GENERAL DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

9.1. General Discussion

On the whole, this dissertation examines the effects of advergames on consumers’ advertising outcomes from three perspectives – i.e., attention, elaboration and persuasion. It describes that how various identified game factors, such as nature of game, brand prominence and game-product congruence and individual and social factors, such as need for cognition, persuasion knowledge, game-involvement and prior game experience as attention and elaborative components, shape consumers’ advertising outcomes.

Essay 1 provides a comprehensive exploration and a systematic synthesis of 200 advergame studies, and proposes a literature review framework for future advergame research. This literature review framework uncovers various literature gaps and provides nineteen research questions that can be answered in future research studies. Thus, this essay adds to advergame literature and practice in two ways. First, it encompasses the existing knowledge in this field by synthesizing the research findings and expounding the vital aspects which should be taken into consideration to develop effective advergames. Second, it suggests 19 research questions to be addressed in future studies, answering of which will provide the important insinuations for managers and advertising practitioners.

Essay 2 explores the effects of nature of game, brand prominence and game-product congruence on consumers’ ad-persuasion, addressing the research questions 1, 2 and 3. The two way-interaction results reveal that for a slow-paced advergame, a prominent brand placement results in higher ad-persuasion than a subtle brand placement, whereas, for a fast paced advergame, there is no difference in ad-persuasion between prominent- and subtle-brand placements. Furthermore, three way interaction results demonstrate that low game-product
congruence results in higher ad-persuasion than high game-product congruence condition in slow-paced games with prominent- as well as subtle-placements. Thus, this essay contributes to the literature of brand placements in non-traditional media specifically the advergames by displaying the varying effects of advergame speed on gamers’ ad-persuasion under varied brand prominence and game-product congruence conditions from attention, elaboration and persuasion perspectives. Also, this investigation shows that if advertising practitioners want to design highly persuasive advergames then they can develop low-speed advergames prominently embedded with less-congruent brands which will be very effective in swaying consumers’ minds.

Essay 3 demonstrates the combined influence of nature of game, game-product congruence and gamers’ NFC on ad-persuasion, addressing the research questions 1, 3 and 7. The findings show that slow-paced advergames result in higher ad-persuasion than fast-paced advergames. Furthermore, the findings show that a slow-paced advergame with low game-product congruence results in higher ad-persuasion than high game-product congruence. Moreover, the results reveal that in both the cases i.e., for a slow paced advergame with low game-product congruence and for a fast paced advergame with low game-product congruence, high-NFC individuals report higher ad-persuasion than low-NFC individuals. Thus, this essay contributes to online advertising literature by exploring the moderating role of need for cognition (one of the individual factors) in determining the persuasion effects in the context of advergames. The essay also highlights that while designing highly persuasive advergames, along with game-specific factors, such as nature of game and game-product congruence, gamer-specific factor – i.e., need for cognition must be taken into consideration when persuasion effects are viewed from attention and cognitive elaboration perspectives.
Essay 4 exhibits how the game-speed and its boundary conditions i.e. game-involvement and gamers’ NFC influence gamers’ ad-persuasion from attention, elaboration and persuasion perspectives, addressing the research questions 1, 7 and 9. The findings show that for a slow-paced advergame, low game-involvement results in higher ad-persuasion than high game-involvement. However, for a fast paced advergame, there is no difference in ad-persuasion between high and low game-involvements. Furthermore, for a slow paced advergame with low game-involvement, high-NFC individuals report higher ad-persuasion than low-NFC individuals. Hence, from a theoretical point of view, this essay contributes to literature of advergames by exploring the moderating roles of individual and contextual factors, such as game-involvement and gamers’ NFC. From a practical point of view, this essay demonstrates the importance of designing games of low-speed with low game-involvement as these games prove to be more persuasive than fast and high involving advergames.

Essay 5 explores the impact of nature of game, game-product congruence and gamers’ persuasion knowledge on their brand memory and brand attitude, addressing the research questions 1, 3 and 8. The findings reveal that for a slow-paced game with low game-product congruence, gamers with high persuasion knowledge report high brand recall and less favorable brand attitude than gamers with low persuasion knowledge. On the other hand, for a fast-paced and low game-product congruent advergame, there is no difference in brand recall as well as in brand attitude between gamers with high persuasion knowledge and those with low persuasion knowledge.

Essay 6 scrutinizes whether there is any difference in recall and attitude towards brands embedded in advergames because of the differences in brand prominence, and are there any differences in brand recall and attitude in the same context if the advergame involvement is high
versus low and gamers’ persuasion knowledge is low versus high, addressing the research questions 8 and 9. The findings reveal that an advergame with prominent brand placement under low game-involvement condition results in higher brand recall and less favorable brand attitude than in high game-involvement condition. Furthermore, a three way interaction suggests that for an advergame with prominent brand placement under high game-involvement condition, individuals with high persuasion knowledge report higher brand recall than those with low persuasion knowledge. The findings also reveal that for an advergame with prominent brand placement under high game-involvement condition, gamers with high persuasion knowledge report less favorable brand attitude than gamers with low persuasion knowledge. Thus, this essay contributes to online advertising literature by demonstrating the moderating role of gamers’ persuasion knowledge about advergames in determining the advergaming effects.

Essay 7 explores the impact of brand prominence, prior game playing experience and game-involvement on gamers’ brand memory, addressing the research questions 9 and 10. The finding shows that an inexperienced gamer report higher brand recall in a prominent brand placement than in a subtle brand placement. However, for an experienced gamer, there is no difference in brand recall between a prominent- and a subtle-brand placement. The results also indicate that inexperienced gamers with low game-involvement playing an advergame with prominent brand placement report higher brand recall than inexperienced gamers with high game-involvement playing an advergame with prominent brand placement. Hence, this essay contributes to the marketing knowledge that while designing effective advergames with a purpose of increasing the brand awareness in an entertaining way among the new and inexperienced consumers, prominent brand placements must be done in the games rather than doing subtle brand placements in games.
9.2. Limitations of the Dissertation

There are certain limitations of the dissertation. First, due to the time constraint, this dissertation addresses only seven research questions out of nineteen research questions proposed in essay 1. Researchers can address the remaining research questions in future advergame studies. For this dissertation, we used only single-player games with 2-D technology, thus, future research can consider multiple-player games with 3-D or 4-D technologies to identify and understand how these advergaming effects are different from single-player 2-D advergames’ effects. In this dissertation, because of the time constraint we could focus only on three game-specific factors and four individual and social factors, thus, future research work can address advertising effects of the remaining factors, such as individual’s proneness to advertising, thought-favorability and self-congruity, as it might happen even if gamers are aware about the persuasive intent of advergames, still they could neglect the promotional attempts made by advertisers as they might be more susceptible to advertising. Also, while playing a high-involving game, if gamers’ thoughts are not favorable towards game or brand, they might show negative brand attitude. Thus, these aspects can be addressed in future research studies.

Furthermore, our dissertation doesn’t discuss about the effects of social factors, such as parental influence, peer group, opinion leadership and culture. Thus, the impacts of these factors can be investigated in future studies. Also, the study doesn’t look into the regulatory aspects of advergaming, which can be addressed by advertising scholars in their future investigations. Finally, this dissertation shows the advergaming effects in terms of brand recall, brand attitude and ad-persuasion, various other brand related outcomes, such as brand beliefs, purchase intentions, recommendation to others and various psychophysiological responses can be researched and captured in future studies.
Second, this study investigates the advergaming effects in a specific country context – i.e., India. Hence, it will be worthwhile to look at different countries contexts, i.e., cross-cultural advergame studies can be conducted considering the gamers from various other countries. Also, the findings of this dissertation can be extended and further confirmed on different countries’ gamers as usage of non-traditional advertising media by companies in different countries are not same. Furthermore, it will be very interesting to elicit a comparison between countries with higher levels of usage of non-traditional advertising media, such as USA and UK and those with lower rates of non-traditional advertising media, for instance developing nations.

Third, this study considers only undergraduate and graduate management students between the ages of 17 and 24 years; thus, future research studies can explore advergaming effects on consumers from different age-groups as the gaming literature shows that today the gaming-trend is changing, gamers playing online games are mostly women and the average age of an online game player is 31 years (ESA, 2014). Hence, advergame studies focusing different age group people can be considered for future research exploring many more interesting facts about advergaming effects.

One final limitation of the dissertation is that only fictitious brands are used in this study to investigate the advergaming effects, however, marketing scholars can conduct future advergame studies by taking real brands into consideration to extend and confirm study findings. Also, to analyze the differences in advergaming effects between those of fictitious brands and real brands, by exploring the influence of various real-brand-related factors, such as brand familiarity, brand likability etc. in combination with other game-specific and gamer-specific factors, future research can be conducted.