THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVERGAME AND BRAND LOYALTY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of advergame on increasing brand loyalty. It aims to achieve concrete results by comparing the level of brand loyalty among two groups of Vodafone brand customers: those who have been part of the "Vodafone City" advergame and those who have not played it. The method chosen in this paper is the Quantitative Method. Study Approach is Deductive Approach. The research material used in this paper is collected through the Survey. The sample of this study consists of 600 people, clients of "Vodafone Albania" Sh.A. The main findings of the study are: (1) Advergame has a positive impact on brand loyalty, (2) Loyalty to advergame is closely related to brand loyalty. This study is the first of its kind in Albania. To date, there is no study which investigates advergame practice as a brand communication tool. Presenting concrete results, the current study can contribute to the existing literature and be an impetus for further studies in this regard.

Keywords: Advergame, Brand Loyalty, Vodafone City Advergame, Vodafone Brand

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the main focus is not "to produce" but to be successful in transferring it from producer to consumer. To achieve this, marketing strategies have played and still play a key role, and to have competitive advantages, marketers focus and encourage creative, targeted and effective forms of transferring marketing message. Furthermore, numerous studies focusing on consumer behavior suggest that introducing entertaining elements into human life improves the absorption of messages, improves their behaviors and attitudes toward parties. Meanwhile, field-focused works emphasize that elements such as brand awareness, brand preference, brand choice, purchase motivation, purchase intention, brand satisfaction and brand loyalty have a positive impact on harmonizing the person's feelings (see Sirgy, Lee, Johar, & Tidwell, 2008; Sirgy, 1985; Sirgy & Su, 2000; Lui, Li, Mizerski & Soh, 2012).

The latest invention of marketing field, advergame, is thought to offer all those and that the elements which make it up best achieve the marketing purpose. On the other hand, the ultimate goal of brands is brand loyalty, which goes through several phases and is considered to be the highest level of consumer connection with its brand. Loyalty to the brand goes through several phases, which if listed based on the brand-customer level of connection, usually begins with awareness, continues with consideration, goes on with brand preference which if it is translated into purchase can be considered as brand loyalty.

Technological developments have made advergames even more sophisticated and their use to promote brands has taken other dimensions. Nowadays, apart from grocery brands, advergame is being widely used by the brands operating in the telecommunications sector, sports and real estate brands. So it can be said that expanding the use of advergames from the brand operating in different sectors is related to (1) the profile extension of people who prefer to play them, and (2) the dependence that online games cause to players. As suggested by Kinard and Hartman (2013), further studies in this regard could explore more about advergame's moderating effectiveness in terms of brand loyalty.

Numerous studies that address advergame as an effective brand communication tool have so far focused largely on the positive relationship between the brand message and the adverse effect it has with advergame (Rodgers, 2003); higher purchase intentions due to positive attitude towards the game (Shamadasani, Stanaland, and Tan, 2001); the connection between players and game attitude (Wise et al., 2008). But in our best knowledge, no other work deals with the close relationship that exists between loyalty to the game and loyalty to the brand. For this reason, this paper provides an empirical approach to the positive relationship between loyalty to the game and loyalty to the brand by making a concrete study of a successful case applied in Albania in the telecommunications sector. *Using survey method this research*

tests the hypothesis that using advergame as an brand communication tool affects positively in increasing brand loyalty and at the same time, loyalty to advergame is positively related to brand loyalty. Differently from previous studies this work uses quantitative method to come up with some concrete results: by using SPSS program is quantifies the data collected, and test the hypothesis using Ki-square test; finally it does some cross tabulations in order to specify in more details the results using demographic data. More over it makes a parallelism of the results with the brand loyalty model developed by Dick and Basu (1994) by which is done on interpretation of the results coming out from relation between inclusion in advergame "Vodafone City" and the recommendation of "Vodafone" brand and then interpreting the results respectively to the level of corresponding loyalty. The study is the first of its kind in Albania. To date, there is no study which investigates the practice of advergame as a brand communication tool. Presenting concrete and considerable results, the study can contribute to the existing literature and be an impetus for deepening further studies in this regard and at the same time may serve as an example for further practices of advergame. The increased effect on brand loyalty is measured by the recommendation level is done for "Vodafone" brand that results from participants included on the "Vodafone City" advergame and the positive relationship between recommendation done for the advergame and the brand. Based on the results may be concluded that inclusion in the game is very important to increase recommendation level for the brand and consequently for the increase of brand loyalty. Moreover, the results showed that recommendation level for the advergames goes approximately the same as the recommendation level for the brand which means that it is very important to design an advergame from which the players get positive emotions from it.

This study is structured into five parts. After the introduction in the first part, the literature review part deals with the theoretical aspects of the development and definition of the advergame concept, the concept of brand loyalty, and the advergame linkage with brand loyalty and so on. In the third part is presented a clear development of the methodology used. The next part shows the main the findings, analyzes the results and test the hypothesis. Finally it comes to some concluding marks and give some recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development Background and Definition of Advergame

Advergame development as a game is supposed to date around the '30s, time when cases of the use of various forms of brand promotion are identified, but evidently they were evidenced during the 1980's as advertising tools, while the literature about the concept and its features starts from the year 2000, taking year by year more attention of both academics and

practitioners. Advergame development as a digital game with the purpose of promotion is mainly related to the Japanese invasion which brought about change from a technical point of view and also regarding the content. According to Malliet and de Meyer (2005) some of the most successful Japanese games were "Space Invaders" (Taito, 1978) and "Pac-Man" (Namco, 1980). The aforementioned cases illustrate the appearance of the same logic with advergame, since if we adhere to the definition of advergames those cases cannot be considered as such. According to Schwarz (2005), the main feature of advergame which distinguishes it from other online games is the brand embed in its creation. Advergame is defined as online game that has marketing content (Dobrow, 2004; Thomases, 2001). Svahn (2005) defines advergame as "an objective-oriented competitive activity within agreed rules, designed entirely or partially and produced in order to actively or passively assist in transmitting the message set to persuade the player to change behavior in the world outside the magical circle of the game".

Regarding the advergame development as a concept and its entrance in marketing literature, it was about January 2000 the first time when Anthony Giallourakis has written about it (Sharma, 2014), and later by Matt Krantz at Wired "Jargon Watch" in January of '01 (Krantz, 2001). A year later, the first advergame definition was made by Keats (2001) as "a downloadable or web-based game created solely to enable product placement", a definition that was somehow accurate for years but, besides the basic definition, Conde-Pumpido (2014) adds that the purpose of advergame is not only to enable product placement but "to convey the message of the advertiser who does not always use product placement". In recent years, many scholars make different definitions for advergame in their studies (An and Stern, 2011; Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010; Montgomery and Chester, 2009; Culp et al., 2010; Dahl et al., 2009, Mallinckrodt and Mizerski, 2007; Moore, 2006; Moore and Rideout, 2007). Although everyone explains advergame, none of them includes all the necessary elements that describe it in practice and that differentiate it from other digital marketing strategies. Different authors make definitions and emphasize different advergame elements.

Among the main elements Moore (2006) added to advergame's basic definitions was the online gaming, but nowadays games are available not only online but also on other platforms. Other important element Moore (2006) adds to the definition of advergame are those features that serve as brand identifiers. The definition of Mallinckrodt and Mizerski (2007) focuses on how brands adhere to advergames by defining it as a form of branded entertainment with features of advertising messages. The definition of Dahl et al. (2009) seems to be the most accurate, as it states that promotional messages are attached to the game. While Cicchirillio and Lin (2011) in their definition do not include the sole purpose of advergame existence "brand promotion". Conde-Pumpido (2014) argues that advergames are "media chosen by brands to

convey their message." To conclude, we can say that advergames are interactive games designed by companies to promote their brands by joining the brand's message in their entertaining content.

Meanwhile, the way how advergames have been perceived explains in details how the authors have come to the definition of advergame. The advergame presence is known since 1980 when "Kool-Aid" and "Pepsi" developed "Atari 2600" games that identify their products. In 1998, "N'Vision Design" built their company's campaign through the game "Good Willie Hunting" which was a success that drew attention to this promotion method. Advergame represents a special form of entertainment through the brand as the main focus is on the inclusion of a branded message (Deal, 2005). Initially, advergame should entertain customers and, secondly, involve consumers to form a positive attitude to the brand (Tina and Buckner, 2006). Its service is based on integration and interaction (Dobrow, 2004).

Advergame belongs to the world of video games, but they have to be understood differently and have different features. The video gaming world is built in such a way that the individual gets the feel of the controller or expert of the entire process.

Advergame is defined as an online game that includes marketing content (Dobrow, 2004; Thomases, 2001). It is a neologism formed by the combination of "advertising" and "game" words, and is described as a marketing strategy that mainly uses electronic games to advertise brands through the diving mix of advertising and entertainment that takes the form of video games (Obringer, 2007). But, there are authors who emphasis initially the brand and then the game. This approach shows the way that this mix functions in reality. Grossman (2005) defines advergame as a combination of brand and entertainment with the aim to increase site visibility of brands along with message transfer. Kretchmer (2005) defines advergame as a computer game created specifically to function as a commercial entertainment content that mimics traditional forms of gaming.

Advergame is designed for the sponsorship brand and aims to provide consumers with an inclusive and interactive experience (Wise, et al., 2008). Unlike traditional advertising, given that the customer interacts with brand components in the game, his role changes from a passive to an active player (Buckner et al., 2002). The value of advergame is to transmit an attractive advertising message so that customers create a positive attitude towards advertised brand (Dahl, Eagle, and Ba'ez, 2009). It offers this unique way of demonstrating the product, unlike traditional practices and makes a fusion of the elements by attaching them to the product (Wise et al., 2008).

Brand Loyalty Concept

Before we move specifically to addressing the concept of brand loyalty, it is important to first make a detailed explanation of what phases the customer passes to achieve loyalty. Initially, recognition of the brand is the first important step in this process, as the development of the process leading to the final act of purchase passes through phases that follow a hierarchy that begins with the recognition of the brand, goes on with the creation of consideration for the brand and then realized through brand preference which, then based on different motives, turns into brand loyalty. The concept of brand loyalty has constantly sparked a lot of interest and, as it has become the main focus of companies trying to create brand loyalty to consumers it has also been the focus of field scholars.

According to Aaker (1991), Jones and Sasser (1995), Keller and Lehman, (2006); Runyan and Droge, (2008); the concept of brand loyalty is used by marketers as a powerful strategic weapon to provide competitive and sustainable advantages. Furthermore, it has been argued further that a firm's ability to retain existing clients and transform them into loyal to the brand is a critical issue for continued success (Russell-Bennett, et al., 2007) because, brand loyalty is an important component of brand value (Aaker, 1991) and that loyal customers are a significant competitive asset for the brand and have a decisive impact on brand equity growth. Hence, increasing the level of brand loyalty is a good opportunity to increase the percentage of brand volume in the market, which is related to the growth of return on investment (Buzzel and Gale, 1987).

In literature it is concluded that brand loyalty reduces marketing costs (Aaker, 1991; Jones and Sasser, 1995; Uncles and Laurent, 1997), specifically in the service sector (Reichheld et al., 1996). In more detail, the reasons that companies push in this direction can be emphasized as follows; brand loyalty generates more sales and as a result of higher revenue, the existence of a loyal brand customer base raises barriers to competitors and leave long enough time to the company to react to them (Aaker, 1991), reduces the cost of marketing efforts to attract new customers who cost approximately six times higher than existing customer retention (Rosenberg and Czepiel, 1983; Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998), loyal customers are less price sensitive (Krishnamurthi and Raj, 1991; Reichheld et al., 1996) reduces the sensitivity of customers to competitors' marketing efforts and reduces the need to seek replacement of the brand with a similar one (Solomon, 1983, Knox and Walker, 2001, Rundle- Thiele and Mackay, 2001). Therefore, customer satisfaction with the aim of minimizing the possible reasons for switching the brand they consume is more profitable for companies (Aaker, 1991). Following the research, Russell-Bennett, et al, (2012) raised an essential question regarding studies about this approach: -Why are consumers committed to buying a brand consistently?

In this prism, many researchers have proposed different factors as precedents of brand loyalty. Some of them (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Sirdeshmukh, et al., 2002; Harris and Goode, 2004; Woodside and Walser, 2007; He et al., 2012) outline psychological constructs such as trust, satisfaction, engagement and value perceived to explain brand loyalty. Others like (Mukherjee and He, 2008; Marin, et al., 2009; He and Li, 2011) consider, among other things, the motives of social identity as consumer self-expression, self-expansion and self-esteem - identity and brand identity as explanations for brand loyalty. However, brand loyalty is mainly approached in two ways: based on behavior and based on attitudes, which, although both are valid, when used separately, have different meanings for the company and yield different results (Peppers and Rogers, 2016). Thus, it has been assessed and defined in different perspectives and it is concluded that it concerns the sufficiency of buying a brand and different motives for the customer's continued preference towards the brand (Zeithaml et al. 1996, Dick and Basu, 1994).

Brand loyalty based on behavior is related to ongoing purchase of customers over a certain time frame, which is supposed to create a growing link between the brand and the consumer. This approach is related to the observation of certain behaviors of a brand according to repeated consumer purchases, and consequently, different scholars have defined brand loyalty based on repetitive purchases. Specifically, Brown (1953) defines brand loyalty with five, Tucker (1964), with three, and Lawrence (1969) with four repetitive purchases. However, patterns of brand loyalty purchase repetition-based not always are accurate and often result as manipulated conclusions, for the fact that in this case observable is behavior rather than motive. So, not every repeated purchase should be considered as an indicator of addiction to the brand; it can only express the acceptability of the brand (Assael, 1998) with or unwilling, as a result of the constraining barriers for certain consumer groups in different markets. Because, it is a fact that repeated purchases usually occur in markets where; Monopolies dominate as a result of the transformation of habitual behavior due to the ease of purchase, because of the lack of similar brands, for the pricing reasons or promotion of sales which in itself do not carry the affection of the consumer against the brand. This kind of loyalty does not guarantee consistency and is destined to disintegrate in the first case of changing circumstances, eliminating barriers and price changes (Dick and Basu, 1994; Assael, 1998).

So the explanation of customer loyalty is based on two motives. *The first motive* is the benefit that a client receives from a promotion and *the second motive* implies an emotional connection or proximity that the client has created with the brand. The first reason is valid at certain times and ends when circumstances change or when the supply becomes invalid. While the second motive that is closely related to "true" loyalty, affects the customer relationship with

the brands that he considers special. Therefore, companies mainly carry out promotion activities oriented by the second motive, "real" loyalty is the desire of the client to continue his connection to the brand (Cyr, et al., 2006), is the customer's commitment (Evanschitzky, 2006).

For this reason, (Knox, 1998; Back and Parks, 2003; Kim, et al, (2007) argue that if customer attitude towards the brand is more positive than toward a similar brand, at that time it can be considered loyal customer. In this regard there are obvious differences between loyal customers and frequent attendants (Day, 1976; Jacoby, et al, 1978). Attitude-based loyalty has to do with the fact that even if the customer does not repeat the act of buying, it is important that he speaks well about the company, suggests it to friends and persuades them to buy it. So the brand loyalty is a kind of attitude and should not be expected the same attitude from all clients (Knox, 1998) since, brand loyalty is influenced by the proportion of attitudes (Dick and Basu (1994). According to them, "true" loyalty is defined as a long-term commitment to repeat the purchase based on an emotional co-ordination. Thus, definitions focused solely on the operational aspects of repetitive purchases are not sufficient to explain brand loyalty, as they also need to take into account the specifics and multidimensional attitudes shown to the brand (Back and Parks, 2003). Hence, approaches to measuring brand loyalty based on attitudes suggest behaviors such as; recommendations and referrals that make clients to each-others through the word-of-mouths which, according to Aaker (1991) and, Jones and Sasser (1995) appear as a result of brand loyalty and attitudes (belief, emotional connection , engagement and cost changes should be taken into account to measure the "correct" concept of brand loyalty) (Baloglu, 2002; Dick and Basu, 1994; Shoemaker and Lewis, 1999; Tidewell and Fredline, 2004) . So, briefly, brand-based definitions based on behavioral perspectives emphasis repeated purchase loyalty, while attitude-based definitions focus on the motive of customer loyalty to the brand. In their brand loyalty model, Dick and Basu (1994), anticipate different levels of loyalty according to behavior and proportion of attitudes and categorize brand loyalty levels

Table 1. Dick and Basu (1994) Loyalty Model

		Repeated Purchase	
		High	Low
Proportional attitude	High	Loyalty	Latent Loyalty
	Low	Spurious Loyalty	No Loyalty

Source: Dick, A. S., & Basu, K. (1994). Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework. Journal of the academy of marketing science, 22(2), 99-113.

1. ***No Loyalty:*** As can be seen in Table 1, customers with low "proportional attitude" and low repeated purchase are not considered loyal clients. According to Dick and Basu (1994) there are two reasons why "proportional attitude" is low: first, the lack of proper promotional activity by new companies in the market, and the second, the strong competition between the brands operating in the same markets. Lack of customer loyalty, as it may be caused by the company, may be caused by some of their features also. According to McGoldrick and Andre (1997), some of the reasons are: Intelligence, engagement, limited entertainment, saving, curiosity, and leisure.

2. ***Spurious Loyalty:*** , customers with low "proportional attitude" and high repeated purchase are not spuriously loyal clients. So, this type of customer, despite the fact that repurchase the same brand, continues to have poor emotional connection with it.

3. ***Latent Loyalty:*** At this level of loyalty, despite the fact that the client is strongly connected with the brand through "proportional attitude", the "repeated purchase" is low. So, the customer has appresiated the brand but buys little of it. For latent loyalties, we can say that, despite the fact that customers are not constant customers, they have positive attitudes to the brand.

4. ***Loyalty:*** At this level of loyalty, customers with high "proportional attitude" and high repeated purchase are loyal clients. Absolute loyalty, as it may be the result of a good organization of the company's activities, may also be the result of the consumer itself. The reasons that can be caused by the customer are: laziness, habit, comfort, time saving and full entertainment (McGoldrick and Andre, 1997).

Often it is a seen a great similarity between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. But, the level of customer expectations represents the client's satisfaction, while the likelihood of re-routing and continuity of the client shows his addiction to the brand. So every frequent attendee is a satisfied customer, but not every satisfied customer is loyal customer (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998). According to Goderis (1998), in order to increase the level of loyalty, the level of satisfaction should be at the highest level. In many companies it has been noted that satisfied clients are more loyal to those who are partially satisfied (Bowen and Shoemaker, 1998).

Given that a considerable part of the dissatisfied customers will not repurchase the brand, the company's main focus must be to establish positive relationships with customers and improve them (Plymire, 1991). Once, on average, each customer shares with 8 to 10 other people his experience. While loyal customers are inclined to share their thoughts about the

products they like (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010), and people are willing to listen to others' thoughts on certain products (Krugman, 1967).

Advergame and Brand Loyalty

Marketers are constantly seeking new ways to communicate with consumers in the most effective way. At different times, they have tried to understand and determine the process of customers purchasing behavior using models and implementing different strategies for improving brand communication. As is well known, brand communication is a dynamic and constantly changing process as it is related to lifestyle and how people consume media (old and new), which are reasons that affect and cause change in behaviors and motives of purchasing customers. Thus, as a result of increasing customer awareness and the ease of access to any information, it is increasingly noted that consumers are much more interested in the meanings than marketing forms. So unlike the past, consumers are interested in value, and this does not make any difference if it is transmitted through entertainment or various loyalty programs (Gilbreath, 2009). Especially the last decade when, entertainment is becoming increasingly popular because the effectiveness of traditional advertising formats is declining (Lowrey, et al., 2005).

For the above reasons, marketers try to create brand recognition by combining advertising with different online gaming forms. So advergame can be a powerful tool for building brand loyalty and collecting important data for existing and potential customers (Çeltek, 2010). Because, unlike other forms of advertising, advergames allow marketers the opportunity to establish a direct relationship with potential customers, so that in order to become part of the game, at least, implies their encouragement to record demographic data (Edery and Mollick, 2008) and, addressing users in their environment by presenting value in the form of entertainment rather than classical loyalty programs (Gaarbo and Johsen, 2012). They are considered as a way to create brand recognition and brand loyalty, ensuring orientation of companies toward branding occurs through multiple exposures to certain audiences (Calvert, 2003).

In all their forms, online games are considered highly successful in maintaining an extremely high level of customer loyalty through the degree of addiction (Lewinski, 2000), especially on children and young age audiences. Addiction to them makes players play them consistently. All these reasons push people to play online games repeatedly and the design features those games possess, helps them created high loyalty toward the game and consequently toward the brand (Choi and Kim, 2004)).Hansen (2013) points out that, the perception of satisfaction, social norms, and positive feelings of online games affect loyalty of

players, a finding which implies that the more positive the player's attitude to the game, the more positive it is expected to be its attitude toward brand and brand loyalty. This is a phenomenon identified specifically in children aged 7-10 years and who encourage to replay the game (Waiguny et al., 2011; Rifon, et al., 2014).

According to Escalante de Cruz, et al., (2004), the creation of brand loyalty is an activity that is accomplished over a period of time, requiring two to three years. They found that children, still without reading and writing skills, exhibit specific requirements for various branded products. Moreover, relationships that children build with brands since the early stages of childhood are thought to be stronger and more stable than those formed later (Ji, 2002). Therefore, it has been suggested that child exposure to brands, especially in the early years of family life, is critical to creating emotional links and strengthening brand relationships (LaTour, LaTour, and Zinkhan, 2010). These findings are not surprising as, attitude towards the game is a psychological response that stands in parallel with an advertisement, an important precedent for attitude towards brand (Muehling and McCan, 1993).

As games are played repeatedly and with long periods of time the experiences are different (Grodal 2000, Nelson, Keum and Yaros 2004). In this context, Bhat, Bevans and Sengupta (2002) conclude that as long as consumers stay on a web site where advergames are placed and as often as they return to the website, the greater the potential to increase sales and brand loyalty. Through advergames placed on the web pages of brands attract players to play and thus begins the experience of branded entertainment (Moore, 2006). But advergame also, as a new method widely used by marketers to promote their brands, has its own specific features related to their design. Not every advergame, well-formed and well-designed in the aspect of variability, turns out to be successful in creating brand loyalty. Though in their complexity they greatly affect the creation of brand recognition, if they do not include a compelling story or a character that create telepresence they lose the effectiveness in creating brand loyalty. Only advergames that really have a considerable level of telepresence can achieve this goal successfully because it minimizes the deformation of the message and, through the recognition it creates, categorizes the brand in the category of favorite brands; so if telemetry is fully achieved brand loyalty is enhanced (Purswani, 2010).

One of the most valuable models for designing online games is the conceptual model proposed by Choi and Kim (2004), which is a model of customer loyalty to online games and includes personal interaction and social interaction as a precedent of customer loyalty. According to this model, to ensure effective personal interaction, online games must contain: (1) appropriate targets to be reached by the players, (2) the instructions the player must follow to achieve the online game objectives, (3)) appropriate feedback options for the purpose of

tracking information on the current situation of the player in the game. Online games also require the feature of effective social interaction. In order to promote social interaction effectively, they should provide (4) appropriate communication opportunities between players, (5) appropriate spaces where players can share their thoughts. If personal and social interaction (6) is effectively supported during online games, players may have an optimal experience. Lastly (8), if players experience positive experiences of the online game, their loyalty to the game will also increase.

Also, a study on the use of the Impact Model Hierarchy (Ghirvu, 2013) has tested the AIDA model, which describes the consumer buying process by interpreting this model in the context of online advergame. According to him, the use of the hierarchy of effect patterns based on the interaction between consumers and brands by the interaction achieved through advergames, where the player is exposed to the advertising messages contained in their content, represents a multifaceted model depicting how consumers create an awareness of the brand's total lack of recognition and how they exhibit particular preferences and buy the product and potentially develop brand loyalty. In this process, it is important for marketers to clearly identify these hierarchical phases and to observe at each stage of each case the customer has retired (Ghirvu, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

In this study it is used *deductive approach* under which, it is developed a theoretical and conceptual framework and then goes on with the empirical part in order to test the hypothesis raised. The empirical part consists on *primary data* collected through the use of *quantitative method.* The procedure followed is gathering information from different customer of the service offered by the company taken as a case study through the *survey research material*. Questionnaire was self designed and after the conduction of the appropriate structure and form of the survey (appropriate questions that gather information for the raised hypothesis, listing the questions in accordance with the importance and appropriate order, formulation of question understandable, easy enough, and so forth) it is decided for the sample of the research to consist on 600 participants. It is taken care that all participant of the survey to be client of "Vodafone Albania" company, which are contacted randomly after they have done any transaction near the service shops of the company. The direct research focus is the case of Mobile Advergame called "Vodafone City" which is applied by "Vodafone Albania" company within the Albanian territory. Surveys are filled on 10 different (Tirana, Durrsi, Fier, Vlora, Elbasan, Shkodra, Korca, Berat, Gjirokastra, Kuksi) cities where the above mentioned advergame has been applied. The main aim of the study is to measure the effect of advergame

as a brand communication tool on the customer loyalty toward the brand. For this reason the sample is separated into two parts: 300 of the respondents which have been part of the advergame by fully or partially playing the game have filled all the questionnaire while the other 300 which have not been part of the game have filled only the part of it consisting on demographic issues and the questions regarding advergame involvement, attitude toward it and brand loyalty, in order to make e comparison between the results pointed out from the two separate groups. Surveys have been conducted during the period May 1- June 30, 2018. Those are unique data gathered of such a kind from which may be extracted different results and can lead to considerable conclusions. Despite the subjective nature of the customer level data and the reliability of self-reported answers, they are advantageous for allowing benchmarks and specifications and since they are the first can be taken as references for other similar applications.

ANALYSIS

Demographic Distribution

Table 2: Distribution of Participants According to Demographic Data

2.1 Age Group	n	%	2.2 Gender	n	%
14-24	340	56,7	Female	284	47,3
25-34	200	33,3	Male	316	52,7
35 +	60	10,0	**Total**	**600**	**100,0**
Total	**600**	**100,0**			
2.3 City	n	%	**2.4 Education Level**	n	%
Tirana	260	43,3	Secondary School	16	2,7
Durrsi	68	11,3	High School	324	54,0
Fier	52	8,7	Bachelor	260	43,3
Vlora	44	7,3	**Gjithsej**	**600**	**100,0**
Elbasan	40	6,7			
Shkodra	40	6,7			
Korça	32	5,3	**2.5 Employment Status**	n	%
Berat	24	4,0	Yes	242	40,3
Gjirokastra	20	3,3	No	358	59,7
Kuksi	20	3,3	**Total**	**600**	**100,0**
Total	**600**	**100,0**			

According to the data presented in Table 2.1, where is given the distribution of participants in this study by the respective age groups, it results that 56.7% of them belong to the age group 14-24, 33.3% are 25-34 year olds , 10% of the adult age 35+ and over. The main result

extracted from here is that, as it is stated on literature also the main users of the mobile company and its applications (which automatically means that at the same time are the main users or requestors of the services those companies offer) are teenagers, adult and young people till the age of 35 years-old.

According to the data presented in Table 2.2, where is shown the distribution of participants in this study by gender, 47.3% of them belong to the female gender and 52.7% belong to the male gender. As it is seen there is not any considerable difference in usage of the offered services by the company according to the gender (both genders use it approximately on the same level).

Table 2.3, shows the distribution of the participants according to the residential towns where the "Vodafone City" game was played, it turns out that most of the participants in the study have become part of the game in the city of Tirana, to be followed by the city of Durres. Specifically, 43.3% of the participants are in Tirana, 11.3% in Durrës, 8.7% in Fier, 7.3% in Vlora, 6.7% in Elbasan, 6.7 % in Shkodra, 5.3% in Korça, 4.0% in Berat, 3.3% in Gjirokastra and 3.3% in Kukes. As it is expected most of the participants come from metropolis of the country, which in general can be considered as country representative since the concentration of population is high. But, the result is related with one other fact also, it was the second time this game was played in Tirana, and they were more informed about the game and maybe more familiar also.

The distribution of participants according to the "level of education that are enrolled or have completed" presented on Table 2.4 points out that, 2.7% of them follow or have completed secondary education, 54% are attending or have completed higher education, and 43.3% are attending or have completed university (bachelor).

Employment status reported on Table 2.5 showed that 40.3% of participants are employed, while 59.7% of them are not employed. As stated on literature participation on different online games (among them advergame) is linked among others with leisure and the manner how people decide to pass free time. Since there is no any huge difference between two groups, it means that it is effective for both employed and unemployed people.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Information/contact participants have for "Vodafone City" advergame.

"Vodafone City advergame" Information	n	%
Yes. I have information what "Vodafone City" advergame is	300	50,0
No. I have no idea	300	50,0
Total	**600**	**100,0**

The above given figures in Table 3 present the information which make the separation of participant on two different equal: 50% of respondents are the one that are informed about Vodafone City advergame, while 50% of them do not have information about it. The sample of participants without information is used to make a comparison at the final stage for the level of loyalty between two groups.

Table 4: Recommendation percentage participants have done for "Vodafone City" advergame.

Recommendation for "Vodofone City" advergame	n	%
Yes	178	59,3
No	56	18,7
Maybe	66	22,0
Total	**300**	**100,0**

According to the data presented in Table 4, where the distribution of participants of this study was made according to their readiness to recommend "Vodafone City" advergame to their friends, colleagues and their family members, it turns out that 59.3% will recommend it , 18.7% would not recommend it , and 22% said that maybe I would recommend it.

Table 5: Recommendation would be done for "Vodafone" brand by
participants that have information about "Vodafone City Advergame"

"Vodafone" Brand Recommendation by informed participants	n	%
Yes	176	58,7
No	124	41,3
Total	**300**	**100,0**

According to the data presented in Table 5, where is presented recommendation would be done for "Vodafone" brand by participants that have information about "Vodafone City Advergame", it turns out that 58.7% of them would recommend Vodafone to friends, colleagues and their family members, while 41.3% would not recommend it.

Table 6: Recommendation would be done for "Vodafone" brand by
participants that did not have information about "Vodafone City Advergame"

"Vodafone" Brand Recommendation by uninformed participants	n	%
Yes	84	28,0
No	216	72,0
Total	**300**	**100,0**

According to the data presented in Table 6, where is presented recommendation would be done for "Vodafone" brand by participants that did not have information about "Vodafone City Advergame", it turns out that 28% of them would recommend Vodafone to friends, colleagues and their family members, while 72% would not recommend it.

Hypotheses Testing

In this part of the study, the results of the hypotheses testing are presented

H₁: Using Advergame as an Brand Communication Tool Affects Positively in Increasing Brand Loyalty (Net Promoter Score -NPS).

Table 7: The relation between inclusion in advergame "Vodafone City"
and the recommendation of "Vodafone" brand.

Do you have information about "Vodafone City" advergame?		Would you recommend "Vodafone" brand?		
		Yes	No	Total
Yes	n	176	124	300
	%	58,7	41,3	100,0
No	n	84	216	300
	%	28,0	72,0	100,0
Total	n	260	340	600
	%	43,3	56,7	100,0

X^2=57,448;

p=0,000*p<0,01

#Percentages are given on row bases

To test this hypothesis, the Ki-square test was used. According to the results achieved at the end of the Ki-square test, it turns out that the link between Vodafone City advergame and the Vodafone brand recommendation is statistically significant. (X^2=57,448; p=0,000; p<0,01).

As above, it can be said that that 58.7% of participants who have had information or contact with "Vodafone City" advergame would recommend the Vodafone brand to their friends, colleagues and family members. While the Vodafone brand recommendation level for respondents who did not have information or contact with "Vodafone City" advergame remained at 28%.

H₂: Loyalty to Advergame is Positively Related to Brand Loyalty.

Table 7: The relation between recommendation of advergame "Vodafone City"
and the recommendation of "Vodafone" brand.

Would you recommend "Vodofone City" advergame?		Would you recommend "Vodafone" brand?		
		Yes	No	Total
Yes	n	166	12	178
	%	93,3	6,7	100,0
No	n	0	56	56
	%	0,0	100,0	100,0
Maybe	n	10	56	66
	%	15,2	84,8	100,0
Total	n	176	124	300
	%	58,7	41,3	100,0

X^2=218,859;
p=0,000 p<0,01**
# Percentages are given on row base s

To test this hypothesis, the Ki-square test was used. According to the results achieved at the end of the Ki-square test, it turns out that the link between the advergame Vodafone City recommendation and the Vodafone brand recommendation is statistically significant ($X2$ = 218,859; p = 0,000; p < 01).

As noted above, according to the data presented in Table 11, 93.3% of the participants who said that "Vodafone City" advergame would recommend to their friends, colleagues and family members they will also recommended the "Vodafone" brand, while all those who prefer not to recommend "Vodafone City" advergame prefer not to recommend the Vodafone brand as well.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As discussed earlier on the results part, among 600 participants on the survey half of them are informed regarding "Vodafone City" advergame. After this fundamental categorisation for the further steps the aim of survey has been to collect step by step appropriate information that satisfy hypothesis risen. Initially on the literature part, it is obviously firstly shown that there are phases or step toward the brand loyalty and secondly it has been filed the relationship between attitude toward advergame and consequently toward the brand its is design by; in this regard its worth to mention once again the study conducted by Hansen (2012) which show the positive relation between them. Some authors relate the brand loyalty with the concept of behavior and attitude, while the literature focused on advergame analyse those concept taking into consideration how they stand toward advergame. From the other perspective, the effectivity of

any communication campaign is measure by the direct effect it has on sales, or differently how it has affected the purchases. One of the ways purchases are increased is through the recommendations clients do. In this regard, Table 4 and Table 5 show that 59.3% out of 300 informed participant would recommend the game to the others and 58.7% would recommend Vodafone brand as a result of the satisfaction they got from playing the advergame, while the same measure is done for uninformed participants and it appeared that only 28% will recommend the brand. Based on this it can be concluded that it is very important the inclusion into the advergame and the effect of using advergame as an brand communication tool is that it considerably increase the brand loyalty.

If we consider the loyalty model developed by Dick and Basu (1994) but as a base for analysis the loyalty level to take cords tabulation presented in appendix, it can be said that 58.75 show absolute loyalty, 28% show spurious loyalty, and 41.3% show latent loyalty. the result is satisfactory and the hypothesis is tested so far, but the critical point remains the last one, which we think show the difference, and which we suggest is the part with which companies must work on. No Loyalty appears at the level of 72%, which at the first look is a very high number, but when you see the reason behind it is understood the real effect of advergame as e brand communication tool. This 72% show how loyal will be that customer who is uninformed and does not participate on the game; from the perspective of the company, this is the sample of the participant on the survey which should be as a potential customer if they would have been participated on game.

Once we sow the importance of inclusion on advergame and the effect it has on brand loyalty, we go furthermore to measure the level of recommendation would be done by participants by rising the hypothesis that "Loyalty toward the advergame is positively related to loyalty toward brand". In this case based on the Table 6, 93.3% of the one who would recommend the advergame would also recommend the brand and only 6.75 of them wouldn't recommend the brand. The other interesting result here is that none of them responds that categorically wouldn't recommend the advergame. In this case the group of potential customers appear to be even higher, around 84.8%, which once again show the effectiveness of advergame as brand communication tool.

If we would go further to a more specified analysis, based on the figures given on Appendix, which show detailed results on how stands the recommendation level of both "Vodafone City" advergame and "Vodafone" brand, it appeared that; among the total of those that are willing to recommend the advergame 55.1% of them comes from the age group 14-24, 32.6% from the age group 25-34 and only 12.4% from the group age 35-54. Despite the differences in percentage in general we come to the same conclusion in both cases (advergame

and brand recommendation), the highest percentage is occupied by the age group 14-24, and it goes like that, the older the less they would recommend.

Regarding the gender specifications, in total even thought with a slight difference, males are those who mostly recommend both of them, advergame and brand. Based on the results it is identified that, percentage of females which do not recommend them is higher than those who recommend them, by which may be concluded that this form of communication may be more effective for males than females.

As expected most of them have finished or are enrolled in high school or in bachelor level of study. Those that belong to the high school level mostly would recommend the advergame and the brand while the percentage of those having a bachelor degree fall more in the category of not recommending them.

Finally employment status also shows the level of engagement with the game and it is consequently reflected on the level of recommendation they do. As it is expected most of them that have played the game are unemployed and of course the percentage of recommendation of the advergame is higher from this category. Interesting finding here is that "Vodafone" brand is highly recommended even from those employed but did not played the game.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study focus is advergame and brand loyalty under the assumption that it is a very effective brand communication tool. It is chosen "Vodafone City" advergame developed and conducted by "Vodafone" brand, which is a very successful company from the telecommunication sector in Albania. The increased effect on brand loyalty is measured by the recommendation level is done for "Vodafone" brand that results from participants included on the "Vodafone City" advergame and the positive relationship between recommendation done for the advergame and the brand. Based on the results may be concluded that inclusion in the game is very important to increase recommendation level for the brand and consequently for the increase of brand loyalty. Moreover, the results showed that recommendation level for the advergames goes approximately the same as the recommendation level for the brand which means that it is very important to design an advergame from which the players get positive emotions from it.

Tirana was the city from which appeared the most significant results due to the fact that it was the second time the game was played which means that recognition of the game is very important and we recommend to any future application of the same practices to make a detailed awareness of the game before applying it.

The age group belonging the range 14-24 years old were more willing to recommend, which means that this type of brand communication is more effective to this group, and based

on this we recommend to further applications to predetermine the target group in accordance to this or to make any specification while playing the games so that to best fit to every group age.

Since the direct effect of a communication tool is the change in sales level, it is suggested to further studies to consider how increased brand loyalty created through advergame as a brand communication tool will affect purchase intention or the company's sales.

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APPENDIX 1: Cross tabulation of demographic data with commendation toward the "Vodafone City" advergame and toward the "Vodafone" brand.

Age		"Vodafone City" Recommendation				"Vodafone" Recommendation		
		Yes	No	Maybe	Total	Yes	No	Total
14-24	n	98	32	40	170	156	184	340
	%	55.1%	57.1%	60.6%	56.7%	60.0%	54.1%	56.7%
25-34	n	58	20	22	100	74	126	200
	%	32.6%	35.7%	33.3%	33.3%	28.5%	37.1%	33.3%
35-54	n	22	4	4	30	30	30	60
	%	12.4%	7.1%	6.1%	10.0%	11.5%	8.8%	10.0%
	n	178	56	66	300	260	340	600
Total	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Gender		**"Vodafone City" Recommendation**				**"Vodafone" Recommendation**		
		Yes	**No**	**Maybe**	**Total**	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Female	n	66	30	46	142	118	166	284
	%	37.1%	53.6%	69.7%	47.3%	45.4%	48.8%	47.3%
Male	n	112	26	20	158	142	174	316
	%	62.9%	46.4%	30.3%	52.7%	54.6%	51.2%	52.7%
Total	n	178	56	66	300	260	340	600
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Education		**"Vodafone City" Recommendation**				**"Vodafone" Recommendation**		
		Yes	**No**	**Maybe**	**Total**	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Secondary School	n	0	0	4	4	6	10	16
	%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	1.3%	2.3%	2.9%	2.7%
High School	n	118	30	38	186	150	174	324
	%	66.3%	53.6%	57.6%	62.0%	57.7%	51.2%	54.0%
Bachelor	n	60	26	24	110	104	156	260
	%	33.7%	46.4%	36.4%	36.7%	40.0%	45.9%	43.3%
Total	n	178	56	66	300	260	340	600
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Employment		**"Vodafone City" Recommendation**				**"Vodafone" Recommendation**		
		Yes	**No**	**Maybe**	**Total**	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Yes	n	34	16	14	64	90	152	242
	%	19.1%	28.6%	21.2%	21.3%	34.6%	44.7%	40.3%
No	n	144	40	52	236	170	188	358
	%	80.9%	71.4%	78.8%	78.7%	65.4%	55.3%	59.7%
Total	n	178	56	66	300	260	340	600
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%