

# 'Advergames' new avenue for TV advertising

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Dr Bellman says new technology in the form of online television is opening up a range of new interactive possibilities for advertisers. Credit: Yuwen Memon

Advertising in the form of games or "advergames" can be as effective as regular 30-second television advertisements according to researchers at Murdoch University's Audience Labs.

This first-of-its-kind study involved 233 members of an Australian audience panel, who were told they would be evaluating the suitability of a new US half-hour sitcom.

Participants were divided into three groups, with a third watching TV with regular 30-second ads, another watching TV with ads that included the option to play a trivia or Pac-Man-style advergaming, and the final third playing the advergaming on a personal computer without the sitcom or ads.

They then filled out semantic differential and Likert questionnaires to assess their brand attitude, engagement with the ad type and product involvement.

Dr Steve Bellman says all three ad types were effective, primarily because they generated similar feelings of telepresence, the feeling of 'being there' in the game or commercial.

"Telepresence increases the effectiveness of advertising because it leads to the experience of flow, where a person forgets about their surroundings and becomes immersed," Dr Bellman says.

"This leads to an increase in positive feelings towards a brand, because flow increases enjoyment directly. People are absorbed in what they are doing and associate that with the product."

Dr Bellman says that equal levels of telepresence could be due to similar visual angles, or perceptions of the size of the screen, which is a key factor in producing the sensation of being inside a game or show.

"All three ad types shared a similar visual angle, ranging from 9.8 to 33.7 degrees, which is relatively narrow when compared to more effective immersion modes such as IMAX cinema or virtual reality goggles," Dr Bellman says.

One major difference Dr Bellman found was that the PC group had a significantly higher recall of brands when interviewed 24 to 36 hours

after participation.

Dr Bellman says could be due to a more engaged 'lean forward' mode of attention, compared to the typical 'lean back' mode that people adopt when watching television.

He says these sorts of engagement factors, as well as advergaming effectiveness on tablets and smartphones, will be the subject of future research.

"New technology in the form of online television is opening up a range of new interactive possibilities for advertisers, so it's good to explore how companies can move beyond the traditional models to connect with customers," Dr Bellman says.

"And if this leads to increased enjoyment for viewers, everyone wins."

**More information:** Steven Bellman, Anna Kemp, Hanadi Haddad, Duane Varan, "The effectiveness of advergaming compared to television commercials and interactive commercials featuring advergaming," *Computers in Human Behavior*, Volume 32, March 2014, Pages 276-283, ISSN 0747-5632, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.12.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.12.013).

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