

Consumer Perceptions of Additions to Geographic and Social Space

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Abstract. This position paper introduces a relationship between ambient media and pervasive games, and opens both fields up to an analysis with the Heuristic-Systematic model of persuasion based on the relationship between the two fields. The paper concludes with an invitation to discuss the relationship between the ambient media user experience and the kind of brand equity, as measured by the two-tiered persuasion model, that ambient media can build.

Keywords: Consumer Experience, Theory, Brand Equity, Advertising, Pervasive Games, Two-Tiered Persuasion Modeling.

1 Introduction and Proposition

“Ambient Media” is a term that is as clear as London fog on a misty day. Erik Satie (1866-1925) produced what he called “furniture music” (*Musique d'ameublement*), [1] the point of it being that it could insinuate itself into the environment. Later, Brian Eno created “Music for Airports” and is popularly credited with having coined the term “ambient music” [2]. The English language has the word “ambience” meaning; a feeling or mood associated with a particular place. In the computer- and design sciences the subfield of “ubiquitous computing” has produced many achievements where the qualities of a particular geographic place impacts a computing system. That line of work has begotten among other things pervasive games [3] and pervasive advertising [4], two fields of work that can both relate to the ambience of a particular place and create ambience for a particular place. So ambient media may be many things.

A common denominator however; may be that ambient media is media that “*is not*”. It is not print, it is not radio, it is not TV. It is not the internet and it is not ubiquitous computing. What ambient media *is*, is that it is something that blends blurs and pervades itself into the users’ everyday life in ways that breaks the constraints of classic media definitions e.g. Shannon & Weaver [5], hence opening up ambient media for analysis as a pervasive game. This position paper proposes a discussion about the consequences of understanding ambient media as a pervasive game and how that may or may not open for applying two-tiered persuasion modeling [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11] as a way to understand how ambient media creates brand equity and business value and what particular kinds of brand equity and business value ambient media can typically create.

1.1 Blending, Blurring and Pervading

The most significant quality distinguishing the user experience of pervasive games or pervasive advertising from other games and advertising, is the same quality that distinguishes ambient media from other media; the hybrid characteristics [3]. In ways that non-pervasive games, non-pervasive advertising and non-ambient media does not, pervasive games, pervasive advertising and ambient media has design qualities of “expansion” that takes into account the players’ and the receivers’ geographic location and the visible and humanly invisible qualities in the players and the receivers’ surroundings. Those expanded qualities can also take into account the same players and receivers’ social context. Those qualities are implemented in order to create a play and media experience that adapts and hence is in constant flux. The challenge to the user of perceiving that experience of flux, is at the core of the model this paper proposes.

2 The Heuristic-Systematic model, - Two Ways to Brand Equity and Business Value.

It has been asked that if the media is the message, - what message does ambient media tell us? [12] This paper proposes to approach the question from the angle of, - *how* does ambient media tell the consumers, that that it tells us? Therefore the fundament for the proposed workshop discussion is the Heuristic-Systematic model of cognition [6, 7, 8, 9, 10]. It states is that there are two ways in which humans perceive an experience. When we have a high need for confidence in our understanding of an experience humans process the perception of that experience through logical and conscious thinking based on a desire to take in and understand the full spectrum of characteristics of that experience. This is what is called the Systematic Route, running from first perception of the experience, through systematic processing, to decision making about what to do and feel next. In all other cases when the need for careful understanding and evaluation of an experience is less pressing; processing of an experience is done through the Heuristic Route. In those cases humans do not pay attention to any objective merits of an experience. Instead the experience is perceived and judged through a comparison with various surface characteristics of the experience compared with other experiences previously stored in memory.

The system of the heuristic and systematic judgments is a fluid continuum described in the “sufficiency principle. It states that in the human mind there is an ever ongoing tension between the tendency towards cognitive economy, making for heuristic processing and the wish to feel safe in ones’ perceptions and judgments making for systematic processing. Along the continuum lies two critical points lie; one designating perceivers’ level of actual confidence; the other indicating the level of desired confidence. Perceivers will strive to have the two points meet [9]. The Heuristic-Systematic model (and its’ “cousin” the Elaboration Likelihood Model [11]), has found considerable use in analyzing and predicting the effects of advertising. [6]. When the heuristic route to understanding is used in a persuasive situation then persuasion is easier achieved but more shallow, - when the systematic

route to cognition is used persuasion is more difficult to achieve, but when achieved deeper and more lasting. What typical characteristics of ambient media design drives a user towards one or the other end of the sufficiency continuum? We can see that the user actively participates and co-designs contextual media[12], by thinking about it. But the relationship between thought and design needs to be fleshed out. Here is a tentative model that can be further discussed in the workshop.

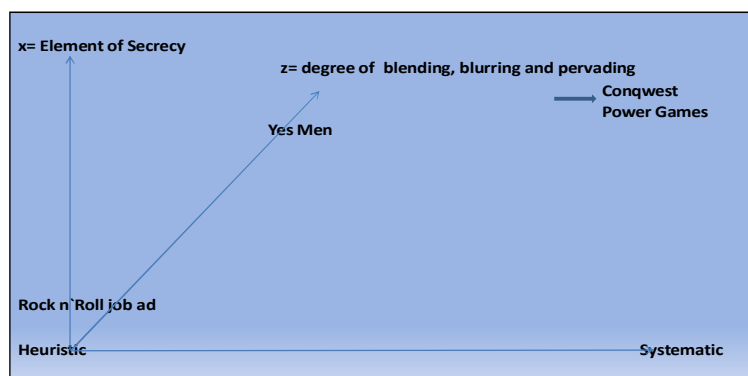


Figure 1 The Model

The model is based on three continuums. One being the sufficiency continuum (y—axis), one is the degree to which an ambient media experience leverages the element of secrecy, (x-axis), the third is the degree of blending, blurring and pervading (z-axis). The way in which an ambient media experience impacts the receiver is defined by the interaction of these three elements. The shape the active co-construction takes is defined by the interplay of these three axes of perception, (y-axis), general design, (z-axis), and particular design, (y-axis).

To flesh out the proposed model and stimulate a discussion some cases of ambient media based marketing can be plotted in.

The Power games are a series of three pervasive persuasive serious games. The three games *Power Agent* (2007),¹ *Power Explorer* (2008) [13, 14, 15, 16] and *Agents Against Power Waste* (2009)², have different game play designs, but are all based on making a households' electricity consumption a variable in a game play system. The single channel typical of media definitions [5] has disappeared, the game is played *with* the whole house *on* its' everyday appliances. The dishwasher becomes part of the

¹The Power games were designed by the Energy Design Studio of the Interactive Institute, and produced by the Energy Design Studio of the Interactive Institute and the company Mobile Interaction

² www.aapw.se

channel. Also the player must engage the other (unwitting) household members into the game. The design informs us that the explicit aim of the Power games is to drive discussion and cognition on the sufficiency scale.

ConQwest [17] was sponsored by Qwest, a large telecommunications carrier, as a way of promoting its services. The game has elements of a treasure-hunt game play, built around finding and uploading Semacodes hidden throughout a city in a variety of formats – ads on billboards, the sides of buses and taxi tops, flyers stapled to telephone poles, posters in store windows and stickers hidden in various locations. Conqwest had clear primary and secondary targets groups and may have driven cognition on the sufficiency scale in different ways depending on which of the the target groups experienced it.

The rock n' roll job ad; In 2009 an advertisement from the “Arvika Rock Festival” appeared in Platsbanken an online databank for jobs run by the official Swedish Public Employment Service³. Platsbanken exudes connotations of being very serious in every way. However, the job ad requested seasoned rock festival visitors, having practical experience of making out in bars, listening to loud music and dancing for hours in mud. It did not take long for the Public Employment Service to take down the ad. But already the news of the bizarre ad had spread all over Swedish news media and social networks and the available “positions” had gotten several hundred applicants. The ads’ sole purpose was to spread the festivals’ brand.⁴

Yes men. In 2009 the US Chamber of Commerce called a press conference; or at least what seemed like the US Chamber of Commerce. At the press conference, an everyday common almost dour event the US Chamber of Commerce announced a series of startling turnabouts in its’ public policy.⁵ This led to immediate astonishment in the news media first via social media, and then in front page news (New York Times) and “breaking news” in TV-media (Fox News). In reality it was the political satirists the “Yes Men” that had staged the press conference playing that they were the US Chamber of Commerce. The resulting controversy has drawn some debate towards the issues of public policy that the Yes Men wished to address.

Other cases can also be plotted into the model, for example Frequency 1550 [17] , Rexplorer[18] , Red Bull Flugtag⁶ and others, in order to test the model. The discussion in the workshop will be a first theoretical test of the viability of this model.

³ <http://platsbanken.arbetsformedlingen.se/Standard/Start/Start.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.sydsvenskan.se/kultur-och-nojen/article564349/Annons-om-naken-arbetskraft-drogs-in.html>

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D67LYEacBoE>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Bull_Flugtag

3 Discussion & Further Work

The issue that remains to model is what kind of product and what kinds of business situations are appropriate for what kind of ambient media product, as defined by the intrinsic design qualities of ambient-media design.

In marketing science issues and in particular consumer behavior issues of timing a campaign and issues of “influencing the influencer” are well researched [19].

Among our examples the Power Games are an example of a campaign aiming at “influencing the influencer” i.e. a secondary target group. The players of the game are teenagers, these do usually not hold an electricity contract. But to win the game, - the whole family including the parents must take part. The unique qualities of an ambient media product, in the shape of a pervasive game, have been designed to influence a secondary target group and drive a whole family into systematic cognition and intense discussion on a low interest topic.

The rock n´ roll job ad, was not designed to target only the ones browsing through “Platsbanken” looking for jobs, the target was the larger spin cycle it created, using the serious connotations of “Platsbanken” as the resonance for creating the spin, i.e. using society as the media platform for distributing the brand of the rock festival.⁷

But given the here presented model, how would an ideal ambient media product design look for other product situations? That is a topic ripe for discourse.

⁷ The job ad was not the last attempt from the festival to use this kind of media strategy, see: <http://www.dagensmedia.se/nvheter/kampanjer/article127743.ece>

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