

Effects and opportunities of mobile advergames into brand management and marketing: a content analysis

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Abstract—In advergames, game design can be used as a way to understand aspects of user interaction and brand management. With the integration with mobile technologies, it's necessary to investigate the impact of this platform in the design of mobile advergames. The objective of our work is to develop an overview of the application of elements of mobile advergames into brand management and marketing strategies. In the first section we identify the main elements of mobile advergames. Then we illustrate the scenario of previous research in advergames, including elements to be analyzed and classified. To conclude we investigate the relationship between mobile advergames affordances and brand management, outlining the impact of each element into marketing strategies involving advergames.

Mobile advergames; brand management; e-marketing; pervasive technology; content analysis; game design; HCI

I. INTRODUCTION

Social network and gaming are changing the way people make decisions for choosing and purchasing brands. The challenge for marketers is to find a way to encourage consumer engagement, especially through online and interactive environments, as technology enables the consumer to be a participant and co-creator of value [1].

In this context, marketers are interested in ways to build pervasive strategies, through which mobile devices could be able to transform and develop significant relationships with consumers. Hence, the role of effective networks, ubiquitous computing, mobile technology and interactive systems such as games are crucial in order to build engaging and long-term relationships with consumers in different contexts, developing strong e-marketing strategies.

In essence, games are able to provide engaging activities for people [2] and, in the case of e-marketing, they could also augment the relationship between the brand and consumers through well-executed advergames, utilizing mobile devices as a platform for real-time marketing and interactive strategies.

By definition, advergames could be described as customized games created to transmit a rhetorical message (usually related to a brand [3]), designed to persuade, engage and influence players' behavior [4]. Also, most of advergames can be classified as casual games, in which the game has simple controls, easy interactivity and could be played in short periods of time [5].

Considering this, the opportunity to include mobile advergames in marketing strategies and brand management grows as advertising has become most ubiquitous, considering the amount of exposure to ads and the transformation of the medium into the message, extending its reach into all domains of social interaction [6].

In addition, mobile applications are capable to include elements such as mobile actions, social activities and game space expansion [7], amplifying the influence of interactive systems in different contexts.

For this reason, most mobile games could allow to promote pervasive interactions, characterized by the connection between digital media and people's everyday experience, especially though location-based data [8], blurring the line between the traditional limits of the game and real-world activities.

Essentially, pervasive games can be expanded into three important dimensions such as spatial (the action occurs in many locations at the same time), temporal (activities are embedded to everyday life) and social (people can be considered as game elements) [9].

However, most of previous research has focused on the study of mainly online advergames, leaving mobile technology into a field still to be explored [10]. Thus, the map of mobile advergames elements that could extent the distribution of the message is crucial to define the impact of games into marketing strategies and brand management issues, such as brand loyalty and engagement.

II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of our work is to develop a relevant and situated outline of effects and opportunities of mobile advergames for marketing strategies and in brand management. In this context, we discuss the following research questions:

- (1) *How the content is presented in mobile advergames?*
- (2) *What are the main affordances of mobile advergames?*
- (3) *How can mobile advergames integrate aspects of the mobile technology and pervasive games inside the game?*

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- (4) How can mobile advergames integrate aspects of brand management and marketing strategies inside the game?

III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND EXPECTED RESULTS

In order to answer the featured research questions described in the previous section we employ an empirical approach, through three stages such as literature review, definition of variables and further content analysis.

For the first stage, we identify and describe the main elements or affordances of all formats of advergames analyzed in previous research (*research question 2*). In order to identify the affordances for well-executed mobile advergames, as the core of our content analysis, we employ a research of all determinants of effectiveness in advergames. However, as we propose an analysis that includes mobile elements and affordances of mobile technology, we employ a wider research for mobile advergames and games in general. For that we utilize database such as Google Scholar, searching for relevant publications involving the keywords “effectiveness”, “advergames”, “mobile advergames”, “mobile games” “pervasive games” and “pervasive advergames”.

In the second stage, we analyze the main elements of effective advergames and separate in categories, describing each feature related to mobile advergame (*research question 1*). For that, we focus our analysis into variables related to the integration of the brand, message and strategy of the advergame, game structure (including interface, mechanics and storyline) and aspects of mobile technology embedded inside the advergame, considering pervasive dimensions.

In the third stage we perform the content analysis based on the variables defined in the previous stage, through the analysis of a representative number of mobile advergames in format of mobile applications (*research question 3 and 4*). For that we download the mobile advergames and execute the analysis, testing each application. Then we compare with previous research and analyze the opportunities for marketers and advertisers to utilize mobile advergames, including elements that characterize mobile technology and pervasive games.

Stages 1 and 2 are already completed. For stage 1, we identified a lack of studies of advergames utilized in mobile devices, supporting the novelty of our study. Findings also include the utilization of content analysis as research methodology in previous research in advergames, which allows us to compare our results to previous studies, giving us more insights about the impact of mobile technology in advergames.

From both stages 1 and 2, we were able to define the variables necessary to perform the content analysis, such as:

- Aspects of the game (game structure, interface, storyline)
- Aspects of the integration between the brand and the game

- Aspects of the message or purpose of the advergame
- Aspects of mobility (considering pervasive dimensions such as spatial, temporal and social [9])

Until now, we were able to analyze 20 mobile advergames. Once finished we aim to be able to:

- Define the mobile advergames affordances for effective marketing strategies and brand management
- Outline the opportunities for marketers to utilize mobile advergames
- Amplify and suggest the application of mobile advergames into real world contexts

IV. CONCLUSION

Considering our expected outcomes, we can develop and outline an integrated categorization of mobile advergames affordances in smartphones and mobile devices. Moreover we are able to explain and shape each feature of mobile affordances, considering aspects of mobile technology, game design and brand management. As a result, we will be able to provide a relevant list of recommendations and opportunities for marketers to utilize mobile advergames as marketing and brand management strategies, through the employment of the whole extent of the mobile device and providing an augmented experience to the user/consumer.

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