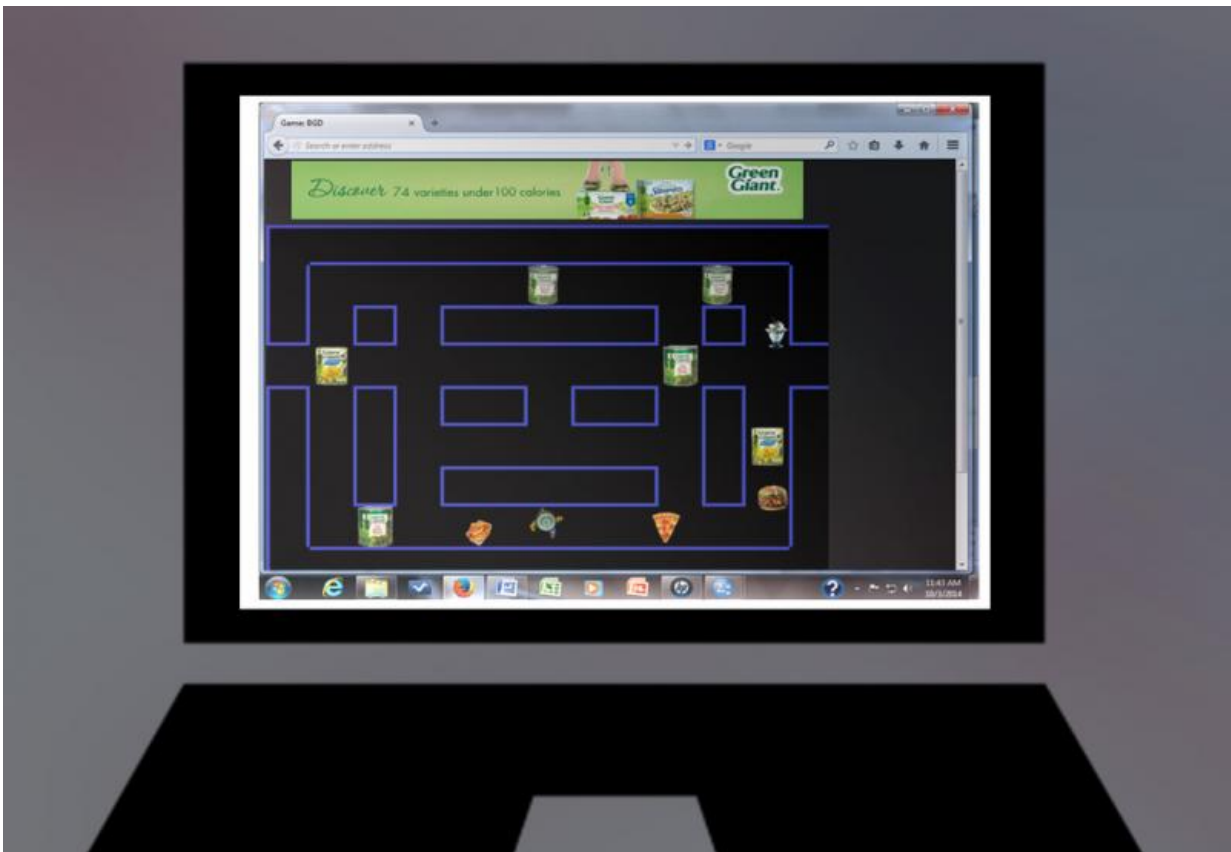


Careful ad placement may help marketers level up in video game advertising

January 19 2017, by Matt Swayne



Researchers found the branded video game -- Green Giant Healthy Eating -- generated better recall and more positive feelings by video game players. However, they added, there are other ways marketers can effectively promote their businesses and products in the new world of video game advertising. Credit: Patrick Mansell, Game Screen provided by Frank Dardis

When it comes to video game advertising, marketers may be better off owning the game rather than advertising in the game, but a team of researchers say there are still other opportunities to effectively place ads in this growing advertising space.

The researchers found that gamers better recalled brands in video games that were custom-developed for that specific [game](#)—called "advergames"—compared to generic video games, said Frank Dardis, associate professor of [advertising](#) and public relations, Penn State. Gamers also were more likely to have positive feelings about the brand after they played an advergame.

"If you (an advertising company) can afford an advergame, that, by far, led to better attitude and the best memory change," said Dardis.

"Obviously, playing a branded game will make you remember the brand a lot more than if you just saw an ad in the game while you're playing."

The best advergames entertain the player while promoting a brand experience, according to the researchers, who report their findings in the current issue of the Journal of Interactive Advertising. For example, an auto company may insert its line of cars into a race game to promote their brand.

"Yes, they want to engage people and make them want to play the game, but in an advergame, the whole game is based on trying to promote the product," said Dardis.

However, advergames can be expensive to develop and maintain, according to Dardis. He suggested that marketers who cannot afford to develop a branded game can still use their ad budgets more effectively by choosing how they advertise and when they advertise during the game.

The researchers recruited about 179 participants for the study. The participants were assigned to one of six conditions, including two different game settings: advergaming or nonbranded game—and three different ad types—preroll video, banner and no advertising.

The researchers created their own version of an advergaming, calling it the Green Giant Healthy Eating game that required players to "eat" as many healthy Green Giant-branded vegetables as possible. The non-branded game used the same rules.

In-game video ads in non-branded games performed better than traditional banner ads, according to Dardis. Further, game players had better recollection of video ads that played in the middle of the game—usually after a player reaches a new level—as opposed to video ads appearing before the game begins. Improving brand awareness and boosting [positive feelings](#) about that brand may increase the likelihood that the player will buy from the advertiser, according to the researchers.

Marketers spend approximately \$145 billion on digital advertising, according to recent figures. Video ads are increasing in popularity. In 2011, marketers spent \$7.55 billion on banners and \$2 billion on [video ads](#). Analysts, however, expect video advertisements to quadruple to more than \$8 billion in 2017, while banner advertisements increase to more than \$11 billion.

While banner ads appear to be the least effective, Dardis added that they are also typically the least expensive forms of advertisements on the web.

"We are not saying that banner ads shouldn't be used at all," he said. "They likely play a role in the mix of your advertising in video games."

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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