The predominant focus of this chapter is to address the research gaps highlighted in Chapter 2 which is accomplished in a sequential manner. First, development of executable objectives of this research is undertaken. Following this, conceptualization of a research framework based upon a set of hypothesized relationships is attained in order to meet the research objectives.

3.1 Research Objectives

Based upon the literature gaps, the overall objectives of this research are as follows –

i. To examine the effects of advergame outcomes, i.e., winning and losing, on players’ motivation measured in terms of regulatory focus.

ii. To examine the effects of message feedback, i.e., positively and negatively framed feedback, on players’ regulatory focus.

iii. To examine the effects of game outcome-induced regulatory focus on players’ implicit and explicit memory.
iv. To examine the effects of game outcome-induced regulatory focus on players’ attitude toward the advergame and attitude toward brands embedded in the advergame.

v. To explore and examine effects of change in players’ performances in the advergame on their emotions.

3.2 Hypotheses Development

Based upon the above-mentioned research objectives, five sets of hypotheses are developed each one of which is intended to meet a specific research objective.

3.2.1 Examine Effects of Advergame Outcomes on Regulatory Focus

In the literature review, evidence is given for the fact that regulatory focus is not only a chronic individual differences variable but situational factors like performance feedback, task contingency conditions, and priming of a particular kind of focus can also induce either a promotion focus or a prevention focus within individuals (Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Roney et al., 1995). It remains to be seen whether regulatory focus of a specific kind is induced within a subject due to repeated wins and losses in the advergame that one plays. Clearly, wins and losses resemble desired and undesired end states of an advergame respectively. It is expected that repeated wins in few trials of the advergame will prime winning as the desired end state among the players. These players will not be concerned about losing the advergame; but will be more concerned about presence of similar or even better outcome and performances in subsequent advergame trials. This will actuate a promotion focus among players who repeatedly win the advergame resulting in a strategic inclination to make progress by approaching similar or better performances in subsequent advergame trials (Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Higgins et al., 1994). Therefore, players who repeatedly win the advergame in few initial trials will be in a state of
eagerness with the goal of attaining better performances or advergame score as they play the advergame more number of times.

On the other hand, it could be expected that repeated losses in few trials will prime *not losing* as the desired end state among the players. What will concern these players is not winning the advergame but absence of similar or even worse outcome and performances in subsequent trials. This will actuate a prevention focus among players who repeatedly lose the advergame resulting in a strategic inclination to be precautionary and prudent so as to avoid making any further mistakes in subsequent trials (Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 1997). Therefore, players who repeatedly lose the advergame in few initial trials will be in a state of vigilance with the goal of attaining no further decrease in performances or advergame score as they play the game more number of times. However, there is no logical acumen to believe that winning will induces only promotion focus and losing will induce only prevention focus. Intrinsically, one of the salient propositions of the regulatory focus theory is that individuals’ promotion or prevention focus are not discrete motivational states but they reflect the predominance of one particular focus over the other in individuals (Higgins, 1997). Hence, we hypothesize that

**H1:** Winning an advergame will induce more promotion focus than prevention focus while losing an advergame will induce more prevention focus than promotion focus in players.

### 3.2.2 Examine Effects of Message Feedback on Regulatory Focus

One prime facet of regulatory focus theory revolves round the fact that either promotion focus or prevention focus could be induced in people by means of appropriate feedback (Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Roney et al., 1995). Specifically, Higgins (1997) delineates how momentary
situation like performance feedback can induce a specific regulatory focus. Beyond the valence (positive or negative) of end states and consequences of any event, a positive focus feedback with gain-nongain information is capable of actuating promotion focus whereas a negative focus feedback with nonloss-loss information is capable of actuating prevention focus in people (Higgins, 1997; Roney et al., 1995). Few studies have also examined the nature of interaction between individuals’ chronic regulatory focus (promotion or prevention) and valence of feedback (positive or negative) (Idson and Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk and Kluger, 2004). For example, the study conducted by Idson and Higgins (2000) find that promotion focused subjects improved their performances more over time when they received success feedback rather than failure feedback; whereas prevention focused subjects improved their performances more over time following failure feedback rather than success feedback.

A visible limitation in the procedure followed in these studies is that these success and failure feedback concern more about the valence of the real success or failure of individuals rather being concerned about how the feedback is formed, i.e., whether they are formed with a positive focus or a negative focus. As suggested by Roney et al. (1995), it may be noted here that following a real success, for example solving an anagram correctly, a feedback could be framed either with a positive focus (e.g., “right, you got that one”) or with a negative focus (e.g., “you did not miss that one”). On the other hand, following a real failure, for example not being able to solve an anagram correctly, a feedback could be framed either with a positive focus (e.g., “you didn’t get that one right”) or with a negative focus (e.g., “no, you missed that one”). These positive focus feedback concern about presence and absence of positive outcome, i.e., gain-nongain information, and induce promotion focus momentarily while the negative focus feedback
concern about absence and presence of negative outcomes, i.e., nonloss-loss information, and induce prevention focus momentarily (Higgins, 1997, 1998).

We expect similar results in the context of advergames. It is predicted that valence of message feedback (positively and negatively framed feedback) will induce in players either a promotion focus or a prevention focus. We expect that this effect will exist beyond the influence of advergame outcomes on regulatory focus. In other words, to segregate the influence of game outcomes and message feedback on regulatory focus, it becomes essential to counter-balance real nature of game outcomes, i.e., actual wins and losses, with valence of message feedback, i.e., positively and negatively framed feedback. Hence, it is hypothesized that

**H2:** Positively framed message feedback to losers will induce more promotion focus than prevention focus while negatively framed message feedback to winners will induce more prevention focus than promotion focus.

3.2.3 Examine Effects of Regulatory Focus on Memory

In H1 and H2, we hypothesized about how advergame outcomes and message feedback will influence players’ promotion and prevention focus. Eventually it becomes important for a marketer to understand the influence of induced regulatory focus on nature of information processing. Knowledge of this aspect will help marketers in designing appropriate feedback that suit their commercial interests.

Our research conceptualizes that regulatory focus is induced within players by two possible routes – (a) repeated wins and losses in few advergame trials, and (b) positively framed and negatively framed message feedback after each such trial. In either case, players in a promotion
focus state will have different strategic inclinations as compared to players in the prevention focus state (Crowe and Higgins, 1997).

A promotion focus state is concerned with advancement, growth, and accomplishment and is strategically inclined to approach matches between current actual state and desired end state (Higgins, 1997, 1998). In terms of motivational consequences, a promotion focused individual will be in a state of eagerness and will focus on increasing the gains and avoid omitting any possible opportunity of accomplishments (Crowe and Higgins, 1997). Conversely, a prevention focus state is concerned with safety, security, and responsibility and maintains a strategic inclination that avoids mismatches between current actual state and desired end state (Higgins, 1997, 1998). In terms of motivational consequences, a prevention focused individual will be in a state of vigilance and will focus on attaining nonlosses and avoiding making mistakes (Crowe and Higgins, 1997).

In an advergaming context, it is expected that players induced with more promotion focus (either due to winning or due to receiving positively framed message feedback) will be eager to progress in subsequent advergame trials by attaining similar or even better performances relative to initial trials. Alternatively, they will be not be concerned about reduced performances in subsequent trials and will not be motivated to process advergame-related stimuli in an elaborative or conceptual manner. Rather, they will be engaged in perceptual processing of visual and peripheral cues present in the advergaming environment including embedded brand elements. Therefore, they will exhibit higher implicit memory for brands as it depends on perceptual or data-driven information processing during stimuli exposure condition (Jacoby, 1983, 1988; Morris et al., 1977; Roediger, 1990). However, their explicit memory for brand names will be
low as it requires elaborative and conceptual processing (Jacoby, 1983; Roediger and Blaxton, 1987a, 1987b).

On the other hand, players induced with more prevention focus (either due to losing or due to receiving negatively framed message feedback) will be vigilant in subsequent game trials so as not to lower their performances any further. They will also insure against errors of committing mistakes that may further reduce their performances. We predict that they will rely more on context specific information and will be more analytical in their approach in terms of processing advergame objects, including advergame related stimuli and embedded brands in fuller details. This will result in processing of every piece of available information in an elaborative and conceptual manner. Therefore, they will exhibit higher explicit memory for brands as it depends on conceptual or elaborative information processing during learning (Jacoby, 1983; Roediger and Blaxton, 1987a, 1987b). However, their implicit memory for brand names will be low as it requires perceptual or data-driven processing (Jacoby, 1983, 1988; Morris et al., 1977; Roediger, 1990). Therefore, we hypothesize that -

**H3a:** Players who are more promotion focused will have higher implicit memory for brands than players who are more prevention focused.

**H3b:** Players who are more prevention focused will have higher explicit memory for brands than players who are more promotion focused.

3.2.4 Examine Effects of Regulatory Focus on Attitude toward Advergame and Embedded Brands

Extant research suggests that individuals in the promotion focused state exhibit higher motivation and better performances than those in the prevention focused state (Crowe and
Higgins, 1997; Johnson et al., 2011; Klodiana et al., 2012; Roney et al., 1995). This is primarily because promotion focused individuals are more concerned about presence of positive outcomes (gains) and are more eager to increase their gains (Higgins, 1997, 1998). Alternatively, prevention focused individuals are more concerned about absence of negative outcomes (nonlosses) and are more vigilant against incurring further losses (Higgins, 1997, 1998). Following these tendencies, it may be predicted that players who are more promotion focused strategies will do better in subsequent trials in order to increase their scores and performances. This enhanced performances will result in more positive mood (Hirt et al., 1992) which will be infused in the individual and reflect in terms of more favourable judgments and attitude toward the game and the embedded brands (Batra and Ray, 1986; Forgas, 1995). On the other hand, it may be predicted that players who more prevention focused strategies will exhibit lower performances in subsequent trials as because their goal is not to increase gains but to avoid or arrest further decrease in performances. This will infuse much lower positive mood in more prevention focused individuals and will be reflected in terms of less favourable judgments and attitude toward the advergame and the embedded brands (Batra and Ray, 1986; Forgas, 1995). Hence, we hypothesize that -

**H4a:** Players who are more promotion focused will exhibit more favorable attitude toward the advergame than players who are more prevention focused.

**H4b:** Players who are more promotion focused will exhibit more favorable attitude toward the brands embedded in the advergame than players who are more prevention focused.
3.2.5 Examine Effects of Change in Advergame Performances on Emotions

As promotion and prevention focused individuals endeavour to bridge the distance between their current actual self-states and desired end states, they encounter different affective reactions (Higgins, 1996b, 1997, 1998). As presented in the literature review, emotional experiences attached with presence and absence of positive outcomes for promotion focused individuals consist of cheerful-related feelings and dejection-related feelings, whereas the emotional experiences attached with absence and presence of negative outcomes for prevention focused individuals comprise of quiescence-related feelings and agitation-related feelings (Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 1987, 1996b, 1997). Further, improvement in performances by promotion focused and prevention focused individuals lead to decrease in their dejection-related and agitation-related feelings respectively (Roney et al., 1995).

Similar results are expected for players who play the advergames repeated number of times. Though it is predicted that promotion focused players will perform better in subsequent game trials relative to prevention focused players, there is no reason to presume that prevention focused players will not be able to improve their scores at all as they play the advergame over and over again. Intrinsically, as players play advergames more number of times, their overall game playing experience, familiarity with the gaming environment and manoeuvreing skills of the gaming consoles improve (Boot et al., 2008; Kureshi and Sood, 2009).

It is therefore predicted that players induced with promotion focus will exhibit changes in their dejection-related emotions due to changes in their performances in the advergame in subsequent trials, e.g., being able to improve their performances. On the other hand, more prevention focused players will exhibit changes in their agitation-related emotions due to changes in their
performances in the advergame in subsequent trials, e.g., being able to avoid or arrest further reduction in advergame performances. Therefore, it is hypothesized that –

**H5a:** Players who are more promotion focused will show change in dejection-related emotions followed after change in game performances in subsequent advergame trials.

**H5b:** Players who are more prevention focused will show change in agitation-related emotions followed after change in game performances in subsequent advergame trials.

Based upon these proposed hypotheses, a conceptual framework is developed which demonstrates the hypothesized relationships. Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework of the research.
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Research