

Chapter 5

Persuasive Advergames: Boon or Bane for Children

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ABSTRACT

As the present consumer market is no longer bound to traditional forms of advertising, it has led to several advancements including marketing through online platforms like digital and social media. One such advertising format that appeals most to the youth is advergames. The younger generation spends lot of time on the internet, giving an opportunity to the marketers to make the best use of this medium. Advergames, which consist of online gaming and advertising, are considered a promising form of reaching the youth market. Therefore, this chapter attempts to deal with the concepts related to advergames and a small empirical study showing the impact of advergames on children. The results of the study showed that there existed a relationship between attitude towards advergames and several variables involved. The relationship was most significant between entertainment and attitude towards advergames. The study of demographic variables showed no significant impact of gender, but there was a significant correlation of age with the persuasion knowledge, escape, and attitude towards advergames.

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INTRODUCTION

Interactive marketing techniques are on a sharp increase since the last decade. These techniques integrate persuasive messages into editorial content or immensely entertaining program which result into faded boundaries between information, entertainment and advertising (Raney *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, these non-traditional types of advertising are often highly interactive and immersive in nature. One promotional method that is, advergaming, is increasingly gaining attention. “Advergaming is the delivery of advertising messages through electronic games” (Hernandez & Chapa, 2010). This technique is a distinctive feature which offers extensive exposure to brands. There is a paucity of literature that assesses consumer memory on advergaming despite the possibility of it being used as a promotional tool. Therefore, in the coming sections the researchers will introduce certain concepts related to advergaming which have been discussed by previous authors. As early as the 1980s, product placements emerged in video games but still advergaming is a matured form of product placement where rather than the brand placed in the game, the game itself is centred around the brand. Such types of marketing tools include advertisements and games which is a good means for brands to target children in a different way (Tóth & Nagy, 2011). There is little knowledge as to how well children discern the commercial nature of advergaming despite the increasing prevalence of them and, in particular, the extent to which children can be aided in recognizing the embedded persuasive attempt. Therefore, this chapter attempts to deal with the concepts related to advergaming along with a small empirical study which was conducted to show the impact of advergaming on children.

BACKGROUND

Affective and Cognitive Responses

There is a concept of advertising literacy which is a part of broad concept of persuasion knowledge (Hudders *et al.*, 2015). Traditionally persuasion knowledge has focussed on cognitive theory developed by psychologists such as Piaget (1929). Therefore, it can be said that advertising literacy comprises of cognitive skills. But recent research has focussed on the affect based nature of advertising content. The affective advertising literacy refers to an automatic affective reaction. In particular, it refers to the innate tendency of individuals to resist persuasion attempts, as they restrict their freedom of choice (van Reijmersdal *et al.*, 2012).

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