ADVER-GAMES AND CONSUMERS: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON ONLINE GAMES

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Abstract: Advergame is an interactive online game used by companies to advertise product, service or ideas to the consumers or target audience. When people play advergaming they enjoy it and at the same time they learn about the product and possibly try the product, service or idea. Online games became one of the medium of advertising and has an impact of consumer's decision. This research seeks to examine the impact of online game to the consumers; explain advertising through games; features and benefit of advergame. The paper will also explore different types of advergame; such as below the line advergame, about/above the line Advergame and through the line advergame. The paper's design method is a narrative literature review and the data sources include Google scholar, blogs, books, journals, magazines and newspapers. The study uses Schema theory in examining the degree of influence advergame has in persuading consumers to purchase goods, services or idea. The study concluded that advergaming has great impact to the consumers by changing a player into a consumer.

Key words: Advertising; Online; Game; Consumer; Advergame
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Introduction

The term 'advergame' is the combination of two words i.e. advertising and game, the term 'Advergame' was first used in January 2000 by Anthony Giallourakas, and later mention by Wired (Conde-Pumpido, 2014). With the increase of the internet, advergames have proliferate, often becoming the most visited aspect of brand websites and becoming an integrated part of brand media planning in an increasingly split media environment. Advergames theoretically promote repeated traffic to websites and strengthen brands. Users choosing to register to be qualified for prizes can help marketers collect customer data. Gamers may also invite their

friends to participate, which could assist promotion by word-of-mouth, or viral marketing. In recent brand-impact studies, associating a brand with the fun of gaming is known to lift brand metrics such as brand awareness, message association and purchase intent (Robinson, 2008). After playing a game, consumers are more likely to remember not just the brand or product itself, but to associate specific brand attributes with it. Branded online games can be one of the most effective viral marketing agents.

Călin, (2010) observed that initially, companies have placed their brands or logos in the virtual environment of computer games launched by specialised gaming firms. Nevertheless, this form of advergaming is rather static and ineffective, since the player is concentrated on the task required by the game and might not acknowledge the brand image displayed in the background. This limitation has encouraged the firms to create their own advergames, which are developed around a theme or a character directly related with their products and/or brands. In order to ensure a large diffusion of these games, they were made freely available on the Internet.

There are a lot of advergames on the internet today, and it is used almost in every sector. The term advergame gained the meaning of 'free online game' because major companies made the advantage of advergames by letting their customers to play them mostly for free. Some of the companies asked users to fill some kind of form in order to collect information and create a customer data. The information collected would help the companies to improve their product or service according to their customer profiles. Sometimes companies offer prize for the winner of their advergame (Okur, 2010).

From advertising point of view, the advergames attempt to capture the attention of players, and then to transmit to them, in an indirect way, suggestions that aim to modify their perceptions regarding an enterprise, brand, or product. The psychological fundament of this process is the inducement and the use of the 'state of flow'. This concept is used by psychologists to describe a mental state in which the attention is highly concentrated on a specific process, the environmental information is screened out, and the person experiences a harmonious flow of its present experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991). The main aim of this study is to explore the nexus between Advergame and consumer and examine the impact of online game (s) to the consumers.

Advergame: Conceptualization
The concept of "Advergame" comes from the combination of the words "Advertising" and "Game" and is used to describe the way of advertising through games. This concept is used to define games designed with the purpose to promote the products in different ways (Servet, G. and Kriselda 2016). Advergames are interactive video games whose purpose is to advertise, they are usually hosted on the Internet, where players usually children or young men take the role of a character in completing certain objectives. The brand logo may comprise part of the character, or may be visible in the background.

Other forms of advergaming also include 'sponsorship of events' where consumers are offered tickets to real life events via the game; as well as 'adverworlds' which are interactive worlds designed to inform consumers about their products. Associative advertising is also used, which is where a product is associated with a certain lifestyle or activity (Purswan, 2011). Călin (2010) defines advergame as an online game that includes in its content marketing messages. This means that companies used their brand logos in virtual environments of the computer gaming derived from games specialist firms.

Nairn and Hang (2012), posits that; there are two formats of advergame:

i. Electronic games that are used to advertise a product, brand or an organisation, accessible on social media site companies' own websites and as downloadable content or apps on mobile devices.
ii. Commercial messages embedded within the content of retail-accessible video games, online electronic games or apps.

In line with the above two categories, we can understand that; the first one is a game created by the company with the sole aim of advertising their product, companies like Coka-Cola, Bugerking have such kind of games, the second category shows that; the game is not created by the company but the company used the game to place their product in it, this popularly known as product placement.

People play game in their home, in their working place, in the library, students in their classes, in the coffee shops, in the train, some people play game even in their toilets. People spending time playing game before they go to bed at night, so with all of this interaction between people and games, you know that someone had to come with the idea of branding the games (Francanon, 2010). The engagement between people and the game is what give birth to 'advergaming' i.e. advertising via games. Advertising in online games involves the use of interactive gaming technology to deliver embedded advertising messages to the consumer (Winker and Buckner, 2006). Advergames are habitually less difficult than real video games, because advergames are attractive simple in their nature they can be easily distributed on different platforms, such as on website, emails, facebook, twitter and smart phones. While playing advergame users are not just exposed to a company's product but are encouraged to interact with it (Fussell, 2011).

Types of Advergame
There are three types of advergames. These three types of advergame have different names but all the content is within these: about the line advergame, below the line Advergame and through the line advergame.

Above the Line Advergame/Revenue Generated Advergame
This is a game placed on a company web site (or even a special gaming site owned or sponsored by the company) in order to attract web visitors and entice them to remain on the site longer. The longer a visitor is on the site, the longer the company's message is in front of them. The games may or may not be related to the product. The user becomes more aware of the website's product the longer that user uses the advergame. This type of advergaming is also called 'Revenue-Generating Advergame' and the main aim is to maximize profit and attract new customers.

Below the Line Advergame
This type is closer to the traditional, commercial video game developed and sold to be played on computers or game consoles, but the primary difference is that the games are developed with a specific purpose in mind. For example, the United States Army sponsored an extremely successful game called "America's Army" in an effort to increase recruitment. This form of advergame serves as an educational tool for users to learn more about environmental issues, military organizations, and political movements. This allows the player to enjoy a game that also provides an academic experience that relates to their educational interests. This type of advergame is also called 'Attention-Generating Advergame'

Through the Line Advergame

This type of advergame is what we typically call [product placement](), or in-game advertising, where the product or an ad for the product is part of the game. For example, you might see a Ford Mustang cruising the game's virtual streets. So, the games can be completely free and played online, or you might find ads as part of a commercial game that you've bought to play on a game console or computer. In narrow sense, when a company includes their brand, logo, company colors or products as a part of the actual advergame, brand interaction can occur with the player, but in a more subtle fashion. For example, The Willy Wonka Candy Company has a Laffy Taffy advergame where individual candy bars are used as the layout for the game. However, this type of advergame can be somewhat controversial, especially if there is a fee associated with the game (Fussell, 2011). This type of advergame is also called 'Stealth' Advergame.

Chen and Ringel (2001) quoted in Theodrou, and Sirmakessis provided a typology based on brand integration and engagement in the game, according to which three types of advergames exist:
• Associative Advergaming can drive brand awareness by associating the product with the lifestyle or activity featured in the game.
• Illustrative Advergaming can outstandingly feature the product itself in game play.
• Demonstrative Advergaming can influence the full arsenal of interactivity by allowing the consumer to experience the product within the virtual confines of the gaming space.

Impact of Advertising on Online Games

Advergaming is a great communication tool to make new products known. For instance, for advergames in the automotive sector, players learn information's about brand new cars through a great gaming experience. However, it is very hard to persuade purchasing because of the difficulty of the decision-making process for this kind of products. But with the game understanding, brand introduces its car on the top of mind awareness in consumers' minds. (Serious factory, 2013). Advergames give confidence to players to get more information about brands and their products. Moreover, when people want to purchase a product in the same category, the brand is better placed in the consumer's minds. When people play advergaming they enjoy it and at the same time they learn about the product and possibly try the product, and most important things players have fun while they experience an advergaming. Both companies and customers like the concept of advergaming and it is beneficial for both companies and customers or consumers.

Theoretical Framework

Most of the media theories that talk about impact of advertising and influencing purchasing behavior centered on cultivation theory and social action theory. This research focus on '**schema theory'** Lewis and Porter argues that; "perhaps a better way to examine brands within video games is through schemata." The focal point of schema theory developed by Tokt is that, a cognitive schema is a mental representation of knowledge stored in the brain, a network of knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about the world. Schemas serve to process incoming information, and how we interpret that information is shaped by the schema we have about that item. Brewer and Treyen (1981) develop schema theory further by saying schemas can be describe in three ways: -

    iii.   They can describe how specific knowledge is organized and stored in memory so that it can be accessed and used when it is needed;

    iv.   This idea is based on the assumption that humans are active processors of information;

v. If information is missing, the brain fills in the blanks based on existing schemas, or it simply invents something that seems to fit in.

According to this theory, schemata represent knowledge about concepts: objects and the relationships they have with other objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions. A simple example is to think of your schema for online games.

Within that schema you most likely have knowledge about product in general. In line with this theory we can deduct that it explains advergaming. Looking at the first description of Brewer and Treyen, the knowledge is store and organized in memory so that it can be access in the future or when the need arises. This is the aim of advergaming, the companies want to store the information in the head of the players and turn them to consumers and they also store information in children's' mind and make them consumers when they grow up.

Discussion

Advergaming is created with different motives or objective, when we look at the typology of advergaming we will see that there is an advergame with sole aim to educate not to maximize profit. One important thing about advergame is that; not only teenagers are playing the game, also significant number of adults were playing the game. Moreover, advergame is mostly associated with male, not only male players were playing the game, female also do. According to a research which was made in New York, 30% of the online game players are middle-aged between 35-49 years old. Teenagers seem to spend lots of time while playing games on the internet but in the reality, they are just 14% of the whole players. 17% of the online game players' age differs between 25 and 34. Another survey shows that active female players are as much as male players and most of them are professionals. According to another research which is held in Virginia discovered that 42% of players are females. (Okur: 2010). African countries also engaged in playing such online games and it became viral in recent years. Nigerians join the trend in 2013 when Naira games introduced online game 'casinos' and other forms of gaming are rising in popularity as well.

Conclusion

Games for advertising are sometimes classified as a type of serious game, as these games have a strong educational or training purpose other than pure entertainment. Other methods of advertising in video games include product placement being integrated into in-game environments and companies or organizations sponsoring commercial games or other game-related content. Advergames should be relevant to company's target. Game should be created considering company's customer profile. Companies that use advergames have to seriously consider using the medium as a method of educating consumers, and need to enforce data protection and child welfare in their practices (Purswani: 2011). If advergame is irrelevant to target than some people will play it anyway but company will not get the revenue as much as it wants, because they would not be able to reach right people who will buy their products after playing the advergame. If you think that people will play it over and over again, then they will hear and see the slogan or the logo of the company as much as they play. If advergame is fun to play, then company's message which is given in the game will be heard as long as player plays the game. If your message or information which is given in the game is good enough, you can change a 'player into a customer.'

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