

Acceptance of Advergimes Design: A Critical Analysis from Cross-Cultural Aspect

Alaa Hanbazazah^{1,2} & Carlton Reeve³

¹ Marketing Communication, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

² Media Design & Technology, Bradford University, Bradford, UK

³ Digital Technologies & Arts, Staffordshire University, Staffordshire, UK

Correspondence: Alaa Hanbazazah, Marketing Communication, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Tel: 966-505-580-793.

Received: February 26, 2022

Accepted: April 11, 2022

Online Published: April 15, 2022

doi:10.5539/ijef.v14n5p37

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijef.v14n5p37>

Abstract

Culture influences people's behavior—culture differentiates people of one group from those of another group as a system of patterns. To make an advergime acceptable to a culture it is essential to understand the cultural difference as people build perceptions according to the cultural values. The present study investigates the acceptance of advergimes design in cross-cultural aspects. The study analyzed the advergimes design from a cross-cultural perspective. It proposed that to be culturally more relevant. The advergime should work to make the visual interference of the game look more localized to impact the consumer. The product placement should also be carefully chosen as it will help the consumer recognize the brand.

Keywords: advergimes, design, cross-cultural

1. Introduction

Culture influences how people behave. It differentiates people of one group from those of another group as a system of patterns (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997). From the perspective of a country, culture in the games business has taken the shape of localization, which is translating material from one language to another (Bizzocchi et al., 2011). Other methods for integrating culture into the game design include a cultural adaptation of game content (Bndes, 2014) and cultural appropriation of game elements (Bogost, 2007). There are also other approaches to integrating culture within games design, which can bring many problems for designers, mainly concerning advergimes design. Advergime is a mixture of two abstracts, video games, and brand advertisement. It conveys commercial messages from brands via digital games (Catalan et al., 2019). Video games designed to promote or advertise a specific product or brand are called advertising games (Cadirci & Gungor, 2019). Past studies have explained that people from different societies have different responses towards advergimes (Bradley et al., 1994); therefore, it is a major obstacle for advergime developers to promote a positive experience for customers as constructive games experiences lead to productive outcomes. Broadly interested in the agents and institutions that structure social imaginations and subjectivities by mediating which images are available to what audiences to imagine through, the way that localization practices—while often framed by a discourse that positions cultural differences as both incommensurable and easily and discretely bounded by the borders of nation-states—typically involve a nuanced negotiation of contradictions, dilemmas, and interests (Carlson & Corliss, 2011).

Marketing and Advertisements demand in-depth knowledge and understanding of culture; Cultural values are commonly mediated by marketing communication as people have different values that arbitrate the behavior of consumers; heroes, symbols, and rituals (Casual Games Association, 2013). Cross-cultural studies in marketing and advertising have given significant attention to comparisons between Eastern and Western cultures (Cauberghe & De Pelsmacker, 2010). According to Wanick et al. (2018), advertising design influences people's perceptions about the brand, predominately if they consider their cultural background. However, according to Hernandez et al. (2004), most minor importance has been given to consumer approval of advergimes as an advertising platform. In addition, Mart íParre ño (2015) stated a lack of literature comparing consumers regarding advergimes on a cultural basis. Therefore, the advergimes are also types of advertising via games. The same

principles might be valid to them. Consequently, this research focuses on identifying the acceptance of advergames design in cross-cultural aspects.

1.1 Research Questions

Q1. To what extent does culture affect the design of the advergames?

Q2. Does Culture affect the acceptance of advergames?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Advergames Design and Consumer Behavior

The literature present on advergames efficacy accompanies features connected with the perspectives towards the brand and advergame; it could be arbitrated by numerous elements such as brand-game consistency (Hernandez & Minor, 2011), brand familiarity (IAB, 2011), product involvement (Havas Media, 2013), arousal (Johnson & Wiles, 2003), brand fit, congruity (Hernandez, 2011) are the various elements which are related to advergame effectiveness.

The addition of brand functions in the game is an essential feature to calculate advergame efficacy since advergames are an improvised form of product placement. Customer involvement is also diverse across cultures as attitudes and perceptions towards brands could be socially constructed (Keller, 2001). Advergame effectiveness can also influence by brand familiarity, signifying those past events with the brand influence the way individuals respond to advergames (IAB, 2011). However, while evaluating the efficiency of advertising games, there are also concerns with the games themselves. The way advergames are designed an impact the player's experience. Although this experience may vary depending on the individual's skills, it can also be a matter of culture, as people favor culturally-adapted systems (Luna & Gupta, 2001).

Culture is frequently discussed in Human-Computer Interactions via the lens of localization, generally at the interface level (Mart íParre ño et al., 2012). Status presentation, multitasking, diffuse vs. specific interactions, universalism versus particularism behavior, low context versus high context, and blame transferal are all factors connected to interface design that might be modified across cultures (Luna & Gupta, 2001). Games take the same approach, particularly when adapting game material to match culture and setting (Bndes, 2014). Cross-cultural games need symbols, color, knowledge processing, and location (Montola, 2005). Through the lens of socialization', this conversion extends beyond elicits and translation modifications in the game content (Bndes, 2014). Game mechanics can also be customized to match a specific culture (Newzoo, 2016). Cultural appropriation may also be used to explore the adaption of game mechanics, storylines, and interface design (Bogost, 2007).

Other factors, like gaming experience and computer exposure, can impact a player's performance across cultures (Newzoo, 2016). As a result, advergame design might be culturally customized using a technique similar to cross-cultural HCI. On the other hand, the message is a critical component of advertising games. Because various parts of advertising influence individuals from different cultures, the manner the message is conveyed in advergames is critical for advergame efficacy across cultures. According to Friestad and Wright's Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), convinced consumers may have unfavorable attitudes toward advertising; consequently, the sensation of intrusiveness of the advertising message may elicit varied attitudes toward advertisements. Culture may also play a role in this intrusiveness.

As a result, an advergame is a sort of advertising that has two sides, one for the game and one for the advertisement. The advertising side involves the features related to the brand. In contrast, the game side contains interface design, mechanics, and narrative design. Furthermore, while considering advertising among different cultures, it shows that the same design principles are present in the intercultural human-computer interaction research; that is, transformation and conversion of the representative and figurative factors are central for advertising effectiveness across cultures—for example, the modifications among cultures that are high and low context. Individuals from high-context cultures understand the information from clues and cues around them and not just from a single source of communication (Hermeking, 2006). Individuals from high-context cultures would search for such signals around them and make sense of them. This scenario proves that communication among cultures depends on how comfortable people feel with their environment and how the information is presented or delivered to them.

According to a study by Mart íParre ño (2015) conducted on American and Spanish students on acceptance of advergames design, American students' behavior towards product placement in advergame is the main variant affecting advergame acceptance while Spanish students' attitude towards brand advertising is the main factor affecting advergame approval.

Consumer attitude research has primarily focused on the differences between individual and collectivist cultures, particularly when comparing eastern and western countries (Shavitt, 2004). As a result, new cross-cultural comparisons, such as those involving Latin American countries like Brazil, have become possible. In addition, when the cross-cultural studies were taken, it showed that Hispanic players compared to Americans. Advergaming is perceived more positively in the United States than in other industrialized countries. This means that if people from different cultures have different attitudes toward an advertisement, it's possible that it's because of cultural values and the advertisement's design (Hernandez et al., 2004).

According to Svahn (2005), using games as carriers for goal-oriented strategically shaped rhetorical messages, i.e., advertising and propaganda, has been much discussed. Media strategists are interested in finding the audience leaving traditional media for games. It could be fruitful for media strategists and game producers to meet. Still, as the meaning of the term advergaming is becoming diluted, that meeting is becoming difficult.

A study by Wanick et al. (2018) contrasts and collates behavior structures among British and Brazilian cultures. An advergame (Colheita de Café (CC)), highlighting the Fairtrade mark was used. The findings showed that Brazilian people sensed more familiarity with the optical factors comprised by the advergame in comparison to the consumers of Britain. In addition, it was also seen that Brazilians also had a more favorable attitude towards the brand, indicating that consumer behavior could be influenced by brand familiarity. In comparison, both British and Brazilian people had the same attitude towards the advergaming, which indicates that optical similarity did not predominately influence the advergame experience. Another study showed that individuals from diverse societies have numerous levels of advertisement game enjoyments grounded on how it was made (Hernandez et al., 2004). It is essential to understand that advergaming could change the factors to fit one's cultural expectations and values.

4. Method

The essential purpose of critical review is to demonstrate extensive research conducted by the researcher and critical evaluation of the content extracted from the available literature. It includes the description of the articles identified and incorporates the analysis and conceptual innovation. Therefore, this study adopts a critical review analysis described by Grant and Booth (2009), which helps achieve the aim of the current study. Another rationale for adopting Grant & Booth's required review method is that the recent research goes beyond mapping and describing scope or rapid reviews. It includes analysis and conceptual innovation. The study evaluates relevant literature about advergaming design from a cross-cultural perspective to provide competing ideas, a launchpad for conceptual development and subsequent testing. The current study presents a constructive analytical review and analysis. It incorporates material from different channels such as Scopus, Web of Science, and the Google Scholar database. The study evaluates articles, thesis, dissertations, books, and journals.

5. Interpretation of the Evidence

From past research on advergaming design, it is evident that people from different cultural upbringings have different likes and dislikes for particular advergaming merely because the perceptions and attitudes towards brands are socially constructed based on cultural values. Such as Keller (2001) states that consumer involvement differs on the basis of the culture. Moreover, in order to make the design of advergaming effective, the design of the advergame should include the features which help the consumer relate to the brand. For instance, it is stated by Wanick et al. (2019) that a productive strategy to make the advergaming familiar to the target market is to match the mechanics of the game to the popular game's rules of the particular culture. It is also stated by Montola (2005) that games that are cross-cultural require symbols, colors, and location.

Moreover, the consumer attitude towards advertising and product placement in the advergame is a critical feature determining the acceptance of advergame in cross-cultural scenarios. This can also be seen in the study by MartínezParreño (2015), which showed that American people are more affected by the product placement in the advergaming to accept the advergame. In contrast, the Spanish people's attitude towards the advertisement is the primary factor to receive the advergame. Consumer behavior across cultures absorbed individualistic and collectivist cultures as the study by Hernandez et al. (2004) drank that people Hispanic have a positive attitude towards the advergame compared to the Americans or the developed countries that viewed it negatively. Whereas it is explored that cultural difference also affects the enjoyment level in advergaming, which is in line with the study of Hernandez et al. (2004) as it is stated diverse cultures have several of the advergame enjoyments grounded on the way it was made.

6. Discussion

In order to make an advergame design, acceptable cross-cultural is important to understand the cultural

difference as people build perceptions according to the cultural values. In order to make the advergame design more acceptable, the display of the game should have features or symbols which would help the consumer to relate themselves with the game and would increase the acceptability of the advergame. Also, familiarity with the brand also plays a vital role as until or unless people are not recognizing the brand, they are not able to connect with the game. For instance, the advergame can incorporate local locations scenes or the name of the location that is locally used, or the game mechanics should match the rules of the popular game that are played in that culture.

Character ethnicity can also play a major role in culture. Advergame design can be more culturally acceptable if the game is in localized language as many people are not familiar with the English language; it will also give a sense of inclusiveness to the customer, and the brand image will also improve and the also message of the advergame will be memorable to the consumers as it would be given in their own language.

Advergame design should be very careful about the placement of the products in the advergame as people do prefer the product placement as an effective tool in the design of advergame. However, acceptance of advergame design could also be seen as the design of an advertisement as advergame is a type of advertisement. As a brand, localize the adaptation of the representative and features in advertisements to make it culturally acceptable. Therefore, the advergame should also treat in the same way in order to make the design more acceptable in a particular culture.

7. Conclusion

The study analyzed the advergames design from a cross-cultural perspective and proposed that to be culturally more relevant; the advergame should work to make the visual interference of the game look more localized so that it makes an impact on the consumer along with that the product placement should also be carefully chosen as it will help the consumer to recognize the brand. This study has laid the ground for future researchers to conduct an empirical study to test the findings of the current study.

Acknowledgments

The author is very thankful to all the associated personnel in any reference that contributed in for the purpose of this research.

References

- Aaker, J. L., & Maheswaran, D. (1997). The effect of cultural orientation on persuasion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(3), 315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209513>
- Bizzocchi, J., Ben Lin, M. A., & Tanenbaum, T. J. (2011). Games, narrative, and the design of an interface. *International Journal of Arts and Technology*, 4(4), 460-479. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJART.2011.043445>
- Bogost, I. (2007). Persuasive games: The expressive power of video games. 2007. *Google Scholar Google Scholar Digital Library Digital Library*. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/5334.001.0001>
- Bradley, S., Hitchon, J., & Thorson, E. (1994). Hard sell versus soft sell: A comparison of American and British advertising. *Global and Multinational Advertising*, 141-57.
- Çadırcı, T. O., & Gungor, A. S. (2019). The gap between mobile and online advergames: The possible effects of the optimal gaming experience-flow. In *Application of Gaming in New Media Marketing* (pp. 125-150). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-6064-7.ch008>
- Carlson, R., & Corliss, J. (2011). Imagined commodities: Video game localization and mythologies of cultural difference. *Games and Culture*, 6(1), 61-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412010377322>
- Casual Games Association. (2013). Casual Games Association Sector Report: Smartphone & Tablet Gaming.
- Catalán, S., Martínez, E., & Wallace, E. (2019). Analyzing mobile advergaming effectiveness: The role of flow, game repetition and brand familiarity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 28(4), 502-514. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2018-1929>
- Caubergh, V., & De Pelsmacker, P. (2010). Advergames. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367390101>
- Deuze, M. (2016). Living in Media and the Future of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 326-333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1185983>
- GEDI Games, G. D. E., & de Games, D. D. I. (2014). Mapeamento da Indústria Brasileira e Global de Jogos Digitais.

- Georgieva, G., Arnab, S., Romero, M., & de Freitas, S. (2015). Transposing the freemium business model from casual games to serious games. *Entertainment Computing*, 9, 29-41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2015.07.003>
- Grant, M. J., & Booth, A. (2009). A typology of reviews: An analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 26(2), 91-108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x>
- Havas Media. (2013). *Meaningful brands*. Retrieved from <http://www.havasmedia.com/meaningful-brands>
- Hermeking, M. (2005). Culture and Internet consumption: Contributions from cross-cultural marketing and advertising research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(1), 192-216. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.tb00310.x>
- Hernandez, M. D. (2011). A model of flow experience as a determinant of positive attitudes toward online advergaming. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 17(3), 315-326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2011.596761>
- Hernandez, M. D., & Minor, M. S. (2011). Investigating the effect of arousal on brand memory in advergaming: comparing qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 14, 07-217. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13522751111120701>
- Hernandez, M. D., Chapa, S., Minor, M. S., Maldonado, C., & Barranzuela, F. (2004). Hispanic attitudes toward advergaming: A proposed model of their antecedents. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 5(1), 74-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2004.10722095>
- IAB. (2011). *33 million UK game players/IAB UK*. In IAB's Gaming Britain Rep. Retrieved from <http://www.iabuk.net/news/33-million-uk-game-players>
- Johnson, D., & Wiles, J. (2003). Effective affective user interface design in games. *Ergonomics*, 46(13-14), 1332-1345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00140130310001610865>
- Keller, K. L. (2001). *Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands* (pp. 3-27). Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.
- Luna, D., & Gupta, S. F. (2001). An integrative framework for cross-cultural consumer behavior. *International Marketing Review*, 18, 45-69. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330110381998>
- Mart íParre ño, J., Aldas-Manzano, J., Curr ás-P érez, R., & Sanchez-Garcia, I. (2013). Factors contributing brand attitude in advergaming: Entertainment and irritation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 20(5), 374-388. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2012.22>
- Mart íParre ño, J., Ruiz-Maf é C., & Scribner, L. L. (2015). Acceptance of branded video games (advergaming): A cross-cultural study Spain-USA. In *Marketing and consumer behavior: Concepts, methodologies, tools, and applications* (pp. 851-871). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-7357-1.ch038>
- Montola, M. (2005, December). Exploring the edge of the magic circle: Defining pervasive games. In *Proceedings of DAC* (Vol. 1966, p. 103). Doi: 10.1.1.125.8421
- NEWZOO. (2016). *The UK Games Market 2016*. Retrieved from <https://newzoo.com/insights/infographics/the-uk-gamesmarket-2016/>
- Shavitt, S., Lee, A. Y., & Torelli, C. J. (2009). Cross-cultural issues in consumer behavior. In M. W änke (Ed.), *Social psychology of consumer behavior* (pp. 227-250). Psychology Press.
- Svahn, M. (2005, November). Future-proofing advergaming: A systematization for the media buyer. In *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series* (Vol. 123, pp. 187-191).
- Wanick, V., Stallwood, J., Ranchhod, A., & Wills, G. (2018). Can visual familiarity influence attitudes towards brands? An exploratory study of advergaming design and cross-cultural consumer behavior. *Entertainment Computing*, 27, 194-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2018.07.002>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).