ETHICS OF IN-GAME ADVERTISEMENT

Master’s (one year) thesis in Informatics (15 credits)

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2012MAGI05
Title: Ethics of in-game advertisement

Year: 2012

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Abstract
Advergaming is a new type of medium for advertising. It is primarily used by companies targeting children and adolescents. However, there are some ethical issues in Advergaming highlighted by existing scholars. In the primary and secondary studies in this dissertation, it was found that Advergaming comprises deception by positioning simple products (like soft drinks and food) as performance and power stimuli, which is non-compliance against even the basic empirical theories about ethics in advertising. It was also found that companies use the emotions, arousals and stimuli of children to promote their products and also use violent events, unsocial behaviours, negative language, facial expressions, bullying or vindictiveness to make the games more attractive. Companies have also been promoting junk food disguised as power and stimuli enhancers to children. This is very harmful for the children. The study has made recommendations on how parents should deal with this problem and how should they spread the knowledge in the society. The study recommends that the parents should use a permit only policy to choose and permit Advergaming links on computers used by children and adolescents. Moreover, the study also recommends that parents should actively persuade the Advergaming companies to capture their needs and make Advergaming accordingly. For example, the parents can persuade the companies (through their feedback channels) to make educative Advergames. However, the parents should strictly block the Advergames that promote unhealthy eating and drinking habits and harmful behaviours. The parents should spread the knowledge to as many people as they can through personal contacts.

Keywords: In-game advertisement, IGA, ethics, games
Acknowledgements

This is a great opportunity for us to appreciate all our friends and teachers who helped a lot in our thesis work. We would especially thank our professor Bertil Lind, who had a great impact on our views regarding ethics in IT. He was our great inspiration to do the research work in the field of Ethics of in-game advertisement. We are also thankful to our coordinator Anders Hjalmarsson, who guided us throughout our thesis work and now we are proudly able to submit it.

We would like to thank Hanfi Ahmed and Behrad Hajizadeh who helped us gather the data from UK and Iran to complete our thesis work.

We would also like to thank all of our interviewees for their assistance in the empirical phase of our research and all the people who participated in our survey.

Borås August 2012
Mani Pashaei Rad, Abdul Majid
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and context of the dissertation

The evolution of digital economy has given birth to new ways, approaches and models of advertising and promotions, marketing, brand and product positioning and generating revenues (Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen, 2008: p. 13). The digital media has been proved to be highly effective due to its interactive abilities, creativeness, reach and low cost of promotions (Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen, 2008: p. 14). Companies increasingly prefer the digital media for advertising and product promotions with new and innovative ways of persuasion in the digital economy (Arvidsson, Bauwens and Peitersen, 2008: p. 15). However, advertising through digital media has resulted in new ethical challenges and a need for a new value system especially in the context of an increasingly unsupervised exposure to children and adolescents (Austin and Reed, 1999: p. 591). It is important that a new code of ethics and guidelines should be created by regulatory and controlling authorities to govern the targeting of children through online digital marketing channels (Austin and Reed, 1999: p. 590). Kamery, Pitts and Lawrence (2002: p. 103) emphasised that ethical advertising should invoke social accountability among the marketers whereby, they should consider the potential harms that an advertisement campaign can cause to the recipients of the communications. The marketers should exercise extreme precautionary measures while designing the message and image for a food, drugs or cosmetics advertisement (Kamery, Pitts and Lawrence, 2002: p. 113-114). Moreover, promotion of alcohol, tobacco and gambling should be restricted or completely banned (Kamery, Pitts and Lawrence, 2002: p. 110-111, 115).

Camy (2005: p. 8-19) presented a new concept of positioning products in electronic games. Camy described how products can be positioned on the body of game characters, or in the game events and scenes such that the players can notice them and build brand awareness. For example, if the player is using a night vision camera, a logo of Sony can be displayed on one of the corners to make the player realise that Sony is one of the makers of such cameras. Camy further emphasised that games can also be used to experience the products in a virtual environment using interactive controls. For example, the dashboard of a racing car can be made identical to the dashboard of a real car brand. In-game advertisement efforts have resulted in significant response by the players. In 2006, Engage positioned some real restaurants operating in a subway in a first person shooting game called “Counter Strike” (Lewis, 2006: p. 6). The advertisement resulted in 31000 unique impressions on the linked ads in just three weeks (Lewis, 2006: p. 6). Lewis (2006: p. 7) explained that in-game advertising has given birth to a new and highly effective medium for advertising, popularly referred to as “Advergames”. A number of leading game developers are considering “Advergaming” as the next generation marketing methodology that can result in superior effects on the target recipients due to interactive experience of the products and viewing the brands in highly interesting scenarios (like a challenging game scene) (Lewis, 2006: p. 8-9). A survey conducted by Microsoft in 2005 among gamers reflected 40% brand recall for the products that were positioned in various components in a game, like – a skateboard, a car or a truck, a vending machine, and a billboard (Lewis, 2006: p. 10).

The target recipient of advertising communications through Advergames are mostly children and adolescents, as found by a research conducted by the Henry J. Kaiser family foundation (Moore, 2006: p. 4-5). The research was especially focussed on food advertising through Advergames and reflected that about 73% recipients of the promotion campaigns were children and adolescents. Hence, as emphasised by Harris, Speers, Schwartz and Brownell (2011: p. 16), Advergames are posing new ethical challenges in the world of digital advertising. Their research resulted in very alarming findings. They found that over 1.2 million children visit the websites that use Advergames to promote food products every month, but only one website promotes healthy food habits through an Advergame. The research also revealed that most of the Advergames promoted junk snacks to the children. In this context, Purswani (2010: p. 57) emphasised that there should be new laws and regulations and code of ethics for controlling the advertising content in Advergames. Grimes (2008: p. 162) further emphasised that there should a new set of contract laws, industrial self-regulations, consumer protection laws and media regulations to define how the children and adolescents should be targeted through Advergames and how should they be treated. In addition, there should be appropriate educational schemes that
should make the parents aware about the harmful effects of Advergames on their children (Evans, 2010: p. 7).

In this dissertation project, the researcher has conducted a study on chosen Advergames on the Internet to analyse how they have addressed the ethical issues and how can they improve upon their ethical conduct in presenting the advertisement messages in a more ethical manner. The names of companies have been kept anonymous while analysing their Advergames to ensure ethical conduct in this research. In addition, the researcher has surveyed a group of parents employing a structured questionnaire to capture their perspectives about effects of Advergames on children and adolescents, and the ethical codes that an advertiser should keep in mind. The outcome of this research comprises detailed guidelines on what positive and negative impacts can be foreseen on children and adolescents as a result of product promotions through Advergames and how can the Advergames be made as ethical as possible by promoting good impacts and avoiding bad impacts.

1.2 Rationale and significance of the dissertation

The emerging era of Advergames will soon establish a new dimension of online digital marketing. With the continuous growth of popularity of online gaming, this medium is expected to expand considerably over the Internet and also through interactive television, mobile phone networks and such other emerging online gaming channels. A rapid growth of Advergames may lead to uncontrollable exposure to children and adolescents. There can be harmful exposures that may affect the mental and physical health of children and adolescents.

The researcher has realized that there is a lot of potential for conducting academic research in this area given a lack of adequate theories and generalized concepts. The researcher has reviewed some literatures in chapter 2 in which, the scholars have analyzed this problem in detail and have made some useful recommendations. However, these efforts need to continue such that more insight into this emerging social challenge can be achieved. It is important that the researchers interested in this subject should locate and analyze the problems, and find out the short-term and long-term solutions to the problems. The researcher is hopeful that this study will attract more academic researchers toward this emerging social challenge and contribute by conducting further studies. In addition, the researcher is also hopeful that this dissertation may serve as one of the references for the advertising agencies and marketers that genuinely want to enhance their ethical conduct while designing Advergames.

The researcher intends to disseminate the knowledge achieved through the study by responding to call for papers and presenting relevant articles in reputed journals. If an opportunity is granted, the researcher will like to make presentations in conference proceedings about the ethical problems associated with Advergames and their possible solutions, and also like to propose the research opportunities in this area.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

Based on the research background and context introduced in section 1.1, and the rationale and motivation for conducting this study, the following aims and objectives have been formulated. The aims indicate the focal points of the study and the objectives indicate the key achievements of the study.

Aims:
(a) To study the emerging concept of Advergames and its impacts on children and adolescents.
(b) To study the ethical considerations in designing and presenting Advergames to children and adolescents.
(c) To study about the roles and responsibilities of parents in appropriately guiding the children and adolescents those are exposed to Advergaming through various online channels.

Objectives:
(a) To achieve a theoretical understanding about advertising through Advergames.
(b) To achieve a theoretical understanding about ethical challenges in Advergames pertaining to children and adolescents.
(c) To evolve a theory on what ethical considerations should be kept in mind while designing and promoting Advergames for children and adolescents.
(d) To evolve a theory on the roles and responsibilities of parents in the context of knowing and minimizing the impacts of Advergames on children and adolescents, and spreading the knowledge in the society.

1.4 Statement of problem

Advergaming is a new way of advertising primarily targeted at children and adolescents. It may cause harmful effects on the children and adolescents if the advertiser does not follow ethical practices in the promotions and their contents. Given the affinity of children and adolescents towards online gaming, the unethical practices in Advergaming can invoke a serious social issue that needs to be tackled. The ethical standards and practices in the Advergaming industry should be defined and established. In this research this problem has been investigated such that the ethical considerations in Advergaming can be established and the responsibilities of parents in guiding the children and adolescents can be ascertained.

The ethical conduct may be different from the perspectives of different stakeholders. For example, it may be possible that the perspective of a game designer about ethics in the Advergames is different from the perspective of the parents. An easier way could have been to assure compliance with a documented set of ethical codes for Advergames published by a regulatory body. However, in absence of such published codes, it is wiser to investigate the ethical conduct keeping in view the probable harms those can be caused to the most vulnerable end users. Hence, the end users chosen in this study are children, and adolescents, and the ten point code presented by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) has been chosen because it helps in investigating the ethics in Advergaming by analysing the possible impacts on children and adolescents. The ten point code is discussed in chapter 2. The perspective of parents about ethics in Advergaming has been chosen in this study because it matches effectively with the viewpoint chosen (impacts on children and adolescents) for investigating the problem.

1.5 Research Questions

Research questions are the high level questions that have been formulated to instigate an enquiry/investigation mode in this study. These questions have been answered partially through a literature review, partially through a primary research involving analysis of three chosen Advergames and partially through a primary research involving survey of parents sampled in this study.

Research questions:
(a) What are Advergames and why are they getting popular?
(b) What are the ethical challenges in Advergames pertaining to children and adolescents?
(c) What ethical considerations are needed in designing and promoting Advergames for children and adolescents?
(d) What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in understanding the impacts of Advergames on children and adolescents, taking appropriate steps for minimizing the impacts, and spreading the knowledge in the society about Advergames, their impacts and controlling actions to minimize the impacts?

1.6 Scope of the dissertation

Ethical aspects of advertising are part of a much wider subject matter of marketing ethics. Many of its aspects may be applicable in this research as well. The researcher has started the literature review with a brief review of ethics in advertising with an added review of effects of digital advertising on children. But overall, the researcher has focused the literature review and the two components of primary research on ethical advertising through Advergames only. In addition, the researcher has focused on
ethical advertising through Advergames pertaining to its impact on children and adolescents only. Hence it is a focused study with an aim to generalize the ethical practices in Advergaming globally keeping in mind its impact on children and adolescents in any part of the world.

1.7 Target audience of the dissertation

This dissertation is an academic research. Hence, the target audience is primarily academicians and researchers. It is expected that this research will serve as a reference document for the researchers that are studying ethical challenges in online advertising in general, and Advergaming in particular. In addition, this research may also be useful to advertising professionals that are working toward conceptualizing and designing Advergames. The ethical considerations evolved in this research may be useful to Advergaming design professionals for keeping the ethical aspects in mind while positioning and promoting products to children and adolescents. This research may also be useful for parents for knowing about Advergaming, its impacts, its ethical challenges and their own accountabilities.

1.8 Expected outcome

The study comprises two components in the primary research part –
(a) An analysis of three chosen Advergames on the Internet with respect to the ethical aspects studied in the literature review.
(b) A phenomenological study of chosen respondents (parents) for establishing the accountabilities of parents in guiding the children and adolescents about the harmful effects of Advergames.

It is expected that the study will result in a way to create a profile for ethical considerations in Advergaming. The profile will be applied on three chosen Advergames and hence the study will also result in how to use the ethical profile while designing an Advergame and positioning products through it for children and adolescents.

In addition, the study is expected to present the collective experiences of parents related to impact of online gaming on the children and adolescents and the expected effects of Advergames on them. In this context, the study is expected to create a list of responsibilities of the parents in guiding their children and adolescents pertaining to the harmful effects of Advergames and the protection strategies to minimize the harm. Overall, the study is expected to create knowledge about the ethical challenges in Advergaming, its impacts on children and adolescents and the accountabilities of parents such that the parents can take appropriate measures to protect their children and adolescents, and also spread the knowledge among their friends and relatives such that other parents can also be benefitted from this study. The researchers interested in studying the ethical aspects of Advergaming may find this article useful to conduct further studies and evolve more empirical results. If there is a call for papers pertaining to ethical online advertising, this research may become a useful choice for publishing the resultant knowledge in a reputed journal.

1.9 Limitations of the dissertation

This is a new and much focused subject area. Hence, the number of literatures is limited given that not many scholars have studied this area. In this study, the literature review is based on a study of 45 most relevant literatures to form the theoretical background for the two primary research studies conducted by the researcher. In addition, the primary study is based on three chosen Advergames and a sample of 78 parents living in the Iran and the UK. The number of literatures and the sample size are the primary limitations of this study. Given the time constraints this is the maximum that could be achieved by the researcher. However, the researcher is confident about achieving high reliability and validity of the results given that the conclusions have been drawn after a combined analysis of literature review, primary analysis of three Advergames and interpretations and analysis of survey data collected from one-to-one interaction with 78 respondents. Another limitation may be that the survey data is from the respondents of the Iran and the UK only. However, the researcher feels that the parenting concerns may
be similar across the world with some minor differences. Hence, while the research may be lacking some country specific viewpoints linked with the local cultures, overall the results may be applicable in any part of the world.

1.10 Brief outline of the dissertation

The dissertation is presented in six chapters. The chapter 1 comprises an overview of the context and background that has been used to derive the aims, objectives and research questions. The chapter 2 comprises detailed literature review to establish a theoretical background that is used as a baseline to analyze the three chosen Advergames and also is used to prepare the structured questionnaire for conducting the primary research. The chapter 3 comprises a review of literatures pertaining to research methodologies and methods, and the finalized research design has been discussed. The chapter 4 comprises organization, presentation, interpretations and analysis of primary data. The chapter 5 comprises the conclusions and recommendations drawn after combined analysis of literature review, analysis of three chosen Advergames and analysis of survey data. The chapter 6 comprises details on reflections from the study and the intentions of the researcher for using the reflections in real life assignments.

1.11 Theoretical framework of the dissertation

The theoretical framework of the dissertation is presented in the figure below. The theoretical foundation begins from the empirical theories on ethics in advertising. Thereafter the foundation is focused on ethics in digital advertising with special emphasis on Advergames as the medium. The theoretical reviews have been concluded at an acceptable promotional strategy through Advergaming. From this point onwards, the results of primary research have been introduced in the framework, which comprises two parts:

(a) Analysis of ethical aspects of the chosen Advergames.
(b) Perspectives of chosen parents about ethical aspects of Advergames.
Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the dissertation

The results of literature review and the results of two primary research studies have been jointly analyzed to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations about:

(a) Ethical designing and presenting of Advergames
(b) Saving children and adolescents from harmful effects of Advergames
(c) Spreading the knowledge among parents across the world

1.12 Summary of Chapter 1

The chapter 1 of this dissertation has established the direction of this research. The aims and objectives have guided the researcher about what is the focus of the study and what needs to be achieved from this study. The research question has guided the researcher about the enquiries to be carried out in this study. The theoretical framework has guided the researcher about theoretical baseline on which this research is based and how the baseline should be used to conduct the primary studies. The theoretical framework has also been useful to understand how the researcher can arrive at reliable and valid conclusions and recommendations in the end. The chapter also comprises discussions on scope and limitations of the dissertation project. The researcher has chosen phenomenology and grounded theory as the research methods under data triangulation methodology. The sampling method chosen is judgmental and the data collection is through case study (first component of primary research) and surveys (second component of primary research). These design elements of the research are described in detail in chapter 3.

In the next chapter, a detailed literature review has been conducted to form the theoretical foundation of this study.
2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, the researcher has reviewed relevant literatures pertaining to the research topic keeping in mind the aims and objectives of the research, and with the intent of finding the answers to the research questions. The literature review has been divided into two sections – the literature review pertaining to relevant theories and the literature review pertaining to relevant past studies.

2.1 Literature review of relevant theories

2.1.1 An empirical review of ethics in advertisements

Ethics in marketing is an old subject that has been researched since the evolution of virtue ethics (Williams and Murphy, 1990: p. 19). Williams and Murphy (1990: p. 19-20) described that the ethical aspects in marketing are linked with the virtue ethics that drives the ethics of an organization and the people working in it. It is related with openness, loyalty, fairness and compassion within an organization (Williams and Murphy, 1990: p. 20). It is also related with the level of corporate social responsibility owned by the organization that is demonstrated through humility, justice, public-spiritedness, prudence, fidelity, candour, compassion, and integrity (Williams and Murphy, 1990: p. 21). The claims made in the marketing efforts should be targeted to make the lives of people more interesting, healthy and worth living (Williams and Murphy, 1990: p. 22). Loe and Ferrell (2001: p. 2) stated that marketing managers may perceive many opportunities in their respective companies to engage in unethical behavior to capture opportunities with quick gains. However, as emphasized by Loe and Ferrell (2001: p. 2), the marketing managers should exercise self-restraint and distance themselves from unethical conducts. They argued that such self-restraint should be imbibed in the respective individual characters of marketers. Hence, a lot depends upon the individual personality traits of marketing managers that influences their perceptions, choices and decision-making (Loe and Ferrell, 2001: p. 3).

Advertising is one of the most significant activities of marketers. It is primarily conducted for two purposes:

(a) Information dissemination
(b) Differentiation of products and services
(Dyer, 1985: p. 75)

The ethical aspect of advertising is related with its truthfulness (Dyer, 1985: p. 76). Moreover, there should be objective ways of measuring truthfulness of the claims made in an advertisement (Dyer, 1985: p. 76). Traditionally, advertising has been perceived as a way to target the unconscious fantasies, wishes and wants of people (Dyer, 1985: p. 77). However, not every targeting may be ethical in nature (Dyer, 1985: p. 77). In this context, Butt, Ahmed and Ali (2009: p. 9-10) described seven key issues related to ethics in advertisement:

(a) The advertisements designed to target people that are vulnerable in some or other forms.
(b) The advertisements those are linked with cultural issues in a society.
(c) The advertisements those are competitive or comparable.
(d) The advertisements those are subliminal
(e) The advertisements comprising deception in some form or shape.
(f) The advertisements of products that are classified as controversial in a society.

Among these ethical issues in advertisements, the focus of this dissertation is on the first issue pertaining to advertisements targeting vulnerable people. The study is specifically focused on ethical issues related to advertisements targeting children and adolescents. In this context, the next sub-section is dedicated on impact of digital advertisements on children and adolescents.
Now, let us discuss about ethical issues in executing an advertisement. Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 806-809) described the following ethical considerations in execution of advertisements:

(a) Violation of autonomy of consumers by influencing their first order wants and desires through higher order deficiencies in unethical ways. Examples are advertisements of instigated personality changes by using a product that is meant for an ordinary usage. One popular example is an advertisement of a deodorant spray in which, its usage is shown as a way for people with ordinary personalities to influence people of opposite sex. In fact, the advertisements linking people’s first order desires with ordinary products have flooded the marketplace with no ethical boundaries drawn.

(b) Executing an advertisement in such a way that it creates an unavoidable invasion of privacy.

(c) Executing an advertisement in violation of the consumers’ legal rights to know.

(d) Executing an advertisement under a disguise in some form or shape. For example, there are news channels on TV and Internet that are primarily established for detaining various products and services of companies.

(e) Executing an advertisement that is obtrusive to the target audience. Examples are the billboards used in a sports arena. The unavoidable pop-ups on the important Internet sites (like a news site) are good examples of obtrusive ads.

(Nebenzahl and Jaffe, 1998: p. 806-809)

In the following figure, Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 810) have presented a mapping between various advertisement executions and the ethical dimensions, chosen as “disguise” and “obtrusiveness”. The mapping shows that unidentified commercially sponsored films, unidentified press releases and digitally created product placements carry highest levels of disguise and obtrusiveness. The mapping also reveals that digital media adds to the level of disguise and obtrusiveness in an advertisement.

![Figure 2: Various advertisement executions mapped with ethical dimensions (Nebenzahl and Jaffe, 1998: p. 810)](image)

In the next sub-section, the researcher has reviewed about evolution of advertising in the digital economy and its impact on children and adolescents.
2.1.2 Evolution of advertising in the digital economy and its impact on children and adolescents

In the mapping of advertisement executions with ethical dimensions (Nebenzahl and Jaffe, 1998: p. 810) presented in figure 2, it is shown that digital media can cause high levels of disguise and obtrusiveness. Butt, Ahmed and Ali (2009: p. 11) described that digital tools help in creating virtual reality in advertisements employing special effects, audiovisual gimmicks, rapidly moving images, virtual characters, virtual product images and highly effective sound effects. Digital advertising is a part of an entirely new technology called persuasive technology that employs a variety of audio-visual and collaboration technologies (O. Brien, Alfano and Magnusson, 2007: p. 126). In this context, Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen (2007: p. 311-314) presented the following model of computer-mediated persuasion. They argued that some patterns of communication can be computerized in such a way that they are equally effective as a social communication by a human actor (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 312). Such a communication pattern is created using computer persuasive tools that comprise verbal and non-verbal symbols, images, videos and graphics (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 313). The theories applicable in computer-mediated persuasion are human cognition theory, consistency theory, information processing theory and perceptual theory (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 313). All these theories are applicable in computer-mediated advertising, which is a form of persuasion through mass communications (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 314).

Figure 3: A model of persuasive technology (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 312)

McDonnell and Drennan (2010: p. 25) described that virtual product positioning is an innovative way of advertising that is growing rapidly as a multibillion dollar business. As per the ethical dimensional mapping model by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 810), digital product positioning comprises highest levels of disguise and obtrusiveness. Product placements in films and popular TV programs are very common now-a-days (McDonnell and Drennan, 2010: p. 27). The marketers are now aggressively targeting online games for product positioning with a view to target children and adolescents (McDonnell and Drennan, 2010: p. 29).

Brey (1999: p. 6-7) described that ethics in virtual reality is a new and significant challenge given that any form of immoral activity can be simulated in a gaming environment. Some of the games described by Brey (1999: p. 7-9) comprises the most brutal and dangerous acts that a human being can imagine. Children and adolescents are allowed to assume the role of brutal actors and indulge into most heinous crimes in the virtual reality world (Brey, 1999: p. 9). Brey (1999: p. 10) described why children and adolescents like such a role play in games. The key reason for popularity of such games is that a child feels the experience of being extremely powerful and unstoppable. On the top, if products are positioned in such games at crucial places (character’s body, action sequence and exciting scenes), there is a high chance that the advertisers may get excellent responses (Lewis, 2006: p. 6). However,

Figure 3: A model of persuasive technology (Harjumaa and Oinas-Kukkonen, 2007: p. 312)
there can be a number of harmful effects on children and adolescents due to such advertisements. Butt, Ahmed and Ali (2009: p. 11-15) described the following effects of digital advertising on children and adolescents:

(a) Unhealthy eating habits  
(b) Obesity among children and adolescents  
(c) Conflicts between parents and children/adolescents  
(d) Instigation of materialistic attitude in children and adolescents  
(e) Instigation of violent attitudes in children and adolescents  
(f) Learning substance and alcoholic abuse habits  
(g) Negative behavioral promotions  
(h) Foreign culture behaviors

In developed countries, children aged between 4 to 12 years form a huge multibillion dollar market (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 83). Marketers know very well how to attract children through custom advertisements and strategic targeting (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 95). They employ a number of strategies to attract children, specifically through buzz marketing (employing child and adolescent celebrities), product placements, and Advergames (Mizerksi, 2009: p. 2-3). These strategies are called “masked marketing strategies” (Mizerksi, 2009: p. 3). Through such advertisements, companies have been successful in widening the need domain of the children and hence the budget allocated by parents to please their children and adolescents (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 95). Their research has revealed that advertisers have found it easier to influence the wants of children and adolescents than adults (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 84). Children give high importance to fitting into an image by copying their friends, their favorite celebrities and even their parents’ lifestyle (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 84).

However, the costs of fitting into such images are gradually increased by the advertising companies enabling them to earn significant margins on products designed for children and adolescents (like toys, toiletries, clothing, food, electronics, movies and music) (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 85-89). This is one of the major ethical challenges facing the advertisers targeting children and adolescents (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 89). Other challenges are related to the TV viewing, Internet surfing habits and online social networking habits of children (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 89). Due to reduced monitoring by parents and inadequate involvement of regulators and law enforcing agencies, children and adolescents are increasingly getting exposed to inappropriate and deceptive messages in advertisements (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 90-93). Mizerski (2009: p. 17-18) argued that children are highly influenced by Advergames and tend to showcase an affinity towards products positioned in them. Hence, Advergaming designers should use the medium for promoting good habits and healthy products.

There is a need for establishing standards for ethical digital advertising to children and adolescents. In the next section, the researcher has reviewed about ethical advertising to children and adolescents.

2.1.3 Ethical digital promotional strategy for children and adolescents – what it takes?

Kamery, Pitts and Lawrence (2002: p. 108) argued that digital advertising world should have self-regulations as well as statutory regulations. They described that self-regulation of advertising should be linked with the core business ethics of a company comprising the following values:

(a) Delivering best products to customers as per their needs  
(b) Delivering harmless products and services  
(c) Earning profits through fair means  
(d) Providing fair compensation to workers  
(e) Providing gains to shareholders through fair means  
(f) Ensuring that the company is a good community member

Kamery, Pitts and Lawrence (2002: p. 109) argued that ethical conduct cannot be ensured in advertising alone. It needs to be imbibed in the organization’s cultural and value system. They specifically emphasized that ethics in advertising should be derived from the code of ethics of the entire business. Companies targeting children and adolescents should formulate special code of ethics for marketing and advertising. Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) presented the following online
advertising codes prevailing in New Zealand for advertising to children and adolescents (defined as individuals below 14 years of age):

(a) The advertisements should be clearly recognizable as targeted towards children and adolescents.

(b) If an advertisement is targeted at individuals below 14 years is confused with an editorial or content of a program, then there should be a clear identification as advertisement showcased in the editorial or content.

(c) The advertisement should not comprise any form of portrayal of violence, adventures and aggression that an individual below 14 years of age can mimic in his/her life and cause self-harm or harm to others.

(d) There should not be any horrific or menacing events in the advertisement those may disturb the children psychologically.

(e) The advertisements should neither show any form or anti-social behavior nor should show children or adolescents indulged in anti-social behavior.

(f) Any form of negative language, facial expressions, bullying or vindictiveness should be banned in advertisements targeting individuals below 14 years of age.

(g) All children and adolescents shown in advertisements should exhibit good behaviors and manners.

(h) The advertisement should not convey any such message that may make the child believe that he/she may be perceived to be inferior by not owning the product.

(i) The advertisements should not show unsafe situations or unsafe usage of the products.

(j) Promotion of unhealthy eating habits, tobacco, smoking or drinking to children should be banned.

Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 269) emphasized that parents should train their children and adolescents to interpret and understand the commercial intent behind advertisements. They also emphasized that parents should continuously educate their children about the difference between fantasies and reality, and educate them about the harmful results of various activities. They stated that children will begin to realize the deception and disguise in advertisements after they realize their own limitations and the problems that they will face by indulging in harmful choices and activities.

Montgomery and Chester (2009: p. S18-S21) described that modern children and adolescents are closely connected with the online digital world. The leading food and beverage companies are actively targeting the cyber-kids through interactive advertisements. However, most of these companies are promoting unhealthy habits and junk food items. Advergames, brand engagement and viral marketing are new advertising strategies developed by such companies (Montgomery and Chester, 2009: p. S24). Children and adolescents are under high negative peer pressure and do not possess sufficient persuasion coping skills (Montgomery and Chester, 2009: p. S23). They are susceptible to instant decision making especially during their high arousal state when playing a game (Montgomery and Chester, 2009: p. S24). They can easily indulge into thrill and fun seeking activities and may hardly use their interpretation skills to understand the commercial intentions behind the aggressive persuasion in online Advergames or such other media (Montgomery and Chester, 2009: p. S24). Hence, there is a need for a new policy paradigm to address the negative effects of these new ways of advertising to adolescents and children (Montgomery and Chester, 2009: p. S23). In a survey carried out by Geraci (2004: p. 2), it was found that modern marketers consider the children and adolescents as powerful, demanding, savvy, stressed, busy, and influential consumers. However, they also agreed that these characteristics of children and adolescents are the best when they are unsupervised, unstructured, intolerant, pestering others and independent thinkers/decision makers (Geraci, 2004: p. 2-3). Hence, somehow supervised and controlled children and adolescents are not the preferred targets of modern marketers. Therefore, there is definitely an issue of ethics when products are positioned for children and adolescents through digital channels.

This research is focused on effects of Advergames on children and adolescents. Hence, the researcher has presented a focused literature review pertaining to advertising ethics through Advergames in the next section. The section also covers a review on the impacts on children and adolescents and acceptable promotional strategy.
2.2 Literature review of relevant past studies

2.2.1 Evolution of in-game advertisements and the concept of “Advergames”

Advergaming is a new way of product and brand positioning using online games as the media (Santos, Gonzalo and Gisbert, 2007: p. 203). Some selected brands have gained extensively by launching interactive campaigns through challenging games, while others have gained by positioning their products within the scenes of popular games (Santos, Gonzalo and Gisbert, 2007: p. 203). Microsoft showed in a survey conducted in year 2005 that gamers were able to recall 40% of brands that were positioned in various virtual models in an Advergame, like – a skateboard, a car or a truck, a vending machine, and a billboard (Lewis, 2006: p. 10).

As per Santos, Gonzalo and Gisbert (2007: p. 204), the key benefits of Advergaming are the following:

(a) It offers rapid and effective brand reinforcement.
(b) A large database can be collected for demographics research.
(c) A number of target markets can be reached through game sharing links.
(d) The number of clicks and time spent by consumers on the website of a company can be increased considerably.
(e) If viral marketing is involved, the traffic on a website can increase considerably.

Dahl, Eagle and Fernandez (2006: p. 2-3) explained that the designers of Advergames try to make it as entertaining as possible such that the players imbibe an emotional affinity with the brands and their products. Most of the gamers interested in Advergaming are of less than 18 years (Dahl, Eagle and Fernandez, 2006: p. 3). Advergaming is considered as a persuasion technology used to target the non-conscious cognitive processing of children (Dahl, Eagle and Fernandez, 2006: p. 4). It is also believed as a persuasion technology to influence the affective components of children’s attitudes (Dahl, Eagle and Fernandez, 2006: p. 4). Vedrashko (2006: p. 17) argued that Advergaming through consoled based online games run on Sony PS2 or Nintendo WII have been highly successful because of the quality of virtual reality experience and excitement/challenges offered by the games. He classified Advergaming lovers as explorers, plot lovers, adventure lovers, vicarious players, challenge and distracters (Vedrashko, 2006: p. 18). His research revealed that online gaming has resulted in a different kind of social clusters that has immense potential for marketers to position products and services (Vedrashko, 2006: p. 24). He believes that Advergaming is an excellent platform to promote good practices, habits, behaviors and morals (Vedrashko, 2006: p. 26). Camy (2005: p. 25) cautioned that Advergaming will not be successful if real advertisements are positioned in the games. The players like the virtual reality world in Advergames and hence the products and brands need to be carefully integrated with the same virtual reality environment in which, the game plot and storyline has been designed (Camy, 2005: p. 25-26). The players will not compromise their virtual experience, excitement, challenges and a fictional environment (Camy, 2005: p. 26). They will recognize a brand and its product only if they perceive it to be a part of the virtual gaming environment. Hence, after mapping with the model by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 810) it is revealed that Advergaming may comprise high levels of disguise in brands and their products. There can be different effects on children and adolescents due to such integration of brands with the virtual reality environment of games and the resulting disguise. In the next sub-section, the researcher has reviewed effects of Advergames on children and adolescents.

2.2.2 Effects of in-game advertisements on children and adolescents

The Gamers interested in virtual reality sports and actions are highly influenced by brand positioning on the clothes of the players within the game (Kim and McClung, 2009: p. 265). Their survey reflected that gamers are normally not able to differentiate between ethical or unethical advertisements (Kim and McClung, 2009: p. 266). Islam (2005: p. 8) conducted a survey among children interested in Advergames. He found that children were able to recall brands positioned in both high and low intensity games and find them highly exciting and pleasurable (Islam, 2005: p. 9). Bati and Atici (2010: p. 2951) conducted a similar study in Turkey among adolescents and youth and found that the attitudes toward brands in Advergames are directly linked with level of entertainment and the overall theme of the game. D’ Andrade (2007: p. 9) found that the gamers possessed high brand recall in exploratory
games. For example, they explained that a gamer could recall that he had a virtual lunch in a Pizza Hut outlet in a subway before an action sequence. However, as found by D’Andrade (2007: p. 9), gamers couldn’t recall the brands positioned on rapidly moving objects (like a train). Adding to this finding, Winkler and Buckner (2006: p. 24) concluded that gamers possess higher brand recall for products known to them in general and positioned in the Advergames. Whatever is the brand recall, two researches revealed that gamers interested in Advergaming possessed very high intrinsic affinity and association with the brands (Ho and Yang, 2008: p. 523) and associative placements with existing products (Ho, Yang and Lin, 2011: p. 10117) positioned in Advergames, which affects the purchasing decisions by the gamers. These findings tally with the findings by van Reijmersdal, Jansz, Peters and van Noort (2010: p. 1787). They studied 2453 girls that were aged between 11 and 17 years and found that they demonstrated highly favorable behavioral intentions and affinity towards the brand images positioned in Advergames on the characters or objects most loved by them. Okazaki and Yague (2012: p. 78) found in their study that brand positioning in Advergames invokes an electronic word of mouth networking among game lovers through social networking sites. They presented the following model to describe this effect.

Figure 4: Invoking of electronic word of mouth advertising through social networking engagement as a result of popularity of Advergames (Okazaki and Yague, 2012: p. 81)

Okazaki and Yague (2012: p. 81-82) described that the fitment of brand with the game influences the perceived brand value among the gamers, which in turn is determined by the uniqueness, awareness and favorability of the brand. The gamers having high engagement with social networking sites and possessing good perceptions about the brand automatically invoke electronic word of mouth marketing. Deal (2005: p. 2) argued that more and more companies are now turning their focus towards Advergaming because studies have proved that brand positioning through them results in high brand recalls and brand equity. However, the brand affinity and association generated by children and adolescents those like to play online Advergames can result in negative effects on their physical and mental health. Hence, there are ethical issues that need to be tackled. The next sub-section deals with the ethical issues associated with Advergaming.
2.2.3 Ethical issues of in-gaming advertisements

Affections and intimacy are natural characteristics of the developing minds of growing children (Kennett and Matthews, 2007: p. 3). However, if the same is used as a vehicle for deceptive brand and product positioning for commercial gains, it is highly unethical (Kennett and Matthews, 2007: p. 3). Fine (2007: p. 14) argued that children have lesser cognitive capabilities to recognize an advertisement and interpret the commercial purpose behind it. Hence, if a company displays clearly that the presentation to a child is an advertisement; there is no ethical issue in it (Fine, 2007: p. 14). However, as further argued by Fine (2007: p. 15), a deliberate attempt to link a brand with the emotions, arousals and stimuli of children is unethical. Given that the fundamental strategy of Advergaming is to link the emotions, arousals and stimuli of children with a brand, it has significant ethical challenges. Harris, Speers, Schwartz and Brownell (2011: p. 2) described that Advergames can be an excellent media to promote good and healthy habits among children and adolescents. However, companies have mostly used it to promote products for commercial gains causing unhealthy and harmful habits among children and adolescents (Harris, Speers, Schwartz and Brownell, 2011: p. 2). Children and adolescents normally do not understand the commercial intent behind the brand placements (Harris, Speers, Schwartz and Brownell, 2011: p. 5). A recent study by Lewis (2010: p. 100) revealed that even parents are sometimes deceived by the companies that promote the Advergames as useful tools for mental development of their preschool children. In the modern world of high competitive pressures, parents are normally compelled to spend long hours and even many days away from their children (Lewis, 2010: p. 101). Hence, they accept the need for their children to interact with online entertainment tools that also offer education and child development remedies (Lewis, 2010: p. 105). However, most of such tools are full of advertisements and hence are essentially Advergames (Lewis, 2010: p. 105).

Some online video games possess covert or subtle messages embedded within the storyline of the game (Calvert, 2008: p. 208). For example, the player may achieve victory in a level only if he/she uses some gadgets of specific brands (Calvert, 2008: p. 208). Some companies hire the rights to use popular animation characters to promote their brands to children (Calvert, 2008: p. 209). Example, the Roland McDonald animation character has been used to promote various products of McDonald’s fast food chains (Calvert, 2008: p. 209). Mr. Butterworth is shown as fighting evils that are linked with branded products (Calvert, 2008: p. 209). In one of the games, Coke is positioned as a tranquilizer that makes the character a better athlete after its consumption (Calvert, 2008: p. 210). Choi, Yoon and Lacey (2011: p. 6) found that children develop high trust for the brands that are known in the external world and are promoted by popular gaming characters. They also found that the trust multiplies if the character is popular among the social networking group of children interested in a common game (Choi, Yoon and Lacey, 2011: p. 7).

Such disguised Advergames with high levels of deceptive product positioning causes lots of confusion in the minds of children and adolescents (Calvert, 2008: p. 218). These confusions cause wrong concepts in the minds of children. Example, a soft drink can help in achieving high sporting skills or a junk food can result in high power and courage. These perceptions may cause some kind of a psychological belief, which may be changed after lots of efforts and counseling by psychotherapists (Calvert, 2008: p. 218). Some children may develop conflicts with siblings and parents, develop materialistic attitudes, become obese and internally weak, and develop mental disorders (Calvert, 2008: p. 218). Such children may make demands for products that are highly advertised through Advergames and similar media (Calvert, 2008: p. 217). Such products are often bogus and unreasonably priced (Calvert, 2008: p. 217). They resist significantly if the parents try to explain that these products are of no use (Calvert, 2008: p. 218). In many cases it has been found that mothers hardly have any influence in curbing the choice of boys for highly attractive products (Calvert, 2008: p. 219). These products offer extreme visual and mental satisfaction to children because the advertisements through Advergames and viral marketing have somehow encapsulated their minds (Calvert, 2008: p. 219). Currently, many countries do not have adequate regulations to prevent unethical deceptive advertising through online Advergames (Grimes, 2008: p. 164). Even parents are not well informed and educated about the deceptive practices used by companies in Advergaming and the harmful effects on their children (Lewis, 2010: p. 100).

In the next section, the researcher has reviewed about the possible good practices that Advergaming companies can adopt to make their advertisements ethical and harmless for children.
2.2.4 Acceptable promotional strategy pertaining to in-gaming advertisements

Companies need to own the responsibility of child welfare and protection (Purswani, 2010: p. 62). They should prefer to position good products for children and promote healthy and good habits and behaviors through Advergaming (Purswani, 2010: p. 62). There should be appropriate controls implemented by companies to ensure that they check the quality of products promoted through Advergames such that obesity among children can be reduced (Alvy and Calvert, 2008: p. 713). In this context, companies should hire the services of food and nutrition professionals for children (Alvy and Calvert, 2008: p. 713). Alternatively, the food and nutrition professionals should initiate or join existing movements to oppose the unethical advertising practices by companies (Alvy and Calvert, 2008: p. 713). Culp, Bell and Cassady (2010: p. 199) argued that advertisers should include disclaimers and warning messages at appropriate places in the Advergames such that the children should be aware that such food items should be eaten occasionally for fun and not regularly. For example, the promoter of a junk food item should state somewhere in the Advergame that the gamer should consume it occasionally for fun and should regularly eat the food provided by parents (Culp, Bell and Cassady, 2010: p. 199). Health professionals should come out with their own Advergames in direct competition with these companies and promote healthy messages through exciting games (Culp, Bell and Cassady, 2010: p. 200). They should also run campaigns to educate parents about the new marketing media and their harmful effects on children (Culp, Bell and Cassady, 2010: p. 200).

Grimes (2008: p. 165-175) argued that Advergames should be regulated separately through four types of regulations – contract law, industrial self-regulation, consumer protection law and media regulation. She further emphasized upon content guidelines and auditing methods to be established for all such companies that are extensively using Advergaming for product positioning (Grimes, 2008: p. 176). She insisted that Advergaming is a different form of advertising medium and hence is unlikely to be governed by the existing laws and regulations for advertisements (Grimes, 2008: p. 177). For example, the content design in Advergaming is very different from the conventional advertisement content design (Grimes, 2008: p. 178). Moreover, the commercial intent in an Advergame is not explicit (Grimes, 2008: p. 178). Hence, a lot of study and analysis is needed in this area to establish appropriate regulations (Grimes, 2008: p. 178).

2.3 Critical discussions – researcher’s viewpoints

An advertisement should be recognizable to the target recipient. If not, it should be stated explicitly. This is the fundamental ethical aspect needed in Advergaming. In researcher’s view, Advergaming employs a lot of disguise, which is a form of deception. Deception is based on lies and is highly unethical. Hence, the first aspect that is needed in Advergaming is that the brand positioning should be recognized or declared as advertisement, which can be clearly seen by the children and adolescents playing the game. The second fundamental ethical aspect needed in Advergaming is that the brands should be dissociated from the arousal and stimuli of children. The advertiser should be very careful that the children and adolescents do not link the products with unreasonable physical and mental enhancements. For example, a soft drink should not be portrayed as a tranquilizer that helps in enhancing sporting abilities of the player. Similarly, a junk food should not be portrayed as a stamina enhancing drug to the players. First of all, the companies should position these products with a message that they are for temporary fun and have harmful effects. They should discourage extensive consumption of such products. Secondly, they should clearly mention somewhere that these products are positioned in the game for advertisement. Thirdly, the advertisers should be careful that the children do not develop wrong and negative concepts by getting exposed to their advertisements. Fourth, the Advergaming companies should ensure that their advertisements do not cause any harm to the health, mental state or physical body of children and adolescents.

2.4 Contributions of this dissertation

In this dissertation, the researcher has tested three chosen Advergames against the ten-point criteria reviewed in sub-section 2.1.3. The analyses of the Advergames against these criteria have indicated the level of ethical practices used in those games. The compliances against the each criterion in the ten-point checklist have been marked as partial or full depending upon the researcher’s analysis. In
addition, the researcher has conducted survey among chosen parents that are concerned about the Advergaming exposure of their children and adolescents. The parents have been requested to analyze the Advergaming exposure of their children and adolescents based on the ten-point checklist and mark the responses in a structured questionnaire based on their experience and resulting knowledge. They also have been requested to provide a short one line statement against each question justifying their choice. The results have been compared with the literature review outcomes to evolve the empirical theories from this research. It is expected that the results will serve as a useful reference for the researchers studying ethics in Advergames. The results may also be useful to the agents that want to contribute in making Advergaming ethics policies, laws and regulations.

2.5 Summary of Chapter 2

In this chapter, the researcher has conducted an organized literature review that is relevant to the research problem and the research questions. The literatures are chosen keeping the focus, aims and objectives under consideration. Two sets of literatures have been studied: the literatures on relevant theories and the literatures on relevant past studies. The literatures on relevant theories comprise the references on ethics in digital advertising to children/adolescents and the literatures on past relevant studies comprises references on Advergaming, its ethical aspects and its impact on children and adolescents. The review conducted in this chapter has helped the researcher in designing the structured questionnaire and in analyzing the secondary and primary data. In the next chapter, the researcher has studied a number of literatures on designing and conducting a social research, and has presented the research design for this study.
Chapter 3: Research methodology and methods

In this chapter, the researcher has reviewed relevant literatures on social research methodologies and the methods that assist in conducting a study under the chosen methodology. The research methodology and the associated strategy are linked with research philosophy. Hence, the researcher has first reviewed the known philosophies in the context of a social research, and has chosen the most suitable philosophy for this study.

Collis and Hussey (2009: p. 12) described that a research is a process of finding out answers to certain questions or prove hypotheses. The questions may be related to an investigation, an exploration, a focused study, or an enquiry (Collis and Hussey, 2009: p. 14). The hypotheses are pre-conceived theories defined by a researcher with the help of self-experience, wide studies, inputs from experts, or observations of natural phenomena (Collis and Hussey, 2009: p. 12-13).

Bryman and Bell (2007: p. 7-8) described that a researcher in the modern world is guided by epistemological or ontological considerations of the study. Epistemology and Ontology are frameworks created by philosophers to build knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 8). Epistemology is a framework in which, the findings and conclusions by a researcher should be accepted by the interested communities (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 10). The acceptance depends upon the philosophy and the underlying methodology adopted by the researcher (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 10). Ontology is a framework in which, a researcher takes two different directions of study. In one direction, the researcher considers the society (or an organization system having its own structure and characteristics, independent of its members. In another direction, the researcher considers the society (or an organization) as an entity that is totally dependent upon its members. Both the directions are characterized by different philosophies. In the next section, the researcher has reviewed the philosophies under epistemology and ontology frameworks and the associated research strategies.

3.1 Research philosophy and strategy

In this section, the researcher has reviewed the philosophies under epistemology and ontology frameworks of knowledge building. The objective of this review is to choose the most appropriate philosophy for this research and arrive at the right research strategy.

There have been two popular philosophies under the epistemology framework for conducting a research (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 14). They are – positivism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 14). Positivism philosophy is related to proving of theories (hypotheses), whereas interpretivism philosophy is related to creation of theories (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 14). A positivist prefers scientific approach to research by applying mathematical and statistical methods to experimentally collected data, whereas an interpreter prefers empirical approach to research by collecting credible information from various sources including existing empirical theories and applying self-interpretation skills (hermeneutics) to derive the results (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 15). A third philosophy called realism is also popular in epistemology, which is a modern approach of combining the benefits of both positivism and interpretivism (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 15). Under ontology framework, they described two philosophies named objectivism and constructivism. They are not reviewed herewith because this research is not concerned with structure of a social system/organization and hence, the researcher intends to choose one of the philosophies from the epistemological framework.

In this research, the researcher has chosen realism. Given that ethics of Advergames is a new social issue, there is a lack of sufficient scientific or empirical support. This research is expected to value add to the existing body of knowledge in this area and hence the researcher do not want to take a side of either interpretivism or positivism. It appears that both philosophies are equally applicable to study this problem and hence a wise approach will be to derive benefits from both of them. Hence, the researcher has chosen realism as the philosophy for this study.

Now, we review and decide upon the research strategy. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 124) discussed about two strategies of conducting a research, named as Inductive strategy and Deductive
strategy. In the inductive strategy, the researcher is required to induce valid and reliable information from credible sources in any interpretable form, sort and reduce them, organize them, analyze them and then draw conclusions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 125). Inductive strategy is mostly used by interpreters (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 125). In the deductive strategy, the researcher is required to formulate appropriate relations among the variables related to the research, collect data from experiments or surveys, convert the data into numbers by applying proven methods, and apply mathematical and statistical theories and formulations to deduce the results (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 126). Deductive strategy is mostly used by positivists (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 126). The two strategies can be appropriately combined in triangulated studies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 146).

The researcher has made a choice of realism as the philosophy. But there cannot be two different strategies in the same study. Hence, it is important for the researcher to choose between either inductive or deductive strategy. The researcher has chosen inductive strategy because the inputs to the study have been taken from websites and survey. Most of the inputs will be textual and not easily convertible to numbers. The researcher has chosen Likert scale to convert survey data into numbers, but the analysis of Advergames will be textual only. Hence, inductive strategy is suitable for this study.

3.2 Research methodology

Bryman and Bell (2007: p. 16-19) described two research methodologies used in social research studies, named as Qualitative methodology and Quantitative methodology. They further described that qualitative methodology is linked with interpretivism and quantitative methodology is linked with positivism (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 17). Qualitative methodology comprises an organized collection of research data (mostly in textual and graphical formats) and applying interpretive theories to analyze them after appropriate reduction, sorting and organizing (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 18). Quantitative methodology comprises an organized collection of research data, converting them to numbers (if the data is not in numbers already) and applying mathematical and statistical theories to analyze them after plotting them in frequency tables, histograms, pie charts, or models (Bryman and Bell, 2007: p. 19).

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 151-154) described that the qualitative and quantitative methodologies can be merged following a triangulation (mixing) strategy. A researcher may follow multiple triangulation strategies. The most common triangulation strategies used in social studies are: methodology triangulation and data triangulation. In methodology triangulation, the qualitative and quantitative methodologies are mixed. For example, the researcher may like to apply interpretive skills and derive textual results after completing the statistical or mathematical analysis. Such a research study is primarily quantitative supported by qualitative analysis. In data triangulation, the numerical data is mixed with textual data. In such a mixed strategy, for example, the researcher may like to apply interpretive skills to analyze numbers as well, in addition to texts and images. A researcher may also like to adopt a hybrid strategy comprising data as well as methodology triangulation.

In this study, the researcher has chosen data triangulation with qualitative methodology. The data collected in this study are of two types:

(a) Textual data is collected by analyzing the chosen Advergames on websites. The textual data is reduced and sorted in the form of definitive statements that deliver a clear message related to the concepts under study. This has been carried out by carefully analyzing the contribution of free text analysis to the concepts under study (research aims, objectives and research questions) and the indicators that represent the concepts.

(b) Numerical data has resulted from survey conducted with parents employing structured questionnaire modeled with Likert scale. The numerical data is plotted in the form of bar charts and interpretations have been carried out of each chart independently as well as in coherence with others.

The interpretations of textual and numerical data have been carried out separately and then later combined in the discussions section. The discussions section also comprises comparisons with the literature review such that the validity and reliability of the conclusions can be enhanced.
Under qualitative methodology, the following methods are popular in the context of an academic research:

(a) Anthropological Ethnography: This method is one of the oldest in the world of research. Tilley (1980: p. 28-30) described that ethnographers prefer the method to study communities and cultures to analyze how people live and behave in them, how they socialize, how they perform the rituals, what are their beliefs, how they make decisions and what are their actions. These aspects are closely linked with anthropology and hence the name of the method is anthropological ethnography. The method is linked with interpretive sociology (Tilley, 1980: p. 30). The primary instrument used in ethnographic studies is observation sheets/formats. In modern studies, Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram is also widely used in ethnographic studies (Coast, 2003: p. 337). This instrument is also called cause-effect analysis chart (Coast, 2003: p. 338).

Ethnographic observations are longitudinal studies carried over a long period (Coast, 2003: p. 338). A large amount of data is collected in various forms and hence, data reduction and analysis is very time consuming (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981: p. 51-53). In the researcher’s view, this research method is very exciting due to the level of involvement. However, if time is a constraint this method is not suitable. The researcher should give adequate time in collecting and analyzing the information to ensure reliability and validity of results. In the current research, time is a constraint and hence ethnography is rejected.

(b) Grounded theory: Every research is conducted to study certain theoretical concepts or to prove theoretical concepts, as explained by Bryman (2004: p. 63). The theoretical concept needs to be evolved with the help of appropriate indicators (Bryman, 2004: p. 63). Grounded theory is a method to conduct detailed study of past empirical and scientific theories such that the most appropriate indicators can be chosen that accurately represent the conceptual framework under study (LaRossa, 2005: p. 837). However, in a primary research, the indicators cannot be chosen in just one attempt (LaRossa, 2005: p. 839). The researcher has to carefully analyze the nature of theory evolving from the primary research and compare with the past empirical studies many times (LaRossa, 2005: p. 839-40). It is a time taking process because the primary research may have to be repeated multiple times till the most probable theory evolves from data set (LaRossa, 2005: p. 840). Hence, there is a chance that the primary data set may be rejected or modified multiple times before the final set has evolved (LaRossa, 2005: p. 840).

In this study, grounded theory can be applied partially to compare the primary data collected from the field with the past empirical theories reviewed in chapter 2 (literature review). However, the researcher is working on a time bound research and hence the data collection shall be once only. This means that this research cannot employ grounded theory in its totality but can adopt only one aspect of it, which involves comparing the primary data with the literature review for better interpretations and for enhancing the reliability and validity.

(c) Action Research: In this method, the researchers are deeply involved with the participants in various research settings to find the solutions to the research problems (Hindle, Checkland, Mumford and Worthington, 1995: p. 454). In some studies, the solutions are tested in the research settings by the participants (Hindle, Checkland, Mumford and Worthington, 1995: p. 454). Such research studies return excellent practical knowledge and are highly accepted epistemologically (Carr, 2006: p. 421). However, the studies take very long time and require multiple interactions among the researchers, the participating subjects and the non-participating subjects. Again, due to time constraints this method is not suitable for this research.

(d) Phenomenology: In this method, the collective data on experiences of people and their resulting viewpoints are treated as primary data (Gallagher and Sorensen, 2006: p. 120). The outcome of phenomenology justifies a constructivist’s theory that correlates human experiences with social constructs (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011, p. 116). Hence, phenomenology is a research method that helps in evolving social construction theories.
based on the experiences of individuals living in societies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011, p. 117).

Phenomenology is one of the most popular methods in social studies given that it can be used in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Gallagher and Sorensen, 2006: p. 120). Moreover, phenomenology is not a time consuming method (Gallagher and Sorensen, 2006: p. 122). The researcher needs to conduct either a survey or interviews among chosen subjects (by applying appropriate sampling theory, as discussed in the next section) and collect the data (Gallagher and Sorensen, 2006: p. 123). The instruments used are open ended questions (semi-structured questionnaire) and closed questions (structured questionnaire) (Gallagher and Sorensen, 2006: p. 125). The data can be analyzed employing qualitative and quantitative theories (as applicable).

The researcher has chosen phenomenology as the primary method for this research. This is because after going through the review of all methods, the researcher has understood that this method can be completed within the project timelines and it is the most preferred research method for conducting social research with constructivist mindset. Moreover, Collis and Hussey (2009: p. 193) discussed that data collected from collective human experiences increases the reliability if the sampling has been done carefully and the bias factor has been reduced. Phenomenology is a method of learning from the experiences of a number of people included in the sample and hence, it is concluded that the results will be reliable.

The researcher has chosen structured questionnaire as the primary method for this research. This is because after going through the review of all methods, the researcher has understood that this method can be completed within the project timelines and it is the most preferred research method for conducting social research with constructivist mindset. Moreover, Collis and Hussey (2009: p. 193) discussed that data collected from collective human experiences increases the reliability if the sampling has been done carefully and the bias factor has been reduced. Phenomenology is a method of learning from the experiences of a number of people included in the sample and hence, it is concluded that the results will be reliable.

The researcher has chosen structured questionnaire with Likert scale. Sekaran (2010: p. 188-197) described that Likert scale is an example of an interval scale in which, the responses can be assigned an extent such that the indicators can be analyzed with a magnitude (example, low to high or weak to strong) and a direction (skewed negatively or positively). This is how a qualitative data can be made quantitative using phenomenology (Sekaran, 2010: p. 187). For example, there may be two individuals that believe in the same thing, but the extent of their beliefs may differ. Such a difference in beliefs can be captured using an interval scale. An interval scale can have many levels to denote the extent or magnitude (Sekaran, 2010: p. 188). However, Likert scale is designed based on an understanding that quantitative values of human respondents mapped at more than five levels may not effectively reflect the required knowledge of the indicators; rather the results may appear more confusing (Sekaran, 2010: p. 197). Hence, Likert scale comprises only five levels: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree (Sekaran, 2010: p. 197). Likert scale has helped the researcher to convert the textual responses into appropriate quantitative values such that the mean, frequency and percentage of responses can provide a better representation of indicators allowing more accurate interpretations. Likert scale also helps in enhancing the reliability of data in studies based on collective human responses (Sekaran, 2010: p. 198). Hence, the researcher has chosen the aforesaid five level Likert scale to prepare the structured questionnaire for surveying the parents. The use of Likert scale in this study has been explained in section 4.1.

### 3.3 Sampling theory

A social research is carried out on a population (Sekaran: 2010, p. 265). The population in this research comprises of the parents having children and adolescents exposed to Advergaming. Such a population will be very large and hence everyone in it cannot be interviewed or surveyed. Hence, it is important that an appropriate sampling theory should be applied to select the best possible representative units (individuals) of the sample (Sekaran, 2010: p. 265). The sample should be chosen in such a way that the results of the primary research can be inferred back to the population with a reasonable level of applicability (Sekaran, 2010: p. 267). Sampling is done employing probabilistic and non-probabilistic techniques (Sekaran, 2010: p. 269). Probabilistic techniques are applicable in quantitative methodology and non-probabilistic techniques are applicable in qualitative methodology (Sekaran, 2010: p. 269-270). In this section, the non-probabilistic sampling methods have been discussed because the methodology chosen is qualitative interpretations of triangulated data.
Primarily, there are two types of qualitative sampling techniques: convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Sekaran, 2010: p. 276-278). Convenience sampling is carried out when the respondents need to be conveniently accessible to the researcher (Sekaran, 2010: p. 276). For example, the visitors of a shopping mall can be quickly sampled and interviewed if they are ready to participate (Sekaran, 2010: p. 276). Typically, a reasonably large primary data collection can be completed in just one day at a convenient location (Sekaran, 2010: p. 276). However, such studies can only be used to capture preliminary information because any visitor has been included in the sample without conducting any analysis about their inclusion (Sekaran, 2010: p. 277). A large scale quantitative study with simple random sampling is similar to this technique (Sekaran, 2010: p. 270, 277).

Purposive sampling is carried out using three techniques: judgmental sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling (Sekaran, 2010: p. 278). In judgmental sampling, each member of the sample is chosen after carefully mapping the suitability of his/her inclusion against pre-determined criteria that are closely linked with the research problem and the questions (Sekaran, 2010: p. 278). Quota sampling is carried out by conducting judgmental sampling on multiple populations to create multiple samples representing their respective populations (Sekaran, 2010: p. 278-279). Snowball sampling is carried out in multi-phase studies by gradually increasing the sample size at the completion of each research phase, after slightly modifying the selection criteria based on the outcomes of the phase (Sekaran, 2010: p. 279).

The researcher has chosen one sample using judgmental sampling technique of the purposive sampling category. In this technique, the members of the sample have been chosen after mapping their fitment against chosen criteria as explained in the next section. This sampling method has been chosen as most suitable because the researcher was clear about the members needed in the sample, and the study is conducted on only one sample type: parents having children or adolescents exposed to Advergaming. The differentiation between effects of Advergames on children and adolescents has not been considered because no such differences have been evident (yet) in the literatures on Advergaming and their impacts on children and adolescents.

### 3.4 Data collection

The discussion on data collection by virtue of analyzing the chosen Advergames is already presented in section 3.2. In this section, the researcher has discussed the method of primary data collection.

The members of the sample have been chosen after mapping their fitment with the following selection criteria:

- **(a)** The individual should have children or adolescents that are used to playing Advergames.
- **(b)** The individual should have knowledge about Advergames and should have some understanding about their impacts on their children/adolescents.
- **(c)** The individual should be accessible to the researcher over phone or in-person.
- **(d)** The individual should be ready to participate in the research.
- **(e)** The individual should be fluent in speaking English or Farsi (Persian).

The sample size decision in qualitative methodology is not made based on mathematical theories (Sekaran, 2010: p. 296). The criteria that determine a sample size in qualitative studies are: cost and time constraints, population variability, accessibility, extent of desired precision in choosing sample members and risks associated in the level of precision targeted (Sekaran, 2010: p. 296). As a thumb rule, any sample size of 50 to 500 can be suitable for a qualitative research, depending upon these criteria and the research problem (Sekaran, 2010: p. 296). In the view of researcher, a sample size around 50 to 80 is suitable to conduct this research. The level of precision needed in choosing the sample members is not as high as will be expected in conducting studies on advanced technology or management problems. Hence, the risk associated in the fitment criteria chosen above is low. Population variability is also not a concern because the researcher is not studying the impacts on different types of populations (by race, religion, country of origin, or a similar differentiator). The only aspect in which, the researcher needed to be careful is sampling criteria (b). It is not easy to judge an
individual’s level of knowledge about Advergames. However, the key consideration in this study is the impact (especially, negative) on children and adolescents such that the ethical considerations in Advergames can be decided. To reduce any kind of bias or confusion, the researcher has presented a written note on two aspects to each chosen respondent:

(a) The context of this research (what are Advergames and how they can influence a child or adolescents?).
(b) The known impacts of Advergames on children as learned from the literature review.

This note helped the respondent to quickly correlate the research questionnaire with the context, and also compare the impacts from the theory with the actual impacts happening on their children/adolescents. In this way, the accuracy of data collected from the respondents has been increased.

Most of the respondents were surveyed over phone. The pre-survey materials (a note and the questionnaire) were sent to the respondent before conducting the survey. The researcher preferred to talk to each respondent over phone while he/she is answering the questions in the questionnaire. This is because general information on the rationale of their choices could also be captured such that the interpretations can be conducted based on additional information and not just the responses filled in the questionnaire. The interactions were carried out only once because this is a cross-sectional data collection. As described by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 155), data collection method is decided based on the time horizon of the research. A cross-sectional data collection method is chosen for short duration studies and longitudinal data collection methods are chosen for long duration or data comparison studies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 156). This research is a short duration study with only one sample and hence the choice made herewith is cross-sectional data collection. The comparisons are made with the literature review outcomes and not with any other data sets.

3.5 Strategy for validating findings

Validity is a measure of how appropriately the findings fit into the theories investigated/formed in the study (Bryman, 2004: p. 65). In a qualitative research, the validity is analyzed using content validity testing, which is carried out by analyzing how accurately the indicators represent the concepts studied in the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 157-160). The validity of a qualitative research is under threat due to the following problems:

(a) The research problem has not been defined appropriately.
(b) The research is based on false and illogical assumptions.
(c) The research population is not identified accurately.
(d) The sampling is not done accurately.
(e) The data collection is not planned and executed as per the research needs.
(f) The data collection was not ethically conducted.
(g) The data interpretation is erroneous and full of bias.
(h) The conclusions are erroneous and biased, and hence cannot pass the scrutiny of the critics.

Given that the qualitative research is not conducted using scientific methods (applying mathematics and statistics); the researcher has to apply extra efforts in making the conclusions logical, truthful, acceptable, generalized and transferable (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2011: p. 159). Bryman (2004: p. 67) described that one of the methods by which, the validity of data can be tested is by comparing with an already validated data set. In this study, the researcher has compared the primary research data with the outcomes of the literature review to accurately reflect the indicators representing the concepts. For example, the checklist for testing ethical conduct in Advergames has been prepared after intensive literature review and not just downloaded from the Internet or created haphazardly based on some verbal discussions. Hence, the results can be easily compared with the past empirical theories making this study empirical in nature as well. In addition, the researcher has carefully taken care of all the validity threats defined by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 157-160). The university guide on dissertation preparation and the support from supervisor helped a lot in making these aspects error free in this study.
3.6 Data/Result presentation

As described in section 3.2, the researcher has collected two types of data: textual analytics of the chosen Advergames and the numerical data from the primary research. The textual data is reduced to definitive statements that represent the indicators representing the concepts. The numerical data is plotted in bar charts to represent the frequency of responses. The data analysis process has been carried out as per the procedures detailed in the next section.

3.7 Data analysis procedures

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 482) presented the following three steps in qualitative data analysis:
(a) Reduce and sort/codify data.
(b) Classify the data into categories based on meanings expressed in the textual information.
(c) Analyze the concepts by carefully looking at the indicators.

The researcher has analyzed the two sets of data (discussed in section 3.7) using the following steps:
(a) Reduce the textual data into definitive statements and arrange them as per the indicators.
(b) Convert textual data into quantitative numbers using Likert scale and plotting them as bar charts against each question.
(c) Analyzing the concepts in the two data sets separately.
(d) Combining the analysis and comparing with the literature review.
(e) Highlighting the findings that stand out and drawing conclusions.

The primary instrument chosen in this study is the ten point code proposed by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260). This code has been chosen because it helps in investigating the ethical aspects of Advergames from the viewpoint of negative impacts on children. As described in section 1.4 (statement of the problem), the perspective of parents has been chosen to investigate the ethical aspects of Advergames, which is based on their worries about negative effects of Advergaming on their children and adolescents. The ten point code by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) is the only instrument that helps in investigating the ethical aspects of Advergaming from this viewpoint.

In the investigation of the three chosen Advergames, the following levels have been chosen to present the results:
- Clearly evident: 5
- Somewhat evident: 4
- No clarity: 3
- Somewhat lacking: 2
- Clearly lacking: 1

The perspective of parents have been mapped with a five level Likert scale employing the following coding of levels:
- Strongly agree: level 1
- Agree: level 2
- Neither agree nor disagree: level 3
- Disagree: level 4
- Strongly disagree: level 5

3.8 Piloting strategy

Due to lack of time in hand, the researcher did not conduct a pilot.
3.9 Ethical considerations

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2011: p. 185) presented the following code of ethics for conducting a research:

(a) Privacy and confidentiality
(b) No discrimination policy
(c) No forced participation
(d) Informed consent (no deception policy)

The researcher has taken informed consent by presenting the purpose of research and a note on Advergaming and possible impacts on children and adolescents to all participants over E-mail. The participants have been requested to ask queries and get fully satisfied before giving their consent for participation. No discrimination of any type has been carried out during the research. The identity of all participants and the Advergaming companies (owning the Advergames analyzed in this research) have been kept anonymous in this research. Finally, all participants have been requested to withdraw from the research any time if they later decide not to participate. In such cases (if arises) the participants have been committed in writing that all the data collected till the withdrawal will be destroyed from all the media maintained by the researcher.

In addition, the researcher has taken extreme care to comply with the ethical conduct established by the university. Moreover, the researcher has strictly followed a Zero-plagiarism policy.

3.10 Summary of chapter 3

In this chapter, the theories related to conducting a social research have been reviewed with the help of books and journal articles. The resultant design is presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design Attribute</th>
<th>Researcher’s choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Qualitative interpreations of triangulated data (textual and numerical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Judgmental sampling of the purposive category under non-probabilistic sampling theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>Cross-sectional, one-to-one interactions over phone and in-person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>Qualitative (reducing, sorting/coding, categorising, analysing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity testing</td>
<td>Comparing with past empirical results obtained in literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piloting</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Privacy and confidentiality maintained; Informed consent obtained; no discrimination policy; zero plagiarism policy; no forced participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Chapter 4: Presentation and analysis of the secondary and primary data

In this chapter, the secondary and primary data sets collected by the researcher have been analysed. The secondary data comprises of the textual analysis of the Advergames chosen by the researcher and the primary data comprises of the Likert scale outcomes of the responses to the questionnaire answered by the respondents. The interpretations have been carried out individually of both the data sets and have been later combined with the discussion on literature review such that the conclusions can be drawn based on accurate analysis of the indicators representing the concepts under study.

The Likert scale used in this study have the following five levels:

- **Strongly agree**: The respondent has fully agreed with the statement in the question.
- **Agree**: The respondent has partially agreed with the statement in the question.
- **Neither agree nor disagree**: The respondent has neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement in the question.
- **Disagree**: The respondent has partially disagreed with the statement in the question.
- **Strongly disagree**: The respondent has fully disagreed with the statement in the question.

The agree and disagree levels pertain to partial agreement and partial disagreement. A person that has partially agreed has also partially disagreed, and vice versa. However, this does not imply that these levels are the same. This is because the respondent that will choose “agree” will have an agreement mind-set whereas the respondent that will choose “disagree” has a disagreement mind-set. In the next section, the researcher has explained how the empirical results will be analysed.

4.1 Analysis of theoretical and empirical results

The research data has been collected in two sets. In the first set, the data has been collected by self-analysing three chosen Advergames and in the second set; the data has been collected from 78 respondents that responded to the structured questionnaire sent to them. The chosen Advergames have been analysed based on the following criteria of the indicators:

- Clearly evident: 5
- Somewhat evident: 4
- No clarity: 3
- Somewhat lacking: 2
- Clearly lacking: 1

The indicators defined by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) have been used to analyse the Advergames as well as design the questionnaire for the survey. Although, these indicators have been mentioned by other researchers as well, Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) have presented a complete and comprehensive list. The text of the indicators has been slightly modified to make sure that the respondents understand the context clearly.

The responses by the parents have been plotted on the five level Likert scale and mapped with the criteria of indicators established by the researcher for self-interpretations of the three chosen Advergames. Based on the mappings and comparing/contrasting the findings with literature review outcomes, the conclusions have been drawn.
4.2 Secondary research: a review of few chosen in-gaming advertisements

The first Advergame analysed by the researcher comprises a super hero character named after a popular soft drink in the world. The second game analysed is a wrestling game with the main character named after one of the popular burger products sold by a fast food chain. The third game is a car racing game featuring popular names of toy cars manufactured by a leading toy manufacturing company. The researcher has played the games and ranked them as per the criteria defined in section 4.1. The results of the analysis are tabulated as below:

Table 2: Ratings of chosen Advergames as per the criteria defined in section 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Rating as criteria defined in section 4.1</th>
<th>Advergame 1</th>
<th>Advergame 2</th>
<th>Advergame 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The advertisements should be clearly recognisable as targeted towards children and adolescents.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If an Advergame is confused with an online game, then there should be a clear identification that it is an Advergame.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Advergame should not comprise any form of portrayal of violence, adventures and aggression that children/adolescents can mimic in his/her life and cause self-harm or harm to others.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There should not be any horrific or menacing events in the Advergame those may disturb the children psychologically.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Advergame should neither show any form or anti-social activities nor should show the game characters indulged in anti-social behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Any form of negative language, facial expressions, bullying or vindictiveness should be avoided in Advergames targeting children and adolescents.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>All characters shown in Advergames should exhibit good behaviours and manners.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Advergame should not convey any such message that may make the child believe that he/she may be perceived to be inferior by not owning the product.</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Advergames should not show unsafe situations or unsafe usage of the products.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Promotion of unhealthy eating habits, tobacco, smoking or drinking to children should be avoided in the Advergames.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As per the analysis made by the researcher, the three chosen Advergames faired inadequately in most of the ethical indicators in the table. The responses from the 78 parents surveyed are tabulated in the next section.
4.3 Primary research: presentation of survey data

The primary research data collected from the respondents is presented in table 3 below. The definitive statements have been taken from the indicators presented by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260). The respondents were requested to provide their general purview based on all the Advergames that they have experienced. Their purviews have been mapped with the five level Likert scale and the frequencies against each level have been included in the table after totalling. The respondents were also requested to provide a one line justification about their choices. However, this subject is so important for them that many parents wrote whole paragraphs presenting their experiences and viewpoints. Such free text information helped the researcher to make better interpretations of the numerical levels on the Likert scale.

Following is the general information captured about the parents.

Gender:
(a) Males: 47
(b) Females: 31

Age group:
(a) <25 years: 0
(b) 25 to 30 years: 3
(c) 31 to 35 years: 46
(d) 36 to 40 years: 23
(e) Above 40 years: 6

No. of children/adolescents:
(a) One: 52
(b) Two: 26
(c) Three: 0
(d) Above three: 0

The responses to the instrument are presented in the table 3 below. The no. of responses (frequencies) against the five levels of Likert scale are included on the right side of the table. The data presented here is presented as bar charts in the next section and is analysed with respect to researcher’s own experiences with the three chosen Advergames. A discussion on the findings is presented in section 4.5 and finally, a mapping with past research studies is presented in section 4.6.
Table 3: Responses of the parents against the Likert scale levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Response as per the five level Likert scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advergames are clearly recognisable as targeted towards children and adolescents.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If an advertisement is confused with an online game, then there are clear identifications that the games are advertisements.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Advergames do not comprise any form of portrayal of violence, adventures and aggression that children/adolescents can mimic in his/her life and cause self-harm or harm to others.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There are no horrific or menacing events in the Advergames those may disturb the children psychologically.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Advergames neither show any form or anti-social activities nor show the game characters indulged in anti-social behaviour.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Any form of negative language, facial expressions, bullying or vindictiveness is avoided in Advergames.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>All characters shown in Advergames exhibit good behaviours and manners.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Advergames do not convey any such message that may make the child believe that he/she may be perceived to be inferior by not owning the product.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Advergames do not show unsafe situations or unsafe usage of the products.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Advergames do not promote unhealthy eating habits, tobacco, smoking or drinking to children.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Analysis of primary and secondary data

The researcher has first analysed the findings from secondary research (analysis and interpretations of three chosen Advergames) and has mapped the findings with the frequencies recorded at each level of the Likert scale against each indicator. The first indicator is related to whether Advergames are recognisable as targeted towards children and adolescents. In researcher’s own analysis of the three games, the Advergames were easily recognisable as targeted towards children and adolescents. In facts, these games are accessible through online gaming sites that are dedicated to children and adolescents only. These sites do not host Advergames designed for adults. In the researcher’s view, this identification is sufficient. If the children/adolescents deliberately visit adult game sites, it is a different issue not linked with the ethical design of Advergames studied in this dissertation.

The responses from parents have been presented in the bar chart below. A significant majority at least agreed. However, a good number of respondents (16) are on the disagreement side. A few respondents revealed that they have encountered some gaming websites that are not marked as targeting children and adolescents and host adult games through the same interface as well. Some respondents felt that some kind of a disclaimer screen should be added at the beginning of the game, just like the rating declaration (UA, Adult, etc.) found at the beginning of movies. This will ensure that the child or adolescent will know about whether the game is designed for him/her or not when he/she begins playing it. If properly counselled and trained, he/she can decide not to play it. These inputs are worth noting as opportunities for improvements.

![Figure 5: Responses against the first ethical indicator of Advergames](image)

[29]
The researcher had a mixed experience in the three games on the second indicator. The first two games were tagged as advertisements but the third was not, although the researcher could make out that the third one is also an advertisement because the name of the sponsoring company and its logo appeared at the beginning. However, most of the parents strongly feel that the Advergames can be clearly among all online games. First of all, some websites are dedicated to host Advergames only. Secondly, some general sites clearly mark the Advergames separately. Thirdly, in most of the Advergames encountered by the parents, the companies first introduce the product that they are positioning and then begin the game. A few parents (3) recommended that there should be written disclaimers apart from all the visual indicators.

Figure 6: Responses against the second ethical indicator of Advergames
With respect to the third indicator, the researcher found that the third game (car racing) was compliant to this ethical rule to some extent (if the child prefers to follow rules) but the first two games clearly had many adventure and violence scenes that the children and adolescents can mimic in reality. The car racing game had options to follow traffic rules (like red lights, traffic signs and traffic cops) but the other two games clearly lacked any form of control on action and adventure. The parents also largely disagree that the Advergames do not comprise violence, aggression and adventures. However, the parents also revealed that the Advergames are still much better than the high action PS2, PS3 and WII online commercial games that comprise intense violence and aggression. The intensity of violence and aggression is much lower in Advergames than such games, but because they are present, majority of respondents disagreed to this statement. The five parents that agreed noted that many Advergames are very interesting educational games. If companies prefer to promote more of them, they can get immense support from parents.

**Figure 7: Responses against the third ethical indicator of Advergames**
With respect to the fourth indicator, the researcher found that the superhero and racing games were compliant but the wrestling game had some menacing moments that may disturb children. There was some blood displayed in a few events which, in researcher’s view may affect children psychologically. A good majority (51+3) disagreed about this compliance of Advergames. However, a reasonable number of parents (2+21) agreed as well (please see the chart below).

![Figure 8: Responses against the fourth ethical indicator of Advergames](image)

**Figure 8: Responses against the fourth ethical indicator of Advergames**

The reason cited is that the Advergames are not as graphic as commercial games, barring a few. Advergames are free offerings and hence the companies do not spend money in creating complex and horrifying graphical scenes that may disturb children. However, a few games may be having such events. For example, displaying of blood and body wounds/deformation as a result of aggression and violence are unacceptable even if they have been created using low profile graphics. Some games are very menacing in spite of using low profile graphics. One of the parents mentioned about a game named “the house of the dead”. It is a low graphics game was so horrific that even adults may keep away from it. Another parent mentioned about doom, doom 2 and doom 3 games. Other such games mentioned by the parents are: Nazi zombies, dawn of the dead, the hunted, alone in the dark, the thing and return to castle Wildenstein. They cited these games to justify that Advergames are nowhere near to such games when rated against this ethical parameter. Hence, a reasonable majority (23) felt that if Advergames help in keeping the children and adolescents away from such horrifying games, they are preferred even in their current form.
The responses to the next three indicators (fifth in figure 9, sixth in figure 10 and seventh in figure 11) are on the same lines. The researcher had mixed experiences from the three chosen games as indicated in table 2. The parents also felt that Advergames cannot be perceived as compliant to these ethical indicators but are far better than many commercial, low to high graphic, violent action and horror games.

**Figure 9:** Responses against the fifth ethical indicator of Advergames

**Figure 10:** Responses against the sixth ethical indicator of Advergames

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The Advergames neither show any form or anti-social activities nor show the game characters indulged in anti-social behaviour.
Figure 11: Responses against the seventh ethical indicator of Advergames

The parents felt that companies need to show a little more responsibility and bring the games closer to compliance with these ethical indicators. But in their current form as well, the Advergames are more preferred over the commercial online games. If the parents keep a close vigilance on the gaming habits of the children, and spend some time in choosing the Advergames for their children (like what a reasonable majority of parents in this sample do), the probability of harms can be reduced considerably.
The eighth indicator is a bit tricky to evaluate. If a child loves a gaming character, he/she will try to imitate it. If the character is linked with a product, he/she will like to adopt the product, and will feel dissatisfied or inferior if not owning the product in competition with friends that already own it. From this perspective, every game popular among children will be non-compliant with this ethical indicator. Hence, the researcher has taken a divergent view. He has measured the compliance by observing if the companies have made a tangible effort to instigate this feeling in the players (some kind of a guilt invoking through advertising). The researcher didn’t find such an attempt and hence rated the Advergames as compliant. The parents have, however, given mixed responses. One group (16 + 26) gave a thumbs up while the other group (25 + 11) gave a thumbs down. Hence, it appears that the responses have been based on how the parents judged the question. Some parents believe that advertisers did not deliberately try to push such a belief whereas other parents believe that they do so by designing the storyline of the game with such a purpose in mind. From their perspective, creating a passion for a product and guilt for not owning it are two key emotions that Advergame designers appear to be targeting in children and adolescents. This is a very important learning point for this study.

The Advergames do not convey any such message that may make the child believe that he/she may be perceived to be inferior by not owning the product.

![Figure 12: Responses against the eighth ethical indicator of Advergames](image-url)

[35]
The responses to the ninth indicator is similar to the responses to third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh indicators. The researcher’s own experience with the three Advergames was not positive. The games exhibit or allow many unsafe situations, like jumping from significant heights, fighting with great aggression and rash driving. However, it may again be perceived that these games are still far better than the commercial online games. Majority of the parents also revealed the same reflection from their experiences.

**Figure 13: Responses against the ninth ethical indicator of Advergames**

The Advergames do not show unsafe situations or unsafe usage of the products.
The last indicator is related to unhealthy habits promoted by the Advergames (figure 14). This question could have been divided into three indicators – junk food, smoking and drinking. However, the keyword in this indicator is “unhealthy” and hence they have been clubbed in the same question. In the three Advergames experienced by the researcher, it was found that the first game was low on compliance (it was not clear what the superhero was chewing, although he was shown to attain powers after consuming the soft drink), in the second game it was low again (the wrestler was shown as consuming junk food during breaks) and in the third game it was not applicable. The parents overall disagreed that the Advergames are compliant against this indicator.

![The Advergames do not promote unhealthy eating habits, tobacco, smoking or drinking to children.](image)

Figure 14: Responses against the tenth ethical indicator of Advergames

### 4.5 Discussion on the findings

In the previous section, the researcher mapped the responses by the parents with his own experiences with the three Advergames that was shortlisted. Overall, it is evident that Advergaming lacks compliance with eight out of ten ethical indicators tested in this research. First of all, the parents highly appreciated the ethical indicators listed in the questionnaire. They stated that they will use these indicators in future as well to judge the Advergames before short-listing them for their children. The researcher had requested for only one sentence to justify their choices against the indicators. However, given that this subject is so important for them, many respondents have written complete paragraphs to express their views.

One aspect has come out very clearly. The extent of non-compliance of the Advergames against the ethical indicators is not alarming, although it is definitely worrisome. Advergames are still much better than the commercial online games made available on PS2, PS3, WII and Xbox platforms. In fact it appears that the companies do not know much about how their Advergames have fared among the children and adolescents, and also their parents. Many parents have expressed that they will prefer Advergames over commercial online games. They have also expressed that some non-violent and educational games are much more interesting than their violent counterparts.

Hence, there are two major recommendations. First, the companies should conduct a market research and find out what type of games are most preferred by the parents such that they can design the games
as per their choices. Second, the parents should give as many inputs to such surveys as feasible such that the companies get complete information. This will ensure that the companies will get maximum support from the parents, and both sides will gain what they want.

On the contrary, there may be some products about which, parents don’t want their children to know. To facilitate this control, it is recommended that the parents should closely administer the online Advergaming choices made by the children. As observed by the researcher in the process of short listing the three games, there are hundreds of Advergames around on many websites and hence, activism and legal controls may never work completely. Moreover, many games may be from cross-border sources that cannot be controlled by the government. Hence, it is better to use a simple software to control the permissions to specific gaming URLs only. One software that the researcher knows about is Kaspersky. It has a parental control feature to include only permissible websites for the children, and is password protected.

4.6 Previous research

In this section, the researcher has mapped the findings with relevant literatures reviewed in chapter 2. Mapping the findings of this study against the model by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 810), the Advergames fair high on the ethical parameters pertaining to obtrusiveness and disguise. This is because the primary and secondary research reflected no intention by the promotional companies to hide anything from the gamers. The parents stated that the Advergames can be identified as advertisements and the researcher’s own experience confirmed this perspective. Also, Advergames do not cause any obtrusiveness given that they launch only when children want to play. Hence, Advergames are compliant with the ethics model by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 810). However, when the primary and secondary data is compared with the ethical model of Ahmed and Ali (2009: p. 9-10), Advergames fare poorly in the way they target vulnerable section of the society (in this case, children and adolescents). The eight ethical issues highlighted by Ahmed and Ali (2009: p. 11-15) (discussed in sub-section 2.1.2) related to digital advertising for children have been confirmed in this study.

While the Advergames do not possess disguise and obtrusiveness, they definitely are deceptive, which is the third ethical parameter described by Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1998: p. 806-809). The products hidden behind gaming characters and events is a form of deception to children and adolescents. Another unethical aspect of Advergames is its influence on first order wants of children and adolescents. This is another form of deception because linking an ordinary soft drink with a superhero and an ordinary burger with a powerful wrestler is unethical. A child may perceive that the burger product or the soft drink will result in enormous powers in them, which is definitely a high level of deception. These are comparable to the issue of masked marketing strategy (Mizerkski, 2009: p. 3) and the issue of widening the needs of children through image marketing stated by (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 84). Influenced by an advertisement and with the desire to compete with friends, the needs of children and the resulting budgets of the parents have increased manifold (Gregg and Gordon, 2000: p. 85-89). The products are very smartly linked with the desires of children and adolescents by the promoters. Montgomery and Chester (2009: p. S24) described that children mostly make instant decisions during a high arousal state while playing a game. This is the reason why the Advergaming companies include stunts, violence and adventures in their offerings. Unfortunately, there is no firm legal and regulatory system that can control this. Kennett and Matthews (2007: p. 3), Fine (2007: p. 14), Harris, Speers, Schwartz and Brownell (2011: p. 2) and Calvert (2008: p. 208) confirmed the deceptive practices found in Advergames to deliberately attempt to link a brand with the emotions, arousals and stimuli of children. This has instigated negative behavioural aspects and harmful habits among children. The 10-point ethical model by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) encompassed all these issues and hence was chosen to design the instrument for secondary and primary research in this dissertation.

Geraci (2004: p. 2-3) found that instant decision-making by children and adolescents is at the best when they are unsupervised, unstructured, intolerant, pestering others and independent thinkers/decision makers. However, if parents ensure that they effectively supervise and guide their children, they can be saved from product promotions targeting their arousal state. The studies by Kim and McClung (2009: p. 266), Islam (2005: p. 8), D’ Andrade (2007: p. 9), Winkler and Buckner (2006: [38]
p. 24), Ho and Yang (2008: p. 523), Ho, Yang and Lin (2011: p. 10117), van Reijmersdal, Jansz, Peters and van Noort (2010: p. 1787) and Okazaki and Yague (2012: p. 81-82) have clearly established the factors that prove that Advergames have been very successful among children. Hence, Advergaming is here to stay. In this study, it is found that majority of the parents have avoided taking extreme negative side for Advergames because they have compared them with commercial (paid) online games. However, they can become worse if the companies do not gain an understanding of these issues and create harmless Advergames. Lewis (2010: p. 105) highlighted the need for education and mental development online games for children. If companies create Advergames with such objectives, they can win the confidence of parents and hence promote their products in better ways. However, the products should be harmless and should be useful to children. For example, promotion of toys through education Advergames is a good idea but companies should not promote junk foods. Hence, the parents need to be cautious while choosing the Advergames for their children and adolescents.

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter is dedicated to organising and presenting the secondary and primary data, presenting the results, making interpretations of the results and comparing them with the literature review outcomes. The researcher has chosen three Advergames to experience them and analyse their ethical compliance with the ten point criteria defined by Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260). The first game comprised a superhero named after a popular soft drink, the second game comprised a wrestler named after a popular burger product and the third game was a car racing game featuring a popular toy model. The findings by the researcher and the responses by 78 parents interviewed using the instrument based on ten point scale were compared. The results are similar, and match with the literature review quite closely. The ethical levels of Advergames are definitely not satisfactory but they are not as bad as commercial online games. Hence, there is an opportunity for improvement that the genuine companies should tap by conducting a similar research among large number of parents. They can prefer to make their Advergames as online interactive tools for mental and personality development of children. They can focus on making their Advergames more and more interesting, keeping this objective in mind. If they succeed, they can gain enormous support from the parents. In this sample, the parents do not want to shy away from Advergames, but want improvements in them.
5 Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, the researcher has presented the conclusions and recommendations that have evolved from the study. The conclusions have been presented as the brief answers to the research questions.

5.1 Conclusions

The following research questions were formulated at the beginning of the research:

(a) What are Advergames and why are they getting popular?
(b) What are the ethical challenges in Advergames pertaining to children and adolescents?
(c) What ethical considerations are needed in designing and promoting Advergames for children and adolescents?
(d) What are the roles and responsibilities of parents in understanding the impacts of Advergames on children and adolescents, taking appropriate steps for minimising the impacts, and spreading the knowledge in the society about Advergames, their impacts and controlling actions to minimise the impacts?

The findings against the questions are presented herewith, as an outcome of literature review, secondary research and primary research. Advergames are new form of advertisements in which, the products are positioned within games offered online to children and adolescents. The products are positioned in the events of the game, in the game scenes and on the bodies of the characters. Advergames are getting popular among children and adolescents because of their characters, thrills and storyline, which are getting popular among their players. The children and adolescents possess high brand recalls, especially from the interesting scenes of the games. The companies manufacturing products for children and adolescents are using Advergaming as one of the most preferred media given its desirable effects on children from their perspective. However, this has raised certain ethical challenges for the parents. There are many companies that are using deception as the strategy to promote their products. They are targeting the emotions, arousals and stimuli of children to boost their sales. The children are given false views about the products by attaching them with superheroes or highly powerful characters. For example, as found by the researcher while reviewing three chosen popular Advergames, a popular soft drink was positioned as a stimuli enhancer of a superhero and a popular burger product was shown as source of power of a strong wrestler. In addition, a toy car brand positioned its products in a car racing game with amazing abilities. The children may get highly influenced by such products, especially during high arousal states and hence force their parents to make purchasing decisions. Moreover, it is also found that Advergames possess violence, poor behaviours and activities that children may imitate in their real lives causing self-harm and harm to others.

The companies promoting Advergaming need to improve their ethical considerations in designing the Advergames. Eagle and De Bruin (2001: p. 260) proposed ten point ethical compliance checklist for digital advertising to children. These points have been tested in this study in the context of Advergames. The researcher has used these ten points to frame the research instrument and used it in the secondary as well as primary research. It was found that the Advergames experienced by the researcher and the ones encountered by the parents that responded to the questionnaire didn’t fare well against eight out of ten points. These points definitely need to be considered by the companies promoting products through Advergames. For ready reference of the readers, the ten ethical enhancement points are reproduced below:

(a) The advertisements should be clearly recognisable in the Advergames.
(b) There should be clear differentiation of Advergames from other forms of online games.
(c) There should not be any violence or aggression in the Advergames.
(d) There should not be any horrific and menacing events in the Advergames.
(e) The Advergames should neither show anti-social activities, nor show a character indulged in such activities.
(f) There should not be any negative language, facial expressions, bullying or vindictiveness in the Advergames.
(g) The characters of the game should exhibit good behaviours.
(h) The Advergames should not make the children and adolescents feel inferior by not owning the products promoted in them.
(i) The Advergames should not show unsafe situations and unsafe usage of products.

(j) The Advergames should not promote unhealthy eating habits, tobacco, smoking or drinking.

The parents felt that due to high demands and pressures of urban life, they are unable to give adequate time to their children and adolescents. Hence, online media is essential to fulfil the education, development and entertainment needs of the children. Games are essential for children and adolescents provided they are ethical. The parents felt that Advergames are still better than their commercial counterparts because of low intensity violence and lower level of graphics. However, they can get worse if the companies do not act on time. It is important that parents should choose the Advergames very carefully and permit their links in the computers used by their children and adolescents. All other links should be blocked. This can be easily achieved by using some of the modern low cost software tools (like Kaspersky). In addition, parents should actively get involved in surveys launched by companies promoting Advergames, and provide feedback on what they need for their children and adolescents. Taking the route of activism and law enforcements may yield results only within the country whereas Advergaming is today a global phenomenon. There may be many cross border Advergames for which, the parents cannot take such routes unless the government decides to block them through appropriate regulations. The best way is to use link filters on the computers used by children/adolescents and spread the word among other parents about this ethical challenge in Advergaming and encourage them to actively persuade companies (through surveys, their blogs or other feedback channels used by them). If a large number of parents persuade the targeted companies to take a note of their needs and make Advergames accordingly, this problem can be solved to some extent. For example, the parents can persuade the targeted companies to make educative and child development Advergames. In this way, the companies can also team up with parents and get better response to their Advergames. However, parents should strictly avoid the companies that promote unhealthy and harmful products even if they make such Advergames.

5.2 Implementation for informatics

The researcher wants to spread this knowledge for the benefit of the society. In this context, he intends to respond to call for papers in journals and position a shorter version of this research for acceptance. Moreover, the researcher also wants to share the entire dissertation with the world through shared databases (like Proquest) and the university website. If given a chance, the researcher would like to present these findings in conference proceedings for the benefit of the society. This is a sensitive social issue and hence the researcher will make use of formal academic channels to share the knowledge with as many people possible. It is sure that this dissertation will invoke at least a basic awareness among parents about Advergaming, its ethical issues and the possible actions that the parents can take.

The ten point code tested in the research can be improved further by including quantitative scales and defining the thresholds of compliance for each item on the code. Currently, all items are measured with only two levels: yes and no. It is hereby recommended that the code can be refined to measure an Advergame on a scale with finite number of levels. For example, for measuring the behaviours of characters in an Advergame there may be a five level scale rating the behaviours from level 1 for good behaviour to level 5 for extremely bad behaviours. Inclusion of such scales can result in a more objective analysis of the ethical compliance of an Advergame. In addition, it is also recommended that the items can be made more observable by defining indicators. For example, a good behaviour can be observed using relevant indicators, like – good language, courtesy, and respect.

This study has been focussed on children and adolescents, because they are more exposed to Advergames and are highly vulnerable if not supervised adequately. However, this does not mean that adults are not vulnerable to negative attributes of an Advergame. There are certain ethical issues those can affect adults as well. Examples are: junk food eating habits, smoking, substance abuse, use of negative language, and bullying.
5.3 Recommendations

The key recommendations that have come out of this study are the following:
(a) Advergaming is an effective media for advertisement and hence it is going to stay. The companies and the parents should come closer to make it more useful and effective for children and adolescents.
(b) Countering Advergaming through activism and legal routes may not be effective because it has a global presence.
(c) Parents should take some time out and make recommendations to Advergaming companies.
(d) Parents should choose the links of Advergames very carefully after reading their reviews and if possible, by playing them.
(e) The parents should closely administer the Advergaming habits of their children and adolescents. Only chosen links of Advergames should be allowed on the computers of children and adolescents. Other links should be blocked.
(f) The parents should come forward and spread this knowledge among their friends and colleagues such that more and more parents in the society are aware about this challenge.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Studies

This study comprises a secondary as well as a primary research. However, the sample sizes of three games and 78 parents are very small to represent the entire population. The researcher had time constraints and hence such small sample sizes were chosen. However, this study should be conducted further on much larger scales (say, 50 to 100 games and 250 to 500 parents). Such sizes will be suitable to conduct quantitative studies and return more scientific results. It is also important to sample children and adolescents to capture their perspective about Advergames. This is essential to know why they like Advergames and what are their needs and wants.

5.5 Summary of Chapter 5

The researcher has finally concluded this study in this chapter. All research questions have been revisited such that the findings and discussion in chapter 4 can be mapped with the research questions to verify if they have been answered satisfactorily. A brief discussion is presented against the concept studied in each research question of this study. The researcher is satisfied with this study but wants to do more in this area. Hence, he has made suggestions for future studies using much larger sample sizes. The recommendations evolved from this research have been highlighted separately for the benefit of the readers.
6 Chapter 6: Personal Reflections

In this chapter, the researcher has presented the personal development plan based on Henry and Mumford learning cycle. This dissertation is one of the initial steps taken by the researcher in finding the solutions to a problem employing a suitable research design. This experience has helped the researcher in learning about how an organized project of data collection and analysis can be executed and how the answers to a problem can be discovered. Mapping this experience with Henry and Mumford learning cycle, the researcher has realized that the first level of an activist. Poon, Stevens and Gannon (2000: p. 75-84) described the learning cycle designed by Henry and Mumford, as shown in the figure 15 below.

Henry and Mumford learning cycle is a model showing four levels of maturity that a learner gains throughout his/her learning cycle. The first level is of an activist, who becomes highly enthusiastic to make positive contributions to his/her job or profession after learning a subject. Such an individual is very much open-minded and is ready to take all advices, avail experiences and study the subject further with an objective to gain specialization. The activist wants to learn more and more through active experimentation. An activist, however, has the disadvantage of doing things in haste and loses interest quickly if the initial interests are not positive. (Stevens and Gannon, 2000: p. 76-77)

After achieving concrete experience in the field, the learner becomes a reflector. The learner becomes thoughtful, methodical and careful. He/she takes decisions after very careful thoughts, after going through data collected from multiple attempts. The maturity grows further after the learner carries out a critical review of his/her experience in the field and makes reflective observations. At the third level of maturity, the leader becomes a theorist. The learner becomes highly focused, disciplined, objective oriented, rational and logical in his/her approach to making decisions. The highest level of maturity is gained after the individual develops the skill of abstract conceptualization. At this level, the learner is a pragmatist who is very realistic and practical and is focused on the tasks. (Stevens and Gannon, 2000: p. 77-84)
At the current level (activist), the researcher has carried out a short research on a small sample and conducted cross-sectional data collection. The efforts have returned certain conclusions that appear to be logical and implementable. However, the researcher has realized after mapping with Henry and Mumford learning cycle that this is only a beginning. The next level of the researcher will be that of a reflector, which will be gained after some concrete experience (say, five years). At this level, researcher will be matured enough not to draw conclusions based on a single research effort. The researcher will trust more on longitudinal data collection and by enhancing the reliability of results by repeating the primary data collection in multiple research settings. Alternatively, the researcher will collect perspectives drawn from multiple research efforts. In this way, the researcher will be methodical and thoughtful, and will trust reliable data for making decisions. After gaining more experience (say, ten years), the researcher will gain the level of a theorist if he can compare the research outcomes from various sources and match with self-experience. This is the level at which, the researcher will be able to draw comparisons and contrasts between self-experience through a number of research studies versus perspectives of other researchers. The researcher will be able to evolve near accurate theories using his already enhanced hermeneutical skills. At the level of a pragmatist (say, after 15 years), the researcher would have gained significant insight into what works and what doesn’t, and the tools and techniques that return most reliable results for decision-making. The researcher will become very practical at this level and will gain skills to derive reliable results from a project.

Hence, in researcher’s view the science of research is the path to achieve maturity through a learning cycle. At this stage, the researcher has experience of conducting one research. The researcher is targeting to reach the level of a pragmatist when he would have experienced hundreds of research studies and learnt how the results can be guaranteed to a good extent based on outcomes of most reliable and valid studies. The researcher will become very methodical, wise, patient, task and result oriented, objective oriented and highly disciplined in his approach towards his profession. Research will be used as one of the key methods to derive useful decisions throughout the career of the researcher.
7 References:


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University of Borås is a modern university in the city center. We give courses in business administration and informatics, library and information science, fashion and textiles, behavioral sciences and teacher education, engineering and health sciences.

In the School of Business and IT (HIT), we have focused on the students' future needs. Therefore we have created programs in which employability is a key word. Subject integration and contextualization are other important concepts. The department has a closeness, both between students and teachers as well as between industry and education.

Our courses in business administration give students the opportunity to learn more about different businesses and governments and how governance and organization of these activities take place. They may also learn about society development and organizations' adaptation to the outside world. They have the opportunity to improve their ability to analyze, develop and control activities, whether they want to engage in auditing, management or marketing.

Among our IT courses, there's always something for those who want to design the future of IT-based communications, analyze the needs and demands on organizations' information to design their content structures, integrating IT and business development, developing their ability to analyze and design business processes or focus on programming and development of good use of IT in enterprises and organizations.

The research in the school is well recognized and oriented towards professionalism as well as design and development. The overall research profile is Business-IT-Services which combine knowledge and skills in informatics as well as in business administration. The research is profession-oriented, which is reflected in the research, in many cases conducted on action research-based grounds, with businesses and government organizations at local, national and international arenas. The research design and professional orientation is manifested also in InnovationLab, which is the department’s and university’s unit for research-supporting system development.