

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies used by the Gaming Industry on Indian Consumers

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Abstract: This to India has always been a potential market for gamers, and this long-standing theory was proved right with the massive success of PUBG mobile. In 2020, India's gaming industry had a market value of Rs. 90 billion.

The aim of this research is to analyze and understand the gauging effect of digital marketing strategies used by the gaming industry on Indian consumers. Digital marketing promotes products and services by effectively utilizing the internet and online based digital technologies. Digital Marketing plays a major role in the gaming industry. Companies spent \$4.91 billion on digital advertising in 2016. This shows us how important digital advertising is to the gaming industry and the impact it's had.

For this research, we will be focusing on consumers who play games on a regular basis since they make up the target audience. For this a survey was conducted with the questionnaire prepared with reference to how the students feel about digital advertising of video games and what factors influence their decision. The survey was put up on the r/IndianGaming subreddit to ensure that the respondents belonged to the target audience.

Keywords: digital marketing, gaming industry, video games.

1. Introduction

Video games generally refer to platform specific digital games played for different purposes and often with a group of individuals. The history of video games can be traced back to the evolutionary Nintendo gadgets and Sony's PlayStation, both having served as cultural landmarks and proofs of the result of aggressive marketing campaigns and the considerable impact these have on game sales (de Felix and Johnson, 1993). Culturally speaking, video games have vastly impacted the development of generations, and although the marketing strategies for this industry started out on a standard base, it is one of the singular sectors that have adapted very fast and very well to the advent of the digital age and the continual changes and challenges it brings about.

The video game industry has a cross sector impact on many digital and offline bases and factors – it ties in with multiple social and marketing platforms generating large amounts of revenue through viewership and interaction per month. The digital strategies of this industry impact the impression of singular games on consumers. Consumer behaviour in general is also segregated from other industries when it comes to video

games, as factors such as the platform, adaptability, reviews, experience, and many others matter more, often, than modest elements such as price usually do (Newman, 2012). With the many demand and consumer confidence changes COVID-19 has brought about, the adaptability of industries and firms has come out as of utmost importance. The pandemic has changed consumer behaviour, and the measurement of this change specific to the video game industry will uncover many insights.

Therefore, the research gap being targeted by this study is specific to consumer behaviour in a COVID-19 world specific to video game sales. The insights from this study into the changes in consumer behaviour and consumer reaction to digital strategies specific to the pandemic and before can help guide the marketing of a new generation of video games through an emphasis on the marketing channels that come out as most effective when marketing video games through digital strategies.

2. Literature Review

A. Research Papers

In the paper by Şengün, S. titled A Survey of Marketing Management for the Video Games Industry in Turkey, 23.7% of the participants reported that their opinions of marketing-related business partners are negative due to these institutions' lack of industry experience. The developers use digital advertising to fulfil their marketing needs.

In the research by Smuts, A titled Are Video Games Art, the researcher argues that it is not outside the realm of possibility that more than a handful of modern video games should be considered art. It offers reasons for thinking that video games can be art accrediting to but not limited to their historical, aesthetic, institutional, and expressive theories of art. Overall, it argues that there are plenty of fantastic arguments to consider and good reasons to think that some video games should be classified as art.

Researching along similar lines, Rough, B published a paper titled Are videogames art?

The paper develops definitions and offers arguments about the compatibility of art, games, and videogames. It concludes

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that while not all videogames are works of art, that doesn't mean that a videogame cannot be a work of art. This project also provides the groundwork for new critical and evaluative tools for engagement with videogames as they develop.

Goldstein, J., Cajko, L., Oosterbroek, M., Michielsen, M., Van Houten, O., & Salverda, F came together to study the correlation of Video games and the elderly. Just like its name suggests, the study examined the effects of playing video games on the cognitive adaptability, reaction time and most importantly the emotional well-being of the elderly people involved. Participants played video games for 5 hours a week for 5 weeks, and during that time maintained a well-kept and frequently updated log of their play. Before and after this play period, measures of reaction time, cognitive/perceptual adaptability, and emotional well-being were carefully administered at all points in time. The videogame-playing group felt a more positive and had a general sense of well-being and also faster reaction times.

Squire, K studied Video games in education. The researcher found that video games have been largely ignored by educators. Educators only focus on the social consequences of videogames, failing to see the educational potentials of gaming. This paper also examined the history of videogames in educational research to find that the cognitive potential of games has been largely ignored by educators. New developments in gaming suggest powerful new opportunities for educational media.

In the paper by Gee, J. P titled What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy, the researcher argued that a company will go bankrupt if they make a game that cannot be learned at a certain level. But designers still face and largely solve an intriguing dilemma because most people don't want short and easy games. This problem is also faced by schools and workplaces: how to get people to learn and master something that is long and challenging while also enjoying it.

In his research on Why video games are good for your soul: Pleasure and learning, Gee, J. P talks about how good video games allow people allow people to become professionals and live the life of a soldier, thief, wizard, city planner and countless other things. They allow people to create new stories, experience and rewrite history. The study shows how good video games have the potential to empower people.

According to Griffiths, M in his paper on Video games and health he tells us one innovative application of video games is in the use in pain management in health care. The attention needed to play a game can distract patients from pain. It is a strategy that has been reported and evaluated among pediatric patients.

Hofacker, C. F., De Ruyter, K., Lurie, N. H., Manchanda, P., & Donaldson, J on their research on Gamification and mobile marketing effectiveness describe from both personal experience and the literature that mobile games are terrible. They provide an overview of the game designs and notice how the principles derived are highly applicable to gamification in mobile marketing.

The paper titled Do violent video games impair the effectiveness of in-game advertisements? The impact of gaming

environment on brand recall, brand attitude, and purchase intention. By Yoo, S. C., & Peña, J combines violent videogames and in-game advertisements. The study seeks to examine whether violent video games affect the advertisements in the games. Especially when compared to video games that are not violent. Participants tried to recall advertisements in the game after playing violent and nonviolent games. Participants' brand recall, recognition, and attitudes were comparatively lower after playing the violent video games.

Glass, Z wrote in his paper titled The effectiveness of product placement in video games how studies suggest that the factor that largely determines how well consumers receive the message is the presentation of an advertisement. In the study, participants played a video game that featured branded products, then took a test to determine whether their attitudes toward the brands in the game and a set of equivalently rated brands. It revealed that participants generally categorize in-game brands as good faster than they categorize them as bad.

In the paper Mobile games as an advertising medium: Towards a new research agenda, authors Salo, J., & Karjaluoto, H compile the existing knowledge regarding mobile games as a medium of advertising. This is done by reviewing mobile game research. The paper concludes by detailing the restrictions of the study and brings up a number of the possible avenues for further research.

Merisavo, M., Vesanen, J., Arponen, A., Kajalo, S., & Raulas, M came together to conduct The effectiveness of targeted mobile advertising in selling mobile services: an empirical study. This paper examines the effectiveness of mobile advertising in the sales of mobile services. It was revealed that there is a big increase in sales to customers who were exposed to mobile advertising compared to those that weren't in a population of over 5500 Finnish customers.

According to Gao, Q., Rau, P. L. P., & Salvendy, G, interactivity may benefit the effectiveness of advertisements in mobiles. There are only a handful of guidelines on the way to design mobile advertisements that are interactive. The study investigated the influences of designs of interactivity on mobile advertisements and therefore the relationship between interactivity and attitude. They discuss this in their paper Perception of interactivity: Affects of four key variables in mobile advertising.

In the research by Choi, Y. K., Hwang, J. S., & McMillan, S. J titled Gearing up for mobile advertising: A cross-cultural examination of key factors that drive mobile messages home to consumers, they identify key measures of effectiveness from a population of 629 Korean and American consumers. Both Koreans and Americans responded positively to entertainment and credibility as key factors in predicting purchase intention as well as positive attitude. Naturally, this study found a lot of cultural differences— most interestingly in informativeness, interactivity, and the value of mobile advertising.

In the paper The struggles of everyday life: How children view and engage with advertising in mobile games by Martínez, C, the researcher focuses on digital and mobile games that are a crucial part of the daily media usage of children. The research analyses how children interact with advertising in mobile

games, and how in-game advertising affect the children's game experience. The resulting data shows that children resist and resign themselves from the advertising strategies.

Salo, J. A. R. I. in his paper Digital Advertising in mobile games: A conceptualization and description of typical features of mobile in-game advertising evaluates in-game advertising in its current state and also places it in a wider context of the evolving advertising. Advertising in mobile games can be seen as a form of branded entertainment.

B. Books

The book Video game marketing: A student textbook by Zackariasson, P., & Dymek, M. talks about using marketing knowledge as a tool in the development of video games so that the games achieve their goals. Marketing is a tool for the development of experiences for consumers.

Wesley, D., & Barczak, G's Innovation and marketing in the video game industry: avoiding the performance trap talks about how despite popular belief, the largest and well-known companies in the video game industry are not the most successful ones. The companies that provide innovative products that reached new audiences have always had more success than companies that make complex gaming systems.

In the book called Videogame marketing and PR by Steinberg, S. M, the author helps companies prevent wasting time and money by give the public better games to play. He explains that the way to think about customers, market segments and gameplay.

Zackariasson, P., & Wilson, T. L wrote in The Video Game Industry: Formation, Present State, and Future that despite the video game industry being viewed as creative and creativity being a big part of the industry, the marketing is still very conventional and traditional. Video game companies have new and interesting opportunities to communicate with their audiences and they should realise that potential sooner than later.

In his book Changing the game: how video games are transforming the future of business, Edery, D., & Mollick, E writes that games are very useful tools through which organisations recruit, train, motivate and persuade employees.

In The rhetoric of video games by Bogost, I the author discusses that video games are the kind of media that fully showcases cultural values in all their glory. We can learn to read games as expressions of particular perspectives when understood in this way. Video games make claims about the world, which players can understand and evaluate.

C. Articles

The article Examining the intersection of race and gender in video game advertising by Behm-Morawitz, E. breaks down how advertisers rely on stereotypes to establish an understanding and appeal to a wide market. Despite this, women and ethnic minorities account for a quickly growing percentage of video game players. The study also shows us how race and gender come together in depictions used to market video games to consumers, most commonly the stereotypical character tropes.

Chaika, M. (1996) in the article Computer game marketing bias points out that majority of video games are marketed towards males, thus losing out on an equally large market – women.

Anders, K. in his article Marketing and policy considerations for violent video games discusses the marketing practices and efforts of the gaming industry lawmakers to keep videos minors safe from games with adult themes.

In The benefits of playing video games, Granic, authors I., Lobel, A., & Engels, R. C. bring to light how the last decade has seen a dramatic change in the nature of games, becoming increasingly complex, diverse, social and realistic in nature. By focusing on the cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social domains, this article summarizes the studies on the good effects of video games.

Squire, K's book Video games and learning creates a vision of digital games and learning that speaks to its transformative possibilities as it draws on critical analysis of games, research of game communities, design research, and empirical studies of learning through games.

The book Video games and the future of learning by Shaffer, D. W., Squire, K. R., Halverson, R., & Gee, J. P explains to us that despite the fact that many corporations, the government and the military have already recognized the educative power of video games, most educators are dismissive of them. Schools have to catch up, the authors argue. They further propose that games are fundamentally simplifications of what happens in the real world, and we learn something new every day by playing video games, even the harshest of critics agree to that.

Then by building on the educational properties of games, the authors describe an approach to the design of learning environments.

3. Research Methodology

A. Research Objectives

1. To conduct an in-depth study of the video game industry and determine the marketing techniques used
2. To analyse the effectiveness and impact of marketing strategies on game sales and consumer base using existing empirical evidence
3. To conduct a primary study of video game consumers to determine common opinion on the role digital marketing plays in video game purchase intention

B. Research Question

The research questions being targeted through this study are:

1. What digital strategies does the video game industry use for the purpose of marketing and how effective are these strategies; and
2. How have these strategies impacted general consumer behavior, opinion, and purchase intention specific to consumers who have played/play video games

C. Hypothesis

1) Hypothesis details

The main hypothesis being tested is if the digital strategies used in the marketing of video games has a considerable impact

on the sales of games.

- Null hypothesis - There is no correlation between the digital marketing of the game and its sales
- Alternative hypothesis - There is a strong correlation between the digital marketing of the video game and its sales

D. Research Design

1) Population

There are an estimated 630 million gamers in India who purchase and utilize video games as a source of income or entertainment. This is the wider population being targeted, consisting of individuals across different platforms and games who have had experience in the purchase and browsing of games. The population parameter being followed in terms of restrictions is that of past or current experience in video games, so as to not clog up the sample with respondents with no experience.

1. Sampling method

In order to reach a wider audience, an online questionnaire in a structured format was used. Online questionnaires allow for a wider reach, with low barriers to filling in the survey being utilized so as to gain maximum results. Thus, convenience sampling was used.

2. Sample size

- Population – 630 million
- Confidence level – 95%
- Margin of error – 10%
- Given/targeted sample size – 97
- Collected sample size - 104

The sample size is a mix of respondents of different age groups, genders, opinions and experiences, and other factors so as to collect a sample of responses that best represents a spread-out population with different factors and population parameters. The collected sample is higher than the targeted sample, which will help in equalizing results and reducing the likelihood of errors.

3. Time frame

The time frame utilized for this study is a frame of 4 days for the collection of responses, so as to give maximum time for the collection of responses and continual outreach of the survey whilst also ensuring maximum responses within a short period of time to increase efficiency and reduce time being spent on collecting responses.

4. Area of study

Although the questionnaire did not ask for the geographical location of respondents to keep the privacy factor intact and also reduce the effort required to respond so as to collect maximum responses on consumer behavior and opinion questions, the general or wide area of study geographically was restricted to India. This is because a disparity in companies across different countries and separate purchase, advertising, etc. factors can impact the uniformity of responses and skew results.

E. Data collection

1) Tool utilized

For the purpose of this study, an online questionnaire was

used to make the best of current pandemic norms while also keeping the survey at low levels of commitment in order to facilitate maximum responses.

2) Review of existing research

Existing studies have found many different overlapping and singular results through the study of marketing methods utilized by video game companies. Zackariasson and Wilson (2012) found in their study that marketing methods used by video game companies are generally not specifically innovative and are standard to time periods. Mathews and Wearn (2016) used a simple consumer-oriented questionnaire to ascertain what the real factors impacting buying decision are, finding that the opinions and reviews of known networks of consumers played the strongest role in purchase decision. One study geared towards millennials by Smith (2011) found a strong response to digital methods of marketing, by using a semi-structured questionnaire to guide consumer opinion on impactful marketing. Although there is a lack of studies specific to/correlating with the COVID-19 factor, the results of these studies have helped guide the questionnaire through establishing known and general opinions.

3) Format of questionnaire

I. Arrangement

The flow of questions in this study follow a logical sequence that leads the respondent through the basic to more thought inciting questions. The questionnaire begins with information oriented, structured questions that collect basic details of the respondent. This leads to questions that explore the nature of the respondent's consumer behavior specific to video games, which introduce the targeted topic and the flow of thought. This then leads to the last leg of questions that directly address the respondent's opinion and reaction to specific marketing tactics used by video game companies, to ascertain the level of impact these strategies have on individual consumers. The survey therefore flows from basic questions to direct questions, guiding the respondent to think deeper and deeper into the topic as the survey proceeds.

II. Scale of measurement used

The scale of measurement used to structure the questionnaire is a combination of a generic nominal scale and a particular 5-point scale to guide the respondent through the last stage of questions.

III. Expected response

On the basis of studies already existing, in particular by Mathews and Wearn (2016), responses were expected to be in line with what was already found – that although digital marketing methods played a large role in purchase decision, so did the opinion and experiences of known members of a consumer's social network or frequently watched influencers and reviewers.

4) Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the lack of a diverse and large consumer base. An extended base where consumers from all walks and age groups being equally reviewed would have helped equalize results and provide perspectives from all consumer groups. This would help arrive at heavily supported actionable conclusions, although the current study provided

many insights as well.

5) *Data cleaning*

The questionnaire is structured in a particular format and flow, therefore not resulting in unrequired data. Duplicates were checked for, and with no particularly extreme outliers, there was no requirement for data cleaning beyond basic restructuring and paraphrasing of collected data for better analysis and study for conclusions.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

A. *Analysis of survey results*

1) *Factors important to consumers*

Which of the following is the most important factor to take into consideration while buying games?
104 responses

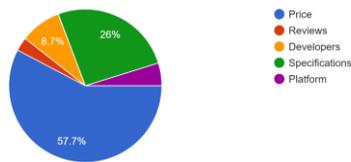


Fig. 1. Factors affecting purchase decision

Analysis: More than half of the respondents prefer price above other factors while buying games. The question targeted the various factors one would take into consideration before purchasing a game to see what customers valued the most. A total of 57% of the respondents prefer price followed by 26% of the respondents valuing specifications the most. This indicates that a significant amount of customers base their decision on the price.

How important is advertising to your purchase decision?
104 responses

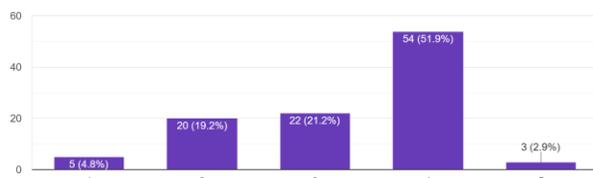


Fig. 2. Advertising in purchase decision

Analysis: When asked how important advertising is to the purchase decision 51.9% of the respondents rated it a four out of five. 76% of the respondents rated it three and above. This is a clear indicator of how much importance customers place on advertising of video games.

How important is the developers reputation and does it affect your purchase decisions?
104 responses

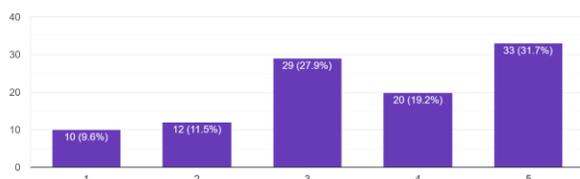


Fig. 3. Developers' reputation in purchase decision

Analysis: The majority of the respondents fall between 'neutral' and 'very important'. This indicates that a comparatively large chunk of the respondents are either giving a lot of thought to the developers reputation or are still on the border about it, which shows a slow growing concern about the reputation of the developers.

2) *Effectiveness of digital marketing strategies*

You are likely to check out a game if:

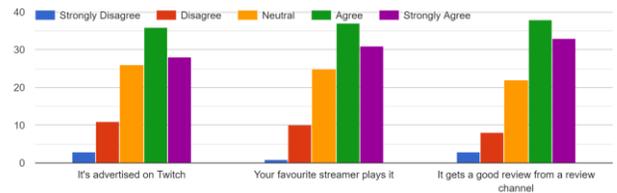


Fig. 4. Influencer marketing

Analysis: The respondents react very positively to influencer marketing. 26.9% of the respondents strongly agree to check out a game if it's advertised on twitch, 29.8% strongly agree if their favorite streamer plays the game and 31.7% strongly agree if a review channel gives it a good review. This is an indicator of how much trust the target market places in influencers and how successful influencer marketing is. This is even more apparent with minimal respondents strongly disagreeing with any of the questions.

You keep any eye out for news about games that:

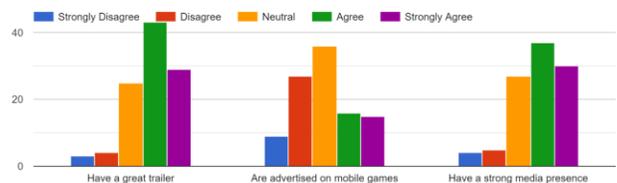


Fig. 5. Social media marketing

Analysis: Social media strategies bring around more varied responses from the respondents. While 41.3% of the respondents agree that a game trailers are important, 25.9% disagree to check out anything from in-game advertisements on mobile games. There is a general sense of discontent with in-game advertisements with only a total of 20.1% of the respondents having a positive opinion about it. On the other hand, 35.5% of the respondents agree that a strong media presence is an important factor.

You are likely to buy a game if:

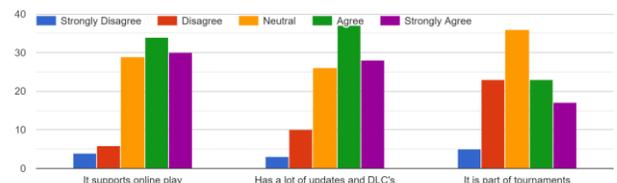


Fig. 6. Online game features

Analysis: The online game features also show interesting responses. Both online play (27.8% - neutral and 28.8%-strongly agree) and updates and DLC’s (25% - neutral and 26.9% - strongly agree) have near identical responses for neutral and strongly agree, this shows that both factors are a personal choice but not necessarily a bad factor. They aren’t necessarily deciding factors and depend on the game and player preferences. This is also true for whether the game is part of tournaments, receiving 22.1% for both disagree and agree and 34.6% for neutral.

5. Findings

The research questions that were framed and inputted into the beginning of this study, are analysed with regards to the results collected. This is to determine whether or not the primary data collection helps in the answering of the key research questions, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the paper.

Table 1

Research Question	Analysis
What digital strategies does the video game industry use for the purpose of marketing and how effective are these strategies?	The digital strategies used by the gaming industry consist of – advertising on twitch, influencer marketing, reviews, advertising in mobile games and game trailers. Majority of the respondents responded positively to these digital marketing strategies with the exception being advertisements on mobile games, which was met with negative responses overall. Therefore, both the strategies and their effectiveness have been measured with the respondents being positive about the strategies.
How have these strategies impacted general consumer behavior, opinion, and purchase intention specific to consumers who have played/play video games?	A majority of respondents (54.8%) indicated that they do think that digital marketing strategies are vital to their purchase decision. 64.2% of the respondents base their purchase decision on social media presence and 69.2% give great importance to game trailers. This is a clear indicator that the digital marketing strategies play a very important role in influencing purchase decision specific to consumers who play video games on a regular basis.

Hypothesis testing:

For the purpose of testing the hypothesis, the Pearson’s correlation test, which measures the level of correlation between two datasets and enables the establishment of a positive, negative, or non-existent correlation, was used on data collected. The two mapped results of the survey are the importance of advertising along with importance of developer reputation.

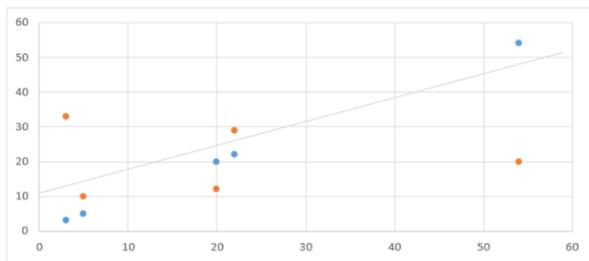


Fig. 7.

Table 2

Importance of advertising on purchase decision (No. responses)	Importance of developer reputation on purchase decision (No. of responses)
5	10
20	12
22	29
54	20
3	33

- Confidence level – 95%
- Alpha value (significance level) – 0.05%
- Calculated R value – 0.0046

As shown above, the plotted responses of the two key questions resulted in two scatter plots that match to a high extent. Although the R value is on the lower positive value (with a value closer to 0 showing weak correlation) there is still a weak positive correlation, showing that both advertising factors impact purchase decision to a mostly positive extent. This allows for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The gaming industry is the fastest growing source of entertainment for the world today. Digital marketing is a necessity for the continual survival and long-term development of businesses in India. The gaming industry faces unique challenges but also has organizational structures conducive to the adaptation of consumers growing needs. Through this study utilizing primary sources, information was gathered on the current scenario, the application, and the impact of digital marketing strategies of the gaming industry in India. A review of literature set the basis of videogames and the importance of advertising. The results of the primary study indicated that a large portion of the target audience believe that it plays an essential part in their experience.

A. Limitations

In terms of limitations, there are two essential drawbacks of this study – one, a small sample size, and two, specific set of respondents. A larger sample size would have provided us with more dependable results. The respondents, while all of different genders and ages were limited to whether they are on the r/IndianGaming subreddit or not. This limited the kind of respondents that participated in the survey.

B. Scope for further research

There is a surprising lack of research on the effectiveness of marketing techniques used by the gaming industry, especially based in India. Specific studies in this area would benefit existing research greatly and help expand our current knowledge on the subject.

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