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HOW GAMIFICATION INFLUENCES CONSUMER'S BRAND PERCEPTION. GOOGLE T-REX RUN CASE

Abstract: In today's highly competitive market, which contains millions of different brands, it is a big challenge for marketers to attract consumer's attention to a particular product or brand. The use of game in the design of non-game context has significant impact on brand awareness. This article explains gamification and aspects of perception, learning and memory. In this article, the concepts from the case study – 'Google T-Rex Run!', is applied using the theoretical framework from a consumer behaviour point of view. This introduces a new vision of the topic and academic insight.

Key words: gamification, brand awareness, perception, in game advertising, experiment.

Language: English

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Introduction

"Digital games have evolved into a mass medium that reaches millions of people" (Terlutter, R.; & Capella, M. L., 2013). Advertising in digital games has developed continually as it is a way to communicate to large number of people who play. However, the use of video games for advertising purposes is not a novelty and can be traced back to the eighties when brands such as Budweiser or Marlboro appeared in video games like Tapper and Pole Position. Nowadays, just in America, more than 150 million people play video games (Entertainment

Software Association [ESA] 2015, cited on Parreñoa, 2017).

In early 2011, Deterding et al. (2011b) proposed that gamification is "the use of game design elements in nongame contexts". In recent years, theory of gamification has been applied in many fields, such as education (Rasulova M., 2021; Rasulova M. & Rasulov S., 2021) and science. But in marketing the aims of gamification are different: they focus on increasing engagement, loyalty, brand awareness, and motivation.

Google is one of the most valuable brands in the world (The Guardian, 2018). This brand focuses on

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consumer engagement and loyalty. When using Google Chrome, when the site is experiencing problems or you do not have connection, they implemented an example of gamification: T-Rex Run! This is a game where you play with a dinosaur across a road. However simple that might sound is an effective way of keeping consumers entertained and playing while problems get solved. In other words, through gamification of a site error it contributes to create motivation, engagement and loyalty.

The objective of this report is to explore how gamification influence consumers perceptions of brands. The study focuses on the marketing industry; how gamification is related to perception, learning and memory; using a case study example and literature review.

“As an increasing part of the population is playing video games worldwide, and more audiences can be reached through advertising in video games, advertising in video games is gaining momentum as a marketing communications tool” (Parreñoa, J. M.; Berros, J. B. & Manzanoc, J.A., 2017) .This article is useful in a practical way for the industry as it gives insight to marketeers working on gamification and consumer engagement. Additionally, academically it reviews concepts explored by other authors and brings theory to practice with case study.

Literature review and theoretical foundation

Our main research papers analysed are:

Müller-Stewens, J.; Schlager, T.; Häubl, G.; & Herrmann, A. (2017) ‘Gamified Information Presentation and Consumer Adoption of Product Innovations’. This article explains main reasons why gamified information is better to perceive. Parreñoa, J. M.; Berros, J. B. & Manzanoc, J.A. (2017) ‘Product Placement in Video Games: The Effect of Brand Familiarity and Repetition on Consumers’. The article reviews how effective games are in brand awareness and recognition. Sakas, P.; Kavoura, A.; & Tomaras, P. (2014) ‘Gamification in Consumer Marketing - Future or Fallacy?’. This article depicts that gamification is helpful to the advertising strategy as it provides a different brand experience to the consumer. However, it is better when it is implemented in a short period of time in order for the consumer to keep the memory of the brand and not of the game. Terlutter, R.; & Capella, M. L. (2013) ‘The Gamification of Advertising: Analysis and Research Directions of In-Game Advertising, Advergaming, and Advertising in Social Network Games’. This article analyses advertising in digital games and the perception of customers. Yoo S. & Matthew S. (2017) ‘Contextual advertising in games: Impacts of game context on a player’s memory and evaluation of brands in video games’. This article examines how positive and negative game contexts influence players’ memories and attitudes.

This articles explain gamification and aspects of perception, learning and memory. In this article, we would apply the concepts from the articles to a different case study: Google T-Rex Run!, using the theoretical framework from a consumer behaviour point of view. This introduces a new vision of the topic and academic insight.

Research method and hypothesis development

Hypotheses.

Consumers process of perception is present in gamification. This belief was analysed using the case study of Google. Also, the influences of gamification to brand awareness of that brand was checked .

Theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework is borrowed from the the articles mentioned in the literature review and from the Solomon, M. R., Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having and Being. The articles will be used to establish evidence of gamification and brand awareness. The book will be used to analysed the stages of perception in gamification.

Methodological approach.

The method of the current research will be the systematic review of several articles dedicated to this topic. The articles reviewed include primary experimental data collection and results that will be used in gaining an understanding. The findings will be explained through the example of the “T-Rex Run!” - Chrome Dinosaur Game by Google.

Data analysis.

Consumers process of perception is present in gamification.

First, the case of T-Rex Run! Game was analyzed in accordance with Solomon (2018). The text is used to prove that the stages are present in the game.

The stages of perception in T-Rex Run! By Google Chrome.

1. Exposure: this occurs when a person’s sensory threshold is stimulated by something (Solomon, 2018). When it comes to Chrome’s T- Rex Run! game, the exposure starts when the consumer is not connected to the internet, waiting for the Wifi to work, or Google is experiencing functioning problems. Chrome presents the consumers with this game stimulating their senses: sight and sound of him/her.

2. Attention: takes place when processing the information is caught and devoted to a particular sense (Solomon, 2018). The consumer has the game in front of them while waiting for the page to work, their eyes see it, they process what it is, and it makes them want to play the game instead of doing something else or leaving Chrome.

3. Interpretation: it refers to our understanding on what is presented to us (Solomon, 2018). The consumer understands that what he or she has in front is a game, and giving the fact that is an easy game to

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interpret, the user knows which keyboards to use and starts playing. This appeals to former knowledge stored in the memory of consumers which they have obtained from playing similar games in the past.

According to Marti-Parreno (2017) the use of games for advertising purposes exists since the '80s and children and youngsters are not the only audience for video games, as parents also play. On his article

the researcher analyses the effect of repetition and the interaction effect of brand familiarity on consumers' memory through experimental observation among college students. Marti-Parreno's experiment showed that higher repetition of brands placed in video game increases brand recognition and the higher effect was observed in the case of unfamiliar brands (figure 1).

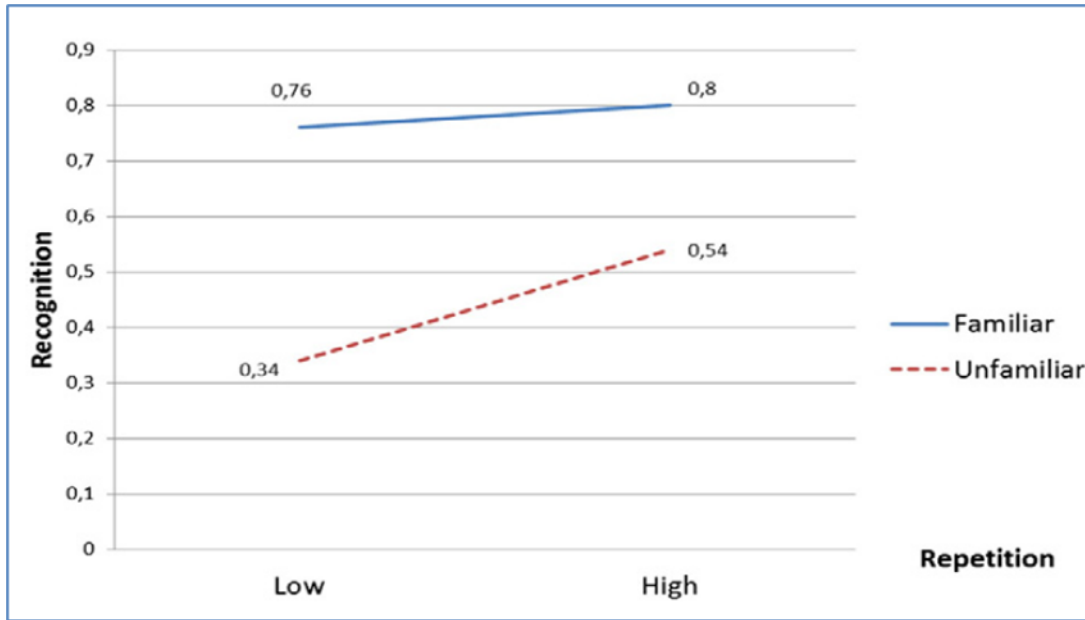


Figure 1. Percentage of brand recognition in each experimental condition (Marti-Parreno, 2017, pp. 55-63).

In his research Yoo (2017) carried very similar experiment among college students. The students played different games with positive and negative context where the brand names were placed. The

answers that were given to after-game questions showed that participants had higher level of brand recall, recognition and attitude in the case of games with positive context (figure 2).

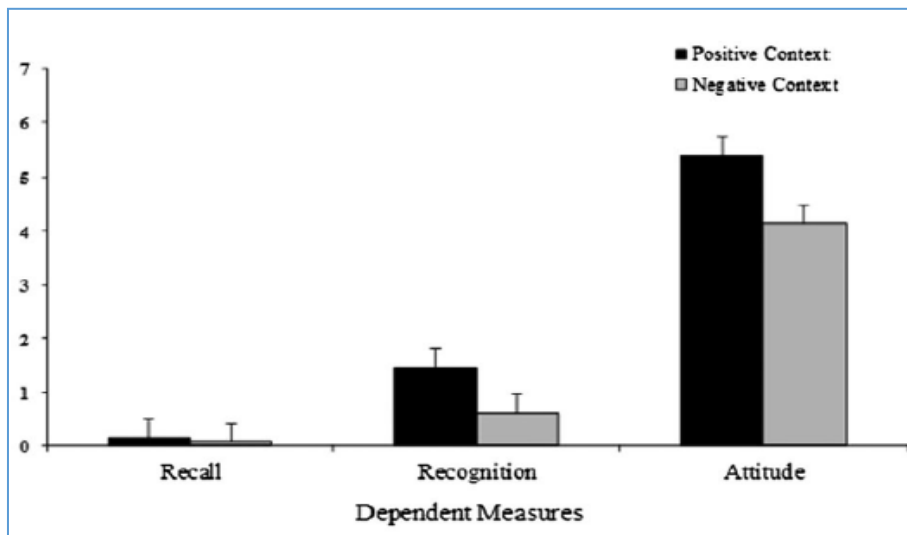


Figure 2. Brand memories and attitudes as affected by the video game context (Yoo & Eastin, 2017, pp. 614-631).

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On the other hand, Terlutter (2013) lists different factors that level of recall and recognition, such as game type (e.g., IGA versus advergaming), game genre and prominence of the embedded brand. Moreover he refers to the previous studies indicating that brand placements that are featured prominently, i.e., integrated in the story or game play or that can be used by the player (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010; Nelson, 2002; Schneider and Cornwell, 2005 cited in Terlutter, 2013, pp. 95-112) lead to improved memory effects. Apart from in-game advertising the gamification of non-game processes also could be

very useful tool in increasing brand awareness and brand loyalty among consumers.

One of the simplest example of gamification is 'T-Rex Run!' offline game run by Google Chrome Browser (figure 3). For consumers, time is very significant and the time spent on waiting the suddenly disconnected network to be connected again can lead to frustration. In this situation, consumers might quit using the browser and immediately switch to another one. Google Chrome uses T-Rex Run! to make this process less frustrating so that the users can spend their time entertained rather than angry.

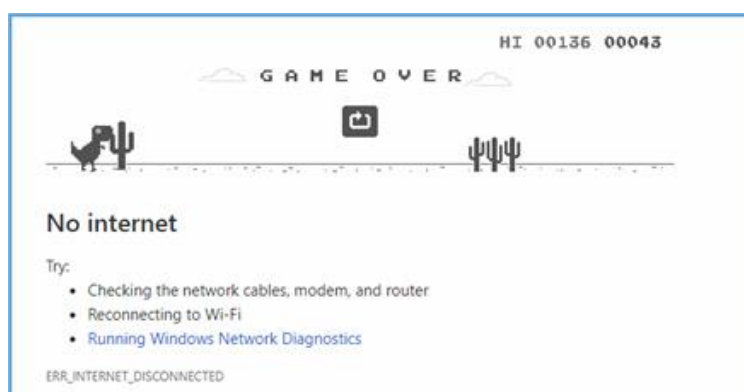


Figure 3. Google "T-Rex Run!"

Results

This article proves that the stages of perception are present in gamification analysing the case study game T-Rex Run! The article also presents a review of papers by Marti-Parreno (2017), Terlutter (2013) and Yoo (2017) which provide evidence that gamification influences brand awareness. These authors state that a higher repetition of brands placed in video game increases brand recognition and that this higher effect was also observed in the case of unfamiliar brands. Also, when brands used gamification participants had higher level of brand recall, recognition and attitude in the case of games with positive context.

Limitations and future direction

One limitation is that the article focuses on one case study, so the findings cannot be applied to all the examples of gamification. The main limitation of this study is that it analyses the Case Study (T-Rex Run!) from a theoretical, secondary research point of view. In order to analyse the effects of gamification primary research could be carried out to grasp the experience of customers when using the game.

In addition, it analyses the game as far as the consumer plays it. The evaluation of T-Rex Run! by the consumer should also be analysed after the play and regain connection to see the effects of the experience in consumers. Finally, it is yet to be studied if gamification improves loyalty and motivation.

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