Six Factors That Determine the Conceptualization of Persuasive Strategies for Advergames:
The Case Study of "Tem de Tank"

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this chapter, I define six factors that determine the conceptualization of persuasive strategies for advergames. Advergames are understood here as "digital games specifically designed for a brand with the aim of conveying an advertising message" (De la Hera Conde-Pumpido, In Press). These six factors have been used for the analysis of the advergame Tem de Tank (DDB Amsterdam & Flavour, 2010), which was launched in 2010 by Volkswagen to introduce the Volkswagen Polo BlueMotion. The reason for selecting this game as a case study for this chapter is that, although the advergame's goals were properly defined, the game contains, in my opinion, a series of problems in terms of persuasion. Therefore, this game is a perfect case study to exemplify how the factors presented here can be useful to identify problems in the persuasive strategy of an advergame.

BACKGROUND

The case study presented in this chapter is part of the PhD research project that I have conducted as a member of the Center for the Study of Digital Games and Play at Utrecht University (The Netherlands). The Center for the Study of Digital Games (GAP) is focused on the examination of digital games as well as the role of play in our contemporary culture. Studying these games, the way they are played, as well as the culture that formed around them, the GAP provides insight in past and contemporary media use.

In my PhD thesis "Persuasive Structures in Advergames", that aims to broaden the understanding of how advertising messages can be conveyed through digital games, I have proposed a theoretical model for the study of persuasive structures in advergames that addresses one main questions: (1) how can an advertising message be conveyed through a digital game and (2) the factors that determine the conceptualization of advertising strategies for advergames. This chapter applies the part of the theoretical model of my PhD thesis that answers to the second question. This part consists of six factors that determine persuasive communication through advergames.

Due to the interactive nature of digital games, the factors that determine the conceptualization of advertising strategies for advergames are related not only to the way the advertising message should be conveyed but also to how the game motivates players to play it and how it engages them to keep playing. I have thus identified six factors that should influence advertisers' decisions: advergames' objectives, products in advergames' integration, advergames' target, advergames' visibility, advergames' credibility and advergames' playability. In the following sections I explain how these factors influence the process of decision-making.

SETTING THE STAGE

The theoretical model presented in this chapter has been applied for a content analysis of the advergame *Tem de Tank* (DDB Amsterdam & Flavour, 2010). I have also conducted an in-depth interview with Jain van Nigtevegt, Creative Director at Flavour, the game company that has developed the advergame. In this interview I have collected specific information about the objectives of the advergame, the conditions of the development process and the difficulties they have encounter within it. In this interview, I have also discussed the results of the analysis of the advergame, which has served to adjust some of my appreciations about the content, and therefore the results of the analysis.

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