



Advertising & VIDEOGAMES:

Advergaming in the new social media landscape

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Abstract:

Along with the evolution of the new technologies and the advertising saturation in traditional media, Advergaming has become a new way to connect brands with consumer through emotions in the recent years.

But the association between advertising and videogames is not new at all, and we can find its origins if we go back in time to the beginning of the eighties. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has frequently been analyzed though a perspective based in entertainment or leisure, and only recently it has been studied under an advertising vision.

Therefore, in the following investigation I will try to find and elaborate a proper definition to the concept, as well as a classification to the field of advergaming.

The main goal will be to demonstrate the importance that advergaming has reached in comparison with the rest of media and its trend as a social tool for any kind of brands all over the world.

Keywords: advergaming, advertising, video games, social advergaming, social media.

Palabras clave: advergaming, publicidad, videojuegos, advergaming social, redes sociales.

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1. Introduction

Along with the evolution of the new technologies and the advertising saturation in traditional media, Advergaming has become a new way to connect brands with consumer through emotions in the recent years.

But the association between advertising and videogames is not new at all, and we can find its origins if we go back in time to the beginning of the eighties. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has frequently been analyzed through a perspective based in entertainment or leisure, and only recently it has been studied under an advertising vision.

1.1. Objectives

Therefore, in the following investigation I will try to find and elaborate a proper definition to the concept, as well as a classification to the field of advergaming. It will be necessary to know its origins and evolution in order to reach this goal.

There will be three main objectives in this investigation:

First of all, to demonstrate the importance that video games have achieved in comparison with the rest of media in the last years.

In the second place, to prove that video games, and consequently advergaming, have certain characteristics that become advantages against compared to traditional media. This is the case of the self-reflection component inside this kind of games, that makes a more effective message inside the gamer's mind.

And last but not least, to demonstrate the influence of the new social media in advergaming industry's evolution, which has given birth to what we could start calling the new Social Advergaming. In this new environment, brands find what might be the most effective way to communicate with their audiences.

1.2. Methodology

The first part of this investigation, dedicated to the redefinition of the concept, classification and evolution, will be based on the work done by Dr. Alfonso Méndiz Noguero, professor of Malaga University, due to its rigour and specificity. But professor Méndiz's work finishes in 2009, and therefore advergaming's evolution will have to be completed up to the present day.

It has been difficult to find real specialist in this field in Spain, due to its relative short life. Therefore, the present situation of the advergaming will be analyzed through the study of real cases, following an inductive methodology and making the selected sample based in the following criterion:

- Advergaming developed from 2009.
- Advergaming developed by big brands, usually leaders in their market sector.

Obviously, being a field whose evolution goes hand in hand with technology, it would be hard to make any future predictions, but we can say, without any doubt, that this will not be just a fleeting trend.

2. Video Games: an escape to another life

Driving an exotic car more than 300 km/h, playing a football match with your favorite team, flying a WWII war plane, saving a princess from the dragon's dent or even lose some weight. All this and much more await videogames users. Who would resist?

Jaime Portolés, 22 years old, Architecture student, he tells us he's got no time for anything other than attending classes and preparing projects for the university. What's curious is that he has just bought the new *Call of Duty Modern Warfare 3*, an action war game that reproduces truly amazing and dramatic situations. When he's asked why he spends part of his so busy time playing videogames he answers 'there's always a little while for a quick game'. On top, he shares the game with his classmates, who play from their respective homes forming an assault commando through the online mode of the *PlayStation 3*. When we ask him why he's so addicted he responds with a question, 'Have you ever tried it?'

And it's not a surprise that videogames have superseded the movie and music industries in the last years. When we sit down and play a game for a short while we simply understand the passion users feel for videogames. The graphics are so realistic they get to confuse sometimes, the soundtracks often threat some of the Hollywood blockbusters. We find famous composers, such as Harry Gregson-Williams (*The rock*, *Chronicles of Narnia*), amazing orchestras, such as Los Angeles or Tokyo philharmonic orchestras, or great rock bands, such as Red Hot Chili Peppers, Green Day, Linkin Park, Nickelback or Muse. If we take a look at the most successful games in the last years, we can find the names of Marlon Brando, Al Pacino or Robert Duvall among the credits, giving their image and voice to some characters in the videogame.

Origins of the videogames

The first steps of what we know as videogames nowadays were taken back in the last century, around the 40's, when some American technicians developed the first flight simulator, intended to train the army aviators. When Atari launched the first game pack system in the late 70's, nobody would expect that firms like Nintendo or Sega would conquer the sector just ten years later. And, in less than twenty years, the big companies such as Microsoft and Sony would make more money than Music and Movies together.

But the entertainment industry wasn't always so successful, or so profitable. Just very few people know that Nintendo, father of the mythic *Mario Bros*, was founded in 1889 and was producing playing cards up to the late 70's of the twentieth century. Sega, one of the big entertainment empires of the 80's, was just a coin machines trader right after the WWII. It's also curious to know that Atari, founded in 1972, had Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak working for the company at the beginning of their career.

Barely four decades have been enough for this industry to proclaim itself as one of the most powerful and promising of our time, moving more than 56 billion euros around the world last year. And Spain isn't an exception. Our country is one of the top 4 consuming videogames in Europe, and it holds the 6th position in the world ranking.

Given this revolutionary trend, agencies and advertisers have found a unique opportunity to connect with their audiences and reinforce the commitment with the brand. This way, advertising in videogames appears to be an option with a huge development potential in the coming years. Experts assure that these kind of advertisements generate a bigger remembrance capacity and have stronger influence the consumption habits.

Some of them prefer speed, others love sports. Some seek adventures of dive deep in tortuous investigations. A few go for bloody street fights, while others learn to cook exotic food. The youngest ones solve puzzles and the eldest ones train their memory...and the most charming ones try to keep fit.

3. Relationship between Advertising & videogames

Saying that online videogames have become a big deal means no surprise at all. There are many examples such as the incredibly successful *World of Warcraft* to prove it. Videogames landscape has definitely changed a lot in the last few years, completely transforming the way this industry gets its profits through them.

In the beginning, the sales of videogames meant the sole source of income of this industry. The more the game sold, the bigger the revenue was, that simple. Later on, when online gaming became popular, it appeared a second source of income: monthly subscription fees. With this new system, along with the price of the game itself, users pay a fixed amount monthly that allows them to access the servers of the company to play online, providing the company with monthly steady revenue.

But there is a third way to get commercial profitability from videogames that hasn't been totally exploited yet. This is, obviously, Advertising.

Therefore, it is no surprise that Microsoft and Electronic Arts have started an alliance to promote advertising in videogames. But how this initiative will be carried out is the most important and what concerns the public the most.

Advertising in videogames is definitely a very interesting financing possibility. With the costs of development exponentially increasing in each videogame generation, the possibility of covering part of these costs by using advertising is a very attracting measure, which benefits both the industry – now capable to deal with bigger budgets – and users – buying the game at a cheaper price.

But advertising is an awkward market, with blurry limits of tolerance that, if trespassed, may make the user feel harassed. Of course, there are ways to avoid these negative effects by:

Correctly placing advertisements

The main problem about advertising in videogames is to find out users' limits of tolerance. A little advertising is not bad at all. Actually, it helps to provide realism to the game. For instance, in football games such as *FIFA* or *Pro Evolution Soccer*, embedding real advertisements on the stadium billboards is a workable possibility,

mostly these days, when new generation consoles are prepared to stay online at all times, ready to receive the advertisements through the net.

This way, a billboard in the football stadium wouldn't be bothering at all. Indeed, it would even be favorable to increase the truthfulness of the stadium itself, as an approach to a world as real as possible.

As another example, we can take a fps from, let's say, *Counter Strike*. If we were playing in an urban scenario with its typical elements, it would be workable to place, for example, a couple of billboards. Nobody would be shocked by seeing a couple of billboards in the street while we're looking for a terrorist group in a certain level of the game. It is, in the end, a common element of the urban furniture.

Product placement

The second type of sponsorship is the product placement. We'll use a few images in order to explain what this technique consists in:



The product placement consists in placing commercial products in highly visual spots, always trying to make this placement seem casual. Once more, this technique, properly used, can provide realism to videogames.

This possibility, usually used in movies and TV serials, is totally workable in videogames. Let's imagine for a moment the game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* teemed with real brands, from the clothes that we can buy at the shops to the food we eat to recover our health. This change wouldn't affect the integrity of the game at all, but it would surely provide amazing earnings to RockStar people if they reached nice advertising agreements.

Paying attention to its limitations

The problem about these kind of techniques is that they can only be implanted in a relatively little percentage of videogames. In other words, they can only be used in present day ambient games. Obviously it is not workable to place a Coca-Cola billboard in a fantastic-medieval ambient game, such as *World of Warcraft*.

It is nevertheless workable to embed advertisements in futuristic ambient games. It can be illustrated with a cinematographic example:



At the beginning of the futuristic movie *Blade Runner*, during a panoramic view of the city we can see huge billboards with Atari and Coca-Cola advertisements. The movie director, Ridley Scott, thought that these brands would be very strong in the future and would be seen all around.

Taking this movie as an example, it would be easy to imagine a big Coca-Cola billboard in an outdoors scenario of the videogame Halo. After all, Coca-Cola will probably be one of the first brands on earth starting a space expansion.

But in the end, it is the very user who must have a say about this commercial practices, mostly known as Advergaming.

4. Advergaming

4.1. Concept and definition

The concept, according to J. Vicente Pons Alfonso in his blog *ExeBlog, Desarrollo de videojuegos y más*, could be defined as the practice of using videogames to advertise a product, organization or viewpoint.

The advergaming has appeared into our advertising landscape due to the change of the paradigm that interactivity has brought to the media, thanks to the possibilities that technology offers to the conception and development of the campaigns.

In other words, in the previous paradigm the most important was the presence of the brand itself (in commercials, sponsored events, etc.), now it is the experience what matters most. Instead of information about the product, marketers now search for the association the public establishes with it. That's why this new advertising modality is also known as advertainment (from advertising and entertainment): a communication that brings the user advertising and entertainment.

With the growth of the internet, advergaming have proliferated, often becoming the most visited aspect of brand websites and becoming an integrated part of brand media planning in an increasingly fractured media environment. Advergaming theoretically provide repeated traffic to websites and reinforce brands. Users choosing to register to be eligible 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.

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.

4.2. Classification

Although many people have tried to establish a general classification of all the different modalities of associating advertising and videogames, it'll be much easier to establish two big groups: In-Game Advertising and Advergaming.

4.2.1. In-Game Advertising

It is the practice of inserting ads inside a videogame. It mainly consists in moving the traditional product placement to the field of interactive videogames. At the same time, In-Game advertising can be:

Static: when the user finds the same ads every time he plays a different game. It's a fixed advertising that makes a whole with the game forever, mostly used in physical platforms and consoles.



Dynamic: when an online videogame uses a self-installed software in order to instantly integrate new ads every time someone starts a new game. In order to determine which ad suits the player best, this software takes in consideration several variants, such as the geographic location (so that it chooses the right language), and others that determine the socio-demographic profile, such as the connection time, the website where it came from, etc.



4.2.2. Advergaming

Though it may sound repetitive, it can be defined as the creation of a videogame with the sole purpose of satisfying the communicating needs of a certain brand, with the intention of stimulating the potential consumer with a community feeling, where the product and an entertaining experience go hand in hand. We can consider this type as the traditional advergaming, so we will need to take a step forward in order to determine a new class of advergaming.



4.2.3. Social advergaming

In the last years, and especially in the current decade, we are witnessing a revolution in the way that people communicate and built relations. We are talking, of course, about the social networks.

Therefore, we could define this new kind of advergaming as:

“Those video games created by brands whose main objective is to built or reinforce brand’s community and brand’s belonging feeling through the new social media”.

In this case, entertainment, being still the main element of this phenomenon, teams up with social recognition. The main goal is to make the user feel part of that brand community and to recommend it throughout the social media he uses in a regular basis. This way, we can see a double effect: in one hand, users share their game experiences in exchange for either prizes o reputation in the social network. On the other hand, brands collect lots of information about users, since the social network provide them with its data bases, which allows them to monitor the results of their actions in a very accurate way and to perform a personalized communication for each of their publics.

This is the kind of games we are interested in from a purely advertising perspective in the present day.

4.3. Advantages of advergaming

As an advertising format, advergaming shows some very interesting advantages for the advertisers. Professor Alfonso Méndiz (2010, 44-45) from Malaga University, points out the following ones:

High exposure to the brand

A billboard on a highway, an ad in a magazine or a pop-up in a website barely can draw the driver’s/ reader’s/ user’s attention longer than a couple of seconds. A TV commercial can do it up to 30 seconds, but a videogame’s user can spend hours playing with the brand. According to some studies, the average time of interaction with the brand goes from 15 to 30 minutes in this kind of games.

User's total attention

Unlike the passivity caused by commercial messages on the radio, newspaper, TV or internet, here the public adopts an active and positive attitude. They must put their five senses in order not to miss any detail of the story, for this might lead to win the game or to a total failure.

Public's Positive predisposition

Actually, it's not that the audience must pay attention, but they merely want to pay total attention to what the brands tell them through the game. This happens because the audience is highly motivated: they are having fun, getting close to triumph, deeply involved with the game. The game provides entertainment, and this, in a leisure society, is one of the greatest rewards a person can achieve. That implication helps the brand to cause the user triple beneficial effect: education about the products and its features, assimilation of the message and identification of the brand.

Brand's integration

In this sense, advertiser's information count on the user's complicity, so it will never be perceived as a bothering advertising. Besides, it can clearly and directly be transmitted. If we want to promote a tire brand, then we can create a racing videogame full of dangerous curves and hard skidding. If the user wins the race thanks to the use of good tires, he will surely have a very positive image of that brand. But we haven't showed him that image through a TV commercial, nor tried to force him to buy anything; we just gave him the chance to try to possibilities of the product with a virtual replica.

Interactivity with the public

The game generates connivance with the users thanks to his active participation. He feels more involved and, at the same time, the bran can compile all the game data in order to settle a more efficient dialog later on: questions about the game or the brand, or the satisfaction level reached, even the messages linked in the game itself. All this permits a very clear segmentation concerning the target it's aimed to.

Remembrance

We remember much better all those things we get involved with. As Confucius said, 'tell me and I'll forget, show me and I'll remember, involve me and I'll understand'. According to a psychology theory, children remember 10% of what they hear, 30% of

what they see and 90% of what they interact with. That's why children learn playing: it's the most efficient way to increase the memory.

Virality

Online videogames are often spread among friends, classmates and other acquaintances. Its gratuity makes the recommendation a very attractive proposal, even more when the game becomes an element of union or competition between these friends.

Apart from these advantages, there are also two very important strategic orientations in advergaming: a determined public and a concrete product.

A especially interesting public: Children.

That's why the brand aimed to child audiences (Nestlé, Danone, McDonalds, Burger King, Kellogg's, Nutrexpá, etc.) are the main promoters of the advergaming and those how have developed more videogames in their websites. It is because children are an especially sensitive target for this advertising practice, due to several reasons:

- They spend most of their time playing: they know the videogames language.
- They are very affective: they can develop a great sympathy and identification with the brand.
- They are taking their first steps in the consumption: videogames can be an important instrument for the brands to educate children's consumption.

A specially suitable product: Videogames about movies.

Commercial possibilities in this field seem to multiply because a videogame can increase sales exponentially.

- Prepares the launching: the videogame unveils the movie and creates expectation.
- Create a community: the game attracts fans of that story (*The Lord of the Rings*), of that movie genre (*Star Wars*) or the new fashionable actor (*The Bourne's* saga). Later on, those fans act as a public speaker, increasing the movie's expectation in their respective personal circles.
- It generates an important synergy: either the game promotes the movie or the movie takes advantage of the community created by the videogame.

Despite of being a recent phenomenon, advergaming appeared almost three decades ago. Actually, we can find their antecedents back in the early eighties. We are going to see the evolution of the advergaming in the next epigraph.

Self-reflection

Besides the previously commented features, it is interesting to point out one of video games, and consequently of advergaming's characteristic which make a significant difference with the rest of audiovisual media. This is video games capacity to make gamers reflect on their principle, the consequences of their decisions and acts.

As Henry Jenkins says describing the war between effects and meanings of video games (2006, 255-260), opposite to what happens in TV or Cinema, in video games it is the user who takes control of the story, being responsible of the consequences of his decisions. In Jenkins' words, "*games, as other media, are more powerful when strengthen our pre-existing beliefs, and weaker when they question our values*". This makes the gamer to think about each one of his actions before making any decision.

Moving this example to advergaming field, we could say that the gamer, thanks to the interactivity provided by the game, takes a more active role in the brand's communication, a role that was more passive in other forms of traditional communication. This probably is the characteristic that strengthen the bond between the consumer and the brand best.

5. Advergaming's evolution

It is necessary to know the evolution of this association between advertising and video games in order to determine and understand its current situation. From the beginning of this association between videogames and advertising professor Méndiz distinguishes four stages: creation of promotional games (1982-1983), first appearances of brands in videogames (1985-1995), first advergaming (1996-2001) and prosperity of the advergaming (2001-2008). But his investigation finishes in 2009, and it would be a big mistake not to pay attention to the changes occurred in different fields, such as technology and, obviously, Internet. This is the reason why it is necessary to continue his work by adding a new stage that would start from 2010 up to the present day.

This new stage could be named as the birth of Social Advergaming.

We can find two singular precedents of the appearance of brands in videogames in what we could call advergaming prehistory. In 1964 Chicago Coin Company launched a game called *Mustang Machine*, a game that included vibrating scenes of this sports car. Nobody ever confirmed the role that Ford played in this case: If they paid for the insertion of the car, if they simply authorized it or just didn't have anything to do with that. The truth is that the car was launched to the market in April of the very same year.

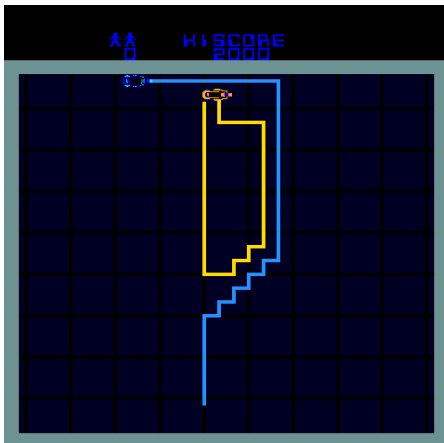


The other precedent is dated on 1969, when the simulation game *Lunar Lander* was launched. Here players had to prove their skills landing on the Moon surface. In 1973 Digital Equipment Corporation commissioned a graphic version, called *MoonLander*, intended to prove the capacities of their new graphic terminal GT40. One of the versions of the game included the following warning: ‘If you land exactly in the right spot, you’ll see a McDonald’s establishment. The astronaut will step out the spaceship walking towards McDonalds and asking for a Big Mac, and then he will walk backwards and will take off. If you crash the spaceship against the establishment you’ll see a big banner saying: Too bad! You’ve just destroyed the only McDonalds in the Moon’. Obviously it was the joke of an anonymous programmer and not an insertion paid by the fast’s food giant but it probably was the first example of a brand integrated into a game.



5.1. Creation of promotional games (1982-1983)

First agreements to link advertising and videogames are dated in the early 80's. At the moment, videogames started to become very popular in USA –mostly among children– and the brands found a possibility to meet their targets in a much more efficient way. In



this first stage videogames were used as a promotional strategy. But those who lead the way in this sense were not the brands, but the films. In 1982 Midway company launched *Tron*, based on the Disney movie with the same name, with the sole purpose of promoting the film. Due to its success, one year later the company developed the continuation of this game, called *Discs of Tron*. Also, in 1992 Sega produced *Star Trek: Strategic*

Operator Simulator, an arcade game to promote the launching of the Movie *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, the second chapter of the saga. And following this strategy Atari created the videogame *Star Wars in 3-D* in 1983, placing the pilot inside the X-wings cockpit created by George Lucas.

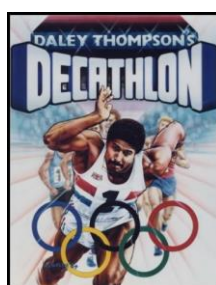
Nevertheless, all this process suffered a sudden breakdown due to the crisis that stroke against the videogame's industry at the end of 1983, what is known in professional circles as the *Videogame Crash*. This way, the sales of videogames decreased from 2 Billion in 1993 to 800 million in 1984, and to just 100 million in 1985.

5.2. First appearances of brands in videogames (1985-1995)

After the videogames crash in 1983, the industry recovered. Companies learnt from their mistakes and started to produce more complex games, with more graphic development and more seductive capacity that opened new possibilities for the integration of the brand.

Sports games immediately accepted to embed logos and commercial names, mostly because of its attraction amongst the young audience and also because of its resemblance to real places.

In 1984 it appeared *Daley Thomson's Decathlon*, one of the first licensed games ever. Francis Morgan Thomson, known as *Daley*, was a British athlete that won the famous



decathlon at Olympic Games in Moscow '80 and Los Angeles '84. Today we find names such as Rafael Nadal, Fernando Alonso or Pau Gasol. In the same year,

Nintendo launched *Tennis*, a game vs. computer that showed several banners of Nintendo.

In 1987, with the improvement of the graphics, the possibility of inserting billboards and banners into videogames started to seem profitable. It was in this year when the new Nintendo's *NES* console appeared.

F-1 Spirit: The Way to Formula 1 (1987) was the first one to introduce billboards advertising the brand Dunlop.

But the most important was the launching of *The Ford Simulator*. The game offered plenty of information about the company, its products as well as a guide for the potential vehicles buyers. More than a game, it happened to be an interactive

demonstration. And in short time, the company that led this software, SoftAd Group, produced a line of very similar games. It was a clear precedent of the future advergaming, but not one of them yet.

In the same way, Pepsi launched in 1998 *Mad Mix Game* (with a clear reference to the movie *Mad Max*) known as the *Pepsi Challenge*.

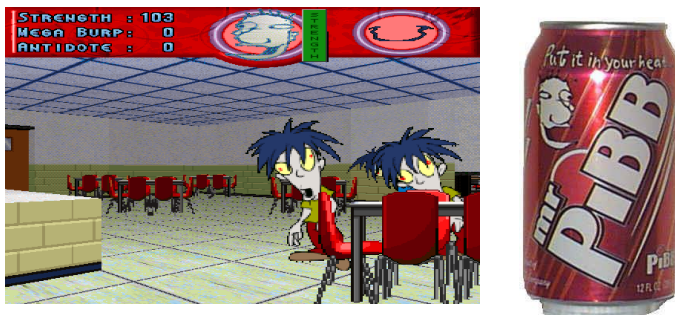
In 1993, ten years after the crisis, the videogame industry covered the front page of Times magazine. The article inside said as follows: ‘*what at first seemed just a temporary fashion for teenagers has grown up becoming a global industry that joins the most creative talents of Hollywood and overcomes the media in terms of profitability. American people spent 5.3 billion dollars in videogames last year, which means around 400 million more than we did in blockbusters*’.

Definitely the insertion of the videogames in the audiovisual industry was a fact by the mid-nineties.

5.3. First advergaming (1996-2001)

In 1995 something happened that radically changed the landscape. It was the birth of several companies specialized in advergaming development.

BrandGames was one of those pioneer companies. In fact, the company worked for many of the big brands, such as Coca-Cola, that commissioned a game in 3D to promote its new drink *Mr. Pibb* inside the campaign *back to school*. The game was called “*Interactive Mr. Pibb Game*” and it was sold in more than 1500 bars and restaurant all around USA in September 1998, at a very affordable price between 99 cents and \$1.99. Coca-Cola sold 750.000 units in just two months.



Another company founded in 1995 was Skyworks. This company brought a very interesting novelty: the possibility of creating advergaming for internet, what gave this advertising format a much broader spreading than usual, approaching to what we know as advergaming today.

Though advergaming started back in 1983 it wasn't until 1995 that this phenomenon became completely professional.

However, the new possibilities of advergaming were terribly shocked by what was known as the “dotcom crisis” (1999-2002). Once again, this industry had to wait.

5.4. Prosperity of the advergaming (2001-2008)

The rely of these innovative companies arrived by the hand of Massive Incorporated. This company founded at the beginning of 2002, specialized in brand placement management in creation phase or pre-launching videogames.

With Massive's thrust many companies entered the business embedding brands into videogames but the definite step was taken in September 2002 when something shocked both videogames' producers and consumers:

“The second part of the bestselling videogame in history has become a very desired advertising support. The Sims, an original social life simulator, sold more than 19 million videogames in the last three years (...) The sequel of the Sims, the Sims online is expected for Christmas and Electronic Arts, the company that developed the game has discovered a new way of earning money with this mass phenomenon. Product placement agreements with companies such as Intel or McDonalds have been signed”.





The growth of the advergaming becomes exponential from 2003. And this definite strength comes as a result of the confluence with the interests of the cinematographic industry. This way, in 2003 companies launch games based not only in the blockbuster sagas of the moment, such as *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* or *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, but also in movies without any previous success, such as *Catwoman* or *Finding Nemo*. Moreover, we started to see games based in TV series (*Dragon Ball*, *The Simpsons*, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *24 Hours*) and in famous novels (*Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*).

In 2005 there's a novelty in this trend. Classical movies such as *The Godfather*, *Scarface*, *Jaws* or *From Russia with Love* become action videogames.

But the advergaming industry reached its maturity in 2006. A study carried out by Yahoo!, OMD Insight and Skive prove the effectiveness of this advertising format. As a consequence, many companies started demanding and commissioning advergaming. Microsoft purchased most of Massive Incorporated's shares with the sole purpose of using its technology to get advertising profits in their coming creations.

Finally, Electronic Arts signs an agreement with IGA Worldwide with the intention of offering producers new dynamic advertising possibilities.

In 2007, videogaming possibilities reached the top of the commercial strategies. In one hand, Google purchased Adscape Media, assuring a synergy between videogaming, advertising and Internet Searchers. On the other hand, Massive developed a new technology that updates the advertisements in videogames in real time. Certainly, the

possibilities of advergaming are growing geometrically, and yet we can say that it is just the beginning.

5.5. A new paradigm: Social Advergaming (2010-2014)

As previously commented in the classification of the different types of advergaming, we have been witnesses, in the last five years of the new social media revolution.

With the growth and popularity of social networks, brands felt compelled, by the end of the first decade of the new century, to take in consideration this new way to communicate, adapting their advertising strategies in order to perform more effective messages. And obviously, advergaming wasn't a stranger in these new strategies.

From that moment on, the new advergaming were meant to be played both in computers and in mobile platforms, and their main goal goes hand in hand with its bond to social networks. Gamers need to share the results of their gameplays in either Facebook or Twitter in order to obtain information about the products, prizes or other kind of rewards. At the same time, advertisers need to reach agreements with social networks in order to have access to their data bases. This way, brands obtain crucial information about consumers, such as:

- Gender
- Age
- Location
- Politic ideology
- Religion
- Places visited
- Tastes (music, food, art)
- Hobbies
- Others

And this is the way how brands, through a deeper knowledge of consumers' habits, get to perform much more effective messages.

Taking advantage of social networks growth, many advergaming were created with quite positive results. In 2009, Burger King launched Whopper Sacrifice, a controversial initiative in Facebook whose virality became an example in social advergaming's field.

But something happened in 2011 that meant an inflection point in advergaming's landscape. Magnum launched Magnum Pleasure Hunt, and many instantly defined it as the first authentic advergaming developed and meant for the new social environment of new technologies. From that moment on, most of the big brands have fallen for this hybrid of advertising and entertainment.

6. Some figures about advergaming and video games.

With the goal of illustrating the current situation of advergaming, some data is to be shown in order to help understand the importance we should give to this phenomenon, that seems to grow every day and, therefore, we should take in consideration we it comes to make predictions about advertising sector.

General

In USA, following a study carried out by IAB Argentina, video games represent a business of over 30 billion dollars, exceeding Hollywood's incomes. In the rest of the world, video games have been billing more than music and movie all together.

1 out of three persons use video games in a regular basis, and 35% find them the most entertaining activity, compared to the 18% of TV.

In Spain, 22% of internet users play video games, which means over 2 million people.

Who play video games?

Though it is true that teenagers and youngsters are heavy video game users, a study carried out by Entertainment Software Association shows that the average gamer is 30 years old, and that 68% of the total are passed 18 years old. This can be easily understood by explaining that many of them belong to what was known as the Atari Generation, who started playing video games in the 80s.

Do women play?

43% of gamers around the world are women, and this figure rises up to 50% when we talk about casual games. This kind of games usually are easy to learn but hard to master. While women prefer puzzle games, men rather go for sports or action games.

Social networks

Not much to say to this respect. Brands mostly choose Facebook and Twitter to insert their advergaming.

Awareness

A study carried out by NeoEdge Networks shows that In-Game advertising provides up to 500% more awareness than TV.

Investment

It is hard to estimate the investment in advergaming, since figures vary depending on the aim they are meant for. It is common to find investment data that comprehend mobile marketing and apps together with advergaming, showing figures that keep us from determining the exact numbers we are looking for.

Nevertheless, we will show some general figures in order to have an idea about the investment in this kind of technologies for advertising.

According to IAB Spain, advergaming represents 0,32% of investments in media.

Mobile Marketing Association Spain (MMA Spain) announced at the beginning of 2014 that investment in apps, advergaming, proximity and coupons remains in the second place, with 21,52 million euros in 2013, though it means a slight decrease compared to 2012.

Infoadex annual's report also shows a decrease in promotional games investments compared to 2012 (around 15%).

7. Study cases

Here below I'll continue carrying out an analysis of cases throughout a completely advertising methodology. The aim is showing the effectiveness of this new media, same as its tendency to a social use. Obviously, they are cases which achieved considerable success and awareness. Besides, taking into consideration the short life of advergaming as an advertising phenomenon, it's almost impossible to get concrete data about actions that are unsuccessful in this field.

7.1. Magnum "Pleasure Hunt"(2011)



Brand: Magnum

Product: Magnum Temptation

Objectives:

- Promote the brand
- Promote the launching of Magnum Temptation new range
- Strengthen the positioning of the brand for "pleasure hunters".

Target: Women from 25 to 54 years old.

Media: Internet. Microsite <http://pleasurehunt.mymagnum.com> trasladado a redes sociales

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LD4uiqejOLg>

Agency: Lowe Brindfords

Communication concept: Magnum is the brand that allows you to experience one of the greatest pleasures of life. The new Magnum Temptation.

Game description: It's a classic platform game, in the style of the famous Mario Bros, which consists in collecting the highest number of chocolates in the shortest possible time.

The user has to run, jump, fly or drive through different scenarios, web pages of brands like Miyato Asian SPA, Saab, Zulu Safari, YouTube, Samsung, Spotify, Dove, Tiger, Hotel San Martino, among others, collecting chocolates until you reach the page of Magnum, where the player gets the final score.

Results:

- Players all around the world have spent in total about 500,000 hours playing the game, with an average of 8.5 minutes per player.
- In just 5 days from its launch the website received 752.101 visits.

Comments:

Based on the previously mentioned communication concept and the insight proposed by the brand on its video presentation (internet is an inexhaustible source for finding various pleasures), Magnum allows the player to experience the pleasures of life, like sleeping in a luxurious hotel, driving a sports car, hang-gliding or enjoying a spa, among others, until you reach the ultimate pleasure... the new Magnum Temptation.

The effectiveness of the action is obvious based on the results. Moreover, bearing in mind that the structure of the game is the classical platform game (played mostly by the male audience), states how middle-aged women are having fun at the same time that they collect the maximum number of chocolates in a relaxed manner. This fact proves the effectiveness of this kind of games.

In addition, to confirm the achieved score, player must share the results via Facebook and Twitter, which shows the trend of brands to strengthen its communication on social networks.

In this case, the identity of the brand and its values (pleasure, exclusivity and sophistication) are reflected in the game.

In short, we have an action carried out by Magnum, in collaboration with brands that share values, whose aesthetic effort and way of execution should be a reference in the sector of advergaming. Indeed, the brand has made two later versions of the game due to the success achieved. You can continue playing nowadays.

7.2. Burger King “Whopper Sacrifice”(2009)



Brand: Burger King

Product: Whopper

Objective: Promote the limited edition burger Angry Whopper

Target: Young people from 18 to 30 years old.

Media: Social networks (Facebook)

Link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0D_MYc6m0o

Agency: Crispin Porter + Bogusky together with Refresh Partners

Communication concept: Whopper is the burger which I can give up other things for.

Game description: Very easy. The game was to delete 10 Facebook friends in order to get a free Burger, under the motto "friendship is strong, but the Whopper is stronger". Then, you had to choose 10 friends whose friendship wasn't as important as a Whopper, and, once selected, Burger King sent the user an exchangeable coupon for a free Angry Whopper hamburger.

Results:

- Around 233.000 people were “sacrificed” by the 55.000 which downloaded the game.
- The campaign generated such controversy that Facebook decided to remove the game within 10 days.

Analysis: In this case, Burger King was able to detect the consumer insight and activate it through Facebook. Being a seemingly simple action implementation, we can make a double reading: on the one hand, Burger King saw the need to use social networks to better connect with their audience, but on the other hand, it’s really interesting the fact that the brand challenged the nature of the platform in which game was played, in this case, Facebook. This meant for us all a touch of attention regarding to how social networks have changed our concept of friendship.

Definitely, we can say that the success of the campaign was that it really connected with people.

Comments: We should remark that this action could generate some controversy around its consideration as an advergame itself, as it doesn’t have a real element of entertainment that turn it into a "game" (beyond the choice of 10 friends who sacrifice). It is probably an example of the reason why many pepole tend to encompass the phenomenon of advergaming to modern Social Media Marketing and digital marketing.

The main reason why it has been included in this selection is due to the fact that it’s presumably one of the first attempts of the major brands to use social networks in a different way, and becoming a leader in the field of advertising.

7.3. Atrapalo “La Rioja” (2013)



Brand: Atrapalo together with La Rioja Tourist Office.

Product: Tourism in La Rioja

Objective: Increase the brand engagement and awareness, promoting La Rioja as a tourist destination.

Target: Men and women from 25 to 50 years old.

Media: Social networks (Facebook)

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8GB0OcH66Y>

Agency: Adverway

Game description: It is an interactive promoting game in which players would discover the particularities of La Rioja, the Atrapalo promoted destination. The game consisted of matching images of La Rioja, which were displayed for a few moments in the Facebook page, in order to get coupons of 50 euros.

Results: the obtained result was a huge success, exceeding the expectations of the company that created the advergame.

- Total of 1,898 players
- Total of 23.645 times played
- Average of 12.5 game plays by player
- Average time of 9 minutes of interaction with the brand per game play.

- Total of 17,000 minutes playing.
- Total of 284 hours of exposure to Atrapalo's content.

Analysis: In this case, Atrapalo decided to take advantage of the social networks potential to turn promotion into something much more interactive. Then, they wanted to check the reaction of their followers (approximately 300.000) regarding this kind of games.

Atrapalo's target is composed mostly by young people (between 18 and 40 years old), social networks regular users, which tend to find tourist offers in the web pages of reference (e-dreams, last minute, letsbonus, privalia), even those people with a medium-high level.

Therefore, since it's a company that operates in the digital medium, and taking into account the public which is directed to, the success of the game is not surprising. Despite of non-existing direct data on the final travel recruitments to La Rioja, we must accept the data displayed (time of exposure to the mark) as very positive in relation to the action's main purpose.

7.4. Adidas “The finale “ (2010)



Brand: Adidas

Product: new football sport shoes F50 Predator

Objective: Promote the launch of new football sport shoes F50 Predator.

Target: Young people from 15 to 24 years old.

Media: street marketing moved into digital media (MSN Messenger)

Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8GB0OcH66Y>

Agency: Isobar

Communication concept: Adidas Predator are the most coveted football shoes all around the world.

Game description: At the beginning, it was a real contest carried out physically in a few cities, but then, game was reinforced by creating a video game for MSN Messenger (almost obsolete nowadays), Microsoft instant messaging service, used daily by millions of users at that time.

The game was to launch the perfect penalty into a goal. Something simple but very addictive, just like the old games of launching balls into a basket.

Initially, the game was presented in the French, Spanish, Italian, British and German markets, due to their passion for football. But the success was such that soon would travel to Mexico.

Results: The result was an unprecedented success, with an average of 20,000 items daily. But this wasn't the end. According to data from Jupiter Media Metrix:

- A total of 13.7 million games played.
- 62% of the players finished the game, and 41% played more than once.
- Adidas website received 125 million visits.
- The average player time was 6.7 minutes.
- Brand got an exposure time of 200.000 minutes.

Analysis: It must be said that, as in many other cases, the game created by Adidas is part of an advertising strategy that includes other media. As mentioned, the contest was initially designed for physically performing in several cities. However, we can see how Adidas, in 2010 tried to connect with their target audience (young people aged 15-24) through the medium in which they communicated daily, which at that time was the Messenger.

In addition, this messaging service made even a bigger broadcasting, as young people recommend it to some others, while they keep competing for being the best penalties launchers among their circle of friends.

Once again, we can see how social media use is a very effective way to increase the brand awareness, strengthening the link with public and speed up the process of recommendation and prescription of brand.

7.5. Nike Winter's Angry. Fight back (2011)



Brand: Nike

Product: Winter sportive clothing line.

Objective: Promote the launch of winter clothes.

Target: Young people from 16 to 24 years old.

Media: Microsite, moved into Social networks (Facebook and Twitter)

Link to video: <http://dylanlee.net/NIKE-INTERACTIVE-WINTER-S-ANGRY-FIGHT-BACK>

Communication concept: This is an online game consisting of train 3 famous athletes by controlling their movements while training in bad weather conditions. Depending on the skills shown the final score will be more or less. At the end of the game play, results are being shared both in the Microsite and Facebook, and depending on the obtained score, players can opt to small daily prices or to a final Grand Prix.

Results: This advergame success was such that microsite (and therefore the game) received more than 2.100.000 visits in less than one month.

Analysis: As it's been doing since long time ago, Nike has been turned into an advertising example all around the world, being able to detect the insights of their target audience in the most creative ways.

Once again, competition feeling for all these people fan of sports, strictly linked to the need to recognition amongst a particular social environment, makes that just a few can resist playing this sort of video games. In addition, aesthetic execution and staging of video game make the game play to become an authentic brand experience.

With this action, Nike strengthens its values of sportsmanship, effort and overcoming, that connect with the public through a few emotions difficult to experience in traditional media.

7.6. BMW Projection Mapping Racing Game (2012)



Brand: BMW South Africa

Product: BMW 1 series

Objective: Promote new BMW 1 series

Target: Men and Women from 25 to 45 years old

Media: street marketing moved into Facebook (BMW official Facebook page)

Agency: iLogic

Communication concept: BMW innovates to provide an unrivalled driving experience.

Game description: The game consisted of projecting an interactive racing game on the facades of buildings in the most important cities of the country during eight nights, leaving consumers to participate on a 108-square-foot screen. Street promotion staff invited passers-by to enter their Facebook data in a Samsung Galaxy Tablet, which was transformed into a virtual steering wheel with which the players competed.

Subsequently, their results were published on the BMW official website on Facebook, along with the user's personal profile.

Results: It was not possible to find bibliographic data around this action results. However, according to the number of references and news published in different digital media, the result of the campaign was satisfactory for the brand.

Analysis: in this case, iLogic Agency, announcing its new model, the 1 series, managed to strengthen consumers' bond with the brand in a new and exciting way. Taking into

account that part of the BMW driving experience is based on a leading-edge technological innovation in its sector, the idea of iLogic to project interactive videos on buildings is in tune with the values of the brand.

Moreover, the fact of publishing the results on the brand official website on Facebook provided users the feeling of belonging to the brand and that social recognition which we seem to need more every time.

The result was an experience that brought together, on the one hand the entertainment and on the other hand the technological innovation that characterized the company, which also had the advantage of measuring the engagement of the public in real time.

7.7. Audi Quattro Experience (2013)



Brand: Audi Canada

Product: Audi A4

Objectives: Promote Audi A4, raise awareness of the advantages of the quattro traction.

Target: Men from 25 to 40 years old.

Agency: Zulu Alpha Kilo

Media: street marketing moved into social network (Facebook)

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpHESUZomxs>

Communication concept: Audi is the brand that provides a unique driving experience thanks to the quattro traction.

Game description: Game consisted of placing a giant scalextric in the financial district of a city, inviting passers-by to try the Quattro Experience. Players competed among them. Cars control was carried out through an Apple iPad. In addition to control the speed with the iPad, you could also display car travel from cameras on board the car.

At the end, each player's race was recorded on video and shared on their Facebook profile.

Results: Thousands of people tried the Audi Quattro Experience. The action was awarded with a bronze in the Clio Awards 2013, in the category of Branded Entertainment & Content Live Events.

Analysis: This action has been included in the selection of cases due to its similarity with the one previously studied. It's possible that, seeing the positive results of the advergame made by BMW only a year earlier, Audi would like to create something similar, with the advantage of learning from the mistakes of others.

In fact, it is worth highlighting the rivalry that keep both German brands for years, and that it's reflected, from time to time, in their advertising messages. This is a good example of this:



Also pretty curious is the fact that two rival car becomes allies with two great rivals in the technology sector (Samsung and Apple).

But looking at the game from the perspective that we are concerned, it can be determined that Audi has made once again use of its good taste when it comes to convey emotions.

In addition, using social networks to make others transmit them on their behalf, has managed to convert an isolated action in the center of the financial district of Toronto in viral fact, likely to gain notoriety in other media all over the world.

Not to mention fun experienced by players, this reinforces the values of the brand and its link with the public.

7.8. Red Bull Formula Race (Red Bull). 2011



Brand: Red Bull

Product: Red Bull energy drink

Objective: Strengthen Red Bull positioning as a brand linked to motor and speed world.

Target: Men from 20 to 45 years old.

Media: Red Bull web page

Agency: Unknown

Communication concept: Red bull is motor, Red bull is speed and adventure.

Game description: Red Bull proposes an online original racing game.

This energy drink brand wanted to share his passion for the world of the motor with Internet users through a facial recognition-driven car racing game. The brand has launched 'Red Bull Formula Face', a game hosted on the portal www.redbullformulaface.com in which the face of participants works like a joystick.

To play in this virtual competition, the user must photograph his face via webcam and create the avatar for his pilot. Once in the race, the vehicle will take an address or another depending on the movements of the head, if player tilt his head to the left or to the right.

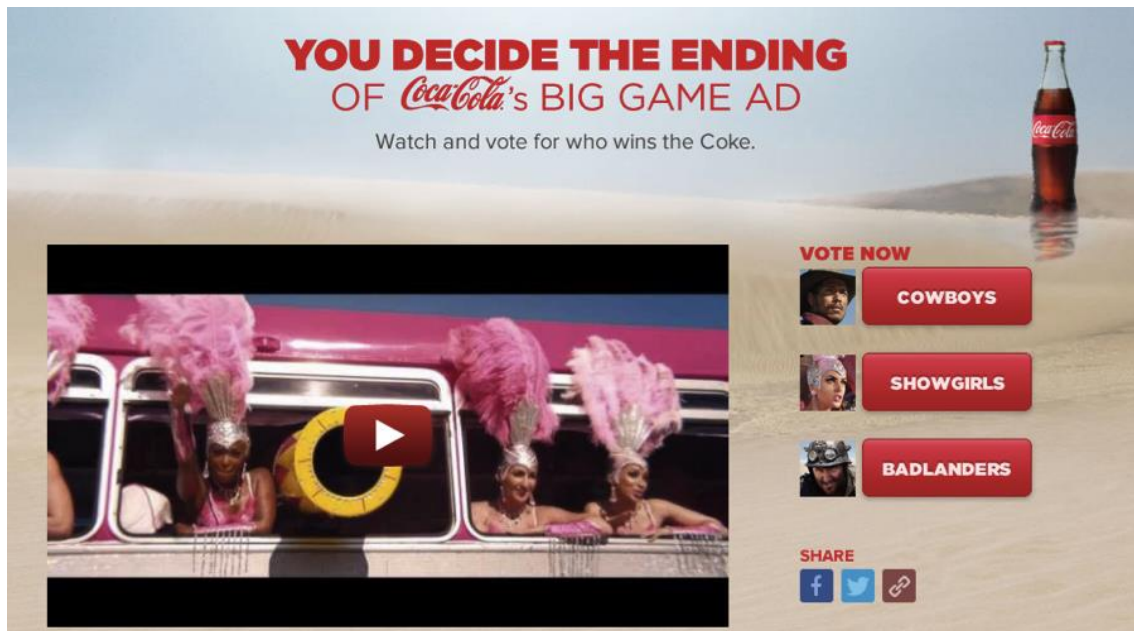
Other than accumulate points for the competition result, you can also earn points by collecting cans of Red Bull throughout the course and participate in photographic challenges, gesturing in the required way, for example, winking an eye or by sticking out the tongue. Obviously, all results can be shared on Facebook and Twitter, to make the corresponding rankings and possible future promotions and awards.

Results: It wasn't possible to find bibliographic results regarding to this action.

Analysis: In this case, the game is based on mere entertainment, and it doesn't look like anyone has paid attention to the need of coherence between the brand values and its actions. It is hard to judge this advergame without details about the final results. Nevertheless, after several searches in different browsers no news nor opinions have been found, so there are no proves of any success.

But from an advertising perspective, it is not enough to understand the need to use social media for the messages to be effective. Brands principles and values must go hand in hand with the action so the audience can decode the message properly. This way the perceived image will fit the one intended by the brand. In this case, we haven't found that necessary coherence.

7.9. Coca Cola COKECHASE.COM (2013)



Brand: The Coca Cola Company

Product: Coca Cola

Objective: to create virality around Super Bowl's final, maintaining public's engagement through digital media.

Target: young people between 18-35 years old, social media users, mainly US citizens.

Media: TV commercial, based in a social media strategy (Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube)

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaCtlwWGut0>

Agency: Wieden + Kennedy

Communication concept: Coca Cola lets people to write the end of the story.

Game description: the strategy consisted in launching a teaser commercial on tv, where three groups of people competed in the desert to reach a giant Coca Cola bottle, and the end of the story was left in people's hands. People, through their social media profiles, voted their favorite group and decided who reached the bottle at the end of the commercial.

Results: no result could be found on this campaign.

Analysis: once more, Coca Cola has shown off its Hollywood style combining a traditional tv commercial with a social media strategy. This time the brand has reinforced one of its main values, people and happiness, by allowing people to run the story as they wanted.

This way, users feel that the brand counts on their responsibility to decide how the story will end, and that joining with other people can achieve it, so they would surely invite their friends on social media, quickly increasing the campaign awareness in short time.

It is not easy to classify this action as an advergame, since new trends such as Transmedia or Cross-Media Storytelling make the limits quite blurry. Nevertheless, if we forget about the fact that it is a tv commercial, we could say that the structure is more similar to a video game than to other audiovisual formats: our decisions determine the story and provide us, not only with entertainment, but with a feeling of victory or defeat.

7.10. Chipotle The Scarecrow (2013)



Brand: Chipotle Mexican Grill

Product: Restaurants Chipotle Mexican Grill

Objective: Build awareness on “Food with integrity” campaign

Target: men and women between 18-45 years old.

Media: Video teaser on YouTube, advergaming available on app store. Facebook and Twitter involved.

Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUtnas5ScSE>

Agency: CAA (Creative Artist Agency) + Edelman

Communication concept: Chipotle is a food chain of restaurants that bets of 100% natural food, instead of processed fast food.

Game description: this is a traditional platform/action video game to be played on iOS devices (iPhone or iPad). The game consists on keeping the world from processed fast food by delivering natural food along different scenarios.

Results: the video reached 6,5 million views in less than two weeks, and the game was on the top 15 in free apps on the app store in US. By the publishing of this investigation it almost reached 13 million views.

The message was so emotional and its success so surprising that it was written about in the New York Times, Time Magazine and many other publications.

Four days after its launch the game had over 250.000 downloads, and despite of decreasing in the lists, figures rose up to one million downloads in the next six months.

On top, the campaign was awarded with the Cannes Festival Grand Prix.

Analysis: after reading the results of this campaign, there not much left to say about the effectiveness of this kind of advergaming. Some described it as the future of mobile advergaming.

In this case, Facebook and Twitter we just in charge of spreading the video and news about the campaign, and the main role was played by YouTube (which is a social network too), causing an unexpected effect on the advergaming sector. Nevertheless, we must be fair and recognize what is obvious: effectiveness can be best achieved when the message reaches people's heart. There is nothing more powerfull than emotions, and it is hard not to consider them when analising this kind of cases. Indeed, when gathering opinions about Chipotle's advergame in different media one can easily notice that most of them come from emotional impulses.

Definitely, Chipotle has smartly complemented its campaign "Food for Integrity" telling a story in flawless way, according to its brand values and obtaining a better reputation from its audiences opinions.

8. Conclusions

After this investigation about the phenomenon of advertising, there are a few conclusions to be mentioned:

The evolution and innovation in Communication and Information Technologies (TIC) has led to the creation of a new interactive model of advertising communication, in which consumers play a more active role than in the rest of traditional media.

Video games have certain characteristics that place them in an advantageous position compared to the rest of media. Among the most important ones, their self-reflection ability. At the same time, this self-reflection also appears as a double-edged sword: while it can strengthen the engagement with the brand, it can easily destroy it if the game experience is not satisfactory.

Investment in this field seems to increase every year, with no signs that could invert this trend.

Advergaming, therefore, should start to be considered as a new communication media. In order to reach that goal, it must be considered as a serious one, and not as a simple pastime with no further consequences.

Besides, advergaming finds its main effectiveness in entertainment. This is why consumer's attitude towards the game makes it much more effective than other media. Advergames can generate emotions which are hard to provoke by other means.

Social networks have changed our ways to communicate and build relationships, becoming a suitable channel to strengthen the bond between brands and their audiences.

But from an advertising perspective, it is not enough to understand the need to use social media for the messages to be effective. Brands' principles and values must go hand in hand with the action so the audience can decode the message properly. This way the perceived image will fit the one intended by the brand. Advergaming is not only entertainment, and it must be considered as a mean of communication where all the elements have to fulfill their function correctly for the communicative process to be effective.

In the end, we can confirm that the study of cases reveals the influence of the social media in advertising strategies, as well as the trend to turn these games into social

events. Besides, social networks allow messages to be transmitted quickly, obtaining an almost immediate feedback from the consumer (thanks to social networks data bases) that give brands the possibility to build more effective messages in the future.

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