

Advergames: Theme of Game is Secret to Success

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(PhysOrg.com) -- It's all fun and games when it comes to the current trend in online advertising. Advergames, online video games used to advertise a product or brand, increasingly are being used by advertisers to attract and engage consumers. In a new study, University of Missouri researchers examined the impact of advergaming themes on consumers' attitudes toward advergaming and brands. The study revealed that consumers expressed strong positive relationships toward brands when they played advergaming with strong thematic connections to the brands.

In the study, participants played two advergaming, both with either high or low thematic connection to the brand. Thematic connection refers to the degree that the object of the advergaming relates to the brand's product or services. For example, the travel company Orbitz designed a game, "Find Your Hotel," that has a theme related to the company's travel services. Another Orbitz game, "Paper Football," does not have a thematic connection to the company's services.

"While games that related to the brand were not inherently more enjoyable than unrelated games, the transfer of enjoyment from the game to a positive attitude toward the brand was stronger when the game and brand were thematically related," said Kevin Wise, assistant professor of strategic communication in the MU School of Journalism. "Game enjoyment led to positive attitude toward the brand when a high thematic connection existed between the game and the brand. This was not the case when the participants played games with a low thematic connection."

According to Wise, previous research has focused on content analysis, effects on children and social policy implications. This is one of only a few studies that examined the effectiveness of specific features of advergames in producing desired results with consumers.

“A great deal of previous research has been devoted to the relationship between attitude towards an ad and attitude towards the brand in traditional media. In this study, we tried to extend that research to the world of online games,” Wise said. “We found that brand-related advergames facilitated the transfer of enjoyment to the brand, compared to unrelated games. Brand-related advergames are not inherently more expensive to produce, so these findings suggest that they might be more effective as a way of developing positive consumer attitudes towards a particular brand.”

The study, “Enjoyment of Advergames and Brand Attitudes: The Impact of Thematic Relevance,” was published in the fall 2008 issue of the Journal of Interactive Advertising. The study was funded by a grant from MU Center for the Digital Globe (CDiG)

Provided by MU

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