How video games offer opportunities for advertisers

Gaming, for the longest time, has remained a mere hobby for people, until recent times when the global trend has made gaming more mainstream. This shift has offered a huge opportunity for brands to connect with consumers. With the immense popularity of gaming at casual and professional levels, savvy marketers are effectively interweaving their brands into the videogame environment to capitalize on the power of these digital worlds.

The market for video games used to be simple once. Gamers would go to the store, pick up a cartridge or disc (in later years), and play on a console or computer at home. But in recent years, console video games are not the ones owning a large segment of the market. With the emergence of mobile gaming, it holds about 42% of the market generating $46.1 billion in revenue. With this, two major traditional mediums, console and computer got overshadowed in the market.

Video games in recent times provide a massive opportunity for brand promotion with the increase in the number of users and a change in the demographics of video game consumers. *The gaming industry which now claims $91 billion a year worldwide in revenue has expanded beyond what it used to be in the 1980s and '90s.* This can be used by the marketers to their advantage to reach more people, thus generating revenue for the company.

Let's take a look at what ways video games can be used for brand advertising:

Banner Ads: Banner ads can be placed on the main game screen of the game. They are the game version of web banner ads. While it can have its share of problems, relevance can improve the effectiveness of any advertising. So, it can be said that the most effective banner ads in games are those advertising other games.

Popups: These are ads on dialogs that pop up during play. As with banner ads, players often click on these by accident. These popups are more disruptive than banner ads because they interrupt the player's attention. Some ads have small close buttons, or they change how they look or where they are between different showings, making it more likely the player will accidentally click on the ad instead of successfully closing in. This might prove annoying for the player, but from a business point of view, it can be used to grab the gamer's attention which might be useful.

Interstitial ads: These ads appear between different screens in the game, for example, between levels. They are less disruptive than in-game popups since they don't interrupt the normal flow.

Reward Ads: Ardent gamers have this innate habit of seeking rewards during a game that would boost up the levels of their game altogether. These are usually video ads that players can watch in reward for in-game benefits, such as currency, an extra life, more choices, or power-ups. Reward ads are one of the most effective ways of advertising and they don't disrupt normal gameplay, and instead become a part of the strategy sometimes.

In-game billboard: Game worlds can contain billboards and posters that advertise real-world brands. This is an effective common option in sports games and games with cityscapes that reflect their use in real life.

Product placement: This is all about placing a game presentation of a product in a game. It is typically used in sports games but can be used in other genres as well. Pepsi in Bionic Commando, Mercedes Benz in Mario Kart 8, and more such examples show the usage of the product placement option.

However, one must remember that too much of anything can ruin good opportunities. Going overboard with product placement can be overwhelming for players which can backfire as it tends to ruin the fun. The right number of product placements, on the other hand, can work for the advertisers.

Playable ads: These ads appear in places where banner ads usually appear. They differ from traditional ads as they are interactive and can be played. Playable ads often offer very short play time and allow the player to back to the actual game without any delay.

In-app games: Sometimes games are included in other apps, like the McPlay and Spin & Win. Because of the sheer number of brands, the competition among brands to have their app on users' mobile devices is stiff; a game can often tip the scale by increasing retention, especially combined with prizes.

Advergames: Advergames are games used to promote brands. They differ from playable ads and in-app games. They are not usually embedded in other content and hence function on their own. For this reason, advergames need to be promoted, often through the brands' channels.

Brands looking to boost their game in the market can resort to these options for better results. The gaming landscape offers a myriad of opportunities for digital advertising agencies which, if missed, can prove to be a loss for the brands. By taking the right initiative and choosing relevant messages, advertisers can lead the brand to success in the market.