Chapter 73
Gap Between Mobile and Online Advergames:
The Possible Effects of the Optimal Gaming Experience–Flow

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ABSTRACT

Mobile and online advergames are likely to influence brand associations differently. Regardless of the advergame environment, successful games are capable of taking the player into the flow state. How the experience of flow influences the outcomes of the advergames in different environments is a new and an important subject for the advertisers. In order to understand the outcomes (i.e., brand recall and brand attitude) of the advergames in different mediums (online vs. mobile) with the flow introduced, a lab experiment was conducted. Results of the experiment yielded that brand recall and brand attitude were different in different environments. When the interaction of skill and challenge was introduced to the study, however, hypotheses were partially supported. Furthermore, arousal resulted in better brand recall and more positive brand attitudes in the mobile environment. Lastly, time distortion caused no difference in brand attitude, while supporting mobile in brand recall.

INTRODUCTION

Games have always been a way of entertainment and have a great potential to influence the masses. With the latest example of Pokemon Go, it leaves no doubt that the dissemination of digital games will continue (Terlutter & Capella, 2013). When the potential of the digital games to affect masses was

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-7589-8.ch073

noticed, marketers have found a new way to convey their brand messages to the existing and potential customers. It is through the advergames; they try to create brand awareness, persuade potential customers, accelerate purchase, retain customers, and enhance the relationship with them for the lifetime togetherness (HoFacker, De Ruyter, Lurie, Manchande, & Donaldson, 2016). Furthermore; they are creating a positive user experience through entertainment.

With the widespread prevalence of mobile phones, the attention of the marketers turned into the direction of mobile advergames. Marketers are working out to unveil the potential of these games to get the desired results on their target customers (Ollila, 2017). Just before the mobile phone diversity, it was only the online games used as a marketing tool. With the introduction of the mobile to the branded entertainment, the excitement and engagement rules are redefined. Although some remain the same, the perceptions caused by certain elements could be different. Among those, taking the game player into the flow state is one of the necessities for a successfully designed game. It is proved to be a critical determinant of positive online experiences (Hoffman & Novak, 1996).

There is a large amount of research investigating the impact of flow on consumer behavior on online advergames (e.g., Hernandez, 2011; Vanwesenbeeck, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2016; Vermeir, Kazakova, Tessitore, Cauberghe & Slabbinck, 2014; Waiguny, Nelson, & Terlutter, 2012; Waiguny, Nelson, & Marko, 2013). However, mobile advergame context is still a research area needed to be explored further. Besides, there is insufficient research comparing the two environments. As a result, questions remain concerning the potential factors that might affect the yields of mobile advergames compared to online.

The current study aims to fill this gap by investigating the flow experience of the game players on two different environments (online vs. mobile) while focusing on the game player responses in the form of brand recall and brand attitude. To define the differences, three main elements of flow; namely, the interaction of skill and challenge, arousal and time distortion, were taken into consideration. The authors investigated each element separately as their effects on online and mobile advergame players are defined comparatively.

In this paper, at the first section, the authors begin by describing the online and mobile advergames, the concept of flow, and its three antecedents as skill and challenge, arousal and time distortion as well as developing the study hypothesis. Next, the authors present the study with all the details. The following section is devoted to the solutions and recommendations. At the last section, the authors conclude with research limitations and future research suggestions.

Background

Mobile advergames are rather a new and an undiscovered area in the marketing literature. Although the concept of advergames is in the deployment of the marketers for quite a long time, it is mostly the online advergames under research. Whether being online or mobile, marketers try to find out the best conditions for better affective, conative and cognitive responses. It has been known that positive online experiences are transferred to the associated brand through affect transfer (Fiske & Pavelhack, 1986; Lantos & Craton, 2012; Liu, Hu, & Grimm, 2010). However, depending on the environments that the advergames are presented, outcomes may vary. With the current study, flow is introduced with its three antecedents. The section presented the previous studies on the subject of online advergames, mobile advergames, and flow.