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ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARDS DIGITAL GAME AND EFFECTS OF ADVERGAME CONTENTS ON SCHOOL CHILDREN: SAMPLE OF ERCIYES UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Advergame has been one of the new advertisement channels for digital games of which effect has been increasing in our lives day by day. Trademarks prepare their games with theme in this channel or position their brands into the current games according to the scenarios. Considering school children, an important target group in terms of advertisement, are customers who have an effect on purchasing decision, digital games and advergame channels are a way used to reach and affect them. Negative influences on children are definitely one of the most important and the most emphasized effects for which it is highly important for parents to comprehend effects of contents of advertisements on the children. This study has been carried out to evaluate attitudes of parents towards digital games and their understanding concerning effects of advergame contents on school children. Parents who are Academicians at Erciyes University (ERU) have been chosen as sample and data has been obtained accordingly. It is considered that this study would show how to reduce possible harmful influences and use it an useful way and it would provide data on perception of parents on digital games and advergame.

Keywords: Digital Game, Advergame, Parents, Advertisement, School Children, Academicians.

Introduction

In today's world where the child's economic power comes to the fore and constitutes an important market, the effect of advertising on children is a known fact. Negative attitudes towards traditional advertising, changes in technology and marketing have been effective in the emergence of different advertising methods. Advergame applications that reach the target audience through digital games which is one of the environments preferred by consumers to have fun is one of these methods. It is seen that the advergame applications also target children consumers. This situation is of interest to parents who have a significant impact on the development of children and leads the academicians to make studies on this topic.

This study has been carried out to measure the attitudes of parents towards the effects of digital games and game applications and to examine the measures taken against their potential harm to children. In the research, academician parents of Erciyes University were taken as sample and their opinions with this regard were given place.

Concepts of Digital Game and Advergame

In the first meaning given by Grand Turkish Dictionary of Turkish Language Association; *game means*: fun with certain roles that develops skills and mind and makes people have a great time, *digital means*: displaying data electronically on a screen (www.tdk.gov.tr). The definition generally used in Turkey is

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computer games. Digital games are the culture industry, where investments are made in today's world more than the film industry and a significant amount of revenue is obtained (Binark et al. 2008, 58). Today's technological developments have changed the understanding of games. It can be played with a competitor through computer or someone who is miles away on the internet (Aktas et al. 2010, 654). The difference between digital games and traditional games is the integration of new media features with the game (Binark et al. 2008, 42-45). The fact that such interactive games as World of Warcraft have widespread Facebook groups and that players share their pictures and information about their real lives over these groups can be an example to this. In these channels, social interactions take place in a game (Kara, 2014, 52).

Advertisement means; Ensuring the establishment of attitudes and behaviors on a pre-determined target group as desired through a business, an idea, a product or a service by using the control of mass media against money. (Guruz, 1999, 20). No matter which media is used in the advertisement, there is a flow of communication from the producer to the consumer (Kocabas et al. 1999, 17). Advergame means applying advertisement in games. Brands prepare their own themed games or place their own brands in games according to the scenario. This new advertising channel has become a big sector in a short time (Kaya, 2010, 145). Advergame, which means placement of visual elements and marketing communication messages of various brands in computer and video games, constitutes a suitable environment for the understanding of postmodern marketing communication of this new era (Ozkaya, 2010, 467). Adding brand to games, which is one of the forms of message transfer in the advergame, is similar to product placement from traditional advertising applications. Another message transfer format is the preparation of games for brands. The company can be reached through its own website. Detailed information about the products is provided during the game (Gun, 2006, 243-244).

The Effect of Digital Game and Advergame on Children

The debates made on this effect within the scope of traditional media texts have been carried to the new media text regardless of the specific characteristics of digital game play, and both the political will and the mainstream media consider digital games negative as they mostly contain violence, they also consider game play negative under the title of computer games addiction (Binark et al. 2008, 206). Even though it may seem fun, many computer games, especially the ones containing violence, are thought to threaten children. Many families cannot keep their children away from computers despite the opening of schools and they complain that they cannot get any result despite all kinds of sanction applied at home, and some others ask for professional help from experts (Iscibasi, 2011, 123). Children often play their games with their computer or virtual opponents on the internet rather than playing with their friends outside (Aktas et al. 2010, 654). For this reason, children's game preferences play an important role in their development. Together with the changing life, children's games and toys are affected by this change. It is thought that mothers have a significant effect in children's game preferences, besides the adults around them (Toran et al. 2016, 2266). Nowadays, middle class is getting crowded, mass culture leads people to material possessions and potential customer group gets extended, as a result consumerism is no longer a factor that affects only the upper classes. Not only the upper classes, but also middle classes, women, men, and even children who have no economic freedom have become the customers of consumption civilization. Awaking consumption desires of individuals, media and modern advertising are effective in the formation of this situation (Aydogan, 2015, 64-65).

The advertisement effect that can be effective for all children is not possible. The mechanism of action varies not only by the age of the child, but also by many factors such as the conditions under which the message is transmitted, the type of product and interest of the child. The results of the advertisement depend on the way the child receives the message. This depends on what they want to perceive and how much they can perceive (Kapferer, 1991, 8). However, together with the significant increase in the number of games, only the websites of the advergame have emerged. In this way, fanatics of some advergames came out. Most of the games are designed to be played free of charge; but some brands make paid distribution (Kaya 2010, 145-146). Broadcast of advergame is limited to the screen of the computer, mobile phone, portable game systems (Gun, 2006, 241). In the process of creating an advergame, such applications as adding a song to the music of a popular game, adding logos of consumer goods to billboards, posters, soda boxes and so on. are used. In some cases, the interface of the same game world is changed to show different ads at different times (Walker, 2010, 121-122).

According to the survey results of a study Aktas et al. (2010) conducted in the province of Konya, on a sample group of 65 literate children studying 3rd and 8th grades who can use computer and internet; the



advergame which is a tool used by brands to increase entertainment and brand awareness, has reached its goal on children. It has been determined that children remember the brands pointed out by the game and develop a positive attitude towards them. Moreover, children are aware that the game contains an advertising purpose. In addition, the tendency of children to want to consume the product and to ask their families to buy this product shows that the new tool used by the brand achieves its function and serves the purpose of advertising.

Parent-Child Relationship

It is possible to see child-dominant family structures after patriarchal and matriarchal families. In this area where the child has economic power, the effects of the advertisements on them have started to be examined (Kapferer, 1991, 8). After the family, the school is the first basic socialization institution of the child. The child also has difficulty in adapting to school, if they are not inclined to communal life, studying and games as a result of the wrong attitude, the family (Yavuzer, 2015, 159).

Instead of trying to stereotype their children in line with their own wishes, mothers and fathers should strive to find a way out in line with the child's wishes. A good communication system starts by getting to know and understand the child very well. A parent who does not get to know and understand their children, is unable to have a successful dialogue and communication and has continual problems with them (Ertugrul, 2002, 51). The child finds peace and love in a warm, caring and consistent family environment. They learn to be self-sufficient, self-satisfied, and to respect themselves. Being self-confident enables children to have confidence in their environment. If the parents support children's attempts to discover and recognize the outside world, and encourage the child to be independent, the child will enjoy the pleasure of being self-sufficient (Yavuzer, 2015, 161-162). It is necessary to be a positive parent and provide effective discipline. In order for the discipline to be effective, parents need to be clear and ensure that children fully understand what is supposed from them. Even if the parents think differently about raising children, they should give their ideas to the child in a unified structure. Consistency is the key point and there can be a group of rules in every house (Green, 2011, 106-107).

In a study conducted with parents living in the province of Afyonkarahisar (Karaca et al. 2007), 150 families were interviewed by face-to-face interview method, and 105 families who gave sufficient answers to the questions asked to determine how much their children get affected from advertisements, were evaluated. The majority of parents are of the idea that advertisements affect children's imagination, creativity and consumption patterns adversely, turn their children into wasters and cause them to have wrong feeding habits. Furthermore, they think that advertising content affects children's perception, psychological development adversely and causes them to have speech disorder. Again, most of parents think that advertisements lead children to buy unnecessary products, cause them to be aggressive, brutal, offensive, causes brand addiction in children, and encourages children to buy the product they see. Furthermore, most parents do not consider advertisements' contents ethically appropriate.

According to the study conducted in 2009 where 493 academicians parents were targeted among 1873 academicians with children aged between 6 and 12 working at the Erciyes University (Akdag et al.), which reached 61 participants who provided feedback to the e-survey through e-mail and which focused on restrictions to be imposed by parents on children for the internet use; 75.41% of them stated that they are aware of the websites that their children enter and 85.25% of them impose restrictions on their children's internet usage and 14.75% of them have not imposed any restrictions. Reasons why parents restrict internet use: 72.13% is that internet has a negative impact on the child, and 39.34% is that children can enter harmful sites. Methods of restricting internet use: While 59.02% is that children are allowed to use the Internet at certain times, 49.18% is to inform children accordingly. Reasons for not restricting internet use; 11.48% is that they don't think children will be affected adversely and with the same rate it has been stated that they don't think children will enter the harmful websites.

Purpose and Method

The purpose of this study is to measure the attitudes of parents about digital games and their perception of the effects of advergame content on school-age children. In the research, where electronic survey method was used, previous studies (Akdag et al. 2009, Karaca et al. 2007, Aktas et al. 2010) were also used to develop the questionnaire, and a group of 30 people were subjected to a pre-test and the parts to cause misunderstandings were revised. After that, The Cronbach's Alpha value of the questionnaire was examined and the rate of 0,768 was found appropriate for the continuation of the study. The population of



the study consisted of 2212 Erciyes University academic staff and 493 academicians with children at the age of school age were reached through e-mail and they were asked to answer the questionnaire and 57 participants gave feedback.

Findings and Evaluation

Table 1: Gender

Options	Number	Percentage
Female	32	56.14%
Male	25	43.86%

Among 57 participants of the survey, 56% is female and 44% is male.

Table 2: Title

Options	Number	Percentage
Professor	12	21.05%
Associate Professor	12	21.05%
Dr. Lecturer	11	19.30%
Teaching Assistant	15	26.32%
Research Associate	4	7.02%
Instructor	0	0.00%
Other	3	5.26%

21% of the participants is Professor, 21% is Associate Professor, 19% is Dr. Lecturer, 26% is Teaching Assistant Associate.

Table 3: Child plays any "Digital Game"(telephone,tablet pc,computer,game console, etc.)

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	53	92.98%
Do not know	1	1.75%
No	3	5.26%

According to the statements of the respondents, children play digital games according to 93%. Only one person does not know the child's relationship with digital games.

Table 4: Being aware of the digital games played by the child

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	18	31.58%
Agree	25	43.86%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	5	8.77%
Disagree	4	7.02%
Strongly Disagree	3	5.26%

Only 32% of parents are strongly sure what games their children play. 44% knows the content of games, and 12% does not have information about the games their children play.

Table 5: Restricting digital games played by the child

Options	Number	Percentage
Yes	43	%75.44
Indecisive	4	%7.02
No	10	%17.54



75% of the parents states that they restrict their children's digital games, while 18% does not impose any restriction.

Table 6: Reasons not to restrict digital games played by the child

Options	Number	Percentage
I find relevant laws adequate	0	%0.00
I think the relevant laws are applied	0	%0.00
I don't think they affect my child adversely	9	15.79%
I don't think my child plays harmful games	7	12.28%
Other	3	5.26%

Considering the opinions of parents who do not restrict the games played by their children, 16% thinks games are unharmed. 12% of the parents states that their children do not play games to harm themselves and that their children behave consciously about digital games.

Table 7: Reasons to restrict the games played by the child

Options	Number	Percentage
I do not find relevant laws adequate	5	8.77%
I do not think the relevant laws are applied	4	7.02%
I think they affect my child adversely	37	64.91%
I think my child plays harmful games	13	22.81%
Other	1	1.75%

The reasons for the restriction of digital games are mostly about the fact that children are affected adversely. One important reason for the restriction of games is the lack of laws with this regard. 7% of parents think that children are not protected by laws.

Table 8: Methods to restrict digital games

Options	Number	Percentage
I let them use it in at certain times	30	52.63%
I use protective software/program	7	12.28%
I inform them accordingly	21	36.84%
Others	1	1.75%

Games are mostly restricted by giving time limits. Parents stating that they provide auto-control with the method of informing their children against the harms of games takes the 2nd rank. Imposing restriction through software/programming takes the 3rd rank.

Table 9: Advertisements in games affect consumption patterns of children adversely

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	31	54.39%
Agree	23	40.35%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2	3.51%
Disagree	1	1.75%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

95% of parents are of the opinion that the advertisements in games affect consumption patterns of children adversely.



Table 10: Advertisements in games turn children into wasters

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	47.37%
Agree	22	38.60%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	6	10.53%
Disagree	2	3.51%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

86% of parents think that the advertisements in games turn children into wasters.

Table 11: Advertisements in games tempt children into malnutrition

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	40.35%
Agree	32	56.14%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1	1.75%
Disagree	1	1.75%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

According to 96% of parents, the advertisements in games tempt children into malnutrition.

Table 12: Advertisements in games destroy perception process of children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	42.11%
Agree	18	31.58%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14	24.56%
Disagree	1	1.75%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

74% of the respondents states that advertisements in games destroy perception process of children

Table 13: Advertisements in games affect psychological development process of children adversely

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	40.35%
Agree	23	40.35%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	10	17.54%
Disagree	1	1.75%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

With a percentage of 80%, parents believe that advertisements in games affect psychological development process of children adversely

Table 14: Advertisements in games causes speech disorder in children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	22	38.60%
Agree	20	35.09%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	11	19.30%
Disagree	3	5.26%
Strongly Disagree	1	1.75%

The fact that advergame causes speech disorder in children covers a rate of 74%.



Table 15: Advertisements in games destroys moral development of children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	25	43.86%
Agree	20	35.09%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	10	17.54%
Disagree	2	3.51%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

While 79% of parents think that advergame destroys moral development of children, 4% does not agree this.

Table 16: Advertisements in games destroy physical development of children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	14	24.56%
Agree	17	29.82%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14	24.56%
Disagree	10	17.54%
Strongly Disagree	2	3.51%

While 25% thinks that advergame absolutely destroys physical development of children, 30% agrees this opinion. With a rate of 21%, families think that advertisements do not cause any physical harm.

Table 17: Advertisements in games destroy mental development of children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	40.35%
Agree	19	33.33%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	9	15.79%
Disagree	6	10.53%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

The percentage of respondents who thinks advergame absolutely destroys mental development of children is 40%. In total, 74% agrees the mental damage.

Table 18: Advertisements in games cause children to buy unnecessary products

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	33	57.89%
Agree	17	29.82%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	5	8.77%
Disagree	2	3.51%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

The percentage of people who think the advertisements in games cause children to buy unnecessary products is 88%.

Table 19: Advertisements in games tempts children into being aggressive, offensive, etc.

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	20	35.09%
Agree	23	40.35%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	9	15.79%
Disagree	5	8.77%



Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%
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9% of parents does not think advergaming tempts children into being aggressive and offensive. In contrast, 75% thinks that these behaviors are encouraged.

Table 20: Ethical suitability of contents of advergaming

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	22	38.60%
Agree	19	33.33%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14	24.56%
Disagree	2	3.51%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

While 4% of parents think that the advertisements in games do not cause ethical problems, 72% considers this as a trouble.

Table 21: Considering the contents of digital games irrespective of advertisements in games, they have negative impacts on children

Options	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree	24	42.11%
Agree	28	49.12%
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	4	7.02%
Disagree	1	1.75%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00%

91% of parents think contents of digital games even without advertisements have negative effect.

Conclusion

The fact that opposed cultural models are given by media and especially by advertisements, are considered an attack by most people. They are concerned that premature conditioning of children will hinder the development of society. It should be noted that what is said about the child as a symbol of the future is said about the future of society (Kapferer, 1991, 233-234). Accordingly, the most important task of mothers and fathers is to understand their children and to establish a good communication with them (Ertugrul, 2002, 49).

The fact that 56% of the respondents are females shows that mothers give more importance to this subject. Most participants, 42% of participants, are professors and associate professors. Of all the participants, 93% of the participants' children play digital games, and only 32% of the parents are confident what games their children play. While 75% of parents state that they restrict digital games of their children, families do not impose any restrictions at all at the rate of 18%. Parents who do not restrict their children's games, with a 16% ratio, think that the games will be unarmful. 12% of parents state that their children behave consciously for digital games and they would not play games that would harm themselves. The reasons for the restriction of digital games are that children will be negatively affected. One important reason for the restriction of games is the insufficiency of laws with this regard. 7% of parents think that children are not protected by laws. Games are mostly restricted by giving time limits. Parents stating that they provide auto-control with the method of informing their children against the harms of games takes the 2nd rank. Imposing restriction through software/programming takes the 3rd rank.

Parents mostly think that the advertisements in games affect consumption patterns of children adversely, they turn children into wasters and tempts them into malnutrition. While the percentage of people who state advergaming absolutely destroys physical development of children, is 25%, 30% agrees this opinion. 21% of parents does not think advergaming affects physically. While 4% of parents think that the



advertisements in games do not cause ethical problems, 72% considers this as a trouble. 91% of parents think contents of digital games even without advertisements have negative effect.

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