

Content Analysis of the Characteristics of Game Commercials in Terrestrial and Cable TV Channels in Korea

¹Eun Hee Kim and ²Seung Yeob Yu

¹Department of Advertising and Public Relations and Journalism, Mokwon University 88, Doan-dong, Seo-gu, 35349 Daejeon-si, Korea

²Department of Advertising and Public Relations, Namseoul University 91, Daehak-ro, Seonghwan-eup, Seobuk-gu, Cheonan-si, 31020 Chungnam, Korea

Abstract: Facing the two sides of coin, growth of the game industry and worries, the current research aimed to identify the characteristics of game commercials. A content analysis was conducted to analyze the characteristics of game commercials by 3 experts in advertising. Before the content analysis, a session of training for categories and items of analysis was offered to them and a preliminary test was conducted. The current content analysis was performed by using SPSS 20.0. The reliability coefficient among the coders was 0.92-0.98. First, the characteristics of expression strategies were analyzed. It was found that information delivery was the most frequent type, followed by promotion, a combination of information+promotion, launching and the teaser type. As for the types of message appeals, the emotional type was the most frequently used one, followed by rational appeals and a combination of emotional and rational appeals. Second, in terms of the second topic of model strategies, the present research found the following results. Game characters were the most popular model type, followed by celebrities and a combination of characters+celebrities, ordinary people, a combination of characters+ordinal people and professional models. In most types of commercials, game characters and celebrities were most common models. Third, as for the information-presenting strategies, the analysis found the following results. In terms of game-playing media presented in the commercials, mobile topped the list followed by SNS and PC. The results of analysis are expected to help advertising personnel arrange strategies for production and implementation of commercials. Future researches might aim to examine what factors affect the characteristics of game commercials.

Key words: Game commercials, expression strategies, model strategies, information-presenting strategies, characteristics of game commercials, appeal

INTRODUCTION

The trend of media individualization has brought about changes in the ways of media contact as well as the growth contact time. According to the survey by Jeil Advertising Media ACR, 63% of consumers watch TV and other media at the same time and the average of media contact time amounts to 6 h a day (Hyun-Jung, 2015). This perhaps indicates that everyday life of consumers can be summarized as a media life.

The trend of media individualization has also affected the game industry. Smart phone games which began with the introduction of i-Phone in 2001 have been leading the rapidly growing mobile game market along with Kakao games. Ever, since, marketing for mobile games has begun, since 2013, major game companies have been

exerting every effort in branding their services through TV commercials (IGA, 2015). To take an example. Google Play game category recorded a remarkable 45% growth over the previous year in sales from January to May in 2015: W 857 billion. TV commercials have become a crucial component of a marketing strategy for successful launching of any mobile game.

Expenses for advertising of game commercials in terrestrial channels showed a rocketing 16 times increase from billion won in 2012-29.3 billion in 2015 (YNA, 2016). Also, the advertisement exposure time recorded a similarly rapid growth from 2 h and 33 min in 2012 to 24 h and 13 min in 2015 (YNA, 2016). The game named Clash of Clan launched by supercell used to be ranked around the 20th in sales for the 1st 2 years in Korea. However, it has climbed up the ladder rapidly in ranking, since, the

company started putting commercials in TV. The advertising expense for the game reportedly amounts to several tens of billion won (ANY-Web, 2015).

One of the reasons why mobile game commercials draw attention from consumers would be that celebrities appear as models in them (Ponnusamy *et al.*, 2016). For example, Actor Liam Neeson appeared in Clash of Clan; unlimited challenge members in Candy Crush Soda and Actor Seungwon Choi in Raven of Net Marble games. Many people, however, maintain a negative opinion against celebrities' appearance in mobile game commercials, since, they might beautify the violent feature of games and highlight sexuality of female models (DongA.Com, 2016).

As of now, the market of TV game commercials is estimated to have grown up to 100 billion won and the rapid growth might be attributable to the intrinsic nature of mobile games. Consumers exposed to TV game commercials may download the game right away to their cellular phones and play immediately (Kim *et al.*, 2015). Also, mobile appliances such as cellular phones might be used anywhere anytime and consumers with a wide range of age enjoy playing games (Young, 2015).

It is true that game commercials on TV have vitalized the advertising industry. However, worrying voice about the trend has been heard in every sector of society (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2016). The most serious problem of adolescent's addiction to mobile games calls for social responsibility of arranging systematic measures to deal with the issue (KBKB, 2016).

Facing the two sides of coin, growth of the game industry and worries, the current research aimed to identify the characteristics of game commercials. For that purpose, a content analysis was conducted to examine the strategies for the expression game commercials, those for the use of models and the types of information presented in the commercials. The results of analysis are expected to provide practical suggestions to the personnel in advertisement production and help them design game commercials by using a variety of media in order to eventually vitalize the game industry.

Research problems: The rapid growth of mobile game industry has made advertisers appeal to other media than the internet: terrestrial and cable TV channels. They take a very active stance in practicing advertisements to stimulate customer's desires.

The current research intends to identify the characteristics of game commercials which have been vitalizing the advertising industry. For that purpose, we investigate the following questions.

Research problem 1:

- How are the expression strategies for the game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of message appeals constructed?
- How are the messages of rational appeal constructed?
- How are the messages of emotional appeal constructed?
- How are the parodies constructed?
- How are the types of background music constructed?
- How are the presence/absence of game-playing scenes constructed?
- How are the presence/absence of game-playing scenes depending on types of background music constructed?

Research problem 2:

- How are the model strategies for the game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of message appeals constructed?
- How are the types of message appeals constructed for each type of game commercials?
- How are the messages of rational appeal constructed?

Research problem 3:

- How are the information in the game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of game commercials constructed?
- How are the types of message appeals constructed?
- How are the types of message appeals constructed for each type of game commercials?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Selection and collection of commercials under analysis: This research intends to investigate into the characteristics of game commercials which now account for a good portion of the advertising industry. The commercials under analysis were the materials received from AGB Nilson Media Research and Jeil Planning, Co., a set of 333 game commercials that appeared on national and cable TV channels for the two whole years of 2014 and 2015.

Types and items of analysis: The types and items for content analysis of the characteristics under discussion include expression strategies, model strategies and presented in ad information. The detailed list of analysis items are like the following. Types of game

commercials: product information delivery, launching advertisements, teaser advertisements, promotion advertisements. Types of message appeals of game commercials: rational appeals, emotional appeals, combined (rational+emotional) appeals, others. Items of rational appeals: rewards for playing games, promotions, launching, being the leader in games or strong points, others. Items of emotional items: humor, horror, compassion, others. Items of parodies: ordinary commercials (with no parody), drama parodies, movie parodies, others. Background music: sounds in games, CM songs, others presence of game-playing scenes in commercials: presence of game-playing scenes, absence of game-playing scenes. Model types of game commercials: game characters, celebrities, experts, ordinary people, others. Character models: animation, humans, animation and humans no character, others. Types of game playing media: PC, mobile, SNS, others. Category of games: for all, R-12, R-15, R-18 no category. Types of game downloading: downloading information presented, downloading information not presented.

Analysis method and reliability: A content analysis was conducted to analyze the characteristics of game commercials by 3 experts in advertising. Before the content analysis, a session of training for categories and items of analysis was offered to them and a preliminary test was conducted. In case there were conflicts among the coders in the content analysis, a final decision was made after reconciling their opinions. The current content analysis was performed by using SPSS 20.0. The reliability coefficient among the coders was 0.92-0.98. The reliability of the analysis categories and items was also identified, every one being >0.90.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Expression strategies in game commercials

Types of game commercials: A frequency analysis was conducted on the types of game commercials. The result is shown in Table 1. The most frequent type was information-delivering one (249, 74.8%) followed by promotion (39, 11.7%) and information+promotion (17, 5.1%). The types of launching and teasers were not many: 14 (4.2%) for both (Table 1).

Types of message appeals: Table 2 illustrates the frequency of different types of appeals. Out of the 333 game commercials, those with emotional appeals accounted for more than a half (170, 51.1%) in contrast to those with rational ones (127, 38.1%). A combination of emotional and rational appeals were not many (25, 7.5%). 11 commercials (3.3%) might belong to the category of others (Table 2).

Table 1: Types of game commercials, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Information	249 (74.8)
Promotion	39 (11.7)
Information+promotion	17 (5.1)
launching	14 (4.2)
teasers	14 (4.2)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 2: Types of message appeals, unit: number of commercials (%)
rational appeal

Parameters	Values
Rational appeal	127 (38.1)
Emotional appeal	170 (51.1)
Rational+emotional	25 (7.5)
Others	11 (3.3)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 3: Classification of rational appeal type, unit: number of commercials (%) reward

Parameters	Values
Reward	17 (13.4)
Promotion	7 (5.5)
Launching	5 (3.9)
Top brand and strengths	29 (22.8)
Others	69 (54.4)
Total	127 (100.0)

Table 4: Themes of emotional appeals, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Humor	114 (67.1)
Horror	11 (6.5)
Compassion	38 (22.4)
Others	7 (2.4)
Total	170 (100.0)

Classification of rational appeal type: The game commercials with emotional appeal were classified into a few types. The results are presented in Table 3. The commercials advertising the strengths such as top brand accounted for 22.8%, followed by rewards (17, 13.4%), promotion (7, 5.5%) and launching (5, 3.9%). Other commercials were a combination of two or more subcategories or difficult to classify due to the ambiguity of the contents.

Themes of emotional appeals: The analysis of themes of emotional appeals found the results illustrated in Table 4. Humor topped the list and was the main theme of 114 commercials (67.1%) followed by compassion in 38 (22.4%) and horror in 11 (6.5%).

Parody as an expression strategy: The presence and absence of parodies as an expression strategy in the game commercials was also analyzed. As shown in Table 5, a great portion (258, 77.5%) of them did not use parodies. About 75 commercials (22.5%) used parodies: 30 movie parodies (9.0%), 5 drama parodies (1.5%) and 40 others (12.0%) including music parodies, advertisement parodies and situation parodies (Table 5).

Table 5: Types of parody, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Ordinary (no parody)	258 (77.5)
Drama parody	5 (1.5)
Movie parody	30 (9.0)
Others	40 (12.0)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 6: Background music in the commercials, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Sounds used in the games	152 (45.6)
CM SONG	25 (7.5)
Others	156 (45.8)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 7: Game-playing scenes, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Game-playing scenes presented	91 (27.3)
No game-playing scenes	242 (72.7)
Total	333 (100.0)

Types of background music of game commercials:

Types of background music were also analyzed shown in Table 6. It might be natural that the same sounds used in games were the most used background music used in game commercials: 152 (45.6%). In 25 (7.5%) game commercials, CM songs exclusively made for a particular game were also used as background music. The rest 156, 45.8% classified as others include the sounds that use the narration and dialogue lines of the commercial models or the sounds that are hard to classify.

Presence and absence of game-playing scenes: As shown in Table 7, interestingly enough, most of the game commercials did not contain any scene depicting game-playing actions: 242 (72.7%). Only 91 (27.3%) of them displayed such scenes.

Background music and game-playing scenes: The two features of game-playing scenes and background music were cross-checked. The results of analysis are summarized in Table 8. In the commercials displaying game-playing scenes, the sounds used in games were the most common background music; 31 (34.1%). CM songs were used in 10 (11.0%) commercials and the rest (50, 54.9%) may be categorized as others. In the commercials not showing game-playing scenes, too, the sounds used in games were the most frequent choice for the background (121, 50.0%), followed by narration and dialogue lines of models (106, 43.8%) and CM songs (15, 6.2%). In sum, it might be concluded that a significant difference was found in the types of background music depending on the presence/absence of game-playing scenes.

Table 8: Background music and game-playing scenes, unit: number of commercials (%)

Categories	With game-playing scenes	No game-playing scenes	Others
Sound used in games	31 (34.1)	121 (50.0)	152 (45.6)
CM songs	10 (11.0)	15 (6.2)	25 (43.8)
Others	50 (54.9)	106 (43.8)	156 (46.8)
Total	91 (100)	242 (100.0)	333 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 7.453; df = 2; p < 0.05$

Table 9: Types of models unit, number of commercials (%) game characters

Parameters	Values
Game characters	137 (41.1)
Celebs	78 (23.4)
Professionals	4 (1.2)
Ordinary people	43 (12.9)
Others	4 (1.2)
Game character+celeb	47 (14.1)
Game character+professional models	4 (1.2)
Game character+ordinary people	16 (4.8)
Total	333 (100.0)

Model strategies

Types of models: The models in the commercials were categorized into several groups (Table 9). It was found that game characters were the most frequently used models, 137 (41.1%), followed by celebrities (78, 23.4%) and ordinary people (43, 12.9%). It is quite surprising that professional models appeared only in 4 commercials (1.2%). About 67 commercials of an interesting type employed a combination of game characters and human models: a combination of characters and celebrities (47, 14.1%) that of characters and ordinary people (16, 4.8%) and that of characters and professional models (4, 1.2%).

Relationship between types of models and types of commercials: A cross-checking analysis was performed to identify the types of models depending on the types of game commercials (Table 10). In the information delivering commercials, game characters appeared more than any others, 101 (40.6%), followed by celebrities 59, 23.7%, a combination of characters and celebrities 43, 17.3%, ordinary people 26, 10.4%, a combination of characters and professional models 2, 0.8% in that order.

Launching commercials marked a little different order of frequency: Game characters 14, 35.9%, ordinary people 12, 30.8%, celebrities 10, 25.6%, a combination of characters and celebrities 2, 5.1% and professional models 1, 2.6%. It was also found that the teaser commercials showed a slightly different ranking: game character models 10, 58.8%, celebrities and a combination of characters and ordinary people 2 each 11.8% and one character plus celebrity and one character plus professional model.

Table 10: Game advertising model according to game advertisement type, number of commercials (%)

Models	Game information delivery advertising	Promotional advertising	Game info+promo advertising	Launching advertising	Teaser advertising
Game character model	101 (40.6)	7 (50.0)	5 (35.7)	14 (35.9)	10 (58.8)
Celebrity model	59 (23.7)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	10 (25.6)	2 (11.8)
Professional model	3 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.6)	0 (0.0)
General model	26 (10.4)	1 (7.1)	3 (21.4)	12 (30.8)	1 (5.9)
Etc.	2 (0.8)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Character×Celebrity model	43 (17.3)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	2 (5.1)	1 (5.9)
Character×Professional model	2 (0.8)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.9)
Character×General model	13 (5.2)	1 (7.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (11.8)
Sum	249 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	39 (100.0)	17 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 51.759$; $df = 32$; $p < 0.05$

Table 11: Game advertising model according to game execution pattern, unit: number of commercials (%)

Models	Has game execution	No game execution
Game character model	8 (8.8)	129 (53.3)
Celebrity model	41 (45.1)	37 (15.3)
Professional model	2 (2.2)	2 (0.8)
General model	14 (15.4)	29 (12.0)
Etc.	1 (1.1)	3 (1.2)
Character×Celebrity model	19 (20.9)	28 (11.6)
Character×Professional model	1 (1.1)	3 (1.2)
Character×General model	5 (5.5)	11 (4.5)
Sum	91 (100.0)	242 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 63.120$; $df = 8$; $p < 0.001$

Types of models depending on the presence and absence of game-playing scenes: A cross-checking analysis was conducted to identify whether there is a significant difference in the types of models depending on the presence and absence of game-playing scenes in the commercials (Table 11). As for the commercials with game-playing scenes, celebrities 41, 45.1% were more used than any other types of models, followed by a combination of game characters+celebrities 19, 20.9%, ordinary people 14, 15.4%, game characters 8, 8.8%, a combination of game characters+ordinary people 5, 5.5%, professional models 2, 2.2% and a combination of game characters+professional models 1, 1.1%.

Of the commercials without game-playing scenes on the other hand, game characters accounted for more than a half 129, 53.3%, followed by celebrities 37, 15.3%, ordinary people 29, 12.0%, a combination of game characters+celebrities 28, 11.6%, a combination of game characters+ordinary people 11, 4.5%, game characters+professional models and others 3, 1.2% and professional models 2 (0.8%). Such a result may lead us to assume that there is a significant difference in model types depending on the presence and absence of game-playing scenes, perhaps because real people like celebrities or ordinary people should appear in commercials to show scenes of playing games (Table 11).

Character models in game advertising: The techniques of presenting character models were classified into a few types as shown in Table 12. Animated character

Table 12: Character models in game commercials, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
A racter models-animated	1 74 (52.3)
Character model-men	54 (16.2)
No appearance of characters	92 (27.6)
Character models-animated with men	6 (1.8)
Others	7 (2.1)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 13: Media for playing games, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
PC	21 (6.3)
Mobile	154 (46.2)
SNS	88 (26.4)
Others	70 (21.0)
Total	333 (100.0)

models accounted for more than a half 174, 52.3% of the commercials under analysis. In 54, 16.2% commercials, character models were men. Interestingly enough in 92, 27.6% commercials no game characters appeared. In very few commercials, game characters appeared with men 6, 1.8%. Other ambiguous cases were classified as others 7, 2.1% (Table 12).

Types of information in game commercials

Media for playing games: The statistical classification of game-playing media in the commercials found the results illustrated in Table 13. Mobile appliances as expected, topped the list at 154 (46.2%), followed by SNS (88, 26.4%) and PC (21, 6.3%). The commercials that were categorized as belonging to others (70, 21.0%) include a combination of mobile+tablet PC, a combination of SNS+PC and these not displaying any media at all (Table 13).

Types of game classes: As shown in Table 14, It might be interesting to see that more than a half of the games under analysis did not present any class category: 176 (52.9%), followed by R-12 (for 12 or older, 58, 17.4%) and for all ages (58, 17.4%), R-15 (37, 11.1%) and R-18 (4, 1.2%) (Table 14).

Download information: As shown in Table 15, more than two-thirds of the game commercials under analysis

Table 14: Types of game classes, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
All ages	58 (17.4)
R-12	58 (17.4)
R-15	37 (11.1)
R-18	4 (1.2)
No category	176 (52.9)
Total	333 (100.0)

Table 15: Information for game downloading, unit: number of commercials (%)

Parameters	Values
Information presented	235 (70.6)
Information not presented	98 (29.4)
Total	333 (100.0)

presented the information necessary to download the games: 235 (70.6%) contained such information whereas 98 (29.4) did not show any information on downloading.

CONCLUSION

The current research is a content analysis of game commercials that appeared on terrestrial and cable TV channels in the 2 years of 2014 and 2015. The topics of analysis were expression strategies, model strategies and information-presenting strategies. The results of analysis can be summarized as follows.

First, the characteristics of expression strategies were analyzed. It was found that information delivery was the most frequent type, followed by promotion, a combination of information+promotion, launching and the teaser type. As for the types of message appeals, the emotional type was the most frequently used one, followed by rational appeals and a combination of emotional and rational appeals. Among the messages belonging to rational type, those presenting 'Number 1' or competitive advantages were more than any others: rewards, promotion and launching in that order in terms of frequency. Humor was the most appealing theme for emotional messages, followed by affection and horror. Parody is a typical expression strategy in advertisements. However, most of these commercials 258, 77.5% did not use parody as an expression strategy whereas the rest 75, 22.5% used a parody in the commercials, movie parody being the most common type followed by drama parody, advertisement parody and music parody. The actual sounds used in games was more used as the background music of the commercials than any others. CM songs independently made for the games were the next in frequency, followed by other types that include narration by models and unclear cases. In particular, in the commercials containing game-playing scenes, the actual sounds used in the games were used more than any other types of sounds.

Second, in terms of the second topic of model strategies, the present research found the following results. Game characters were the most popular model type, followed by celebrities and a combination of

characters+celebrities, ordinary people, a combination of characters+ordinals people and professional models. In most types of commercials, game characters and celebrities were most common models. In the commercials in which models were presented in a scene of playing games, celebrities was the most widely used type, followed by a combination of characters+celebrities, the least being professional models. It is interesting that those commercials without game-playing scenes employed game characters more than other model types, followed by celebrities. In other words, celebrities other than game characters appeared in most of the game-playing scenes. Animated character was more used than any other types of characters. About 54 (16.2%) character models were displayed by men or women. Still, 92 commercials 27.6% did not use any game character.

Third, as for the information-presenting strategies, the analysis found the following results. In terms of game-playing media presented in the commercials, mobile topped the list followed by SNS and PC. As far as the information on game rating is concerned, those with no rating were more than any other ratings, followed by All, R-12, R-15 and R-18. 3. It was also found that the number of commercials with the information for downloading was greater than those without.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future researches might aim to examine what factors affect the characteristics of game commercials. Questions to inquire would include the following. Which type of advertising appeals would be effective for each type of game commercials? What type of models could be effective for game commercials? What kind of strategies would bring positive results? What kind of background music would do it? Or which medium of advertising would better fit each type of commercials. Empirical researches on these issues will shed a meaningful light on the field of game commercials.

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