to judging its effectiveness by the number of sponsorships, so I distributed questionnaires to all the business and organizations that viewed it. The results of this questionnaire can be found in the conclusion section of this report, and the printed material used in the sponsorship presentation is included in the Appendix.

CHAPTER II

PRODUCING THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE

PRE-PRODUCTION

Pre-production of the Renaissance Festival videotape began with the decision-making process. The owners of the festival, David Pearson and Jim Peterson, of Festivals, Inc., either own or are involved in four other Renaissance Festivals: Michigan, Kansas, Florida, and Minnesota. The Minnesota Festival is the largest festival in the country, and has a four-person public relations staff that made their own promotional videotape some years earlier. I saw a copy of this tape, and I felt that it did not adequately convey the excitement and pageantry of the Renaissance Festival, especially since it was made using only a $\frac{1}{2}$ " VHS format. A Renaissance Festival is a very colorful event, and the system they chose to produce their videotape did not do it justice. Minnesota's public relations director told me that the tape was never used much as a promotional device, and was edited for the purpose of television commercials only. Keeping this in mind, I was eager to begin making my own videotape for the Michigan Renaissance Festival as part of my duties as public relations director.

There were many times in the past that I wished we had some sort of visual presentation of the festival, and I thought a videotape would be ideal. There were several ways we could use such a tape:

1. As in Minnesota, it could be used as the festival's television commercials;
2. it could be shown to tour group organizers and agents for group ticket sales as a selling device; and
3. the most important use, it could be shown to businesses interested in sponsoring the festival.

As I mentioned earlier, the owners were concerned that the new location of the festival might be a disadvantage. They feared a great loss in attendance unless the Renaissance Festival was especially well-publicized for the 1986 season. We had sought sponsorships in the past, but had not devoted enough time to the endeavor to make it financially successful for us. Sponsorships for the 1984 and 1985 festivals had been limited to a few stores distributing our discount admission coupons. We therefore planned an extensive campaign to secure sponsorships, and the first step was to prepare a visual presentation, including a videotape to highlight the Renaissance Festival.

We first had to decide on the medium to be utilized. The Renaissance Festival is a very colorful, exciting event, and I felt that film instead of videotape would best convey its beauty and fun, especially since Pearson and Peterson were contemplating purchasing television time to broadcast it. However, we had to consider that the cost of the production would be much higher if we used film instead of videotape. We weighed the pros and cons of each medium, and ultimately decided to produce the project on film and then transfer it

it to videotape for viewing.

I met with David Pearson in July, 1985, to work up a storyboard and rough script for the filming, which would take place in September during the Michigan Renaissance Festival's sixth season. Pearson was willing to give me free reign over the project, but he did request that I portray craft demonstrations, food sales, and crowd scenes. The Michigan Renaissance Festival is best known for its period costumes and entertainment, but it's also one of the largest craft shows in southeastern Michigan, and Pearson wanted to emphasize the lesser-known aspects of the festival.

My next step was to find an outlet for equipment rental, which turned out to be more difficult than I imagined. I contacted several Detroit area audio-visual companies, and was told by all of them that they had closed their film department and switched to video production. In desperation, I called a friend at a local animation company and asked for advice. She recommended Victor Duncan Inc., in nearby Troy, Michigan. They assured me that, although they dealt primarily in 35mm and 70mm film equipment for professional production, they would be able to provide me with a basic 16mm package. I next arranged to purchase eight 400 foot reels of 7291 16mm film stock from Producers Color Service of Detroit, and four reels of $\frac{1}{4}$ " audio tape from Joseph Productions of Southfield. I planned to process the film stock at the laboratory of Producers Color Service.

PRODUCTION

Once the pre-production planning was completed, the production of the promotional videotape began. I was very pleased with the 16mm equipment from Victor Duncan, and was eager to begin. The package consisted of an Arriflex 16-S camera, lenses, zoom motor, battery pack, two tripods, film magazines, and film change bag. This package did not include any equipment for sound recording; the cost of a system utilizing a synchronized sound track was far beyond my budget, so I also rented a Nagra $\frac{1}{4}$ " tape recorder to record a "wild" or unsynchronized soundtrack.

I planned the shooting schedule to take place over the final three weekends of the festival so that I could film a great variety of events while allowing for the possibility of bad weather. In addition, the nature of the entertainment (mimes, jugglers, magicians etc.) made a flexible schedule important. I also had to consider my regular duties as public relations director, such as leading press tours and giving interviews during the festival day. I estimated filming approximately five hours during the nine hour festival day, for a total of thirty hours over the period of three weekends. In addition, I also planned to tape sound effects such as crowd sounds, cheers, and music for the wild soundtrack on the final day.

Filming began on Saturday, September 14. The weekend's theme was "Knights and Chivalry", and several equestrian events were planned. Shooting conditions were ideal, as the day

proved to be sunny and the crowds were not too heavy. I concentrated mainly on an event called "quintaine jousting" in which riders attempt to lance a ring held by a mechanical knight. I wanted to convey the grandeur and excitement of knights racing on horseback, so I decided to shoot from a low angle up at the riders, giving the impression of a looming figure. To achieve this, I entered the jousting ring and set up a low "baby" tripod about fifty feet from the mechanical knight. In this way, I could get a low angle shot of the horse coming directly at the camera. This was admittedly rather a dangerous situation, but the riders assured me that they could reign the horses to the side as they passed the camera. I completed several sequences safely until one of the horses reared when it approached the camera; the rider fell off, but fortunately was unhurt. After this near-mishap, I continued shooting, but at a safe distance.

I filmed the next sequence at the "Flying Dragon", a human-powered swing in the form of a giant dragon. The bright sunny day made shooting conditions ideal, with very little shadow. After filming an establishing long shot, I attempted to zoom in on the riders, but the movement of the swing was too fast to follow without blurring the action, so I had to content myself with closeups of the patrons exiting the ride.

After filming several crowd scenes, I set up my equipment at one of the outdoor stages in order to film our court jester and his magic act. I was looking forward to this sequence, for he is a remarkably animated fellow, in a wildly colorful

suit. Unfortunately, the stage was surrounded by trees, which put a portion of his act in shadow. I didn't realize how much in contrast this would appear with the earlier scenes until I saw it in post-production; the sequence was not used in the final edit.

The next scheduled sequence was Jonathan the Foole (Jonathan Haglund), an expert juggler and tightrope walker. I wished desperately for some sort of high platform so that I could film him at roughly the same level as he traversed the rope, but as this was impossible, I had to be satisfied with shooting from directly below the tightrope. The lighting conditions were similar to the court jester's scene, but the trees were not dense enough to completely shade the scene. This sequence proved to be one of the best, with the leaves throwing just enough shadow to give the scene good depth.

I next began to set up to film the festival front gate sequence. The front gate resembles a rustic castle entrance, with a turreted walkway about twenty feet above the ground. As in previous sequences, I wanted to shoot at the same level as the figures on the walkway, which proved difficult but not insurmountable. I removed the tripod from the camera and stood on a ten-foot ladder while shooting up at a slightly low angle. Although this perch was rather shaky, most of the sequence was satisfactory and was used in the final edit.

I used the ladder again in the next sequence, which was the daily parade, in which most of the entertainers walk through the festival grounds. I wanted to be above the action shooting

down, since I felt this would capture the necessary long shots. This also resulted in a well-composed scene, most of which was used in the final edit.

It was late afternoon when I began shooting scenes of craft demonstrations. The crowds were heavy by this time, and I was having trouble maneuvering the equipment. (The 1985 attendance was over 94,000, with daily attendance averaging 7,000 to 10,000). I tried to film a glass blowing demonstration, but was so hemmed in by the crowds that it was very difficult to get a steady shot. However, a local photographer saw my plight and barreled his way through the crowd, clearing a path for me to shoot. This scene also proved very successful, despite a bit of shakiness in the framing.

Most of the next shooting day was sunny and cloudless, but a few other problems arose. One of the most difficult sequences I'd chosen to film was the "4 Swords", a group of swashbuckling fencers. Although their frantic battles appeared to be spontaneous, they were carefully choreographed. Since I could anticipate most of their movements, I thought it would not be too difficult to get a variety of shots. However, the crowds were also heavy that day, and quickly formed a tight circle around the fencers. I tried to run from one side of the circle to the other to get different angles, but the crowds made this almost impossible. The footage I was able to shoot was satisfactory, but did not have a good variety of shots.

I was afraid of the same problem with the Maypole dance, my next scheduled shoot. However, it turned out to be one of the best shots in the production. The Maypole dance consisted of the Royal Court and other entertainers dancing as they wound ribbons around a tall pole, and the crowds gave them a wide berth. I was able to get shots at different angles, and I even stood beside the pole as the ribbons wound around me. I was pleased with most of this sequence, and it was used in the final edit.

The next scheduled shoot was "Human Chess". A large canvas "chessboard" is laid on the ground, and the Royal Court and festival goers become the chess pieces, their moves directed by King Edward. Once again, I wanted to shoot from a position high enough to encompass the entire action, so I placed my trusty ladder on the horse arena reviewing stand. This sequence was visually satisfactory, but unfortunately, it is not very clear what the participants are doing, since the "chess board" is hidden from view.

Although I didn't plan it, I finished most of the awkward or difficult shoots on the first weekend, which was fortunate because the weather refused to cooperate during the next two weekends. September 21 and 22 was the "Children's Weekend", and I hoped to get good crowd shots on these days. Unfortunately, the day was rainy and overcast, and I was forced to wait out several cloudbursts. I tried filming scenes under the roofs of craft shops and food booths, but the footage was too underexposed to be used. I was very

worried at this point, because I still had several scenes to shoot. The weather cleared a little in the late afternoon and I continued to shoot, but I knew the overcast lighting would not match the scenes I'd filmed the previous weekend. The next scheduled sequences were scenes of musicians, such as bagpipes, harpists, and groups playing traditional instruments of the Renaissance era. Although a little underexposed, most of these scenes turned out fairly good. However, most were not used in the final production because of the audio track; the use of an unsynchronized soundtrack made all the close-ups of musical groups confusing, since their playing obviously did not match the audio. I subsequently decided to leave these close-ups out of the final edit.

The final day of filming, September 28, was partly sunny, and I hoped to reshoot some of the previous weekend's sequences. I filmed several juggling acts, and was very happy with the results for the most part. I was especially pleased with the footage of "Crazy Richard", our resident fire juggler. I was able to get close enough to capture the reflection of the flaming clubs in his eyeglasses.

Another juggling act, "The Flaming Idiots", didn't turn out quite so successfully. As I mentioned earlier, although the acts appear spontaneous, they are quite carefully rehearsed; if I was unable to film enough of a variety of shots and angles, I would wait until the next performance to film cover shots. I filmed the wild juggling of the

Idiots in long and medium shots (I was unable to get closer because of the crowd), and planned to film close-ups at their next performance. When I set up my equipment later, I was surprised to find that they had completely changed their costumes; this was the first and only time they had decided on a costume change. After they finished, they were most apologetic, but I was unable to find time to reshoot. Only part of the earlier footage was used in the final edit, because it lacked a variety of shots.

I finished the final shooting day with a performance by "Amen Ra", an African drum and dance troupe. As with the other musical groups, the use of an unsynchronized soundtrack would make the close-ups confusing. However, I was able to shoot several crowd scenes that I was able to use for cutaway shots.

On the closing day of the festival, I began taping the audio track using the Nagra tape recorder and a "fishpole" boom microphone. Since I had planned a wild soundtrack and voice-over narration, I was not too concerned with exactly matching the sound effects with the film I'd shot. I planned to concentrate on a musical background combined with such sound effects as crowd noises, cheers, and laughter.

There were advantages and disadvantages to the sound recording system. When filming, I was able to set up my equipment behind the crowd and use a zoom lens for close-ups; this did not distract the crowd from the entertainment and was unobtrusive for the most part. However, when recording

sound, I had to stand next to the stage in order to hold the boom as close to the action as possible. I'm afraid I drew attention away from the acts, but the entertainers were very gracious about it. The Nagra recorder came equipped with headphones so I could check the level and sound quality of the audio as I was taping it. Unfortunately, the noise of the wind did not register well; I didn't realize how distorted the musical portion of the audio track was until I heard a playback later in the week. I was disappointed to realize that the live music tracks could not be used; a musical background would have to be recorded in a studio and added in post-production.

POST-PRODUCTION

As I mentioned earlier, a great deal of thought went into the decision to choose film over video; one of the determining factors was the availability of an editing system. There were several pros and cons I felt applied to film editing. I had had considerable experience in Super 8mm editing and limited experience editing videotape. In addition, I would be able to complete a rough edit at home using only two rewind reels and a splicer if I chose film. However, both film and videotape had a distinct disadvantage in that I could not freely change scenes, rearrange shots, or try different effects in a studio or production lab without meticulous preplanning.

I had originally planned to complete the final edit at Allied Studios in Detroit, but when I discovered off-line editing with an operator to assist me would cost \$100 per hour, I was afraid that any experimentation would be prohibitively expensive. I felt that the cost would inhibit the "Let's try this and see how it looks" method of editing that I'd found successful in the past. I simply did not have the expertise to know what would look good without trying it out first, and the \$100 per hour charge would certainly limit creativity. Fortunately, Dr. Kent Creswell told me about Jim Sumbler, a film editor in the Instructional Media Center of MSU. Jim is a wonderful, funny, creative man, who agreed with my views on the aesthetic advantages of film, and was most encouraging with my less-than-confident endeavor. In addition, the IMC's charge was only \$20 per hour for Jim's time and \$10 per hour for the use of the Steenbeck editing system. So, with a sigh of relief, I began editing in January, 1986.

Jim began by splicing my five work prints onto two large reels. He provided me with two rewind reels, a viewer, and a splicer, and I began making a list of the frame edge numbers that divided each scene. With this numbers list completed, I was able to make a "paper edit", which consists of writing a synopsis of each scene plus the edge numbers on separate pieces of paper, and arranging them in different possibilities. Then Jim and I began the task of culling the obviously unusable shots, such as those that were under- or over-exposed, or poorly framed or focused. Once this rough

edit was complete, we could begin picking "The good from the good". Jim Sumbler's philosophy of editing was that "the difficult part is deciding what to use from the good shots; it's easy to throw away the bad." I learned this lesson very well as we discarded good shots in order to tighten the pace of the production.

As we switched scenes back and forth, I realized I would have to make extensive changes in the script. I didn't want a descriptive narration of each scene, but the script did need to include the three main areas of the festival: entertainment, food, and crafts. As we neared the completion of the editing, I revised the script several times and began to look for a narrator. The festival's entertainment director recommended David DuChene, an executive from Greenfield Village with extensive theater experience, and we planned a recording session for late April. The festival owner had suggested that the narrator use an "old English" accent to fit in with the Renaissance theme, but I felt this would be confusing and difficult to understand, and might detract from the visual.

Although he is not a professional, David DuChene is a very versatile announcer, and he gave a perfect reading of the script in only one take! We made a "safety" copy just in case, but the sound technician and I were astounded at the ease with which David read the narration. With renewed confidence, I began making plans for the musical background.

As I mentioned earlier, the audio recording I'd made of the musicians at the festival couldn't be used because of the wind noise. I contacted one of the festival groups, "A Reasonable Facsimile" composed of Ann and Rob Burns, and they agreed to come to MSU to tape a soundtrack. Using an array of period instruments, such as recorders, krummhorns, citterns and mandolins, they arranged a selection of Renaissance tunes to fit the four-and-a-half-minute narration. They also taped shorter versions of the music (sixty and thirty seconds) to go with the television commercials I planned to edit from the film. The audiotape was then transferred to magnetic tape, and the final editing began.

Prior to beginning the final edit, Jim and I filmed the production's opening scene in his studio. I had decided to give the film a "documentary look" by highlighting the historical theme of the Renaissance Festival. Using an easel, we filmed several shots of Brueghel and Dürer paintings. I felt this provided a nice introduction and transition to the festival footage.

Editing to the soundtrack was the most painstaking part of the editing process. I was very grateful for Jim's expertise as we matched the film to the script. He could easily determine exactly where to cut the film; often it was the deletion of a single frame that made the production precise.

With the final editing complete, we could begin the process of transferring the film to videotape. I was looking forward to the transfer process at Allied Studios, since

several shots that may have been over- or under-exposed could be enhanced during the transfer process. Also, we were able to add such effects as a credit roll, a closing wipe, and color enhancing. When the master was finished, I ordered several half-inch and three-quarter-inch duplicates, and the distribution to potential sponsors began.

CHAPTER III

SPONSORSHIPS

As I mentioned earlier, the festival owners had decided that obtaining corporate sponsorships was an important priority for the 1986 season. In order to publicize the festival's new location, we hoped to tie our advertising campaign with those of local businesses. These could take several forms; among those we offered were:

1. Co-op advertising Sponsoring companies would mention the festival in their advertising, and the festival would reciprocate.
2. "Bounce Back" discount coupons The festival would distribute the sponsoring company's discount coupons in exchange for the same.
3. Sponsor's Day A festival day would be dedicated to the sponsoring company, with all festival advertising identifying it as such.
4. In-Store Promotions Costumed festival performers would appear at the sponsor's retail outlets.
5. Treasure Hunts Sponsor's product or service is offered as a prize in treasure hunt on festival ground.

These and other sponsorship opportunities were part of a "pitch kit" we sent to prospective sponsors. I began this laborious process by contacting every business within a twenty-mile radius of the festival. When I called each

business, I asked to speak to either the advertising or public relations director, as they were the ones usually in charge of any fund raising efforts. I then described the festival, and asked if they would be interested in reading a more detailed package of material. 182 businesses were called; of these, 65 agreed to accept the pitch kit. After allowing them approximately ten days to read the material, I contacted each executive again and asked for an appointment to discuss sponsorship possibilities. The festival's general manager, Mary Mann, and I were able to make appointments with nineteen companies. These nineteen companies were going to be the target for the promotional videotape, and would be the real test of my "powers of persuasion".

Our presentations to these companies included the following: an introductory speech describing the festival and its history, a quick overview of our pitch kit, and a viewing of the promotional videotape. Mary and I usually gave this presentation to the company's P.R. director and the executive in charge of making the final decision, usually the vice president of sales or general manager. Sometimes we would have to make more than one appointment, and make our presentation to several executives on different levels of the hierarchy. These presentations were the most important part of our campaign to obtain sponsorships. Of course, most of my job as public relations director involves some level of persuasion, such as persuading the media that our event is "news worthy", persuading the public to attend

an event that is quite different from most entertainment, and most recently, persuading businesses that the Renaissance Festival would appeal to their clientele. Sometimes the job could be quite frustrating; persuading someone to form a positive opinion about something they know nothing about, or convincing a jaded reporter that this event is different from all the rest can be very difficult. However, the task didn't seem quite as daunting when the power of persuasion was applied.

Persuasion theory stems from the behavioral sciences, such as psychology, sociology, and communication, and basically is the study of the process involved in attitude formation. Closely related in the persuasion process is opinion change, which is the specific application of an attitude to a given object or issue.² The process of persuasion depends on the following variables:

the source, which is the originator of the persuasion attempt; in our quest for sponsorships, the P.R. department was the source;

the message, or communication between the source and the receiver, which in our case was the premise that businesses would benefit if they chose to sponsor the festival;

the channel, which is the medium used to convey the message. Our sponsorship campaign was in the form of phone calls,

²Doug Newsome, Writing in Public Relations Practice (California:Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981), p. 59.

letters, an information package or "pitch kit", an in-person presentation (which is considered a "personal channel"), and the promotional videotape (which is considered a "mass media channel");

the setting, which is the environment in which the message is received. In most of our cases, the presentation took place in the prospective sponsor's office, usually with a group present;

the receiver, which is the audience that receives the message. Our target audience for the videotape were those executives who expressed an interest in sponsoring the festival, and would arrange an appointment to see our presentation;

the effect, which is the change, if any, in the attitude of the receiver.³ Our hoped-for effect was that the businesses would form a positive opinion of the festival, and agree to sponsor it in at least one of the forms mentioned earlier.

According to persuasion theory, several factors can affect these variables, both from the standpoint of the receiver and of the source. These factors from a receiver's point of view include variations within the source, within the message, differences in the channel used, and certain variations in the setting. From the standpoint of the source,

³Kenneth Andersen, Persuasion Theory and Practice (Massachusetts:Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1971), pp. 23-26.

these variations might include his credibility, social power, relationship to the receiver, and various demographic characteristics such as gender, age, etc.⁴ When considering these variables, I'd like to relate them to the persuasion process we used in our presentations to businesses. (For reasons of privacy, I have identified by name only those companies that agreed to sponsor the Renaissance Festival).

Once our first appointment was confirmed, Mary and I planned a rough outline of our presentation. Although our basic message remained the same, namely, the benefits of sponsorship, we would sometimes change it slightly depending on the type of business with which we were in contact. For example, one of our sponsors was Hamady Brothers Supermarkets in Flint, Michigan. While Hamady is a successful supermarket chain, the retail outlets are found only in Flint and cities in the northern lower peninsula. Because of their limited area, we did not mention the festival's appeal in the Detroit area. (Approximately 70% of our patrons are from Oakland, Wayne, and Macomb counties, which are south of the Flint area). Instead, we emphasized the fact that the new festival site in Holly is only minutes from Flint, and that we had recently purchased commercial time on four Flint radio stations. We stressed the fact that we expected a great increase in attendance from the Flint area, and subsequently, Hamady Supermarket

⁴Erwin Bettinghaus, Persuasive Communication (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p.23.

agreed to allow Renaissance Festival ticket outlets in three of their stores, and to include our logo in their newspaper ads.

An example of a variation in setting occurred when we met with representatives of the Coca Cola Company. Our first meeting took place in my office, where Mary and I presented our material to the regional sales manager and the marketing director. They gave us a tentative promise to include the festival in their new promotion, the "Coke Gold Rush", in which various prize offers were hidden under bottle cap liners. They gave us a firm commitment after we gave our presentation at a large convention of Coke's regional and district sales managers. The Renaissance Festival's cap liner offer (buy one ticket, get one free) was one of our most successful sponsorships, and helped push our attendance to over 125,000.

One of the variations from the standpoint of the source is its relationship to the receiver. An example of this relationship can be seen in our sponsorship by Beck's Beer. Archambeau Distributing is the Great Lakes regional distributor for Beck's Beer, and had been involved in a limited sponsorship with the festival since 1983. This has included distributing festival discount coupons to its retailers, and servicing the beer tents at the festival. Because we had an established relationship with this company, it was easier to persuade them to take a more active role in festival sponsorship. Archambeau Distributing agreed to pay for our

ticket printing (at a cost of \$10,000) in return for the Beck's Beer logo printed on every ticket.

Another important factor in predicting the effect of the message is the reference group to which the receiver belongs. A reference group is defined as "any group to which a person relates his attitudes [which] sets group standards or norms of behavior."⁵ Therefore, the communicator must plan his message accordingly for maximum effect by focusing the attention of the receiver on a reference group favorable to the message.

Bettinghaus states that "the family is one of the strongest reference groups [and] if the family is against it, the receiver probably will also be against it."⁶ Keeping this in mind, we tailored our message to the Fred Sanders Confectionery Company accordingly. Sanders is a 100-year-old Detroit company that specializes in ice cream and other desserts in its family restaurants. It had been involved in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings several years earlier, and its outlook then was bleak. However, after a valiant reorganizing effort, Sanders regained its old success and began to expand. When we approached Sanders, we emphasized the festival's own expansion and its appeal to a family audience. As the sales managers watched the promotional videotape, we pointed out the great number of children in

⁵Ibid., p.27.

⁶Ibid., p.29.

several scenes, and mentioned that 60% of our patrons came to the festival in a family group, according to our 1985 polls. As a result, Sanders became one of our most loyal and enthusiastic sponsors, providing the festival dessert booths with cakes and hot fudge sundaes at no charge, and organizing a Renaissance Festival coloring contest for children at each of their stores.

We used the same "reference group" strategy when we contacted the American Motors Corporation/Renault company. AMC/Renault had been directing its Renault cars to an up-scale market, so we planned our presentation accordingly. We stressed the income level of our patrons (45% of our patrons have an income of \$25,000+, according to 1985 polls), and the location of our festival office in Birmingham (a high-income Detroit suburb). Renault subsequently provided us with cars for the festival management staff, and offered their customers a free festival ticket with every test drive at their dealerships.

I do not wish to give the impression that all our presentations immediately resulted in a sponsorship agreement. With several of the companies, we had to give our presentation over and over again to different executives before we got a sponsorship commitment. One company was shown the presentation four times before a high-level executive rejected our sponsorship request. Needless to say, this was very frustrating. However, for the most part, our persistence paid off. This is a reflection of another

aspect of persuasion theory, which is the effect of repetition of the message. Bettinghaus speaks of the continued reinforcement of the desired stimulus-response pattern, or the repetition of the message combined with an occasional positive reinforcement.⁷ We utilized this principle when dealing with a potential sponsor that had shown interest but was reluctant to commit. We initially asked the company to distribute our discount coupons at its retail outlets. Since the company executives remained undecided, we offered to pay all printing costs and provide free tickets for all the company's employees. Finally, when they still were unsure, we offered a \$1.00 commission on every \$7.95 festival ticket they sold to their customers. This "rewarded repetition" is what eventually helped us to secure the sponsorship.

⁷Ibid., p.61.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATIONS - CONCLUSION

Besides fulfilling the requirements for my Masters of Arts degree production thesis, my primary objective for the promotional videotape was to benefit the Michigan Renaissance Festival. Although our presentation to prospective sponsors included printed material, the videotape was important for its additional visual impact. We did not achieve the sponsorships using only the pitch kit or videotape alone; instead they were combined in a persuasive presentation that greatly benefited the Michigan Renaissance Festival with increased attendance and profits (1985 attendance was 94,000 - 1986 was 125,000). It was primarily the additional advertising through the sponsoring companies that caused this great increase in attendance.

Although the primary use of the videotape was to secure sponsorships, I found several other uses for it. As I mentioned earlier, we had planned to edit the videotape into sixty and thirty second lengths for the purpose of television commercials. Unfortunately, television advertising rates in the Detroit area are very expensive; however, we do plan to purchase TV time for the 1987 festival. The videotape can not be identified as being a certain festival year; it will certainly be adaptable for commercial use for

years to come. Another interesting use for the videotape was one that I had not foreseen. As P.R. director, I am often asked to appear on local television interview programs to promote the Renaissance Festival. The producers would often ask me to bring our entertainers to perform their acts, until they realized that this would necessitate more studio room, extra camera shots, etc. The videotape solved this problem, since it showed the entertainers in the festival setting, plus provided narration and a musical accompaniment.

Evaluation of the videotape was through the use of a questionnaire I distributed to each executive that viewed it. I wanted to get opinions on the technical quality of the videotape, so I contacted broadcast professionals in the Detroit area, asked them to view the videotape, and respond to the questionnaire. It was basically the same questionnaire I had given to the business professional; however the business survey asked questions concerning fund raising, and the broadcast survey focused on its technical quality and its effectiveness as an advertising tool. In all, thirty five questionnaires were distributed.

A tally of the questionnaires indicated a mostly positive response to the videotape; 83% rated its technical quality as "excellent", and 66% rated its informative quality as "good". 100% rated the narration as "excellent", which is a great compliment to David DuChene's work. Reaction to the editing was evenly split between "good" and "excellent", a response to which I owe a great deal to Jim Sumbler's help.

The responses to the open-ended questions were informative and sometimes surprising. A few of the comments concerning

the videotape's strongest point included "a fun way to look at history", "strong visuals", and "technically tight". Overall, most viewers felt that the videotape's strongest point was its visual impact. However, there was no recurring response to the question concerning the videotape's weakest point. Replies ranged from "more emphasis on audience participation" to "perhaps more about food". I found these comments to be helpful criticism, and will be useful when I edit the tape for television commercials in the future.

Another aspect that should be considered when judging the videotape's success is the cost factor. The videotape was completed within our planned budget and production schedule, despite the complications caused by our choice of film over videotape. I spent approximately thirty hours filming over a period of three weekends, and sixteen hours editing at MSU. The completed videotape was ready to use for our first sponsorship presentation in June.

The production of the videotape was also far less expensive for the festival owners than a professional production would have been. Total cost for the production was approximately \$3,000 (this figure does not include my time as director, writer, camera operator, editor, etc., since it was considered part of my P.R. duties). Jim Sumbler told me that a similar professional production would have cost at least \$10,000.

In conclusion, I feel that the production of the promotional videotape and the "crash course" I received in persuasion was very beneficial to me as a public relations writer, and to the owners of the Michigan Renaissance Festival.

APPENDIX A

SCRIPT FOR THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE
OF THE MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

VIDEO

DISS TO BRUEGHEL PAINTINGS

DISS TO MRF BANNER

SLOW ZOOM OUT

DISS TO HORSE

DISS TO SWING

AUDIONarrator (VC) (Music under)

The late fifteenth and
sixteenth centuries is better
known as the Renaissance era-
a time of a great cultural
and artistic revival.

It was a bridge between the
medieval and modern worlds,
a time of lords and ladies,
peasants and rogues, and
great revelry and
merriment to celebrate
Nature's bounty.

This spirit of celebration
brought to life each year
at the Michigan Renaissance
Festival. Come, join us on
a tour of our magical village
as brave knights and noble
steeds and mystical Flying
Dragons transport visitors
back to a nobler era. As
you wander through the
Festival, something wonderful
is around each corner...

DISS TO TIGHTROPE

or perhaps even high overhead!
The rolling wooded acres of the
Festival grounds provide a
perfect natural setting for a
great variety of crafts, games,
and continuous entertainment.

DISS TO PARADE

The color and pageantry of
the Renaissance era abound as
the grand parade winds throughout
the village. Jugglers, jesters
and musicians join the Royal
Court as they call merry
greetings to the visitors.

DISS TO GLASSBLOWER

Tucked along the wooded village
lanes are over one hundred craft
shops, where expert artisans
demonstrate their timeless
crafts, creating beautiful
handmade wares in the manner of
the sixteenth century.

DISS TO MAN EATING

Savory foods await the heartiest
appetites. Choose from dozens
of tempting dishes and forget
the silverware---it's the
Renaissance way!

DISS TO CRAZY RICH

You'll marvel at the many feats
of daring performed by our
villagers. Audience
participation is welcome on the
rustic wooden stages. Feast
your eyes on the madcap antics
of our wild jugglers, as they
perform for your pleasure.

DISS TO IDIOTS

DISS TO HUMAN CHESS

The Renaissance Festival is an
especially magical place for
children. Little lords and
ladies become honored members
of the kingdom as they enter
the Children's Dell, a special
miniature village just for kids.
Young visitors may be knighted
by King Edward and Queen
Katheryn, or join in the story
telling, games and crafts
featured in the Children's Dell.
As you become involved in the
entertainment you'll find that
the festival is surely a place
for young and old!

DISS TO KING AND KIDS

C.U. KID'S FACE

DISS TO JUGGLING KID

DISS TO MAYPOLE

You'll marvel as the dainty maids
and dashing lords, the peasants
and rogues, all dance to your

CUT TO C.U. MAYPOLE

delight. Join the Royal court as they celebrate the merriment of the Renaissance era in a traditional dance. As the ribbons wind around the colorful pole, you'll step to a lively tune. It brings the age of chivalry to life!

DISS TO LADIES CURTSY

DISS TO 4 SWORDS

Perhaps you'll come upon battling fencers as you wander the wooded paths. Watch the blades of steel clash as you cheer on the king's brave men.

CUT TO C.U. FENCER

DISS TO KING & QUEEN

So come, join us at the Michigan Renaissance Festival. Step back in time as the glory of the sixteenth century is brought to life on the beautiful wooded grounds of Holly, Michigan. Enjoy seven consecutive weekends of revelry and merriment at this unique family-oriented event. It's the most fun you'll have in the twentieth century!

FREEZE FRAME : K&Q

END

APPENDIX B
INFORMATION PACKAGE USED
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE

(This material was originally distributed in the form of
a press kit, on the Michigan Renaissance Festival's
parchment-like letterhead.)

THE ESSENCE OF RENAISSANCE FESTIVALS

Renaissance Festivals are a celebration of an epic era -- the sixteenth century -- which is remembered as a time of great discovery and growth in the fields of art, science and commerce. During this time, the populace found diversion from their labors in seasonal celebrations, the most popular being Market days in the spring of the year. The atmosphere of the Market celebration provides the backdrop for an involving experience that entertains as well as educates. A visit to the festival gives the opportunity to witness and participate in theatre, arts, and handmade crafts, foods, games and equestrian events as they may have been four hundred years ago. The European Renaissance was a reawakening of the creative spirit of mankind. It is that very spirit that is the guiding force of the Renaissance Festival. Each year as the village of artisans and performers comes to life, the enthusiasm and artistry of Renaissance Europe is recreated for everyone to explore and enjoy.

###

HISTORY

Renaissance festivals began in California in the early 1960's. In the fall of 1971, George Coulam brought the Renaissance Festival concept to Minnesota. The festival drew approximately 12,000 persons in its first year. Historically, first year festivals have attracted approximately 10,000 persons, creating a village atmosphere which establishes a nucleus of supporters which enables a rapid growth pattern.

In 1976, James Peterson and David Pearson purchased the Minnesota Renaissance Festival from Mr. Coulam. Attendance at the 1976 Minnesota Renaissance Festival had grown to 111,000.

Festivals, Inc. was incorporated in 1978 after Peterson and Pearson were invited by the Kansas City Art Institute to become consultants to and food purveyors for the Kansas City Renaissance Festival. The first Kansas City Renaissance Festival, held in 1977, drew approximately 8,000 persons. In 1978, the first year of Festivals Inc. involvement, the festival drew 31,000 persons, while the Minnesota festival grew to 231,000 persons. The 1979 festival showed continued growth with Kansas City enjoying an attendance of 70,000 persons and the Minnesota Festival showing an attendance of 272,000 persons.

During the winter of 1980, Festivals Inc. was contacted by civic leaders of Detroit, Michigan, who expressed an interest in holding a Renaissance Festival in the Detroit area.

The first annual Michigan Renaissance Festival was held for five weekends during late September and October of 1980 with an attendance of 11,000 persons. Meanwhile, an expanded site and new attractions increased attendance at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival to 99,000 persons. The Minnesota Festival attracted 244,000 persons, despite rain on 10 of the 13 days.

1981 proved to be a major growth year for Festivals Inc. Kansas City attendance increased to 133,000, with the Michigan Renaissance Festival nearly tripling the previous year's attendance to 33,000 persons. The Minnesota Festival experienced nearly a 50,000 person increase to 293,000.

Plans to expand the Renaissance Festival concept to other markets continued during the winter of 1982 when Festivals Inc. contacted the St. Louis (Missouri) County Department of Parks and Recreation with the intention of leasing park property for the operation of a Renaissance festival during May and June of 1982. The first annual St. Louis County Renaissance Festival had an attendance of 92,000 persons. Attendance at the Michigan Festival doubled to 60,000 persons while attendance at the Kansas City and Minnesota festivals was 144,000 and 274,000 respectively.

The Festivals grew again during 1983 with Kansas City reaching 150,000 persons and the Michigan festival attendance arriving at 68,000. The St. Louis festival was plagued by rain, but grew to 12,500 persons. The Minnesota festival grew to 300,000 persons and remained the largest Renaissance Festival in the country.

1984 was another growth year for the festivals. The

Minnesota Renaissance Festival experienced a record attendance of 320,000 persons. The Michigan Festival grew to 80,000, and the ST. Louis Festival increased to 15,200 persons. The Kansas City Festival experienced bad weather, but drew 144,000 persons.

The Renaissance Festival concept under Peterson and Pearson has expanded from one festival with an attendance of 111,000 persons in 1976 to five festivals with the combined attendance of 594,000 in 1984. This growth pattern has been achieved through efforts to continually upgrade and develop new areas, programs, and attractions to each festival each year, and the continuing support of the nucleus of persons who attend the festivals in the early years of their development.

THE MICHIGAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

During the winter of 1980, Festivals Inc. was contacted by civic leaders of Detroit, who expressed an interest in holding a Renaissance Festival in the Detroit area. After extensive research and planning with area theatre groups, realtors, art councils, business and civic leaders, the first annual Michigan Renaissance Festival was held on the grounds of Colombiere Center in Clarkston. Held during late September and October, the festival drew 11,000 persons over five week-ends. Attendance nearly tripled the following year, as 30,000 enjoyed the event. In 1982, Festival attendance doubled to 60,000 persons and grew to 68,000 in 1983. The Festival continued to grow in 1984, as attendance increased to 80,000 persons.

The Festival endeavors to maintain a high degree of local participation, and has involved civic and business groups since its inception. These groups include the New Center Area Council, Michigan Department of Commerce Travel Bureau, Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourist Association, and the University of Detroit. Organizations in the Holly and Clarkston area such as the Jaycees and athletic groups operate games, park cars, or staff beverage booths to raise funds for yearly projects and operations.

Workshops are held prior to the festival for participants who wish to expand their knowledge of costume, language and performance techniques for involvement in the festival. In 1984,

over 200 people were hired for work on the grounds or in the food program. The festival also attracts 150 entertainers and 100 craftspeople to complete the village atmosphere. With this large core of local participation, the festival is represented in many area parades, performances, and promotions throughout the year.

Although visitors to the festival are diverse individuals, polls show that the majority of patrons are families of middle- to upper-income, and have visited the festival before. Most of those surveyed spend 5-7 hours at the festival, and say they plan to attend next year's festival.

The Michigan Renaissance Festival continues to show a long term commitment to southeast Michigan, as Festivals Inc. has purchased land for a permanent site. Located near the Holly Recreation Area, the 176 wooded acres will allow for continued growth and community involvement. The future looks bright for the Michigan Renaissance Festival!

1986 AND BEYOND

We are very excited about our involvement in the Metro Detroit area. The Michigan Renaissance Festival has shown a strong, steady growth since its inception into the market in 1980. Because new features and events are added to the festival each year that are visible, colorful, and "P.R.able", our nucleus of support continues to grow with each festival year. We feel that the size of the Metro Detroit market coupled with the growth of the Michigan Renaissance Festival will enable the festival to become the largest festival in the country within the next ten years. With this growth in mind, we invite you to become involved with the festival.

Areas for possible involvement include:

Festival Program Advertising - Space is available in the festival program. 70,000 programs were printed in 1985.

Festival Buildings - Theaters, stages, pubs, and demonstration booths will be constructed at the new location. Sponsors can participate in the construction and/or signage of new festival buildings.

Reciprocal Media Mentions or Co-op advertising - reciprocal tags in electronic or drop-ins on print advertising are available.

Special Event Participation - Sponsors can participate in special events at the festival by providing prizes and products.

These are a few of the possibilities which are available at the present time. However, new promotions can be initiated each year of the festival.

BENEFITS

The benefits of involvement with the 1986 Michigan Renaissance Festival are numerous, but can be summarized as follows:

- Identification with an upscale audience of moving and doing persons.
- An entertaining family event, with major emphasis on persons 18-54 years of age.
- Additional traffic for your business.
- Additional media coverage and mentions.
- Additional promotion for your product.

The 1986 MICHIGAN Renaissance Festival invites you to come out, bring your family, get involved, have fun and promote your product!

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR EVALUATION OF VIDEOTAPE

Please rate the following aspects concerning the Michigan Renaissance Festival videotape you've just seen by circling the number that most closely corresponds to your opinion.

POOR	FAIR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
1	2	3	4	5

1. Technical Quality	1	2	3	4	5
2. Narration	1	2	3	4	5
3. Editing	1	2	3	4	5
4. Information	1	2	3	4	5

How well did the videotape present the following attractions of the Michigan Renaissance Festival?

POOR	FAIR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
1	2	3	4	5

5. Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
6. Crafts	1	2	3	4	5
7. Food	1	2	3	4	5
8. History	1	2	3	4	5

9. Was the information presented clearly?

YES _____ NO _____

If you answered "YES" to question #9, go on to #10.

If you answered "NO", please explain.

10. Do you feel the videotape has increased your knowledge of the Michigan Renaissance Festival?

YES _____ NO _____

11. What do you feel is the strongest point of the videotape?

12. What do you feel is the weakest point of the videotape?

13. Would you be more likely to visit the Michigan Renaissance Festival after seeing the videotape?

YES _____

NO _____

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WERE DIRECTED TO EITHER BUSINESS OR BROADCAST PROFESSIONALS:)

As a business professional, your comments on the following section are invaluable in raising the videotape's effectiveness as a fund raising tool.

The videotape is used as a supplement to our written proposal that details sponsorship opportunities with the Renaissance Festival.

14. Do you feel that the videotape helps the overall presentation of sponsorship information?

YES _____

NO _____

If you answered "YES", please go on to question #15.

If you answered "NO", please explain.

15. How would you rate the effectiveness of the videotape as a fund raising tool? Please circle the number that most closely corresponds to your opinion.

POOR	FAIR	AVERAGE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
1	2	3	4	5

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPEARED ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE DIRECTED TO BROADCAST PROFESSIONALS:)

As a broadcast professional, your comments on the following are invaluable in rating the Michigan Renaissance Festival videotape's effectiveness as an advertising tool.

14. Do you feel that the videotape is technically good enough for broadcast?

YES _____ NO _____

If you answered "YES", please go on to question #15.

If you answered "NO", please explain.

15. The videotape runs 4 minutes and 19 seconds. If the tape were edited to fit certain time frames (30 seconds, 60 seconds etc.) do you feel it would still be as effective?

YES _____ NO _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

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