**Video games as a medium for advertisement**

In this era, video games have become so complex and diverse that they require careful analysis and evaluation when considering them as an advertisement medium.

Video games have blossomed in to a multi-billion dollar industry and are now being recognized as more than just forms of entertainment but also as mediums for advertisement.

However like other forms of advertisement media it has its advantages and disadvantages. Another factor to keep in mind is that it is electronics based therefore the technology rapidly evolves; approximately every five years. Matt Story, a video game industry marketing expert, was asked “What kind of reach can I get out of gaming? Who plays the various games?” He replied, “This question was a lot easier to answer five years ago.”

Video games used to be centralized under the typical consoles such as *Microsoft’s Xbox* and *Sony’s Playstation*, whose user demographics were simple to categorize and identify. Now with mobile gaming on cell phones such as *Apple’s Iphone*, games on social media such as *Facebook* and the innovative *Nintendo Wii* console, whole new categories have emerged.

Nevertheless, video games have one main advertising characteristic in common with other forms of media; your results depend on how much you invest in it. “The investment required increases as the level of engagement and share of voice increase” says Matt Story. For example, the cost of product placement in a very popular video game will be much higher than that of a less successful one.

An advantage of advertising in video games is that it targets narrow audience segments. For example, certain genres or categories of video games such as first person shooters are played mostly by males ages 18 to 34. Therefore, product placement of an item or brand that appeals to that age group can be included at some point in the game.

Another advantage is that highly successful games usually create a passionate and loyal fan base that tend to play a game over and over as well as purchase any sequels that are made. Therefore frequency and continuity depend greatly on the games replay value and success.

One more advantage of advertising in video games is that its interactive nature allows for much visual creativity. An item that plays an important factor in the video game maybe a product that is used in real life or may at least have the brand name or logo on it.

Race car games are well known for this since they not only include the car manufacturer’s logo on the game but also provide an almost accurate simulation of what it would be like to drive that specific car.

Drawbacks to promoting a product in the virtual reality of games also exist. “Secondly, marketers have to honestly answer whether or not the program makes sense to gamers or if it interrupts the gaming behavior with unnecessary integration.” says Matt Story.

If the representation of the product in the game becomes a burden or annoyance to the player within the game, then these negative ties will be transferred to the product in real life. In other words, the advertisements true intentions may backfire resulting in product or brand disapproval.

Another disadvantage is fragmentation; as mentioned before, there is an abundance of options in which video games can be played on now compared to five years ago. Consequently, this is likely to become worse as time progresses and technology advances.

One more disadvantage is that some products can be more thoroughly advertised through video games than others. Automobiles and clothing are some of the easiest since they can be integrated to the player’s use of the game while other products can only have their brands or logos displayed on a virtual billboard or poster.

Currently, video game console producers are seeking to move from the traditional game controller to a more innovative form of controlling whereby a motion sensing apparatus is used instead.

In addition, these consoles, both traditional and mobile phones are more comparable to computers; having operating systems with various software applications added to them. One firm that has taken advantage of this feature is the online *DVD* and *Blu-ray* rental service *Netflix* and it has obtained positive results.

Even though using video games as a form of advertisement is only in its infancy, many firms are seeking to tap into its marketing potential similar to *Netflix*. As time progresses and video games continue to rapidly evolve, companies are now aware that many new opportunities will become available to them.

**Bibliography**

Story, Matt., “Digital Marketing Guide: Gaming,” *Advertising Age: Digital Issue*, Feb. 22, 2010, pp 62.