

Scientific paper/Znanstveni rad

ADVERGAMING: IDENTITY BRAND ANALYSIS IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Advergaming is a process that includes advertising and gaming. The video game industry is rapidly growing, and has passed film and music production. In recent years, video game industry dominates the segment of global entertainment economy. Marketing communication through video games is a new term in marketing. Advergaming reflects the postmodern consumer by joining integrated marketing communications and games as entertainment and culture. The paper analyzes advergaming from the aspect of marketing and culture. It is based on Kapferer's theory of brand building and Aaker's theory of brand personality. The game phenomenon, its cultural component and consumer essence were displayed according to Huizinga's theory. Models of cultural theories, cultural objects and models of cultural prototypes were also implemented. This paper is based on the analysis of brand building in the video industry according to Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism. The brand's personality reflects the consumer's personification, and the cultural model of Homo Ludens serves as the starting point for gaming phenomenon interpretation. The aim of the paper is to analyze the identity of the brand in virtual reality with the review of the cultural phenotype of advergaming.

KEYWORDS: brand, virtual reality, digital marketing, video game, culture

1 INTRODUCTION

Today, only those corporations have succeeded in adapting their communications to new consumer needs. In the postmodern society [Best and Kellner, 1991:16], consumers connect with brands, and the world market is no longer a seller's market, but the consumer market. Postmodern consumers have specific needs and are very sensitive to the way of satisfying those needs. Consumers are no longer condemned to classical sources of information, but have interactive resources available. New technologies drive companies towards integrated approach and interactive communication.

The advantage of postmodern marketing [Brown, 1993:19-34] is that today consumers can integrate independently into the integrated marketing communication process. By doing so, consumers take on the role of message senders who are encoding their needs. The consumer becomes an active participant in production and repositioning of images and symbolic meanings. Another problem is [Brown, 1993:29], are we prepared to accept the postmodern marketing challenge?

Relying on postmodern postscript, art and marketing are much closer than implied [Brown, 2001:118]. The video game industry or interactive entertainment is one of the fastest growing industries in the past decade. The evolution of video games enables a wider and faster base of users, greater and easier access and ultimately a huge communication channel. By diversifying the video game market, new marketing aspects are being developed. Marketing communication via advergaming is a new term in marketing.

2 CONSUMER AS HOMO LUDENS

Human culture has emerged and developed from the game [Huizinga, 2016]. The concept of game we perceive as the emergence of culture, not as a play *per se*. The game phenomenon does not find its full interpretation in the space of the need and its value does not measure its usefulness for others. Also, the freedom of the game implies creativity. So the game is older than culture [Huizinga, 2016: 1]. It is impossible to deny the game and it is an independent category, or, if we are more precise, the game is *intermezzo* in everyday life [Huizinga, 2016: 9].

Feeling of joy and pleasure are important features of the game. Such a feeling of satisfaction is interpreted according to two game theories: a game as a flow [Csikszentmihalyi, 1990] or a fun [Huizinga, 2016]. Recognizing the need for the game causes the appearance of a growing number of playroom, workshop, creative treasury or opening gaming centers. The game phenomenon in this paper is viewed in accordance with Huizinga's theory, that is, through the prism of culture [Griswold, 2013] and postmodern [Best and Kellner, 1991].

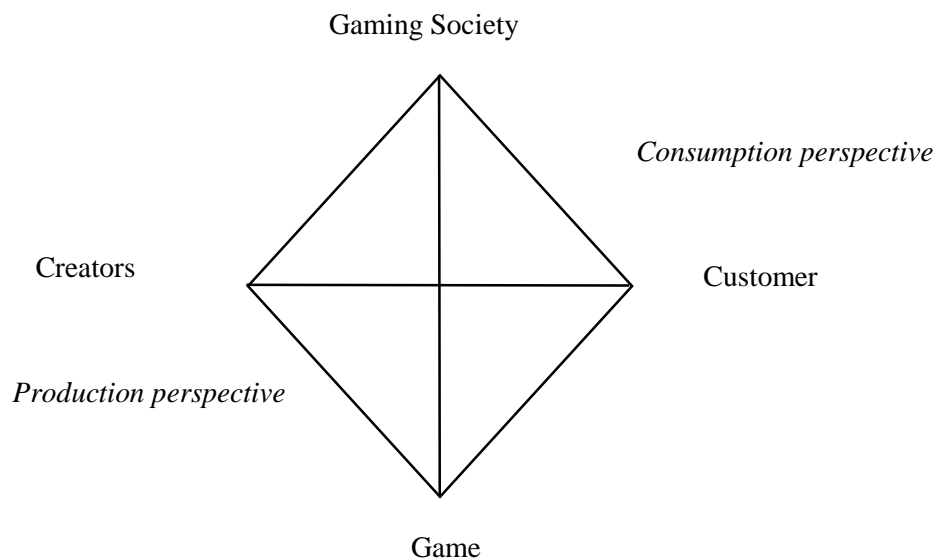
The ability to play the game, of course, exists, but it always ranges from free will and agreed rules. The paradox of the game is that it does not matter who is in the game, but the very act of accepting the rules of the game. Since the game is an activity in which a consumer enters a free will, creating their own rules are taking place in the virtual sphere, in the area of the unreal. Specifically, advergaming reflects the joining of entertainment content [Huizinga, 2016] and marketing [Kotler and Keller, 2008]. Video games represent a form of entertainment, both in younger populations and older people. Advergaming, unlike other forms of communication, has a unique advantage, which is that the ads within games are highly desirable.

As a link between the culture and structure is imposed Griswold's Cultural Diamond [Griswold, 2013]. Therefore, Griswold's Cultural Diamond can be defined as a framework of cultural relations that starts from four relationships: social world, cultural object, producers and receivers. Cultural Diamond is the concept of "cultural object" that implies a socially

meaningful expression that is audible, visible or tangible or that can be articulated. In other words, the cultural object is the subject of corporate marketing analysis. State of the cultural object results from an analytic decision that we make as observers. In the context of advergaming, a cultural object can be a game, a player or a text.

As can be seen in Figure 1, cultural object is a video game that is generated by cultural creators who imply designers, writers, and video game developers. If we look at the message in the wider context of the game's culture, they are linked to the players through the recipient's and sender's relationship. Therefore, the relationship between cultural creators is very similar to the concept of a cultural prototype [Colbert, 2012:31-37] intended for serial production, except when it is a limited edition, which is still a hybrid form of a cultural prototype. The horizontal link between the cultural object of the game in the widest sense and the gaming community is also a representation of subculture. Unlike the vertical link between manufacturers and consumers reflecting supply and demand, horizontal connectivity is an association of corporate brand image [Balmer and Greyser, 2006:730-741] that correlates with brand identity [Kapferer, 2008:183].

Figure 1. Cultural object of gaming industry



Source: Adopted from Griswold [2013:16]

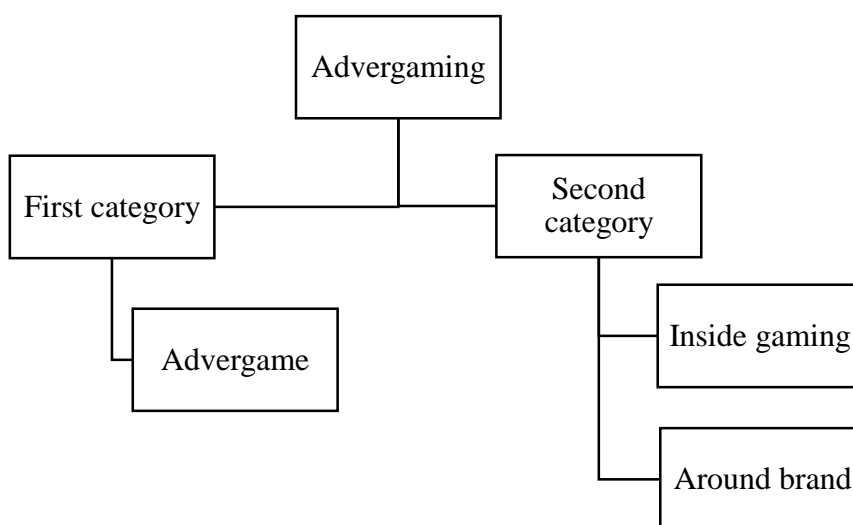
It is interesting that the relations between the creators (the service provider) and the service itself (experienced games) depends on internal factors and the relationship between consumers (viewers) and games (cultural property) on external factors. The cultural sphere of games implies a meaningful function of consumer culture. Every game means something. The game phenomenon appears as a certain social function [Huizinga, 2016:4]. The myth is also a form that takes the elements of the game that would eventually, through metaphor, translate to the consumer brand image.

If we look at these two relationships as a production and consumer dimension, then we understand the video game in a cultural aspect. By doing so, the brand, in the widest sense of the word [Bennett, 1995:85] becomes a complete video game, together with all stakeholders. We watch the video game as a brand. The strategy of building brand begins with a clear understanding of what brand represents to producer and consumer [Keller, 2008:35]. Brand strength is based on a good brand positioning, its most important components: consumer associations. To build a brand equity there are three key components: identity, image and brand personality. Only creating a brand indicates creating differences [Kotler and Keller, 2008:275].

3 AVERGAMING PHENOMENON

Advergaming is compromise of two word advertising and gaming [Sharma, 2014:248]. We can conclude that advergaming is a combination of advertising and entertainment in the form of video games. Advergaming uses interactive gaming mechanics to influence creative messaging to consumers. Advertising have some important functions for the brands: to inform, to persuade, to teach and to entertain [Sharma, 2014:248]. Advergaming advantage is that with gamers creates interaction and involvement with the brand. The term advergaming means the practice of using computer games, console games, and mobile communication devices, which are commonly referred as video games. Figure 2 shows the classification of advergaming from the aspect of virtual reality and brand. As is apparent, advergaming is viewed through two categories where the first category is the original, starting micro game that serves primarily as a promotional corporate software. Its main purpose is to increase brand awareness [Adis and Kim, 2013a: 58-67]. The second category includes the game as a completely different product where brands are integrated within the game or as a game add-on.

Figure 2. Advergaming and virtual reality



Source: Author

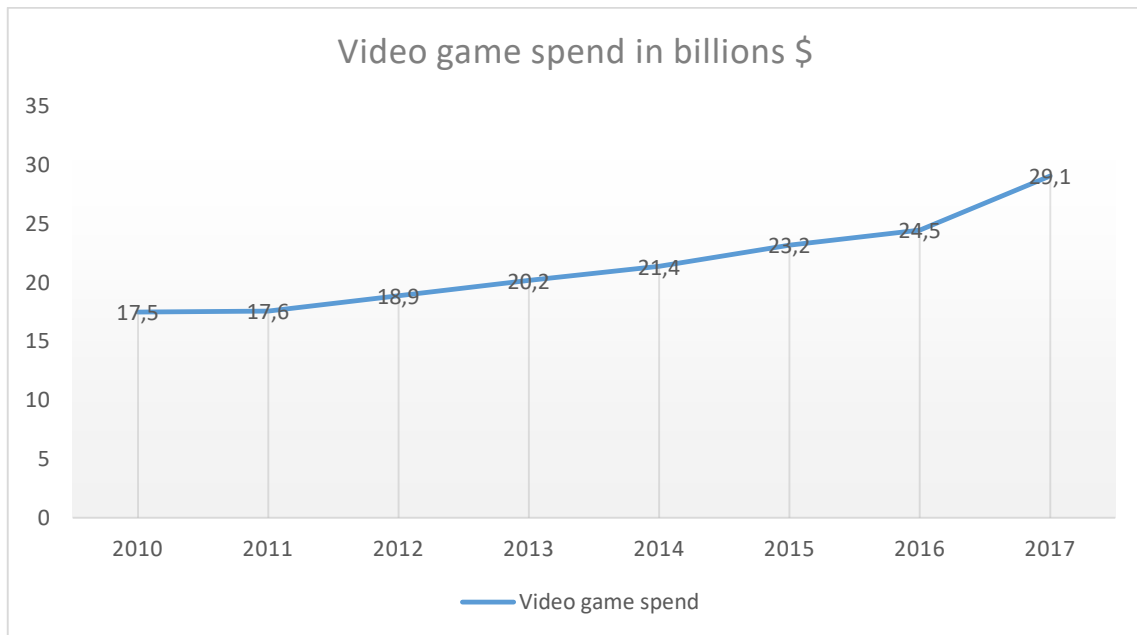
So, advergaming category includes games that are fully developed in order to promote the brand and the category in which brands are integrated into the game. Evidently, the first category are

games that are specifically developed exclusively for the promotion of their own brands and those that they can be most often appear on the pages of the corporation or is distributed free [Adis and Kim, 2013b: 117-139] via cell phone. The second category includes so-called ambient advertising, these are very complex games, both graphically and by content. In this paper the second category of advergaming will be analyzed.

There are two reasons why the first category of advergaming is not analyzed. The first reason relates to a part of a consumer who uses such games exclusively as entertainment. Also, such games cannot be considered games as cultural objects [Griswold, 2013] of a society or games that consumers are approaching to culture [Huizinga, 2016]. And finally, the second reason is the growing consumer concern about using their personal information and brand trust, because consumers believe that such methods collect information about their preferences. According to recent research, the role of customization, brand trust and privacy concerns in advergaming has shown a positive impact on adverage persuasion [Wottrich et al, 2017:60-81]. When privacy concerns are low, a game containing customization leads to a positive brand attitude. Concerns about consumer privacy on the Internet strongly influences the effectiveness of advertising [Ryan et al, 2006:344-360] since the games have become deeply rooted in society.

On the other hand, video games represent a remarkably significant possibility of communicating with consumers, which is still largely unused. Excluding the first category of advergaming, the video industry market is a big challenge for all potential investors. Advertising within a video game allows reaching a wide auditorium. Just match the video game Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3, which earned \$ 400 million in North America and England for 24 hours, and two weeks after a billion dollars [Marchand and Hennig-Thurau, 2013:141]. The video game industry is in huge growth, both dynamically and innovatively. The game concept [Huizinga, 2016] has gained a broader definition and evolved from subculture [Haralambos and Holborn, 2008:662-664] into management, which is confirmed by the term gamification. According to the Annual Report Entertainment Software Association (ESA), the average gamer is 35 years old, and 26% is 50+ [ESA, 2016:13]. Video game industry generated a record of 36 billion and a growth of 19%. Figure 3 shows the annual sales revenue of video games for the last ten years.

Figure 3. Annual video game content spend in billions



Source: Adopted from ESA [2018:10]

The graph clearly shows that video game sales, and therefore the entertainment industry is growing every year. Also, note that the chart does not show the sale of hardware and peripherals because then we include another \$ 6.9 billion, which accounts for \$ 36 billion in revenue in 2017, up 18% from 2017, according to new data released by the ESA. According to the annual report [ESA, 2018], 60% of gamers play games daily, and 45% of the total population is women. Video games have become a mass phenomenon, accompanied by a growing number of exciting questions and possible strategies for marketing managers [Marchand and Hennig-Thurau, 2013:154].

Advergaming must therefore be viewed through integrated communication of the game as culture [Huizinga, 2016], art [Colbert, 2012] and society in which the game has become a very serious category [Alvarez and Michaud, 2008]. In the field of art, where emotions play an important role, the hedonic satisfaction of the consumer experiences from contact with the artwork is a key element [Colbert, 2012: 563-565]. The video game industry not only promotes digital marketing but also indirectly affects network effect. Concept of two-sided markets and indirect network effects are related [Rochet and Tirole, 2003: 990-1029]. Specifically, the hardware produced by Sony is by selling the console and selling the gaming license. Thus, a multi-player platform player is more desirable to the consumer. Video games successfully manage to keep consumers interested in virtual reality and as long as possible in the game. And that is the key difference. Advergaming, unlike other forms of communication, has a unique advantage: consumers want to see the brand.

4 BRAND IN VIRTUAL REALITY

In the context of the second category of advergaming, brands are extremely desirable in virtual reality. At the same time, it is about an oxymoron because consumers do not like communication messages, but in virtual reality, not only consumers are looking for them, they are ready to pay more. Virtual reality and digital marketing have a unique feature that contributes to the reality of the game itself. Specifically, the virtual reality where a consumer recognizes real brands, logos, colors or music contributes to the reality and allows the player to experience more powerful connectivity. This especially stands out when it comes to car brands, because the game *Gran Turismo 6* may find 1,247 different models of extension of car brands.

Also, there is a paradox, because until recently video game makers have had to pay for the brand, while the situation is now reverse. It is often the case that the characters of virtual reality integrated marketing communications used in other media and simultaneously create brand within a brand. Specifically, character Lare Croft uses many brands in the game (sunglasses, clothing, watches, engines, cars), and also becomes the trademark of the brand. At the same time, video games with their main character can become so recognizable that they are filming them, as is the case with the Tomb Raider game.

The importance of virtual reality and video games is precisely because the game itself allows the player to take an active role in interaction. That is the most important brand impact in virtual reality, when a player can actively participate in the game using his avatars, order a favorite drink, eat a favorite food, dress a favorite clothes, or drive a favorite car. Such brand connectivity creates brand attachment [Park et al, 2008]. Brand loyalty is a measure of consumer commitment to the specific brand and functions that arise from the preferred brand, or loyalty becomes the so-called Holy Grail [Sartain and Schumann, 2006:13]. Because of the above, fidelity is most pronounced when transferring ownership of a brand to a consumer, i.e. when emotional connectivity is created.

Various factors of consumer engagement [Park et al, 2008] can also be manifested through perceived value, which indirectly affects brand trust and brand commitment. In today's postmodern marketing [Brown, 1993: 19-34] the role of brand loyalty is imposed as an a priori. The key is to attract and retain consumers, and the brand is crucial in attracting because it reflects the promise that consumers expect. The basic customer loyalty issues are reflected in the brand attachment analysis. Attitude to brands is a construct we take from psychology or the theory of attachment. Attachment theory represents an interdisciplinary approach, because the starting point of psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology and anthropology [Steele, 2003:83-101]. The beliefs and feelings of self-image are, in part, predestined with the object of attachment.

Brand image interactive effect on consumer's self-images. Accordingly, the symbols that represent the brand are observed through the context of symbolic values. We understand the brand through the model of association and image. Such an experienced structure of attitudes and opinions, beliefs and prejudices represents the image in the widest sense of the word. The image, in a communicative sense, denotes an object of exchange and represents a set of perceptions, attitudes and impressions by brands. In this sequence, consumer impressions are

viewed as certain conceptions of the product, or as the conceptual model that arises in the mental part of an individual based on received information.

The concept of brand personality derives from the behavioral behavior of consumers towards brands, and for the first time appears in 1997[Aaker, 1997: 347-356]. Brand personality is defined as a set of human features associated with the brand. The personality of the brand is based on the hypothesis that the consumer brand perception through personification of human characteristics [Miller, 2008: 3]. The consumer usually chooses the brand he recognizes, and if he recognizes a few brands, he will choose the one he perceives as the best. Such brand beliefs are based on brand image.

Brand personality encompasses a group of human characteristics that correspond to the internal domains of consumer personality. To make the brand a "passionate", it must have a deep inner inspiration and as a result help consumers in their lives and in discovering their own identity. The image is a reflection of perception and represents a very important strategic role in mark positioning. The brand may contain different parameters that ultimately create the overall consumer perception. The brand personality dimensions proposed by Aaker do not necessarily have to include the aforementioned features because they are subject to psychodemographic and cultural-social variables [Aaker et al, 2001: 492-508]. From the aspect of consumer self-confidence, the brand's personality represents an expanded consumer perception, which is often manifested as symbolic, status and ideal self-portrait. To the concept of brand personality [Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003: 143-155] consumers attributes various descriptive features to a very wide range of categories. Such personalizations reflect the consumer's perception of creating a brand character that leads us to identity.

It is necessary to distinguish the identity from the brand image [Kapferer, 2008: 174]. Identity is on the side of the corporation, in the context of the communication model it is the sender, while the brand image is on the consumer side and is understood as the recipient of the message. The above shows that the identity precedes the image. Therefore, identity is understood as the desired image (message) sent to the consumer, that is, the identity is viewed as the "sender" of the message, and the image as the "recipient" of the message. Identity observe the six aspects that Kapferer called Brand Identity Prism.

Brand feelings represent consumers' emotional responses to brands and are viewed as mild, powerful, positive, or negative. Consumers buy brands because they feel better and "coordinate their values" [Conley, 2008:76]. Gobe distinguishes between personal and imposing brand identity [Gobe, 2001:123]. Personal identity tends to creativity, and impose abstraction, which means that the emotional meaning of the brand has to develop from being imposed in person. Those brands that are based on so-called. Imposed brand identity model implies a passive consumer, while the personal model of brand identity is based on contact, which actually implies a closer, two-way relationship.

The brand's true value lies in the consumer's thoughts, associations, beliefs and emotions, that is, in the minds share [Arvidsson, 2005: 188-192]. From a sociological point of view, such a share in the consumer's mind is a construct of social activity. Advergaming can affect brand

information, can increase brand awareness [Hernandez and Chapa, 2010:59-68], brand knowledge, and positive brand attitudes [Lee and Cho, 2017:235-245]. That's why gamers develop a specific form of virtual brand personality [Adis and Kim, 2013a; Adis and Kim, 2013b; Lee and Cho, 2017] that has the characteristics of the personality dimension and starts from emotionality towards brands in the virtual world [Aaker, 1997: 347-356], According to research [Lin, 2010:4-17], gamers perceive the brand towards the dimensions of personality, as in real life.

Therefore, brand personality can be observed from the aspect of the gaming platform [Palomba, 2016:63-82] and from the aspect of gamer's perception. The first approach is in line with the classic dimensions [Aaker, 1997: 347-356], so the leading console Sony PlayStation is regarded as a sophistication that then explains the appearance of specific genres in that group of God of War, Uncharted, Detroit: Become Human, and the Xbox represents toughness, which confirms its exclusivity such as Halo, Alan Wake, Gears of War, while the Wii console represents excitement Super Mario and Zelda. There is a significantly positive relationship between extroversion personality trait and excitement brand personality. Competence and sophistication brand personality have a significantly positive influence on action loyalty [Lin, 2010:4-17]. The second approach implies the modified dimensions of the brand personality in the virtual world [Lee and Cho, 2017:235-245] that are referred to by Advergame Personality (AP). The advergame personality goal is expanding the brand personality in the video industry. AP approaches to five dimensions: vibrancy, competence, intelligence, activeness and excitement. Although this AP study [Lee and Cho, 2017:235-245] appears to be in line with previous research on the brand personality scale replicating two dimensions i.e., competence and excitement following those in Aaker model [Aaker, 1997: 347-356]. Also, the gaming experience to the brand of the game is an emotional, positive and desirable [Lee and Cho, 2017:235-245].

5 CONCLUSION

Advergaming reflects the fact of connecting entertainment [Huizinga, 2016] and marketing [Kotler and Keller, 2008]. Unlike the vertical link between manufacturers and consumers reflecting supply and demand, horizontal connectivity is an association of corporate brand [Balmer and Greyser, 2006:730-741], image, which is in correlation with brand identity [Kapferer, 2008:183].

Advergaming is viewed through the integrated communication of the game as culture [Huizinga, 2016], art [Colbert, 2012] and society in which it plays a very serious category [Alvarez and Michaud, 2008]. Two categories of advergame are proposed. The first category is an original, micro game that serves as a corporate promotional software. Its primary purpose is to increase brand awareness [Adis and Kim, 2013a: 58-67]. The second category includes the game as a completely different product where brands are integrated within the game or as a game add-on. Virtual reality and digital marketing have a unique function that contributes to the reality of the game itself. The importance of virtual reality and video games is precisely because the game itself allows the player to take an active role in interaction.

Such brand connectivity creates brand attachment [Park et al, 2008]. Brand is understood in the context of the image, i.e. through the model of association and image. The experienced of structure, attitudes and opinions, beliefs and prejudices represents the image in the widest sense of the word. Advergaming is an object of exchange and is basically a set of perceptions, attitudes and impressions to brands. One of the manifestations of such perceptions starts from the personified views of the brand's personality [Aaker et al, 2001: 492-508], i.e. the dimensions of the AP [Lee and Cho, 2017:235-245]. Identity precedes the image. Therefore, identity is understood as the desired image that is sent to the consumer through the game. And finally, brand feelings are consumer emotional responses. The brand's personality reflects the consumer's personification, and the cultural model of Homo Ludens.

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