EXPLORING CONSUMERS' MOTIVATIONS TO PLAY ADVERGAMES IN FINNISH RETAIL MOBILE LOYALTY PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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Exploring consumers' motivations to play advergames in Finnish retail mobile loyalty program

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Mobile loyalty programs are used to enhance consumer engagement, and it is one of the benefits of advergames. Yet, advergames, unlike gamification, have not been widely utilized in mobile loyalty programs and there has not been previous academic research specifically about advergames in mobile loyalty programs. Thus, the primary objective of this research is to explore the consumers' motivations to play advergames within the Finnish retail company's mobile loyalty program application.

The theoretical part of the thesis consists of advergame characteristics and consumers' motivations. The thesis' empirical study is conducted from the consumer's perspective using qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews, to understand the reasons why the consumers play the company's advergames. In the interviews, 16 of the Finnish retail company's online community members' insights on their motivations to play the company's advergames were gathered, transcribed, coded. and analysed.

The main results of the consumers' motivations to play advergames were; the advergame should be simple, familiar, and quick to play with intuitive controls; the reward should have a high chance of winning and support the player's/consumer's autonomy; and the internalization of the extrinsic motivation affects what the consumer finds motivating in the advergames.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Kuluttajien motivaatiot pelata mainospelejä suomalaisessa vähittäiskaupan mobiili kanta-asiakasohjelmassa

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Mobiili kanta-asiakkuusohjelmia käytetään asiakkaiden sitoutumisen parantamiseen, joka on yksi mainospelien eduista. Mainospelejä, toisin kuin pelillistämistä, ei ole kuitenkaan vielä otettu laajasti käyttöön osaksi mobiili kanta-asiakkuusohjelmia, eikä mainospeleistä mobiili kanta-asiakkuusohjelmissa löydy myöskään aiempaa akateemista tutkimusta. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena onkin tutkia kuluttajien motivaatioita pelata mainospelejä suomalaisen vähittäismyyntiyrityksen mobiili kanta-asiakkuusohjelmassa.

Tutkielman teoriaosuus koostuu mainospelien ominaisuuksista ja kuluttajien motivaatiosta. Empiirinen tutkimus suoritettiin kvalitatiivisena, kuluttajan näkökulmasta, käyttäen hyväksi puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja, jotta ymmärrettäisiin miksi kuluttajat pelaavat yrityksen mainospelejä. Haastattelujen avulla kerättiin, litteroitiin, koodattiin, ja analysoitiin 16 suomalaisen vähittäismyyntiyrityksen verkkoyhteisön jäsenen käsityksiä heidän motivaatioistaan pelata yrityksen mainospelejä.

Keskeisimmät tulokset asiakkaiden motivaatioista pelata mainospeleistä olivat; mainospelin tulisi olla yksinkertainen, tuttu, ja nopea pelata, intuitiivisella ohjauksella; palkkion voittomahdollisuuden tulisi olla korkea ja palkkion tulisi tukea pelaajan/kuluttajan autonomiaa; ja ulkoisen motivaation sisäistäminen vaikuttaa siihen mitkä asiat motivoivat asiakasta mainospeleissä.

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Espoo, the 12th of December 2024

Kimmo Johansson

B2B business-to-business

B2C business-to-consumer

CET the cognitive evaluation theory

eWOM electronic word-of-mouth

IGA in-game advertising

NA a non-salient, autonomy supportive reward

OIT organismic integration theory

PENS the Player Experience of Need Satisfaction

QDA qualitative data analysis

SC a salient, controlling reward

SDT self-determination theory

TAM technology acceptance model

WOM word-of-mouth

Table of contents

Tiivistelmä

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

1 Introduction 9
1.1 Background 9
1.2 Literature review 12
1.3 Research questions 14
1.4 Theoretical framework 16
1.5 Definitions/key concepts 17
1.6 Delimitations 20
1.7 Research methodology 21
1.8 Structure of the thesis 22
2 Advergames' characteristics 24
2.1 Game-brand congruity 24
2.2 Brand placement 25
2.3 Perceived interactivity 27
2.4 Game involvement 28
3 Consumers' motivations 31
3.1 Intrinsic motivations 31
3.1.1 Self-determination theory (SDT) 32
3.1.2 Flow theory 35
3.2 Extrinsic motivations 38
3.2.1 Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) 38
3.2.2 Technology acceptance model (TAM) 41
3.3 Interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations 43
4 Research design and methods 47
4.1 Research context 48
4.2 Data collection methods 50
4.3 Data analysis methods 52

4.4 Reliability and validity 53
5 Findings 55
5.1 Profile of the participants 55
5.2 Advergames' characteristics 57
5.2.1 Game type 58
5.2.2 Game difficulty 59
5.2.3 Game time 61
5.3 Intrinsic Motivations 62
5.3.1 Autonomy 62
5.3.2 Competence 63
5.3.3 Game involvement/Immersion 65
5.4 Extrinsic Motivations 66
5.5 Interactions and influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations 69
6 Discussion and Conclusions 71
6.1 Theoretical contributions 74
6.2 Practical contributions 78
6.3 Limitations and future research 80
References 84

Appendices

Appendix 1. The semi-structured interview questions in Finnish

Appendix 2. The semi-structured interview questions in English

Appendix 3. List of codes

Appendix 4. Participants' demographics

Appendix 5. OIT subtype and game involvement preference

Appendix 6. OIT subtype and motivations to play

Appendix 7. Technology acceptance model (TAM) - Perceived ease of use

Appendix 8. Technology acceptance model (TAM) - Perceived usefulness

Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the research.

Figure 2. Structure of the thesis

Figure 3. Self-Determination Theory's Taxonomy of Motivation

Figure 4. Research context

Tables

Table 1. Interview participants' demographic variables

Table 2. Subtype of extrinsic motivation

1 Introduction

This master's thesis has been conducted in collaboration with a major Finnish retail company. The primary objective of this research is to explore the motivations that drive consumers to play the company's advergames within the mobile loyalty program application. The empirical part of the study is conducted from the consumer's perspective, to understand the reasons why the consumers play the company's advergames.

The theoretical part of this thesis integrates concepts from marketing, game studies, and psychology. The theory part first goes through academic literature to examine advergames' characteristics. The second part of the literature review, is about the consumers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, using theories from psychology as a background. Using the theory as a basis, the empirical research is conducted using semi-structured interviews. The answers are coded, and the findings are presented. The discussion of the findings will cover theoretical contributions, practical implications, and the limitations of the research. Finally, future research ideas are suggested.

The following sections of this first chapter will elaborate on the background and purpose of the study, identify the research gap through a literature review, and present the research questions guiding the study. The theoretical framework and key definitions are presented. Additionally, the delimitations of the research will be clarified, focusing on what aspects are excluded from this study. A brief outline of the research methodology will also be given, before a more in-depth view in chapter 4.

1.1 Background

The digitalization of everything is apparent, and for example smartphone adoption has reached wide coverage in the developed world, and in Finland the adoption rate of mobile phone with a touch screen has gone up from 47 % in 2013 to 90 % in 2023 (Statistics Finland 2023). As almost everyone nowadays has a smartphone and everything needs to be accessed via mobile applications, companies have adopted mobile loyalty programs to stay relevant and to improve consumer engagement (Meyer-Waarden, Bruwer, and Galan, 2023, 10). The loyalty programs have become increasingly popular tools to enhance customer experience,

service quality, satisfaction and ultimately gain loyalty of these customers (Gable, Fiorito, and Topol, 2008). However, as the number of mobile loyalty programs to choose from increases, distinguishing one from another becomes a challenge and it is essential for companies to understand what motivates consumers to stay engaged and loyal.

Previous research has found increased consumer engagement to be one of the main benefits and outcomes of gamification and advergames (e.g. Eisingerich, Marchand, Fritze, and Dong, 2019; Harwood and Garry, 2015; Jami Pour, Kazemi, and Moeni, 2023; Yang, Asaad, and Dwivedi 2017). Huotari and Hamari (2012, 19; 2017, 25) defined gamification as: ”A process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support users’ overall value creation.” Gamification is seen as an attempt to emerge gameful experiences by provoking user's motivational needs and affecting psychological states (Huotari and Hamari, 2017, 26). Advergames can be seen as gamified advertisements offering advertisers the opportunity to engage customers in a new interesting way, when the traditional media is saturated with advertising messages (Bittner and Schipper, 2014; Yang et al. 2017).

Advergames predate their definition as there have been numerous advergames since the release of the video game console Atari Video Computer System in 1977 (Montfort and Bogost, 2009). The first advergames were released in 1983 for Atari 2600 (e.g. ”Kool-Aid Man” and ”Tooth Protectors) with various degree of success (Bogost, 2011, 68). As technology has progressed advergames have moved from physical games, cartridges, and discs to internet and nowadays advergames are mostly released for mobile phones (Kuo and Rice, 2015). According to Terlutter and Capella (2013, 96) the characteristics of an advergame are: ”Free of charge, downloadable from or playable on the brand's website, easy and fun to play, and offer quick rewards.”

These kinds of advergames have also been referred to being ”casual” as they are simpler and require less involvement from the player (Redondo, 2012, 1672). From the perspective of this study, the empirical research is conducted using these kinds of ”casual advergames” in the retail company's mobile loyalty program. The study therefore focuses on advergames and not on gamification, because advergames are thought to be full games, whereas gamification according to Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, and Nacke (2011, 9) is: “The use of game elements in non-game contexts.”

Previous gamification literature is used in this study mainly to get a deeper understanding on consumers' motivations, because there is only limited academic research on advergames' consumer motivations. This study specifically focuses on Finnish retail company that has included advergames into its mobile loyalty program. The research is conducted to understand the underlying motivations that drive consumers to participate in these advergames. Understanding these motivations is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of advergames. For practitioners, particularly those in retail and marketing, the study provides practical recommendations that can be applied to improve the use of advergames in their marketing strategies.

From theoretical point of view, advergames have not yet been widely utilized in mobile loyalty programs and even academic research on gamification of mobile loyalty programs is only starting to gain traction (e.g. Hollebeek, Das, and Shukla, 2021; Hwang and Choi, 2020; Lee, Lu, and Li, 2024). This research uses existing theories of motivations, mainly self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985b), flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990), and technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989), by applying them to a relatively unexplored area of advergames, thereby enriching academic discourse and providing a foundation for future research. As there has not yet been previous research specifically on advergames in mobile loyalty programs it is interesting to explore the consumers' motivations behind the usage and how the motivations align with other advergame and gamification research. The interactions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are also explored, to understand how the consumers' motivations interact together, as was suggested in previous research (De Canio, Fuentes-Blasco, and Martinelli, 2021, 935).

From a managerial perspective, to further enhance the consumer engagement of a company's mobile loyalty program using advergames, it is crucial to understand consumers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Understanding these motivations can lead to more meaningful and enjoyable customer experiences, benefiting both businesses and consumers. For businesses it means the advergames can be designed in a more customer-centric way to resonate with their target audience hopefully improving brand attitude (e.g. Hsiao, Lin, and Wu, 2022; Neyens, Smits, and Boyland, 2017; Panic, Cauberghe, and De Pelsmacker, 2013) and driving sales with increased purchase intentions (e.g. Catalán, Martínez, and Wallace, 2019b; Ham, Yoon, and Nelson, 2016; Lee and Cho, 2017).

1.2 Literature review

Research on advergames has only recently gained more traction (Hsiao et al., 2022), even though advergames have been around since the 1980's (Bogost, 2011, 68). Consumers' access to the internet has helped advergames to become more popular as a marketing tool (Mallinckrodt and Mizerski, 2007). It could be that before the internet, compared to now (Entertainment Software Association 2024), games were perceived not to be for adults and therefore advergames were not as widely utilized as a marketing tool because marketing for children is controversial. Accordingly, advergame research has had a major focus on the effects of advergames on children (e.g. An and Stern, 2011; Panic et al., 2013; Vanwesenbeeck, Walrave, and Ponnet 2017; Waiguny, Nelson, and Terlutter, 2012).

Even though advergames are nowadays mostly released and played on mobile phones, the academic research has still been mainly focusing on advergames on computers (e.g. Ham et al., 2016; Sreejesh and Anusree, 2017; Vanwesenbeeck, Ponnet, and Walrave, 2016 and Vashisht and Royne, 2016) and only recently the research focus has switched to mobile phones as a platform for advergames (e.g. Catalán, Martinez, and Wallace, 2019a; Catalán et al., 2019b; Ghosh, Sreejesh, and Dwivedi, 2021; Sung and Lee, 2020 and van Berlo, van Reijmersdal, and Eisend, 2021). However there has not been previous research specifically about advergames played on a mobile loyalty program application, which is the platform of this study's advergames.

By integrating advertising within engaging and interactive game environments, advergames offer a unique way to influence consumer behaviour. Prior research has therefore focused mostly on the benefits that advergames can provide for brands and marketers such as: brand recall (e.g. Chiu, 2019; Tian, Wong, and Hung, 2023; Vashisht and Royne, 2016; Winkler and Buckner, 2006), brand attitude (e.g. Panic et al., 2013; Tuten and Ashley, 2016; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2017; Wise, Bolls, Kim, Venkataraman, and Meyer, 2008), purchase intention (e.g. Al-Soluiman, Batained, Al-Jabaly and Salhab, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2021; Ham et al., 2016; Hsiao et al., 2022) and word of mouth (WOM and eWOM) (e.g. Okazaki and Yagüe, 2012; Sung and Lee, 2020; Vega, Camarero, and Gutierrez-Arranz, 2023; Zhao and Renard, 2018). While advergames present a dynamic and engaging method for brands to connect with consumers, it has been recognized their integration into marketing strategies is not without challenges.

The success of advergames hinges on a delicate balance between entertainment and advertising, a balance which can be difficult to maintain. Accordingly, prior research has identified negative attitude about advertising to predict a negative attitude about advertising in games (Nelson, Keum, and Yaros, 2004; Poels, Janssens, and Herrewijn, 2013). For the player to have a positive attitude towards the advergame, it should be entertaining or at least be perceived as useful offering motivating rewards (Hsiao et al., 2022; Jami Pour et al., 2023; Martí-Parreño, Aldás-Manzano, Currás-Pérez and Sánchez-García, 2013). Negative content (e.g. violence) is to be avoided designing an advergame, as negative content results in negative brand associations that will transfer through the advergame attitude to the brand attitude (Waiguny, Nelson, and Marko, 2013). Another challenge observed by the previous advergame research is the consumers' persuasion knowledge affecting: the processing of the advergame's advertising message, the players' immersion in the advergame, and the benefits for the brand (Choi, Yoon, and Taylor, 2015; Ham et al., 2016; Vashisht and Royne, 2016; Vashisht and Pillai, 2017).

Previous advergame research on motivation has mainly used the flow theory (e.g. Catalán et al., 2019b; Ham et al., 2016; Hernandez, 2011; Steffen, Mau, and Schramm-Klein, 2013; Wang, Lee, Mantz, and Hung, 2015) with a few very recent exceptions using technology acceptance model (Bayır and Akel, 2024; Jami Pour et al., 2023). However, most of the previous research has used flow as an antecedent for some benefit the advergame can offer the brand (e.g. Ghosh et al., 2021; Ham et al., 2016; Steffen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015). The advergame research focusing more on the player have noted the flow experience being dependent on the: skills, challenge, interactivity, focused attention, telepresence, sense of pleasure, sense of arousal and sense of control (Catalán et al., 2019b; Hernández, 2011; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). However, the research has had conflicting results on the player's skills (Catalán et al., 2019b) and sense of control (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

This study's aim is to give more insight on the consumers' motivations to play advergames and what are the beneficial interactions between the motivations according to the consumers. Thus, the focus is not on the benefits or challenges advergames have for brands. Rather this study focuses on the consumer and the practical implications are more customer-centric than most of the previous research concentrating on the benefits for the brand/company. This study benefits from the use of several motivation theories discussed in chapter 3 (i.e. self-determination theory, flow theory and technology acceptance model) as a background,

compared to previous research mainly focusing on flow theory. The findings of this study have an advantage, as the examined advergames are played by consumers in a real-world situation, compared to advergame research conducted in lab experiments (e.g. Ham et al., 2016; Wottrich, Verlegh, and Smit, 2017, 2017). In the next section, the research questions explain more thoroughly what the goal of the study is.

1.3 Research questions

The primary objective of this study is to deepen the understanding of consumers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to play advergames within the context of Finnish retail mobile loyalty programs. Secondly the interaction of these intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is also explored, to investigate what are the reasons to continue playing the advergames. To achieve this, the study will be conducted in collaboration with a Finnish retail company, which will allow for a more focused and practical examination of the topic. By analysing consumer motivations in this specific retail environment, the research aims to provide actionable insights on how advergames can be optimized to enhance consumer engagement.

The managerial goal of this research is to support the case company in refining its mobile loyalty program by effectively integrating advergames in a way that resonates with consumer motivations, thus driving higher engagement and hopefully fostering long-term customer loyalty. This will be achieved through a combination of the existing advergame and motivation literature with the data and analysis of the empirical research.

The main research question of this study is:

What are the consumers' motivations to play advergames in Finnish retail mobile loyalty program?

The main research question outlines the key objective and purpose of this study. This research aims to investigate and understand the various consumer motivations to play advergames within the context of Finnish retail mobile loyalty programs. By exploring these motivations, the study seeks to uncover the underlying factors that influence consumer behaviour and participation in advergames, providing valuable insights into how these games can be effectively integrated into loyalty programs.

The objective of this study is to develop a theoretical model that explains consumers' motivations to play advergames in a retail setting, specifically within mobile loyalty programs. This model will be grounded in both the existing literature and the empirical research conducted as part of this study, to understand the consumer motivations to play advergames.

The scientific goal of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by identifying the key motivations behind consumer interaction/involvement with advergames in retail mobile loyalty programs, as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging these motivations. Additionally, the managerial goal of this research is to provide actionable recommendations for the case company on how to optimize their advergames to better align with consumer motivations, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and success of the advergames.

The main research question is divided into four sub-questions to organize the structure of the study and guide literature review, data collection, and analysis. The goal is to ensure a thorough exploration of advergames, consumers' intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations, and the interactions of these motivations.

The sub-questions are:

RQ1: What are advergames' characteristics?

Investigates the characteristics of advergames which have gained the most attention in previous academic literature. To explore how advergames function, the following characteristics are discussed: game-brand congruity, brand placement, perceived interactivity, and game involvement/engagement. The empirical study’s goal is to identify the advergame characteristics which are affecting the consumers’ motivations to play.

RQ2: What are the consumers' intrinsic motivations to play advergames?

Explores the consumers' intrinsic motivations using theories of self-determination (SDT) and flow and focusing on what motivates consumers to play advergames for personal satisfaction and enjoyment. The intrinsic motivations' contribution to sustained engagement, flow experience, with advergames is also investigated.

RQ3: What are the consumers' extrinsic motivations to play advergames?

Examines the extrinsic motivations with the help of organismic integration theory (OIT) and technology acceptance model (TAM). Extrinsic motivations in advergames, such as rewards and perceived ease of use, play a role in shaping consumer behaviour. By analysing these extrinsic motivations, the research will provide insights into how these external factors could be used in the design of advergames to increase consumer engagement.

RQ4: What are the interactions and influences between intrinsic- and extrinsic motivations to play advergames?

Aims to understand the possible interaction of intrinsic- and extrinsic motivations when consumers play advergames, revealing how these motivations complement or conflict with one another in the context of advergames. The Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), which is a sub-theory of self-determination theory, is applied to understand the possible interactions. The goal is to develop a deeper understanding of the ways of balancing these motivations, thereby optimizing the effectiveness of advergames in mobile loyalty programs.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presents the key concepts of the study and a model for the predictions and assumptions on how the concepts describe the research (Lee and Lings, 2008, 123). The key concepts of the study are advergames, mobile loyalty program, intrinsic motivations, and extrinsic motivations of the consumers. Figure 1. shows the assumed effects of consumers' motivations to play advergames.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the research.

Consumer playing the advergames in a mobile loyalty program have some prior intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations. Playing the advergame will have some impact on consumer's intrinsic- and extrinsic motivations. There could also be potential interaction effects or outcomes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations when the consumer plays the advergames.

1.5 Definitions/key concepts

Advergame is, as the name suggests, a game designed for advertising purposes to promote a brand's position (Tuten and Ashley, 2016). Advergame is designed for a single brand or product, and therefore should be distinguished from in-game advertising (IGA), in which advertising is included within an existing game (e.g. billboard in a football game), and which are like product placements in movies (Terlutter and Capella, 2013; Winkler and Buckner, 2006). Van Berlo et al. (2021, 179) defined an advergame as: "A type of advertising that leverages game thinking and game mechanics to drive engagement with a brand—to ultimately reach a commercial goal."

Gamification is defined (Deterding et al., 2011, 9) as: "The use of game design elements in non-game contexts." Gamification is further explained (Deterding et al., 2011, 13) to refer to: "The use (rather than the extension) of, design (rather than game-based technology or

other game related practices), elements (rather than full-fledged games), characteristic for games (rather than play or playfulness) and in non-game contexts (regardless of specific usage intentions, contexts, or media of implementation).” Gamification literature is used in this study, to give more depth to the used models and frameworks of motivations, when there is a lack of advergame literature.

Loyalty program is defined by Sharp and Sharp (1997, 474) as: “...structured marketing efforts which reward, and therefore encourage, loyal behaviour: behaviour which is, hopefully, of benefit to the firm.” Loyalty program's long-term goal is to build customer relationships (Henderson, Beck, and Palmatier, 2011, 258). As repeat business of profitable and ”preferred” customers is a goal for companies, the loyalty programs have become increasingly popular tools to enhance customer experience, service quality, satisfaction and ultimately gain loyalty of these customers (Gable et al., 2008). Loyalty program is the specific platform where this study's advergames have been implemented, but the loyalty program literature is not reviewed as the goal is not to explore what motivates the use of loyalty programs, even though advergames will most likely have an impact.

Intrinsic motivation means activities are done for their inherent interest or enjoyment in the absence of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation is defined by Ryan and Deci (2020, 2) as: “... behaviors done for reasons other than their inherent satisfactions.”

Self-determination theory (SDT) is about human motivation explained by three fundamental psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Intrinsically motivated behaviours are based on the needs of competence and self-determination (Deci, 1975). The self-determination, process by which one controls their own life, is seen as the more important component because one needs to feel free to follow their inner interest (i.e. perception of autonomy) to acquire competence (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Fisher, 1978). Extrinsic rewards are found to be undermining intrinsic motivation and make people feel controlled and thus less autonomous (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan, 1999; Deci, 1975; Deci and Ryan, 1980). For the need of competence, one is (Deci and Ryan, 1980, 42): “...in an ongoing, cyclical process of seeking out (or creating) optimally challenging situations and then attempting to conquer those challenges.” The need of

relatedness, to be connected to others and meaningfully involved, is a more recent and maybe less central addition to SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) is a ”mini theory of SDT” and is about ”contextual factors that support or thwart intrinsic motivation” (Ryan, Rigby, and Przybylski, 2006, 349). The two psychological needs in cognitive evaluation theory (CET) enhancing intrinsic motivation are *autonomy* and *competence.* In their research, investigating the motivational pull of video games, Ryan et al. (2006) added also *presence* being a factor in gaming context. (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan et al., 2006)

Organismic integration theory (OIT) addresses the forms of extrinsic motivation in the continuum of internalization of values, goals, or belief systems. Extrinsic motivations have been identified varying from more external/controlled to more internal/autonomous. The four subtypes, from external/controlled to internal/autonomous, of extrinsic motivation are: external regulation, introjection, identification, and integration. (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2020) *External regulation* (Ryan and Deci, 2020, 2) is driven by: “externally imposed rewards and punishments”. *Introjected regulation* (Ryan and Deci, 2020, 2) is: “regulated by the internal rewards of self-esteem for success and by avoidance of anxiety, shame, or guilt for failure.” *Identified regulation* (Ryan and Deci, 2020, 3) is when: “The person consciously identifies with, or personally endorses the value of an activity, and thus experiences relatively high degree of volition or willingness to act.” *Integrated regulation* (Ryan and Deci, 2020, 3) is defined as: “The person not only recognizes and identifies with the value of the activity, but also finds it to be congruent with other core interests and values.”

Flow theory was developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) who explored the reasons people do activities with no external reward. He found these people were intrinsically motivated to do these activities, and when totally involved in the pleasurable activity had an optimal flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 11) described flow as a “crucial component of enjoyment” and defined flow experience (1975, 36) as: “The holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement”.

Technology acceptance theory (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) to predict user acceptance of computers. In his research Davis (1989) validated two variables for user acceptance. *The perceived usefulness* is defined by Davis (1989, 320) as: "The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job

performance.” *The perceived ease of use* is defined by Davis (1989, 320) as: "The degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort.”

1.6 Delimitations

The primary focus of the study is on Finnish consumers (business-to-consumer, B2C), who play advergames of a specific retail company in the company's own mobile loyalty program. Thus, consumers who do not play advergames are excluded from the research, and amotivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985b) is not researched. Additionally, the study's focus on consumers (B2C) means the results cannot be applied to business-to-business (B2B) context.

The specific context of advergames in a Finnish retail mobile loyalty program limits the results' applicability. Firstly, the research focuses on investigating only advergames, the results may not apply to other digital marketing tools using games or game elements (e.g. in-game advertising, social network games, or gamification). Secondly, the research is done in the Finnish market, the results may not apply for different markets. Thirdly, the advergames are played on smartphones and on the company's own mobile loyalty program application, the unique technical platform limits the results' applicability to other platforms (e.g. PC, or game devices such as: Nintendo, PlayStation or Xbox). Fourthly, the advergame brands in the study are food related; results may differ for other kinds of brands. Lastly, the studied advergames' could be defined as casual games played for short time periods, the applicability of the results may be limited for other game genres requiring more involvement/commitment from the player (e.g. strategy-, sports-, or role-playing games).

The data collection method of semi-structured interviews delimits the research to qualitative insights only. The data is gathered from the case company's online community members, which could limit the generalisability of the results as the community members might not be representative of the general population. The research methodology and data collection plan are further discussed in the next section.

1.7 Research methodology

The research methodology is qualitative, as the purpose of this study is to explore the motivations to play advergames. The interpretive approach, and therefore qualitative research, is chosen because the goal is to understand the motivations from the perspective of the users/players/consumers. As there is not, yet clear existing theory on the motivations to play advergames, the study is mostly inductive trying to generate theory from the gathered empirical data's patterns, themes and relationships. (Lee and Lings, 2008, 65) Purposive sampling method, using people who are relevant for the research question, is used because one must have experienced the retail company's advergames to participate in the interview about their motivations to play them (Lee and Lings, 2008, 214).

Theoretical saturation (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007, 611) refers to: “The point at which gathering more data about a theoretical construct reveals no new properties, nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory.” The sample size for saturation of a qualitative research has been shown to be quite narrow, 9-17 interviews (Hennink and Kaiser, 2021, 7). Therefore, the objective of this study was to get around 20 interviews to reach saturation.

The study is not trying to answer the question why one is not playing the advergames in the mobile loyalty program (even though it could be interesting), thus it wouldn't benefit the research to include customers who have not used the advergames in the sample. The online community members of the retail company are selected because they are hypothetically more willing to give their consent and participate to a study, than if the interview invitation would be randomly sent to the customers of the company who use the mobile loyalty program. The non-probability sample or convenience sample, of the online community members of the retail company who are willing to participate, is also used because the goal of the study is to qualitatively explore the motivations to play advergames and develop propositions based on the answers. The goal is not to try to draw statistical generalisations to the population (Lee and Lings, 2008, 268, 271).

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The study is structured as follows: introduction; theory of advergames' characteristics and consumers' motivations; research methodology; findings and; discussion and conclusions. The structure of the thesis is illustrated below (Figure 2).

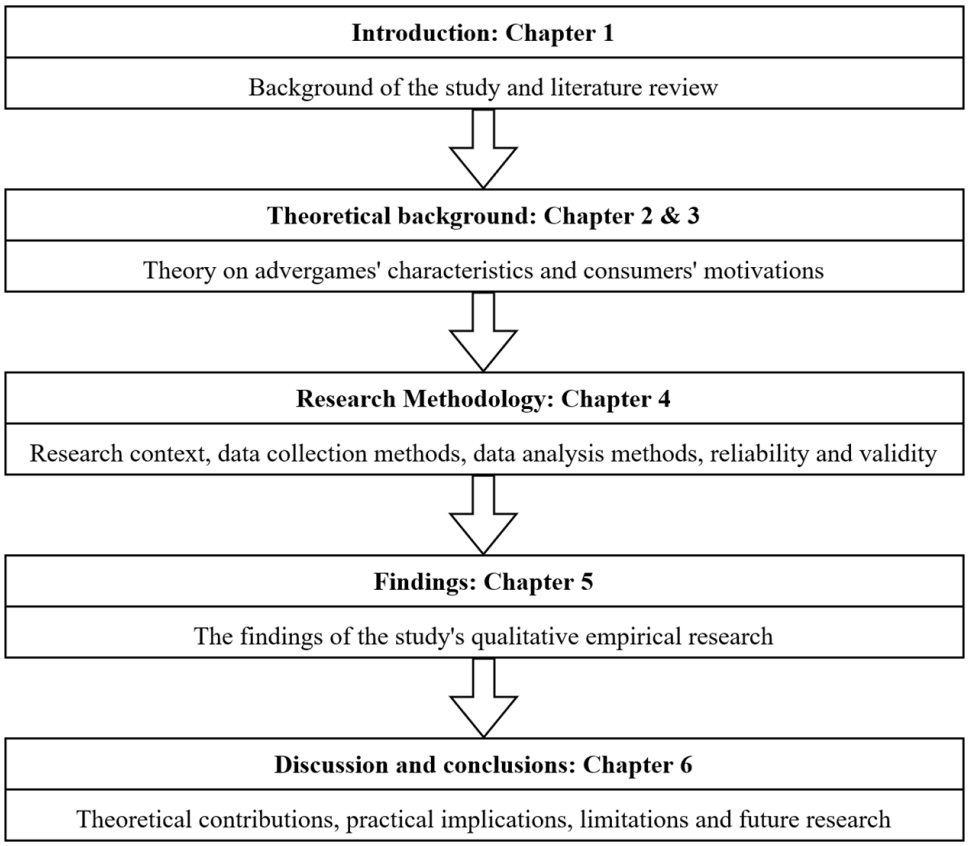

Figure 2. Structure of the thesis

In chapter 1, the introduction part; the background and purpose of the study is presented; research gap is introduced through literature review; research questions, what is studied, are introduced; delimitations, what is not in the focus of the study, are explored; theoretical framework, a model for the predictions and assumptions on how the concepts describe the research, is presented (Lee and Lings, 2008, 123); definitions, consisting of the central concepts of the study, are introduced; and research methodology, of the qualitative semi-structured interview, is justified and explained.

The theoretical part in the chapters 2 and 3, consisting of advergame and motivation literature, is to give context and support for the empirical part of the study. In the second chapter advergames' characteristics are discussed to gain knowledge how they work. In the third chapter motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic, and their interactions, are explored to understand the reasons why people might play advergames.

Chapter 4 explains the chosen research design and methods. In this chapter, the following issues are covered in detail: the research context, the data collection method, the data analysis methods, and reliability and validity. This is to present and explain how the empirical part of the study was carried out.

Chapter 5 is for the findings of the empirical research conducted using semi-structured interviews (see the Finnish interview questions in Appendix 1 and the English version of the questions in Appendix 2). The chapter reports the interview findings based on the study's research questions. The interview answers are coded to understand the findings and the codes and number of references to the codes are presented in a table format (see Appendix 3).

Lastly in chapter 6 of discussion and conclusions, the findings are discussed in relation to existing theory and conclusions are derived for theoretical contributions and practical implications. Limitations of the empirical results and recommendations for future research are also discussed. The goal is to give a summary encompassing the entire study.

2 Advergames' characteristics

Several key characteristics have been identified by the previous research to determine the effectiveness of advergames, each playing a role in shaping consumers' perceptions and behaviour. The previous academic research has focused on the advergame characteristics of game-brand congruity, brand placement, perceived interactivity, and game involvement/engagement. Each of these four characteristics are discussed further in this chapter.

2.1 Game-brand congruity

Game-brand congruity, the level of fit between the game and the brand, is seen as one of the major concerns of advergame design and one of the motivational factors for consumers to play the game (De Pelsmacker, Dens, and Verberckmoes, 2019; Liu-Thompkins, 2019). The brand owner, usually initiating the advergame planning, aims to design the advergame so it conveys the advertising message and brand images, and the players then evaluate how the brand and advergame design match (Wei-Hung, Lin and Wu, 2022, 59). Previous research on game-brand congruity in advergames has shown significant positive effects on: advergame attitude (Hsiao et al., 2022; Jami Pour et al., 2023), brand attitude (Choi et al., 2015), brand value (Okazaki and Yagüe, 2012), eWOM intentions (Okazaki and Yagüe, 2012), and perceived ease of use (Jami Pour et al., 2023).

According to the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) consumers cope with marketers' persuasive attempts using their knowledge about the persuasive goals and tactics (Friedstad and Wright, 1994). The more obvious persuasive goals advertising has the higher consumers' persuasion knowledge, generating more negative brand attitudes (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; Shiv, Edell, and Payne, 1997). Choi et al. (2015), studying character presence effect among American and Korean consumers, found brands in congruent game environment to enhance brand attitude. When the brand and game environment do not fit, the consumer's persuasion knowledge is more ready to activate, and brand attitude weakens. They also noted culture to influence brand attitude, Korean consumers to be less sensitive to the incongruence of character-presence compared to American consumers. (Choi et al. 2015, 362) When the

brand does not fit the game and persuasion knowledge is high, the consumer's motivation to play the advergame could also be negatively affected.

Okazaki and Yagüe (2012, 84-85) concluded in their advergame research on a mobile social networking site, game-brand congruence to positively impact perceived brand value and eWOM intentions, when consumers enjoy and view the advergame as an extension of the brand. Jami Pour et al. (2023, 108) researching customer attitude toward advergames using the technology acceptance model (TAM) found game-brand congruence to be one of the game-related factors affecting perceived ease of use. Similarly to Okazaki and Yagüe (2012), they also concluded fun and enjoyable experience to be the goal of the gamers and when the advergame is easy to use consumers more likely continue to play the advergame (Jami Pour et al., 2023, 108).

The game-brand congruity does not always have a straightforward relationship and in their research for in-game advertising Lee and Faber (2007, 86) showed high incongruity, extremely unexpected or unusual brands for the game environment, to have better brand recall than congruent brands (Lee and Faber, 2007, 86). However, they also noted, the overall brand recall in the study was low (12 % of the brand names were recalled), and the incongruity may have a negative influence on brand attitude (Lee and Faber, 2007, 87). Compared to in-game advertising (one game possibly having multiple brands advertising), one of the strengths of advergame is it contains only one brand, the consumer does not have to process and respond to different brands which helps to form more elaborate cognitive connections between the game and can lead to different pattern of effects for game-brand congruity (Wise et al., 2008, 28). A stronger cognitive connection could potentially enhance the consumer's motivation to play the advergame and if the consumer feels manipulated by the game-brand incongruity they might be less motivated to play. High game-brand congruity could make the game experience more enjoyable and therefore an important factor for intrinsic motivation to play the advergame.

2.2 Brand placement

Brand placements may vary between prominent and subtle. In their research, on product placement in movies, Gupta and Lord (1998, 49) defined prominent and subtle placements as follows: “Prominent placements are those in which the product (or other brand identifier)

is made highly visible by virtue of size and/or position on the screen or its centrality to the action in the scene. Subtle placements are those in which the brand is not shown prominently, (e.g., small, a background prop outside the main field of visual focus, lost in an array of multiple products or objects, low time of exposure)."

In advergames brand prominence is high, when the brand is integrated to the game's interactions, which can be beneficial as the player focuses attention on the interactive content (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010, 6). Prominent brand placement, in the previous research, has been shown to have a positive effect on brand recall (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010; Vashisht and Sreejesh, 2015; Vashisht and Pilai, 2017), and brand attitude (Redondo, 2012; Vashisht and Pilai, 2017),

In their research Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker (2010, 9) prominent brand placement condition had the brand moving in the game and players were to catch the brand logo, and subtle brand placement condition had a static logo in the background of the game. The result was the movement (prominent brand placement) focused consumers' attention on the moving object and had a positive impact on brand recall (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010, 12). Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker (2010, 12) study also found high brand prominence to not have a negative impact on brand attitudes, which they theorized to have been because of the pleasurable gaming experience, focused attention to the interactive content, high persuasion knowledge and brands not interfering the gameplay.

Vashisht and Sreejesh (2015) study's results showed prominent brand placement and inexperience in game playing having a positive impact on brand recall. Also, low game involvement with prominent brand placement had high brand recall among inexperienced gamers. Experienced gamers however were found not to have differences in brand recall, whether the brand placement was prominent or subtle. According to limited capacity model of attention (Kahneman, 1973), when multitasking, total mental capacity gets divided between, what is needed for the primary task, and what spare capacity is left for the secondary task. The primary focus of attention of the consumer is playing the advergame, while processing the brand embedded in the advergame is secondary (Vashisht and Sreejesh, 2015, 297). Thus, it could be argued, the more experienced gamers have the more mental capacity is left to process the embedded brand in the advergame and as a result the effect of brand placement is minimal (Vashisht and Sreejesh, 2015, 305).

Vashisht and Pilai (2017) were the first, in the context of advergames, to show a trade-off between brand recall and brand attitude. To achieve brand recall, an advergame with prominent brand placement and low game involvement can have better results, but then brand attitude is less favourable. For better brand attitude, one should also factor in the consumers' persuasion knowledge in the advergame design. Because when persuasion knowledge is low the effect on brand attitude is favourable. (Vashisht and Pilai, 2017, 410) Redondo (2012) also found brand attitude; to improve with prominent brand placement and brief placement-exposure duration, and by contrast not to improve with long placement-exposure. With subtle brand placement, long placement-exposure duration improved brand attitude, while short placement-exposure duration did not. (Redondo, 2012, 1681) As a conclusion Redondo (2012, 1684) suggested prominent brand placement to suit better for games with short-lived appeal.

In line with the research presented above, the advergames in the empirical part of this study have a prominent brand placement and are short-lived as the advergame is in the mobile loyalty program for approximately a month and after that a new game with a different brand replaces it. A prominent brand placement could positively affect the consumers' intrinsic motivation to play the advergames, enhancing the game enjoyment. The advergames are also easy to play and do not require a lot of mental capacity, which is good for the inexperienced players. It is interesting to see how well consumers recall the brands in the advergames they have played, when they give examples in the interviews of the advergames which they found to be motivating.

2.3 Perceived interactivity

The degree of interactivity in advergames can be divided to game interactivity, how extensively the player can manage the game related content (e.g. design the character); and brand interactivity, how extensively the player is able to interact with the game's brand message (e.g. brand logo) (Sreejesh and Anusree, 2017, 577). In interactive in-game advertising, or advergames, players can actively participate in the game by interacting with the brand which can lead to increased game enjoyment and play intention (De Pelsmacker et al., 2019, 58). Previous research, focusing on the level of brand integration in advergames, has also considered the concept of brand interactivity. When the brand is highly integrated

in the advergame it is seen as an active game component inviting to play with the brand (Lee, Taylor, and Cole, 2009). Interactivity can also help the brand fit the game (game-brand congruity) better, making the brand feel less intrusive and more appropriate for the players, resulting in increased purchase intention (De Pelsmacker et al., 2019, 67).

In their research Sreejesh and Anusree (2017, 585) showed message attention and memory to vary according to the gamer's cognition demand and increase with brand interaction. Game play demanding high cognition reduces consumers' brand message processing ability, but brand interactivity (compared to game interactivity and no interactivity) was found to strengthen brand attention, brand recall and brand recognition. Also, game interactivity (compared to brand interactivity and no interactivity) was found to enhance brand attention, brand recall and brand recognition in low cognition demand game play scenarios. (Sreejesh and Anusree, 2017, 584)

Lee, Park, and Wise (2014) found brand interactivity to have a negative effect to advergame attitudes. They explained the result may be accounted for the perceptions of game difficulty, and suggested brands to be incorporated into popular easy-to-play games that consumers are familiar with. However, brand attitude and purchase intentions were found to be positively affected by brand interactivity. Advergames with brand interactivity may thus have more positive advertising effects creating memorable brand experiences. (Lee et al., 2014, 1281)

The game interactivity supports intrinsic motivation by enhancing immersion in the game and making the game more enjoyable. This study's advergames have mostly familiar interactive game mechanics (e.g. a memory game) with high brand interactivity. The advergames in this study should therefore be perceived as enjoyable and intrinsically motivating, but the high brand interactivity could have a negative effect on the consumers' motivation to play.

2.4 Game involvement

Game engagement (Hamari, Shernoff, Rowe, Coller, Asbell-Clarke, and Edwards, 2016, 172) is: ”The simultaneous occurrence of elevated concentration, interest, and enjoyment”. Involvement has been defined by Rothschild (1984, 217) as: “a state of motivation, arousal or interest.” Even though engagement and involvement can be considered as different

concepts, engagement being a result of involvement (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, and Ilić, 2011, 257), it seems some researchers use game engagement (e.g. Ghosh et al., 2021; Sung and Lee, 2020) and others use game involvement (e.g. Al-Soluiman et al., 2020; Lee and Faber, 2007; Vashisht and Pillai, 2017; Vega et al., 2023).

Advergames require always some moderate level of involvement from the consumer, because when playing the game one needs to actively participate, compared to a more passive form of advertising (e.g. television advertisement) sometimes requiring only low involvement (Lee and Faber, 2007, 77). Results of the previous studies have shown higher game engagement/involvement to increase e.g.: brand attitude (Vashisht and Pillai, 2017) purchase intention (Ghosh et al., 2021; Soluiman et al., 2020) and eWOM (Vega et al., 2023). In advergame context, one is more engaged and committed to the game, when game involvement is high.

The theory of limited capacity model of attention (Kahneman, 1973; Lynch and Scrull, 1982) can be used to explain game involvement. In the case of high game involvement, one needs to use more mental capacity for the primary task of playing the game and less capacity is left to process the brand, resulting in reduced brand recall and more favourable brand attitude. Contrary in lower game involvement condition, one needs less mental capacity for playing and is left with more mental capacity for brand processing, resulting in high brand recall but less favourable brand attitude. (Vashisht and Pillai, 2017) However game experience has been shown to have an effect, the inexperienced players having the greatest brand recall in high-involvement condition, since they were not so aware of what to focus on and what to ignore while playing the game (Lee and Faber, 2007, 86). The high game involvement could also influence the consumers' intrinsic motivation through game immersion improving the game enjoyment.

Ghosh et al. (2021, 2343) found game engagement to be dependent on challenge-skill fit, as adults found their skills to match better and be more engaged playing the challenging game with IGA, and children's' skills were matched better with the less challenging advergame resulting in higher engagement. The advergame should thus be optimally challenging for the consumer as it influences the game engagement and as a result the customer experience. However, if the goal is to increase advergame recommendation and eWOM, one should consider a more challenging advergame requiring high involvement because one reason to recommend a game to others is for the perceived challenge it poses (Vega et al., 2023, 3355).

Feeling competent is integral component of intrinsic motivation and challenge-skill fit in the advergame needs to be considered for the game to be engaging.

Game engagement could be strengthened with a game narrative, giving the player a meaningful reason to play the advergame (Sung and Lee, 2020, 6-7). The game narrative motivates players to be more involved, feel like being part of the game, which leads to greater sense of presence and enjoyment (Schneider, Lang, and Bradley, 2004; Yee, Duh, and Quek, 2010). The brand associated with the game narrative may be evaluated more favourably as the increased game engagement helps reduce message scrutiny and counterarguments (Sung and Lee, 2020, 2). The company's advergames being studied in the empirical research have not had narratives and including a narrative to increase game engagement could be an option in the future.

3 Consumers' motivations

Understanding what drives and motivates consumers to play advergames is crucial for creating effective advergaming strategies. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to play advergames are explored in this study with the help of psychological and technological frameworks.

First, intrinsic motivations, are explored with self-determination theory (SDT) and flow theory. SDT distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with a particular focus on how these motivations can be influenced by external factors (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Flow theory describes the optimal experience of being fully immersed and engaged in an activity, which is often characterized by intrinsic enjoyment and a sense of challenge and mastery (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990).

Second, to understand extrinsic motivations, organismic integration theory (OIT) which is a sub-theory of self-determination theory (SDT), and technology acceptance model (TAM) are explored. Organismic integration theory (OIT) explores the internalization of extrinsic motivations, ranging from external regulation to integrated regulation (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2020). While technology acceptance model (TAM) provides insights into extrinsic motivation by highlighting how perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness serve as external motivators that influence game involvement (Davis, 1989).

Third, the interaction of intrinsic- and extrinsic motivations are looked through: cognitive evaluation theory (CET), which is a sub-theory of self-determination theory (SDT). Cognitive evaluation theory (CET), examines how external rewards can impact intrinsic motivation.(Deci and Ryan, 1980; Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan et al., 2006)

3.1 Intrinsic motivations

Intrinsic motivation, the internal drive to engage in activities for the sheer enjoyment and satisfaction they provide, plays a crucial role in understanding why individuals interact with advergames. In the context of this thesis, intrinsic motivation is explored through two

foundational psychological frameworks: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Flow Theory. These theories offer valuable insights into the conditions under which individuals experience genuine engagement and sustained interest in advergames. By exploring the mechanisms that drive intrinsic motivation, this section aims to shed light on how these psychological principles could be leveraged to design advergames that motivate individuals to play them.

3.1.1 Self-determination theory (SDT)

According to the self-determination theory (SDT) humans can be either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to perform an activity. When one does not feel any motivation to perform an activity it is referred to as amotivation. According to SDT, human motivation can be explained by three fundamental psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to achieve effectiveness, connectedness, and coherence. These psychological needs are to understand the content and the process, when one is pursuing a goal. The needs require support from outside conditions and/or one's inner resources. (Deci and Ryan, 1980; 1985b; 1991; 2000)

People are inclined to engage in interesting or important activities and do not need to be pushed if there is a possibility for need satisfaction. When psychological needs are unmet, individuals may adopt defensive behaviours, such as compliance or helplessness. Conversely, if these needs are already reasonably satisfied—for instance, by not feeling controlled or ineffective—pursuing further need satisfaction may not be the primary goal of their actions (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Intrinsically motivated behaviours are based on the needs of self-determination (autonomy) and competence and maintaining interest in the intrinsically motivated activity depends on the degree to which people experience need satisfaction of autonomy and competence when engaging in the activity (Deci, 1975; Deci and Ryan, 2000). The self-determination, process by which one controls their own life, is seen as the more important component of intrinsic motivation because one needs to feel free to follow their inner interest (i.e. perception of autonomy) to acquire competence (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Fisher, 1978). When autonomy is supported in the activity it is associated with greater intrinsic motivation, increased satisfaction, and enhanced well-being (Deci, Connell, and Ryan, 1989; Deci, Scwartz,

Sheinman, and Ryan, 1981; Ryan and Grolnick, 1986). Providing autonomy has been also shown to be important in advergames in regards of privacy concerns (Wottrich et al., 2017). When players have significant privacy concerns, customization features in advergames can negatively impact their attitude toward the brand. They may perceive a loss of autonomy and suspect that their customization data is being exploited for marketing purposes. However, when privacy concerns are minimal, these customization features tend to foster a more positive brand attitude. (Wottrich et al., 2017)

The self-determined activities have been referred to as internal perceived locus of causality, as opposed to external perceived locus of causality (extrinsic motivation) (deCharms, 1968). Extrinsic rewards are found to be undermining intrinsic motivation and make people feel controlled and thus less autonomous (Deci, 1975; Deci et al., 1999; Deci and Ryan, 1980). When extrinsic rewards are introduced, the perceived locus of causality shifts from internal to external because the behaviour feels originating less from oneself (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Tangible rewards should thus be unexpected, task non-contingent, and given informationally to have a less negative effect on intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan et al., 1983). Accordingly, in advergame context Zhao and Renard's (2018) research concluded their unexpected reward based on chance did not affect intrinsic motivation, or the behaviours of game forwarding and data sharing. Players collected points and the more points they collected the higher level (low, medium, high) prize they had the chance to win in a draw (e.g. high-level prize was a trip to New York). (Zhao and Renard, 2018)

For the need of competence, one is (Deci and Ryan, 1980, 42): "...in an ongoing, cyclical process of seeking out (or creating) optimally challenging situations and then attempting to conquer those challenges." Perceived competence is needed for both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated tasks. Feedback has been shown to affect the need for competence when the feedback is given so it does not negatively affect the feeling of autonomy (Fisher, 1978; Ryan, 1982). Positive feedback makes one feel more efficient leading to enhanced intrinsic motivation (Boggiano and Ruble, 1979; Deci, 1971), while negative feedback leads one feel ineffective resulting to undermined intrinsic motivation (Deci and Cascio, 1972). Achievement related features (e.g. badges, progress level, leaderboards and increasing difficulty) in gamification have been shown to positively relate to competence need satisfaction as the features aim to increase players' concentration and the feeling of accomplishment (e.g. Luarn, Chen, and Chiu, 2023; Xi and Hamari; 2019)

The need of relatedness, to be connected to others and be meaningfully involved, is a more recent and maybe less central addition to SDT. People can do things in isolation (e.g. play a single player advergame) and in these situations' relatedness is not so closely linked to intrinsic motivation. However, when one has a base level of relatedness satisfied, it is more likely one feels intrinsically motivated to explore and grow. (Deci and Ryan, 2000) As this study's empirical research is based on advergames which do not have a social component engaging with other players, the need for relatedness is not in focus. However, the addition of social interaction could be a possible future improvement idea for the advergames and might be something the consumers will also mention when asked about improvement ideas. Recently the need for relatedness has been shown to be important factor in gamification research for e.g. knowledge sharing, user engagement and brand attachment (Cai, Li, and Shi, 2024; Hsu, 2022; Yang, Yang, and Feng, 2022).

Xi and Hamari (2019) researched the relationship between two online brand communities' gamification features and intrinsic motivation. They used immersion, achievement and social related features and examined how they predict the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Immersion features were avatar, customization and narrative. Achievement features were badges, trophies, virtual currency, points, progress level, leaderboards and increasing difficulty. Social features included: cooperation, social competition and social network features.

Xi and Hamari (2019) found interactions with achievement and social-related features were positively affecting all three needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness). Immersion related features were only having a slight effect on autonomy, while achievement-related features had the highest effect on autonomy. They (Xi and Hamari, 2019, 217) thought the reason was: "...when users interact with some achievement-related features like tasks, virtual currency/coin, points and levels in the two communities, they usually can select/accept/giveup different tasks, freely use virtual currency/coin to exchange for what they want as well as earn points/upgrade levels in different ways."

One of the reasons for immersion related features performing poorly in their research was thought to be because they researched web services and not games, which can have a stronger narrative/story and much more options for immersion than gamification. (Xi and Hamari, 2019) Immersion, in the form of telepresence, has been shown to be one strength of advergames (e.g. Catalán et al., 2019b; Hernández, 2011) and flow experience has been the

focus when considering the research on consumer's motivation to play advergames. In the next section of intrinsic motivation, flow theory is explained and the relevant advergame research is explored.

3.1.2 Flow theory

Flow theory was developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) who explored the reasons people do activities with no external reward. He found these people were intrinsically motivated to do these activities, and when totally involved in the pleasurable activity had an optimal flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 11) described flow as a "crucial component of enjoyment" and defined flow experience (1975, 36) as: "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement". In other words, flow is experienced when one is completely engaged and immersed in an activity (Hoffman and Novak, 2009, 24).

Based on Csikszentmihalyi's work on flow theory (1975; 1990), Hoffman and Novak's (1996) early study on flow has been one of the most prominent to the development of the theory. In their work Hoffman and Novak (1996) proposed a conceptual model for the measurement of flow in computer mediated environments. They introduced, the control characteristics of skills and challenges; content characteristics of interactivity and vividness; and process characteristics of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. They suggested, consumers move in and out of the flow experience, and flow can be influenced to some extent through control, content and process characteristics by marketing activities. (Hoffman and Novak, 1996)

Challenge-skill balance based on control characteristics of skills and challenges, and focused attention were argued to be the two primary antecedents for flow experience. Challenge-skill balance should be higher than the critical threshold of person's typical level. Focused attention was argued to be influenced by the content characteristic of vividness and interactivity. Vividness was described by breadth and depth, breadth being the number of sensory dimensions in the presentation, and depth being the quality of the presentation. Vividness, interactivity and focused attention were the requirements for strong sense of telepresence. Telepresence referring to the sense of being in another place than the true location (e.g. when playing a game one feels being in the game). Process characteristics of

extrinsic and intrinsic motivation were thought to result in focused attention through involvement. (Hoffman and Novak, 1996)

The conceptual model of Hoffman and Novak (1996) was tested empirically and revised in the study of Novak, Hoffman, and Yung (2000). For the most part the test supported the conceptual model of Hoffman and Novak's (1996) study. However focused attention was not found to directly lead to greater flow experience, but indirectly through influencing higher telepresence and time distortion. Additionally interactive speed, measured by waiting time between interactions and loading time in the Web, was found to directly impact flow experience. (Novak et al., 2000) Since the conceptual model (Hoffman and Novak, 1996) there have been many different unidimensional and multidimensional attempts to gain more knowledge of flow, as was shown in the study of Hoffman and Novak (2009). Hoffman and Novak (2009, 24) also noted “flow to be an elusive construct to measure and model” and: “What one researcher considers an antecedent of flow, another considers a consequence of flow, or perhaps a part of flow itself”. (Hoffman and Novak, 2009, 29) Hence, flow might be influenced differently in different scenarios (e.g. in advergames).

Previous research, applying flow theory to advergames, has shown flow experience to have results such as: more positive attitude towards the featured brand (or brand personality) and the advergame (Catalán et al., 2019b; Ham et al., 2016; Hernandez, 2011; Steffen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015); greater purchase intention (Catalán et al. 2019a; Catalán et al. 2019b; Ham et al., 2016); increasing behaviours of game forwarding and data sharing (Zhao and Renard, 2016); and being positively associated with children's persuasion knowledge (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

To optimize a game's flow experience, it should be designed to create a strong sense of involvement and enjoyment (Johnson and Wiles, 2003). The more immersed/involved the player is in the advergame experiencing flow, the less persuasion knowledge the player has, because the cognitive capacity is used more for game playing and less is left to consider the commercial intention of the advergame (Ham et al., 2016). Contradicting this, flow experience was indicated to have a positive association with children's persuasion knowledge (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). This could be explained by low game involvement and/or ideal challenge-skill balance for the children in the advergame, leaving the players enough cognitive resources to process the commercial message (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). In the context of mobile games, the more difficult games and which encourage player

interaction have been found to be more enjoyable and more effective for the flow experience (Su, Chiang, Lee, and Chang, 2019).

Research has shown flow experience, a highly enjoyable psychological state engaging consumers into the advergame, to have a significant positive effect on brand attitude and brand personality (Ghosh et al., 2021; Ham et al., 2016; Steffen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015). The more flow the player feels, the more the player enjoys the advergame, and the higher purchase intention of the featured brand (Catalán et al., 2019a; Ham et al., 2016). Flow experience has also been suggested to positively influence game forwarding and personal data sharing behaviours (Zhao and Renard, 2018).

Steffen et al.'s (2013) research results showed, the outcome of the game and the given performance feedback has an impact on the experience of flow, only winning (positive feedback) and control (no feedback) conditions experiencing flow. It was then implied, to experience flow in an advergame, one requirement is the absence of negative performance feedback (Steffen et al., 2013). Having already familiar brand can also be an advantage in creating a flow experience in the advergame (Catalán et al., 2019a). However repeated game play of an advergame showed not to influence flow experience (Catalán et al., 2019a).

The prerequisite/predictors of flow experience in advergames have also been studied in previous research including skills, challenge, interactivity, focused attention, telepresence, sense of pleasure, sense of arousal and sense of control (Catalán et al., 2019b; Hernández, 2011; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). Challenge was seen by Hernández (2011) as the most important predictor of flow experience and suggested advergames to be designed so they create increasing challenges for the players. Catalán et al.'s (2019b) research confirmed the level of challenge significantly promoting the flow experience. Similarly, skills (Hernández, 2011), interactivity (Catalán et al., 2019b), focused attention (Catalán et al., 2019b), telepresence (Catalán et al., 2019b; Hernández, 2011), sense of pleasure (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016) and sense of arousal (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016) have been found to have a significant positive effect on flow in advergames.

A strong sense of control, how in control one feels to be with the artefact (e.g. game) and how in control one feels in completing the task, has been thought to lead to a higher level of flow in computer-mediated environments (Finneran and Zhang, 2003). However, the self-reported feeling of control has been shown not to be related to flow experience in

advergaming (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). Player's gaming skills, according to Catalán et al.'s (2019b) research had also a contradicting result to their hypothesis (and the result of Hernández, 2011), not having a significant effect on flow state. Both studies concluded the mixed result to prior research could be explained by the advergame in their research being easy to play and requiring limited gaming skills (Catalán et al., 2019b; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

3.2 Extrinsic motivations

Extrinsic motivation arises from the desire to achieve specific external goals, such as winning prizes, gaining recognition, or accessing exclusive content. In the context of advergames, understanding these external drivers is essential for designing games that not only attract players but also effectively convey the intended advertising messages. This section explores extrinsic motivation through the frameworks of Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). By exploring these theories, the aim is to uncover how extrinsic motivation can be effectively harnessed to enhance the appeal of advergames.

3.2.1 Organismic Integration Theory (OIT)

According to self-determination theory (SDT) extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2020, 2): ”concerns behavior done for reasons other than their inherent satisfactions.” However extrinsic motivation can vary, and in SDT it has been specified to four subtypes according to how internalized and autonomous the activity is for a person. The four subtypes of extrinsic motivation were first introduced by Deci and Ryan (1985b) as a sub-theory of SDT, and it was referred as Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). The four subtypes of extrinsic motivation, illustrated below in figure 3, moving from external to more internal, are: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation. (Deci and Ryan, 1985b; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020)

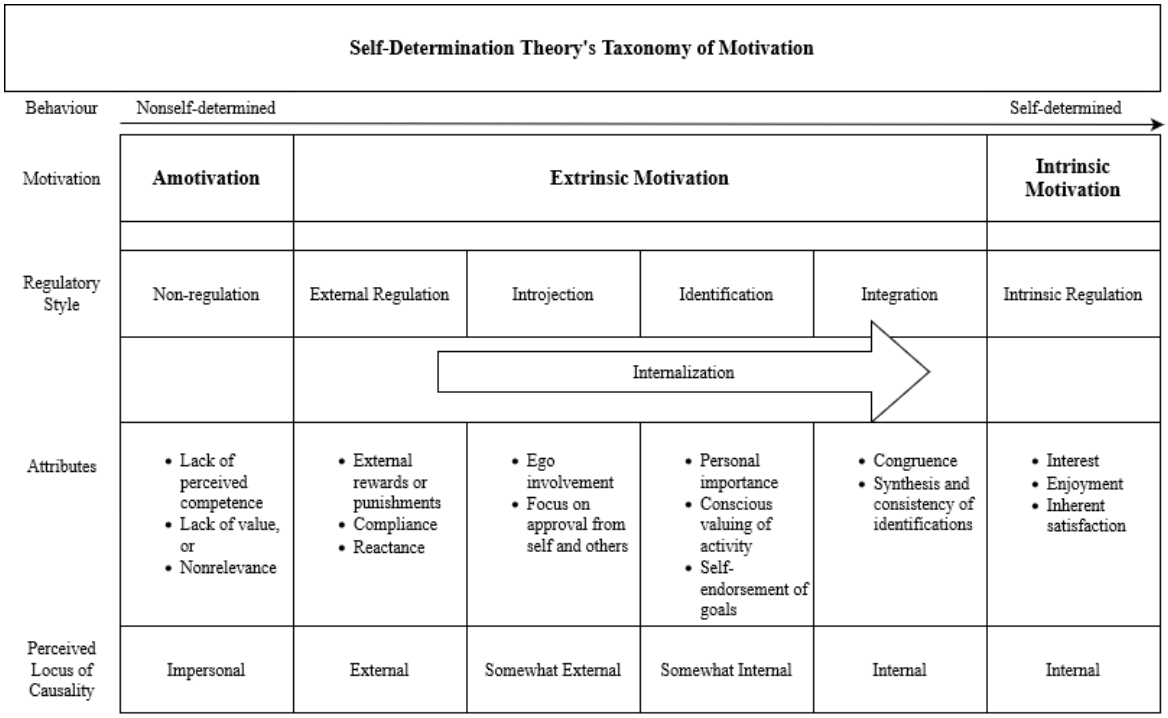

Figure 3. Self-Determination Theory's Taxonomy of Motivation

(adapted from: Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020)

External regulation involves behaviours that are motivated by external rewards and punishments, often feeling controlled and lacking autonomy. In the context of advergames, external motivation plays a significant role as there usually is some kind of reward included. (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) External regulation might manifest in advergame players playing the game due to external rewards, such as in-game bonuses or real-world incentives tied to the promoted product. In the case of this research, the player enters to a draw to win a coupon to receive a free product from the brand (e.g. a free ice cream).

Introjected regulation, on the other hand, refers to extrinsic motivation that has been partially internalized, where behaviour is driven by internal pressures, such as the desire for self-esteem or the avoidance of anxiety, shame, or guilt. Both external regulation and introjected regulation are forms of controlled motivation. (Deci and Ryan, 1985b; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) Introjected regulation can be seen when players feel compelled to participate in the advergame due to internal pressures, such as wanting to feel good about supporting a brand they identify with.

However, extrinsic motivation can also be more autonomous. In identified regulation, individuals consciously recognize and accept the value of an activity, leading to a greater sense of willingness and choice in their actions. The most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, where individuals not only understand and identify with the value of the activity but also align it with their core values and interests. (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) More autonomous forms of motivation, such as identified or integrated regulation, might occur when players genuinely value the content of the advergame or its message, finding it personally relevant or congruent with their values. Understanding these motivations helps marketers design advergames that not only attract but also engage users on a deeper level, potentially leading to more effective promotional outcomes. Research on gamification (Mitchell, Schuster, and Jin, 2020) and loyalty programs (Kim and Ahn, 2017) has found the OIT's internalization of extrinsic motivation should be taken into consideration to improve customers' need satisfaction.

Mitchell et al., (2020) researched gamification and how the internalization of extrinsic motivation impacts on employees' need satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Their results showed, consistent with OIT, employees with external regulation using the gamification application experienced lower levels of autonomy and competence as they felt more controlled. However external regulation influenced positively the need of relatedness which they thought to be because employees felt the social pressure to use the gamification application formed a more meaningful relationship through bonding with other employees. When the employees had identified regulation (i.e. found it useful) using the gamification application their needs satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness was higher. (Mitchell et al., 2020)

Kim and Ahn (2017) studied the undermining effect of rewards on intrinsic motivation to engage in loyalty programs. In the research they had two versions of Starbucks' loyalty program with two different types of rewards: a salient, controlling reward (SC) and non-salient, autonomy supportive reward (NA). The SC reward, typical to most loyalty programs, had an explicit requirement and deadline without options of choice (e.g. “Earn two more stars”, “Offer valid until December 31, 2016”, and “Get our Holiday Spice Flat White”). The NA reward had less explicit requirement, no deadline, and options of choice (e.g. “Earn more stars” and “Get a free drink”). The overall finding of the study showed with the highly controlled reward (SC) customers' motivation to engage was lower compared to the

autonomy supportive reward (NA). The results also showed extrinsic motivation of the highly controlled reward (SC) could be internalized by providing carefully worded feedback acknowledging customers' efforts and negative feelings towards the loyalty program (e.g. “We understand earning stars wasn't easy”). However, if the reward is already supporting customer's autonomy it might be best to not use verbal feedback as it could be found inauthentic, persuasive and controlling. In the research they also suggested loyalty programs should include video-game elements to increase customer engagement and suggested future research to investigate how gamification affects customers' motivation. (Kim and Ahn, 2017)

3.2.2 Technology acceptance model (TAM)

Technology acceptance model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989) to predict user acceptance of computers, has been widely used for research on different kinds of information systems including those using gamification (Aydin, 2018; Bittner and Schipper, 2014; García-Jurado, Castro-González, Torres-Jiménez, and Leal-Rodríguez, 2019; Yang et al., 2017). In his research Davis (1989, 320) validated two variables for user acceptance the perceived usefulness defined as: "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance.” And perceived ease of use as: "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort.”

Both perceived usefulness and ease of use have been shown to promote favourable attitudes towards the gamified system and increase behavioural intentions (e.g. Bitrián, Buil, and Catalán, 2021; Bittner and Schipper, 2014; García-Jurado et al., 2019; Qian, Yu, Matz, Luo, and Xu, 2023; Yang et al., 2017). In prior TAM research, perceived usefulness has been shown to have greater influence on engagement intention than perceived ease of use (Savitskie, Royne, Persinger, Grunhagen, and Witte, 2007; Smith, 2008; Yang et al., 2017). This is thought to be because of the advancements in information technology the ease of use is not an issue anymore, especially for the younger people (Millennials and younger) as they are heavier internet users, and emphasis is on enjoyment and having fun (García-Jurado et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2017). However, ease of use has been shown to increase the perceived usefulness of a gamified system (Aydin, 2018; Bitrián et al., 2021).

Demographic factors have been shown to have an effect how perceived usefulness and ease of use affect consumers in gamification context. Perceived usefulness was found to be

important for males' intention to use gamified systems but not significantly affecting female's use intentions (Aydin, 2018). While ease of use has been shown to be important for the adoption and use of gamified systems, especially for older users (> 39 years) (Aydin, 2018; García-Jurado et al., 2019). Older people (> 39 years) have also been shown to have lower perceived usefulness of gamification than the younger people (15-38 years) (Bittner and Schipper, 2014). In the design of advergames one should also consider the target group's demographic factors as they could influence the intentions to engage with them.

Even though gamification research has used TAM already for at least a decade, there has only been two very recent studies conducted specifically about advergames (Bayır and Akel, 2024; Jami Pour et al., 2023). Both studies found in their results TAM influencing consumers' attitudes. The research of Jami Pour et al. (2023) is discussed further as it offered more descriptive results of the factors affecting perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

The research by Jami Pour et al., (2023) found, through literature review and semi-structured interviews, three categories affecting customer attitudes toward advergames, which are: advertising content (informativeness, recall and persuasive); game-related factors (functionality, game design, game-brand congruence and game content); and player-related factors (personality types, computer self-efficacy and player's motivation). These were added to TAM as external variables in their research and validated through a survey for advergame players. They (Jami Pour et al., 2023, 94) concluded in their results: "…advertising content and game-related factors have a significant positive effect on perceived ease of use (PEOU). The advertising content and player-related factors have a significant positive effect on perceived usefulness (PU)."

Perceived usefulness was found to have more effect on attitude towards advergames, compared to perceived ease of use. Player-related factors had the highest impact on perceived usefulness. Their advice therefore was to design advergames so the players'; personality traits can be aligned with the game, self-efficacy (believing one knows how to play) is high, and motivation to play is high (e.g. increased autonomy and/or rewards). (Jami Pour et al., 2023)

3.3 Interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations

To explore the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in the context of advergames, this study utilizes Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), which is a theoretical framework of self-determination theory (SDT). Cognitive Evaluation Theory focuses on how external events influence intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2006). The goal is to understand how intrinsic motivation (e.g. enjoyment) influences the perception of extrinsic motivation (e.g. prize), and how extrinsic motivation (e.g. prize) influences intrinsic motivation (e.g. enjoyment).

Cognitive evaluation theory (CET) (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Deci and Ryan, 1985b; Ryan and Deci, 2000), which according to Ryan et al. (2006, 349) is a ”mini theory of SDT” and is about ”contextual factors that support or thwart intrinsic motivation”. The two psychological needs in cognitive evaluation theory (CET) enhancing intrinsic motivation are *autonomy* and *competence* (Ryan et al. 2006, 349). In their research, investigating the motivational pull of video games, Ryan et al. (2006) added also *presence* being a factor in gaming context and developed a 21-item scale called the Player Experience of Need Satisfaction (PENS) to measure players' psychological need satisfaction when playing a game. The five dimensions of PENS to be measured are competence, autonomy, relatedness, presence/immersion, and intuitive controls.

The results of the research supported relations between autonomy and competence satisfaction as well as heightened presence when autonomy and competence needs were satisfied (Ryan et al., 2006, 361). PENS has been used in gaming research to assess e.g. the impact of storytelling (Bormann and Greitemeyer, 2015); Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game's player experience (Mora-Cantallops and Sicilia, 2018) and users' motivation to engage in virtual reality (VR) exercise platform (Ijaz, Ahmadpour, Wang, and Calvo, 2020) on the player experience. Yet, advergame literature has not used PENS and gamification research has only used it in one research (Mitchell et al., 2020) on the impact of extrinsic motivation to employees' psychological needs satisfaction.

There are of course other tools to measure player/game experiences e.g. the Ubisoft Perceived Experience Questionnaire (UPEQ) (Azadvar and Canossa, 2018). Most recently Ballou, Denisova, Ryan, Rigby, and Deterding (2024) developed the Basic Needs in Games Scale (BANGS). In the research Ballou et al. (2024) criticized PENS and UPEQ scales

lacking need frustration. Thus, they added subscales of autonomy frustration, competence frustration and relatedness frustration. They validated BANGS and found greater need frustration to result in lower intrinsic motivation. (Ballou et al., 2024) In this study's empirical research and semi-structured interview answers, relatedness frustration is highly unlikely to be mentioned as there is no social element in the advergames of this study. However, autonomy frustration (e.g. wanting more complex games with more freedom how to play) and competence frustration (e.g. wanting more difficult games) could be shown in the study's interview answers related to how one would further develop the advergames to be more motivating.

Autonomy is achieved, according to CET, when tasks are done voluntarily and willingly for the interest of the activity or personal value. Autonomy and therefore motivation is decreased if one feels controlled doing the activity. For one to feel autonomous playing a game, the game design needs to provide flexibility and choices, and rewards that do not control the player's behaviour. (Ryan et al., 2006, 349) The effect of a reward depends how it affects the consumer's perceived self-determination and competence. Reward can be interpreted as controlling which leads to thwarted autonomy and undermined intrinsic motivation. If the consumer perceives the reward as informational and an indicator of one's competence, intrinsic motivation is enhanced. (Deci et al., 1999) However, rewards can have conflicting effects working against each other enhancing and undermining intrinsic motivation. This was recognized in Ryan, Mims, and Koestner's (1983) study which introduced reward contingencies, if the reward is understood as controlling or indicator of competence. The contingencies are task-non-contingent-, task-contingent-, performance-contingent-, and competitively contingent rewards. (Ryan et al., 1983)

In their study Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2011) tested and revealed a significant interaction effect on autonomy- and control causality orientations, and reward condition on intrinsic motivation. The result showed there was no significant difference in intrinsic motivation levels for autonomy-oriented individuals regards to reward conditions, while control-oriented individuals had significantly lower levels of intrinsic motivation with reward condition compared to those with no reward condition (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2011, 485). As a conclusion the rewards only undermined intrinsic motivation for control-oriented individuals, while autonomy orientation seems to offer some sort of protection from environmental contingencies undermining intrinsic motivation. Also, the impact of rewards

(extrinsic motivation) on intrinsic motivation was lower compared to the impact of causality orientations. (Hagger and Chatzisarantis, 2011)

The consumers' autonomy- or control orientations are not explored directly in this study but reward as an extrinsic motivation is an important part of the studied advergames as they all include some kind of reward. It is therefore interesting to gain knowledge if and how rewards affect advergame players' intrinsic motivation. The advergames in the empirical study have rewards which are based on completing (task-contingent) the game to enter the draw for the prize, but better performance (not performance-contingent) in the game is not rewarded. Thus, the rewards in this study's advergames are mostly controlling as the requirement is completing the game. However, the reward is chance based (i.e. only few will win the free product coupon) which adds complexity to the rewards and could have an effect how the reward is perceived.

Competence in CET means there is a psychological need for optimal challenges and feeling accomplished. For one to perceive competence while gaming, the game should have intuitive controls, tasks providing optimal challenges, and chances for positive feedback. Intuitive controls make sense, are easy to master and support game immersion. (Ryan et al., 2006) Both self-determination theory and flow theory suggest intrinsically motivated behaviour requires an optimal challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Deci 1975). Positive feedback has been shown to only enhance intrinsic motivation when one feels responsible for their competent performance and when the feedback is not given in a controlling way (Fisher, 1978; Ryan; 1982). Perceived competence is thought to be necessary for any type of motivation, but without satisfying the need for autonomy the behaviour is not self-determined (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Challenge-skill fit has been researched in advergame context as an antecedent of flow experience (Ghosh et al., 2021; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016; Vega et al., 2023; Waiguny et al., 2012). As discussed earlier, according to flow theory there should be an optimal challenge-skill balance for one to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989; Hoffman and Novak, 1996). Over-challenging advergame can lead to anxiety or anger towards the advergame and the brand, while under-challenging advergame can lead to boredom and rejection (Ghosh et al., 2021; Vega et al., 2023; Waiguny et al., 2012). When the player's skills are higher than the advergame challenge (i.e. under-challenged) one is not experiencing flow and the brand attitude is less

favourable (Ghosh et al., 2021; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). The gaming experience of the player also affects how challenging one feels the advergame is, as the more experienced one is the more skilled one is as a player. Increasing difficulty, making the advergame more challenging, has been shown to reduce the player's perceived competence. (Vega et al., 2023) Therefore, the advergame should not be over- or under-challenging to maintain interest in the advergame and not be overly focused on the advertising message.

On regular games, performance feedback has been shown to influence the players' mood and the players' perceptions of the game (e.g. Hill and Ward, 1989; Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva, and Greenleaf, 1984). In advergame context, negative performance feedback was shown by Steffen et al. (2013) to affect negatively to players' moods and flow experience but not to affect negatively to the perception of the advergame. They (Steffen et al., 2013, 192) attributed this finding to the advergame requiring only low involvement compared to other types of games and that is why negative performance feedback might not be as relevant for the players' perceptions of advergames. However, positive performance feedback when winning in an advergame was shown to have a positive effect on the player's brand attitude and the likelihood of flow experience (Steffen et al., 2013).

Presence is according to Ryan et al. (2006, 350) is: ”the sense that one is within the game world, as opposed to experiencing oneself as a person outside the game, manipulating controls or characters”. For presence to emerge games need to be designed so, players can focus on playing the game rather than the mechanics (i.e. intuitive controls), and players' psychological needs (i.e. autonomy and competence) are satisfied (Ryan et al., 2006, 361). Presence could be also explained as a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), being so immersed in the game one feels being a part of the game. For the mechanics to be intuitive one could expect the game to be perceived as easy to use, thus intuitive controls could be explained with the technology acceptance model's (TAM) perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). In the context of this study, presence/immersion is unlikely to be mentioned in the interview answers as the advergames in the mobile loyalty program application are simple and easy-to-play. The perceived ease of use could be a motivating factor to continue to play the games, but it could be more important for the players with less game experience or for those who do not regularly play games.

4 Research design and methods

This chapter is for demonstrating the empirical research's design and methods. The research design is the plan for the collection and analysis of the data. The research methods are the techniques used to collect data. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, 54) The aim of the empirical research is to connect the empirical data to the research questions, and to the conclusions (Yin, 2018, 26). An interpretive approach was taken for the empirical research to understand what motivates consumers to play advergames (Lee and Lings, 2008, 65). The empirical research design is exploratory, collecting information from the semi-structured interviews to build theory of the consumers' motivations to play advergames (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, 54). The data in the empirical research is mostly qualitative based on meanings expressed through words in the interviews with some quantitative data (i.e. age and sex of the participants) gathered from the company's data base (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2009, 482). The research is cross-sectional as there is a time constraint for the study and the interviews are conducted over a short period of time (Saunders et al., 2009, 155).

The used research methods are the ways to solve the research questions. The chosen research methods must have valid reasons to reach the correct solutions. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, 37) For this study the chosen research method is a one-to-one semi-structured interview held online via Microsoft Teams. In a semi-structured interview, there is a list of questions which can be altered to explore the research questions and thus the interviews are recorded to ensure the answers are for the right themes (Saunders et al., 2009, 320). As the empirical research is exploratory in nature, the semi-structured qualitative interview is chosen to understand the consumers' motivations to play advergames. The chosen method gives the opportunity to ask the interview participants to explain, or build on, their responses. The semi-structured interviews give the opportunity to collect rich and detailed data from the interviewee (Saunders et al., 2009, 324). In the next sections of this chapter the research plan is further explained by providing relevant information about the research context, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and reliability and validity.

4.1 Research context

The company which the empirical research is conducted with operates in multiple business areas of the Finnish trading sector having also operations in other Northern European countries. This study was conducted with the cooperation of the company's retail trade division and the company's online community members. The company has implemented advergames into their mobile loyalty program application and currently the competitors in Finnish retail market do not utilize advergames in their marketing. The advergames are made by an outside company for a brand wanting to use the Finnish retail company's mobile loyalty program as a platform.

This research is exploratory and thus qualitative research method of semi-structured interview is chosen. In qualitative research emphasis is on subjectively understanding and interpreting the respondent's point of view to solve the research question, while in quantitative research the emphasis is on objectively testing and verifying the hypothesis (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, 105). The purpose of the study is to explore consumer's motivations to play advergames in Finnish retail mobile loyalty program. The research aims to gain knowledge of the consumers' intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and the interactions of these motivations.

Even though there have been previous studies on motivation and advergames they have focused more on the company’s or brand’s viewpoint and how the advergame should improve e.g. brand attitude or purchase intention (Catalán et al., 2019a; Ghosh et al., 2021; Ham et al., 2016). The previous advergame literature has used mainly flow theory **(**Csikszentmihalyi 1975; 1990) for consumer motivation and the advantage of this study is the use of multiple theories as a background. The study’s theoretical contributions for future advergame research are to give an idea how to go about designing advergames which motivate consumers to play and propositions for possible quantitative research. As this study’s focus is the consumer and their motivations to play the advergames, the managerial implications are more customer centric than in the previous research which will help to design advergames supporting the overall customer experience. This study is the first to use advergames played in a mobile loyalty program application which adds more significance to the research. Below in figure 4, the research context is visualized and explained to understand the setting of the study.

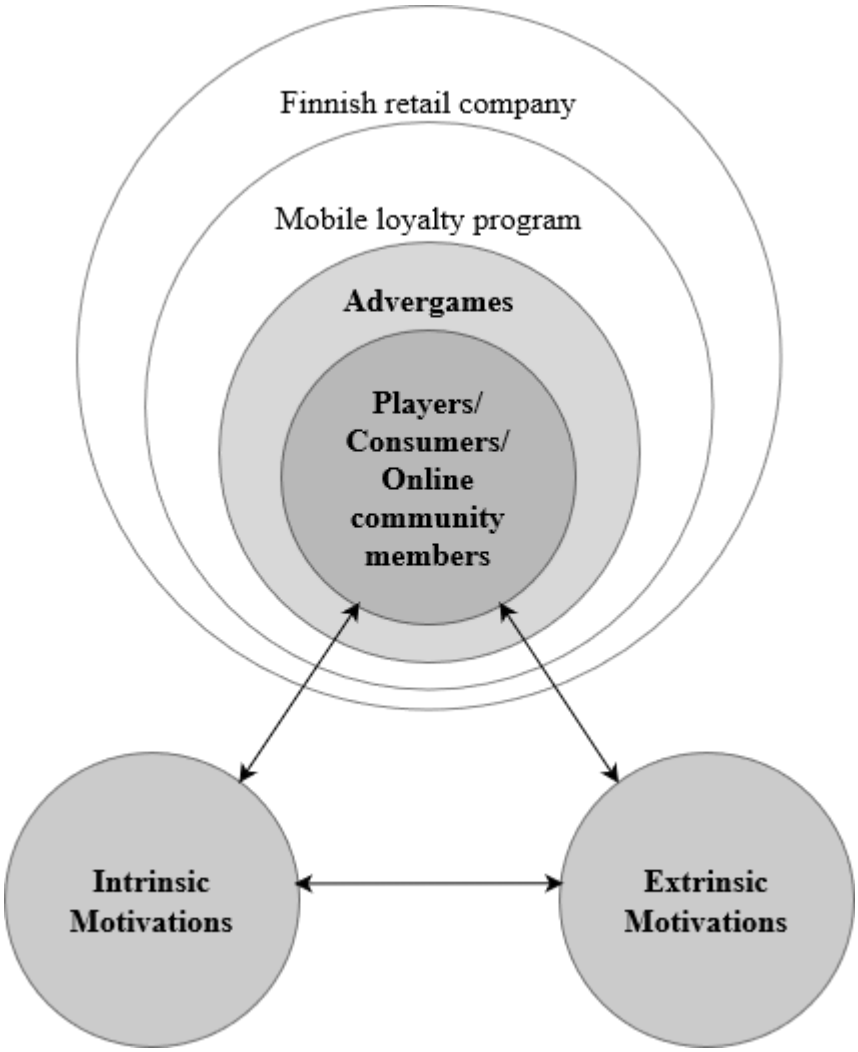

Figure 4. Research context

The Finnish retail company has a mobile loyalty program in which it has had many different advergames during the year 2024 from different brands in different product categories. The Finnish retail company has also utilized the advergames to promote their own brands. The advergames are played by the Finnish retail company's consumers who are logged in the company's mobile loyalty program application and need to have their loyalty program card linked to the application to be able to participate in the draw. The studied population in the empirical research is the Finnish retail company's online community members (also consumers) who have played (i.e. players) the advergames in the mobile loyalty program application.

The advergames are easy to play casual games and all the games have a reward attached to them, which is considered an extrinsic motivation for the consumer/player. The most used game form so far has been memory card game where the player searches two matching pairs and after completing the game enters a draw to win a prize. The second most used game form has been scratching game where the player scratches the picture trying to find the required logos to win a prize. Accordingly, the reward is either given to the consumer when they win, or it the player enters a draw after completing the game. The consumer/player might also find the advergame intrinsically motivating i.e. enjoying the advergame whether one gets the reward or not. Moreover, the possible interactions between the intrinsic motivations and extrinsic motivations are explored in this study.

The research was conducted in ethically responsible way according to the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2023). The participants were informed about their personal data processing and data protection in the research when they agreed to the online interview invitation. The participants were volunteering to participate in the interviews and freely gave the company their consent for the processing of their personal data. After the interview the participant received a gift card from the Finnish retail company. To preserve the participants' anonymity the data was pseudonymised after the required data was compiled, so the answers could not be attributed to a specific participant without additional information.

The company is the controller, and the researcher is the processor of the interview participants' personal data. The researcher signed a legally binding data processing agreement (DPA) with the company. In the interview the researcher used appropriate and simple language to facilitate the understanding and answering of the interview questions. The interview results were reported and interpreted objectively and honestly to reflect the reality. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, 22) The interviews were conducted so not to subject the interviewees to embarrassment, harm or any other material disadvantage (Saunders et al., 2009, 160).

4.2 Data collection methods

The data gathered for this study's theory part, in chapters 2 and 3, is mostly from peer reviewed academic journal articles available online and from books which have been

referenced in earlier research as well. Peer reviewed journal articles' quality is assured by scholars from the same field as the article's research topic (Lee and Lings, 2008, 85). The theory part is based on the key themes and concepts of the research questions presented in the introduction part of the thesis to better understand the research context. Firstly, the theory part goes through the advergame characteristics to gain knowledge what the previous research has been focusing on and how it could relate to the consumers' motivations to play advergames. Secondly, the motivation theories are explored and how they relate to advergame research and gamification research. As the research approach is mainly inductive, the aim of the empirical research is to give more insight to what motivates the consumers to play the advergames and develop theories and possible propositions. (Saunders et al., 2009, 126).

For the empirical part of the study, to achieve the aim of the study, semi-structured interviews were held with the Finnish retail company's online community members. The online community members are also customers of the company and have played the advergames in the company's mobile loyalty program. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews where it is possible to alter and/or omit interview questions, depending on the conversation flow and how the customer answers, to cover the research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2009, 320). The decision to use semi-structured interviews was to collect in-depth answers, which is not possible to ensure when using e.g. a questionnaire.

The company sent the interview invitation to the online community members via email with a link to the online form, where one had to answer if they had played the company's advergames. Only those who answered they had played the advergames were able to participate in the interviews. The participants gave their contact information for me to contact them and for the 30-euro gift card they would receive after the interview. After receiving the email addresses of the participants, emails were sent to book 45-minute interview time from Microsoft Bookings links. Using Microsoft Bookings was to reduce back and forth emails and make it easier to have the interview times organized straight to both the interviewee's and interviewer's calendar.

The interviews were held one-to-one using Microsoft Teams in Finnish, to make it easier for the participants to answer the questions in their own native language. The interviews were recorded, and the answers were transcribed by the researcher in English. The interview questions consisted of the participants' profile, motivations to play advergames, and

improvement ideas how the company's advergames could be more motivating. The semi-structured interview questions in Finnish are presented in Appendix 1 and the questions translated in English are presented in Appendix 2.

4.3 Data analysis methods

For the qualitative data to be useful it needs to be analysed, and the meanings understood (Saunders et al., 2009, 480). The idea of data analysis is to help reducing the rich data into key ideas and concepts (Lee and Lings, 2008, 233). Data reduction is defined (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 10) as the: “process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data”. As suggested by Lee and Lings (2008, 237), the data analysis was started during the data collection to avoid piling up the work.

For the data reduction, this study's empirical research used content analysis approach called thematic analysis (Franzosi, 2004, 551): ”Where the coding scheme is based on categories designed to capture the dominant themes present in a text”. The aim of the coding is to identify key words and/or phrases linked to the motivation theories used in the theory part of the study. The data is analysed line-by-line until patterns emerge. Codes are then clustered into groups with the aim to develop explanatory concepts of the consumers' motivations to play advergames. (Goulding, 2002, 74) For this study, the coding was done using NVivo which is a QDA (qualitative data analysis) software for data reduction to find the themes from the qualitative answers (Lee and Lings, 2008, 244).

For the coding to be possible in NVivo, the gathered data needed to be prepared. The recorded Microsoft Teams interviews conducted in Finnish were transcribed in English in a separate word processing file as soon as possible after the interview had taken place to avoid building up the needed transcription work (Saunders et al., 2009, 485). The files were named according to participant number (e.g. P1 and P2) to preserve anonymity but also to help link the word processing files to the correct participant's demographic and gaming habit information in a different spreadsheet file (Saunders et al., 2009, 486).

4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity have been recognized as complicated issues in qualitative research as things are not measured like in quantitative research (Lee and Lings, 2008, 209). Trustworthiness, evaluated by credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, has been suggested to be used as an alternative to reliability and validity in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The verification of validity and reliability in qualitative research should be continuous process and not only done at a specific research stage (Morse et al., 2002, 17). The validity and reliability of this study was assessed throughout the course of the research with the help of Singh, Benmamoun, Meyer, and Arikan's (2021) framework using the verification strategies fitting the research method of semi-structured interview.

Singh et al. (2021) found there remain gaps in the qualitative methods' trustworthiness, in their content analysis of qualitative research studies in International Marketing Review. They developed a trustworthiness verification framework to assess the reliability and validity in qualitative research by synthesis of past research on the rigor of qualitative research from variety of fields (e.g. education, marketing and sociology). They warned their verification framework will not fit all qualitative studies and enhancing trustworthiness differ among qualitative methods (e.g. for content analysis or case studies). (Singh et. al, 2021)

The credibility is the truth value or internal validity of the qualitative study (Singh et. al, 2021, 1292). The rationale to use qualitative research is to explain why consumers play advergames, which could be difficult to quantify as the research on consumers' motivations to play advergames is in the early stages. The interview questions were developed to answer the research questions presented in the introduction. The questions were modified accordingly and validated by the comments from the supervising professor and the company's representatives, to be understandable and without errors (Lee and Lings, 2008, 282).

The coding of the answers was to identify recurring patterns and insights. Also, consumers' divergent views were sought out and are presented in the findings. As the study is mostly exploratory and done alone, coding reliability was not a major concern. For the reliability check of the coding one would need another coder to measure the intercoder reliability. For the credibility of the findings, discussion is reflecting to previous research results, how they align or deviate. (Singh et. al, 2021)

Transferability or applicability is seen a challenge for qualitative studies and the challenge is recognized for this study as well (Singh et. al, 2021, 1294). The study's context is very specific i.e. Finnish retail company's consumers playing advergames in mobile loyalty program application. The data is collected only from one company's online community members which means the generalization to another context could be difficult. To improve transferability, direct quotes and insights are used to have a more thorough description of the consumers' motivations to play advergames. The findings are also discussed in a broad context of motivations using multiple theories as a background. (Singh et. al, 2021) For the research's conclusions to be generalised there would need to be a follow-up studies in other research settings (Saunders et al., 2009, 158).

Dependability is the consistency of methods and processes in the data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Audit trail, a detailed written account of the research process, is used for the possibility of authentication (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Tables are included in the study to showcase the coding scheme and results (Singh et. al, 2021). Confirmability is the neutrality of the researcher interpreting the data in qualitative research (Singh et. al, 2021, 1295). Confirmability can be assessed via reflexive analysis by the researcher to be aware of the assumptions made and bias control. The main assumption of this study is that motivation theories could somehow explain the reasons why consumers' play advergames and this affected how the interview questions were formed. Another assumption was that the consumers who had played the retail company's advergames would be hard to reach which affected to whom the interview was conducted with (i.e. interviews were held with the company's online community members). To reduce response bias, the interview questions are formed to be as open ended as possible and further explanation is only given if the interviewee needs it. Inaccuracies in the answers are also reduced by recording the interviews. (Yin, 2018, 114) The researcher's bias is reduced because the researcher was not employed by the case company, and there was no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication. (Singh et al., 2021)

5 Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the study exploring consumers' motivations to play advergames within a Finnish retail company's mobile loyalty program application. The findings are structured into five main sections. First, the *profile of the participants* is outlined, offering insights into their demographics, gaming habits, and favourite advergame type. The second section examines the *characteristics of the advergames,* focusing on game type, difficulty, and game time, as described by the participants. The third section delves into *intrinsic motivations,* exploring elements such as autonomy, competence, and game involvement/immersion. This is followed by an analysis of *extrinsic motivations*, highlighting the external rewards and incentives driving advergame participation. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the *interactions and influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations*, providing understanding how these factors interplay. Together, these findings offer a view of what motivates consumers to play advergames and contribute to the theoretical understanding of advergames used in mobile loyalty program applications.

5.1 Profile of the participants

The company posted the information about the possibility to participate in an interview to their online community web page and asked for the participants contact information. The company chose 20 individuals out of the people who entered their contact information and were willing to participate in the study. The 20 people were chosen by the company so there would be 10 male and 10 female participants from different age groups. The interview invitation email was sent to 20 people and out of them 16 reserved an interview time and participated in the study. Below is a collective table of the 16 interview participants' demographics and a more detailed individualized table of each participant's demographics is presented in Appendix 4.

Table 1. Interview participants' demographic variables

Demographic variable	Participants (N=16)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	9	56 %
Male	7	44 %
Age group		
Gen Z (18–29)	4	25 %
Millennial (30–44)	3	19 %
Gen X (45–59)	5	31 %
Baby boomer (60–78)	4	25 %
How often plays video games		
Daily	7	44 %
Weekly	6	38 %
Monthly	3	19 %
Number of company's advergames played		
≤ 10	6	38 %
> 10	5	31 %
≥ 20	5	31 %
Favourite advergame		
Memory games	4	25 %
Scratch	3	19 %
Spin the wheel	1	6 %
Memory games, spin the wheel	1	6 %
Scratch, spin the wheel	2	13 %
Did not specify	5	31 %

The gender and age distribution of the 16 participants is quite ideal in the sense that different age groups are represented and not being overrepresented or underrepresented. Most of the participants play video games daily (n=7, 44 %) or weekly (n=6, 38%). Only three (19 %) participants said they do not play video games every week. The advergames are also considered as video games. Not displayed in the table above (information available in Appendix 4), but an interesting finding was all the 16 participants mentioned one of their primary gaming devices to be mobile phone or a tablet. 12 participants mentioned only mobile phone, while four (4) participants mentioned playing with other devices as well (tablet, gaming console and/or PC).

When asked how many of the company's advergames one has approximately played, majority of the participants (n=10, 62 %) had played quite extensively (more than 10 advergames) and only six (38 %) said had played 10 or less. Almost a third (n=5, 31 %) of the participants had no specific favourite game type of the company's advergames. The most popular single game type was memory games (n=4, 25%) with one participant mentioning both spin the wheel type of games. If one would categorize the games based on the cognitive demand required to play scratch and spin the wheel would be in the low cognitive demand group and memory games in the high cognitive demand group. Low cognitive demand (scratch and spin the wheel) game types were favourite among six participants (38 %), high cognitive demand (memory) game type was favourite among four participants (25 %), and one participant (6 %) liked both high cognitive demand (memory) game type and low cognitive demand (spin the wheel) game type.

5.2 Advergames' characteristics

Interpreting the answers there are at least some links to all the four characteristics found in the previous studies on advergame characteristics which are game-brand congruity, brand placement, perceived interactivity, and game involvement/engagement. It should be noted that the previous studies have concentrated on the viewpoint of the company utilizing the advergames and how the advergames improve something for the benefit of the company (e.g. brand recall or purchase intention), whereas this study has the viewpoint of the consumer and what motivates the consumer to play the advergames. The advergames' characteristics, which affect the consumers' motivation to play, based on the interpretation of the interview

participants' answers are game type, game difficulty, and game time. These three characteristics are discussed in the next sections.

5.2.1 Game type

The advergame types which have been used by the company and which were mentioned in the interviews can be categorized into four types: catching and shoot-em-up games; memory games; scratch games; and spin the wheel/bottle and slot games (spin games). Out of these four the game types the company has used the most during the year 2024 have been memory games and scratch games. All the games display a message after the game if one has won a prize (e.g. Congratulations! You won the prize) or if there was no win this time (e.g. Dang, no win this time. Try your luck again tomorrow/You can play 3 times a day).

The catching and shoot-em-up and memory games have challenge, and the prize is drawn after completing the game, so the skill of the player does not affect winning the prize. In the catching games one needs to move below and catch things falling from above to collect points and/or avoid things to not get minus points. In the shoot-em-up games one needs to shoot and hit falling things before they fall below the line. In the memory games one needs to find pairs by clicking the images and turning the cards around trying to remember where the pair is after the card pair has turned over and there is no limit to how many tries one gets to find the pairs inside the game.

The scratch game and spin games are based on luck and if the goal is achieved one wins the prize. In the scratch game the goal is to find three same pictures by scratching the picture. In the spin games one clicks the spin image to see if the wheel/bottle lands to the required sector or the slot game lands to the required three images. The scratch games usually have only one try per day while the spin games can have three tries per day or a try again sector.

The company's advergames could be described based on the interview answers as familiar, simple/easy-to-play, quick to play, exciting/enticing and varied. The game should be familiar and simple enough so learning to play the game is easy or not required at all. The quickness of the advergames is also appreciated and game time, covered more thoroughly in a separate section of the findings, was one of the four advergame characteristic based on the interviews' interpretation. The game should be somehow exciting or enticing one to play, to gain the

player's interest in the game. The variation between the game types is there to maintain the interest and to keep enticing the consumers to play. One of the participants described the advergames as follows:

P4: She said the company's advergames are quick to play and simple. One knows what to expect from the advergames when they are so simple. One does not have to learn new rules and the advergames are not very complex. She likes simple and peaceful game play. It has been nice the advergame type has been changing and there has not been the same type of game after another.

The advergames' functionality was overall seen as good, and the games are technically working well. The interview participants value the accuracy of movement and visual elements. Some of the answers hoped more different kinds of game types, more personalized games and two of the participants mentioned they would like the games to have sounds, which they do not currently have. Below are some of the things mentioned about how the participants would like the games to be to more motivating to them:

P6: She would add different kinds of advergames because they have been mostly alike and there has been only minor variation.

P7: She would like games that are colourful and fun with sound effects.

P14: She likes to play these more complex games but hopes the movement in those games will be more accurate. The challenging games are interesting to her.

One could interpret from the answer P14 gave above, the more complex and challenging the game is, the more important the perceived ease of use is to her. The next section of the findings covers the game difficulty and its effect on the consumers' motivation.

5.2.2 Game difficulty

Most of the participants like the easier games compared to the more challenging games. The most mentioned reason to like the easier games was them being quick to play. Some participants mentioned they liked the easier games, scratch and spin games, because one sees quickly if one wins or not without doing much. Others mentioned the games should be easy

because one does not bother to read instructions, and the games should be suitable for all ages. One participant commented why she liked the spin games as follows:

P8: If she is on her lunch break spin the wheel game type is the best because it is quick, easy and one sees straight away if one wins.

The participants who liked the more challenging games mostly mentioned the memory games to be interesting e.g.:

P13: Now the points always reset after each game and there could be some kind of point history. Something which would motivate him to play daily. The points would accumulate or there could be a scoreboard who has collected the most points.

There were also participants who would like to have achievements or prizes linked to the result of the game e.g.:

P6: It would be good if one could have an option to choose the game difficulty and the difficulty would affect the prize, the harder the difficulty the better prize one would get.

However, two of the participants who liked the easier games were against the idea of achievements and one of them (P11) reasoned it with the best players always taking the prize. For some of the participants the games felt too easy and simple because they are over too quickly or not challenging enough. If the game feels too easy for a player who likes a more challenging game, it could be interpreted the importance of the prize and chance of winning goes up. This is shown especially in one of the answers:

P10: If the game feels too easy or boring, e.g. scratch games which are not his favourite, he just quickly scratches and sees if he wins something, the game does not excite him.

If the game felt too difficult the main reason was the controls of the game requiring skill or being too hard to master. The game type where one needs to catch and avoid things was the one which irritated or frustrated the participants the most because it required accurate coordination. Another underlying reason for irritation and frustration about the catch game could be one getting minus points from the things to be avoided if one hits them. One participant gave the following answer to why the catch game type was demotivating:

P14: What demotivates her are the type of games where one needs to catch things and avoid other things. Those games do not have accurate movement and when one needs to avoid a thing one slightly grazes the thing. It annoys somehow when one hits a thing when one thinks there was no hit. However, she understands the games are not made by high paying professionals. The game type where one needs to catch things irritates her when she gets minus points hitting a thing to be avoided.

5.2.3 Game time

As was already explained before most of the participants (9 out of 16) appreciated the advergames being quick to play. Click to win, seeing quick if one wins, and not playing if the game takes too long to play were reasons given to like the games requiring only short time to play. These participants could be more motivated by the chance to win a prize i.e. extrinsically motivated. Below are examples of the participants' answers who appreciate quickness:

P9: If the game takes a long time to play through, then he does not bother. The game should not take more than 5 minutes to play through. The company's advergames have not been rocket science and he thinks it is better that way. The advergames need to be quick and short to play through.

P11: He thinks the games are quick and easy e.g. in spin the wheel type of game one just clicks to spin and there is a chance to win without doing much.

There were also participants who liked the advergames which take longer to play through. One of the participants (P3) mentioned she likes memory games because of the longer game play. She also mentioned she plays advergames for pastime, fun, and entertainment. There were also participants who thought the playtime was too short in scratch and spin the wheel type of games. They mentioned the games take a few seconds to play (P10), have nothing to do (P14), and being over too fast (P3).

Another thing relating to game time is the number of attempts one can play the game during a day. Usually, the advergame has either one attempt per day or three attempts per day to play the game. The participants hoped there would be more than one attempt per day to play the game or 2-3 advergames playable at the same time if there were only one attempt per

day. However, some of the participants (3 out of 16) thought three times per day was too much and would like the games to have only one try per day. One participant reasoned the number of attempts should be more than one in the following way:

P14: One time to try to play is frustrating and she would like the games to have always 3-5 tries. When there is only one try one is not able to learn how the game works and one is more adapted to the game in the second and third try. The maximum number of tries should be 5 because otherwise she would play too much.

There was also another participant who had thought about playing too much and he gave the following improvement idea:

P5: He suggested, there could be a counter how many times one has played to know if one is addicted to playing the advergames.

To be able to play the advergames one needs to find them from the mobile loyalty application. Therefore, attention should be given to promoting the advergames to motivate consumers to play them, which is covered in the next section.

5.3 Intrinsic Motivations

The intrinsic motivations of the interview participants are viewed through the concepts/themes of autonomy, competence, and game involvement/immersion. All the company's advergames have a prize to be drawn and therefore the motivation to play cannot be strictly intrinsic. However, one can still find the advergame supporting autonomy, competence and immersion. Some of the participants found a sense of pleasure playing the advergames. The things mentioned by the participants who found the advergames intrinsically motivating were it is nice (P5, P7, P8, P10, P13), fun (P3, P6, P7, P13), entertainment (P7, P8), or pastime (P2, P14) to play the advergames.

5.3.1 Autonomy

Most of the participants (9 out of 16) mentioned in the interviews they are playing the advergames voluntarily and out of interest. The other participants (7 out of 16) were interested in the advergames more because of the prize or the chance of winning something.

Playing the advergames is a habit or pastime activity for most of the participants (11 out of 16). Even though all the advergames have an extrinsic reward, a prize, it could be said most felt they were free to follow their inner interest (i.e. perception of autonomy) (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Fisher, 1978). One of the participants showed high autonomy and not being controlled by the prize with the following comment:

P15: The prize is not so important to him. The advergames are pastime and the memory games train one's memory. Playing the games does not cost anything. He would play the advergames even without the prizes.

Some of the participants felt the prize was controlling and hoped for more autonomy. A gift card as a prize was mentioned by several participants (9 out of 16) what they would want. One of the participants' answer shows reasons why the prize felt controlling to him:

P11: The prize should be something he uses every day. There has hardly been any fresh produce as prizes. Usually it is processed foods, product launches or such. He would like to have e.g. a 3-euro coupon to buy fruit. The prize category could be wider. The prizes are usually something the company wants to activate the consumers to buy.

Deducing from the answer, the autonomy of the prize could be improved by having an option to choose from different products or a gift card so one can decide what to spend it on. Of course, if the advergame's goal is to promote a specific brand the prizes are then linked to the brand as they are currently in the company's advergames. The prize, being the most important extrinsic motivation to play the company's advergames, will be further discussed in the extrinsic motivation section of the findings.

In addition to autonomy, one needs to feel competent playing the advergames and the goal should be to create an optimally challenging advergame (challenge-skill balance) (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Hoffman and Novak, 1996). The participants' perceived competence is discussed in the next section of findings.

5.3.2 Competence

The challenge-skill fit, or competence, needed to play the advergames is mostly balanced as most of the participants (11 out of 16) found at least one game type to have an optimal challenge for their liking. The company has had different game types which suit better for

people wanting easier and quicker games (e.g. scratch and spin games), and there have also been more difficult games for people wanting a challenge (e.g. memory games). However, there were two game types which were seen as too challenging by many of the participants (9 out of 16). The catching and shoot-em-up games were disliked by the participants because they were seen too challenging; having too fast pace and requiring precision:

P3: The game type that did not motivate her to play was the type which had something drop and which needed to be caught because those required coordination. Her fingers do not follow her thought as fast anymore. If she caught something, then there would be an item which needed to be avoided, and she then got minus points hitting the thing.

P4: She does not like games where one needs to collect or shoot something, because they are too fast paced.

P7: Games which diminish her motivation to play are those where one needs to move about a lot or games which require precision.

All the advergames have feedback displayed after completing the game whether one has won a prize (e.g. “Congratulations! You won a brand X energy drink!”) or not (e.g. "Unfortunately, luck wasn’t on your side today. Try your luck again tomorrow!"). Negative feedback has been shown to make one feel ineffective, less competent, and to undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci and Cascio, 1972). One interview participant commented the negative feedback after losing the following way:

P9: He gets irritated a little if he does not win. If he gets a notification after the game, he has not won this time it irritates him, and he wishes the notification will be left out in the future. It would be better to get a notification like thank you for participating.

Along with autonomy and competence, the sense of engagement/immersion in the advergame affects the flow experience and how intrinsically motivating the game is perceived (Ham et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2006). The next section of the findings is for the participants’ views of game engagement/immersion.

5.3.3 Game involvement/Immersion

The four game types can be divided by the degree of game involvement to high and low. The high involvement games are catching and shoot-em-up games; and memory games as they require more cognitive capacity to play. In the games requiring higher involvement, the player is actively moving in the game or trying to remember where the pair for a card is, and the game can be somehow challenging. The games with lower game involvement are scratch games; and spin the wheel and bottle spin games. In these game types, the player is not as active (game involvement is lower) compared to an advergame with high game involvement. The low involvement game is also based on luck, not challenging the player's skill.

The reason to like high game involvement games which got the most mentions (8 out of 16) was the challenge-skill balance they have. The memory games were the most liked out of the higher involvement games and below is one answer why:

P14: What motivates her is a satisfying game type e.g. a memory game. Memory games are the most satisfying to her and she wants to play them the most. They have a challenge; one needs to memorize and think a little.

The participants' (8 out of 16) mentioned reasons to like the lower game involvement demanding advergames such as them being based on luck (P8), not requiring skill (P13), and being quick to play (P16). These three reasons are shown in the answers below:

P8: If she is on her lunch break spin the wheel game type is the best because it is quick, easy and one sees straight away if one wins.

P13: He likes scratch games because they are based on luck and not skill. Therefore, does not like memory games or shooting games because those require more skill.

P16: The company's own brand of advergame which was spin the wheel type of game has stuck in her mind. The game had three tries. She was interested in playing the game because it was a quick game and did not take a long time to be over.

Conversely the participants who did not like lower game involvement advergames thought the games were too easy, too simple and too quick to play through:

P3: Roulette type of games where one taps the screen to spin is over too fast for her liking.

P10: If the game feels too easy or boring, e.g. scratch games which are not his favourite, he just quickly scratches and sees if he wins something, the game does not excite him. He would maybe remove the scratch games because they are too simple and only take few seconds to play.

To support immersion the game controls should be intuitive and easy to master (Ryan et al., 2006). The catching and shoot-em-up advergames did not have game controls easy enough for the participants (8 out of 16) to master and it was the reason why those were found not motivating the participants.

P7: Games which diminish her motivation to play are those where one needs to move about a lot or games which require precision.

To conclude, the participants found reasons to like both lower game involvement and higher game involvement requiring advergames but for immersion the controls need to be intuitive and easy enough for everyone to master to feel as part of the game and not a person outside manipulating the controls (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ryan et al., 2006).

5.4 Extrinsic Motivations

The interview participants number one thing about the company's advergames was the included prize and the chance of winning it was the most discussed subject when coding the answers (151 references). The prizes were described by the participants as interesting (15 out of 16) and small (11 out of 16). One plays the game because the prize entices (P6 and P13) and/or is valued by the person (e.g. P4 and P8). The participants understood why the prizes were small because there are hundreds of them drawn each day and if the prizes were more expensive there possibly would not be as many prizes in the draw (P5, P7, P10, P13 and P14).

The participants also mentioned different things how to improve the reward/prize in the advergames to be more motivating. Gift card as a prize was the most mentions gained improvement idea by the participants (9 out of 16), which shows the participants wanting the prize to be better supporting their autonomy. Another idea was to have one of the weekly discount coupons, which now are given to all mobile loyalty program customers, to be given

after completing the advergame or playing certain number of times even though one does not win the actual prize. Five of the participants described a motivating prize to be sensible, useful and what one uses every day. Monetary value of the prizes being bigger was also a wish mentioned by some of the participants (5 out of 16). Achievement related prizes were wanted by six of the participants who proposed: better score one gets the better chance of winning the prize (P10); collecting points playing the advergames and receiving a reward after a threshold of e.g. 100 points (P2, P11, and P16); after playing certain number of advergames one could receive loyalty points in addition to the product prize being drawn (P5); or to have the option to choose the game difficulty and it affecting the prize one would get (P6). Two of the participants (P4 and P12) would have liked the product prizes to be seasonal e.g. during Christmas the prize could be chocolate confectionery box.

The chance of winning was discussed when asked what kind of prizes motivate the participants to play the advergames. Winning a prize was seen as a goal to pursuit playing the advergames by many of the participants (12 out of 16). One of the participants (P9) even said the chance of winning was the only reason to play the advergames. The chance of winning a prize was seen as low by some participants (6 out of 16) and most of these participants said they were annoyed and disappointed of not winning (5 out of 16). Some of the participants (9 out of 16) wanted a better chance to win a prize, which meant they preferred to have many small prizes compared to fewer large prizes.

The participants were divided into two groups based on the answers' interpretation how internalized the extrinsic motivation was to them. The two subtypes from the four subtypes of extrinsic motivation (see Figure 3), external regulation and identified regulations, were chosen because the fit was thought to be the best. External regulation was chosen because the answers were showing the participants playing the advergames because the external reward (prize). Identified regulation was used because the participants' answers reflected the personal importance and valuing the activity of playing the advergames. (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) Introjected regulation was not used because the answers did not show the participants playing the advergames because of approval form self and others. In the other spectrum of Integrated regulation was also left out as it was not possible to determine if the activity aligns with the participant's core values. (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) Shown below is the

table of the participants divided to the two extrinsic motivation subtypes of external regulation and identified regulation (Table 2).

Table 2. Subtype of extrinsic motivation

Subtype of extrinsic motivation	Participants
External regulation	P1, P2, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P16
Identified regulation	P3, P4, P5, P10, P12, P14, P15

The prize and chance of winning was mentioned to be the reason to play by the participants in the external regulation. The external regulation participants also said nothing else motivates than the prize (P1, P16), not playing for the sake of playing the game (P11), when the prize is not interesting the motivation to play diminishes (P6 and P8), and would not play if there were no prizes (P7 and P9). The participants who were categorized into the identified regulation mentioned the advergames being nice or somehow interesting and valuated the activity more than the externally regulated participants. Some of the participants mentioned they do not play because of the prize or chance of winning and thought it was a pastime activity (P3, P5, and P15). Also, the challenge of memory games was seen as an important factor by some of the participants (P3, P10, P12, P14 and P15) with identified regulation.

All the 16 participants said something which could be interpreted to relate to the technology acceptance model's (TAM) ease of use and perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). The advergame being simple (15 out of 16 participants) and quick (13 out of 16 participants) to play were the two most important things for the perceived ease of use. Below are two example answers where participants described the advergames as simple and quick:

P4: One knows what to expect from the advergames when they are so simple. One does not have to learn new rules and the advergames are not very complex. She likes simple and peaceful game play.

P9: The company's advergames have not been rocket science and he thinks it is better that way. The advergames need to be quick and short to play through.

The advergame being functional (8 out of 16 participants) and familiar (4 out of 16 participants) were the other two things the participants answers could be interpreted to mean. The participants assessed the advergame's perceived usefulness mainly based on the prize

(16 out of 16 participants) and the chance of winning (15 out of 16 participants). The other two things interpreted to be important for the perceived usefulness were self-improvement (5 out of 16 participants) and entertainment (3 out of 16 participants).

5.5 Interactions and influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations

When interviewing the participants the question (Appendix 2) *"What were the interactions and influences of the things motivating you to play the company's advergames?"* did not produce many answers. This could be because the question was hard to understand and needed to be explained. Even after the explaining the question in the interview, the answers were not always linked to the question. Thus, the interactions and influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were looked through all the answers given by the participants. Some of the participants who gave an understandable answer to the question about interactions between motivations said: there have not been any interactions as the only motivating thing is the prize (P11 and P16); winning in the game made one want to play again (P8 and P15); and one wished for a prize related to player's achievement/competence (P10).

Winning the prize in a draw could increase the motivation to play even though one has internalized the extrinsic motivation and values the activity of playing the advergames. One of the interview participants who plays the company's advergames daily mentioned:

P15: The challenge has been what motivates him to play the advergames. After he won in a game he needed to go back and play the same game again. He got greedy thinking he could win again if he quickly played again. He still remembers the time he once while back won something and he must go and see if there is an advergame this week as well.

For the externally regulated consumers, motivated mostly or only by the prize, the chance of winning something can be the most motivating thing to play the advergames and for them it might be more important the advergame to be simple/easy and quick to play. One participant's answers reflected this hypothesis:

P9: The chance of winning is the only reason to play the advergames for him. Without the prizes he would not play.

P9: If the game takes a long time to play through, then he does not bother. The game should not take more than 5 minutes to play through. The company's advergames have not been rocket science and it is better that way. The advergames need to be quick and short to play through.

When one is not winning anything from the advergames and is externally regulated, it can have a negative effect on how much one plays the advergames. Participant #16 said she plays the company's advergames monthly and her only motivation to play is the prize. She also said:

P16: She has not won from the games and maybe if she won then she would play the games more.

The prize could be seen as controlling, undermining intrinsic motivation, for many of the participants and autonomy and competence need frustration could affect the internalization of the extrinsic motivation (Ballou et al., 2024; Deci et al. 1999; Deci and Ryan, 1985b). Some of the participants were hoping for more autonomy (e.g. gift cards or choosing the product prize) and competence (e.g. achievement-related prizes) supportive prizes. It also does not matter what the prize is if the game mechanics do not work or are frustrating for the player as was the case for many of the interview participants playing the catching and shoot-em-up game types in the company's mobile loyalty program (Ryan et al., 2006).

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This study explores the consumers' motivations to play advergames in Finnish retail mobile loyalty program. The themes emerged from qualitative analysis concerning advergame characteristics were game type, game time and game difficulty. These three differ from the most researched advergame characteristics of game-brand congruity, brand placement, perceived interactivity, game involvement/engagement in the previous studies. The reason might be this study being qualitative research from the perspective of the consumer and what they value in the advergames. The interview questions were not about the advergame characteristics but what the participants found to be motivating them to play the advergames and the participants' motivation was influenced by the game type, game time, and game difficulty.

Brands were not discussed extensively in the interviews and most of the participants could not name a brand of the game which they found to be motivating them to play. The company's advergames could be seen as having high brand congruence which could be the reason why brand recall was low, as highly incongruent brands have been shown to have better brand recall (Lee and Faber, 2007). Brand placement in the advergames did not come up even once in the interviews maybe because the company's advergames all have a prominent brand placement with the player interacting with the brand (e.g. logo or product) thus making the games better for improving brand attitudes than brand recall (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker, 2010; Redondo, 2012).

Both brand and game interactivity of all the company's advergames could be seen as high. The company's advergames are quite popular, easy-to-play and familiar to the consumers which could have had resulted in the perceived interactivity not being a major issue for the interview participants (Lee et al., 2014). The one characteristic which was found to be an important for this study's interview participants was game involvement which could be linked to game type, game time, and game difficulty. However, it is clear some participants preferred lower game involvement while others preferred higher game involvement, and two participants liked both lower and higher game involvement (P4 and P8).

The higher game involvement game type, mainly the memory games, were liked by the participants who had internalized the extrinsic reward more and had other reasons (e.g.

entertainment or challenge) to play the advergames than only the prize or the chance to win something. The participants who were more extrinsically motivated, externally regulated, preferred the lower involvement game types of scratch and spin games (Appendix 5. OIT subtype and game involvement preference). (Deci and Ryan, 1985a; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020) The Appendix 6 shows the participants categorized into identified regulation (more internalized) and external regulation based on how internalized the extrinsic motivation is, and what motivated or demotivated participants in the advergames. There is some overlap but overall, it could be said the more extrinsically motivated (externally regulated) participants want a quick, easy, and luck-based game, while the participants with identified regulation want a more challenging game for self-improvement and entertainment.

Based on the results, it is important to know what the target group of the advergame is and what kind of advergame type to use. If one is trying to attract all consumers it might be best to use both low game involvement (e.g. spin game) and high game involvement (e.g. memory game) advergame types and let the consumer decide which one to play. The option to choose the game type would support the players' autonomy and competence (challenge-skill fit) (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ghosh et al., 2021**)**. The study's results show intuitive controls are also an important part of the games, as the company's catch game was perceived by many as frustrating because it did not feel easy to use, reducing one's perceived competence (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Davis, 1989; Ryan et al., 2006).

The external motivation of the possibility of winning a prize from the advergame was the most discussed subject in the interviews (Appendix 3: pages 3-4). The prizes in the advergames were seen as interesting (e.g. enticing or valued) but small (i.e. monetary value could be bigger). A motivating product prize for the participants would be sensible, useful, and something one uses every day. Most of the participants wanted to have a gift card as a prize which shows the participants wanted more autonomy supportive rewards (Kim and Ahn, 2017). Winning the prize was a positive goal to pursue in the advergames for most of the participants and the bigger chance of winning a prize was more important than larger prizes. Although some of the participants wished the prizes were more valuable (5 out of 16 participants).

The participants were divided into two groups based on how internalized the extrinsic motivation was to them. External regulation is one being motivated only by the prize, while

identified regulation is one is more voluntary playing the advergame out of interest (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Majority of the participants (9 out of 16) could be linked to external regulation, while the rest (7 out of 16) could be linked to identified regulation. Almost all the participants with external regulation preferred low game involvement advergames only exception being P7 who preferred memory games and thought they were easy and quick to play, so for the same reasons participants preferred low game involvement advergames (e.g. scratch game) (Appendix 6). Participants with identified regulation preferred high game involvement game type of memory games, except P4 who liked both low game involvement (scratch) and high game involvement advergames (memory games) (Appendix 5).

The technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) was used to interpret the participants' answers what affects the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the company's advergames. The things affecting perceived ease of use of the advergames were them being simple and familiar enough to everyone to know how to play them, quick to play through, and the game's functionality to not negatively impact gameplay (Appendix 7). The perceived usefulness of the advergames was mainly attributed to the prize and the chance to win by the participants. Some of the participants also thought the advergames somehow helped them improve themselves (self-improvement) or were entertained by the advergames (Appendix 8).

The question about interactions and influences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations was maybe too hard to understand for the participants and most of the answers were not relevant to the question (Appendix 2). The interactions and influences were looked at through all the participants' answers. The company's advergames having a prize to be won from a draw being the most motivating thing for most of the participants, it is evident that the prize and chance of winning are the things having the most effect on playing the advergames. For the most extrinsically motivated participants extrinsic motivations were the only reasons to play the advergames and even for those who had internalized the prize mentioned, winning the prize to motivate them to play again/more.

When the advergames are working as intended, having intuitive controls, one does necessarily care about the game design as much as opposed to the situation when the game does not work or is affecting the perceived competence of the player **(**Ryan et al., 2006). The company's advergames which were seen by some of the interview participants as overchallenging or not having intuitive controls were catching and shoot-em-up game types.

The movement was not seen as accurate and the minus points from things to be avoided were the things that annoy the participants. It could be said the perceived competence and immersion of the player should be at a certain level for one to feel motivated to play the game even if one is mostly motivated by the extrinsic motivation of winning a prize (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan et al., 2006).

Age was not a factor on which things participants found to be motivating them. Although, one thing that stood out was the Gen Z participants who all either liked the low game involvement games (P6, P13, and P16) or liked both (P4) lower and higher game involvement games (Appendix 5). This could be because the Gen Z participants are more experienced in playing video games and advergames are played more for the extrinsic reward of the possibility of winning a prize than intrinsic motivation. Perceived usefulness was attributed to both prize and chance of winning by all the Gen Z participants (P4, P6, P13, and P16) and none of them mentioned to play for entertainment or self-improvement (Appendix 8).

6.1 Theoretical contributions

While previous advergame research has relied mainly on one theory of either flow (e.g. Catalán et al., 2019b; Ham et al., 2016; Hernandez, 2011; Steffen et al., 2013)) or technology acceptance theory (Jami Pour et al., 2023), this study is novel in the sense the empirical research's results were interpreted using multiple theories (SDT, flow theory, OIT, and TAM). Also, the previous studies have concentrated on how the motivation to play the advergames affect the company's performance e.g. in the form of purchase intention (Catalán et al., 2019a; Ham et al., 2016) or brand attitude (Ghosh et al., 2021; Steffen et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015), while this study's aim was to explore the motivations of the consumers to play the advergames and using qualitative research gain an understanding what should be considered when designing the advergame to motivate consumers to play.

This is study is the first one to research Finnish company's advergames and advergames inside a mobile loyalty program as the advergames are not yet very popular in Finland and have not yet been widely adopted into mobile loyalty programs. As the study's empirical research is qualitative the theoretical contribution is to formulate propositions for future research to be studied. The logic behind the propositions lies in their foundation on multiple

theoretical frameworks, providing a nuanced interpretation of the empirical study's qualitative findings. Each proposition is a synthesis of the most relevant empirical observations and theoretical constructs how to improve consumers' motivation to play advergames. The propositions are all linked somehow to extrinsic motivation (prize) because it was the most highlighted finding (151 references) in the empirical research.

The theoretical implications of the empirical research show game type, game difficulty, and game time are the most important advergame characteristics affecting the consumer's motivation to play. The three advergame characteristics of game type, game difficulty, and game time determine the game involvement and challenge-skill fit of the advergame (Ghosh et al., 2021). Game-brand congruity, perceived interactivity, and brand placement did not matter to the interview participants as they were not discussed. However, the interview questions were not directly linked to the advergame characteristics rather what motivates the participants to play the advergames.

The Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) could be seen as the most important and consistent theory for this study, explaining how important the extrinsic motivation is for the participants (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020). The participants were categorized to the external regulation or identification regulation subtypes of extrinsic motivation based on the analysis of their answers on how important the external rewards were to them, how much they valued, or how important the activity of playing the advergames was to them. There was especially a strong link between OIT and game involvement.

The higher game involvement game type of memory game has more of a challenge and requires one to play little longer compared to the lower game involvement game types of scratch and spin the wheel which take little effort, usually few clicks or swipes, and are very quick to play. The easier lower game involvement game types are played more for only the extrinsic motivation (chance to win a prize in a draw) and the higher game involvement game types are played not only because of the extrinsic motivation but also because one values the activity (e.g. finding it entertaining or fun). Thus, this study's results suggest the consumer's preference between lower game involvement or higher game involvement game type depends on the internalization of the extrinsic motivation (prize) (Deci and Ryan, 1985b; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020). The proposition of the effect of the consumer's/player's internalization of extrinsic motivation to game involvement is:

Proposition 1: To motivate individuals who have internalized the extrinsic motivation it is better to use game types with high game involvement (more difficult and longer game time), and for the more extrinsically motivated individuals it is better to use game types with low game involvement (easy and quick to play).

The advergames support the participants autonomy, as most of the participants said they play the advergames out of self-interest, for pastime, or it being a habit (Deci and Ryan, 1980; Deci and Ryan, 2000; Fisher, 1978). The company's advergames all have an extrinsic reward (prize), which previous research has been found to undermine intrinsic motivation and make people feel less autonomous (Deci, 1975; Deci et al., 1999; Deci and Ryan, 1980). The prize being drawn in the company's advergames reduces this effect as the prize is less unexpected (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan et al., 1983). Yet, the study participants were hoping for more autonomy supportive rewards in the games (e.g. gift cards or discount coupons), which they could use as they preferred in the company's stores.

It therefore could be said the prize is seen as controlling the playing of the advergame by many of the participants, as many mentioned some of the product prizes not being interesting to them and wanting something which is useful for themselves (Ryan et al., 2006). As concluded by Kim and Ahn (2017) consumers' motivation to engage could be higher when the reward is autonomy supportive (NA), providing options of choice. The proposition for the effect of reward on the advergame consumer's/player's autonomy is:

Proposition 2: To better support the consumer's/players autonomy, the advergame should provide the options to choose the extrinsic reward (prize).

The need for competence, seeking out an optimal challenge, was more important for the study's participants who had internalized the extrinsic motivation and were more motivated to play the game type requiring higher game involvement (Deci and Ryan, 1980). It could be interpreted at least some of these participants had experienced flow while playing the company's advergames, considering that the participants were motivated to play the memory games to challenge themselves by testing and improving their memory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). For other participants the advergames' challenge-skill balance could have been too low, not higher than their critical threshold, to provide flow experiences (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). However, some of the participants did not want the advergames to provide a challenge and appreciated them being quick and easy to play. It was the scratch and spin the

wheel game types which the participants liked because they do not measure one's skill and are based on luck. Therefore, it could be proposed:

Proposition 3: The more important the extrinsic reward (prize) is to a consumer/player the less likely it is one is playing the advergame for the optimal challenge and appreciates more the advergame to be easy and quick. The consumer/player who values the activity of playing the advergames, has internalized the extrinsic reward (prize), is more likely to seek an optimal challenge and flow experience from the advergames.

When interpreting the interview answers based on technology acceptance model (TAM) the advergames were perceived as easy to use when they were simple, quick, functional, and familiar (Davis, 1989). Regarding the research of Jami Pour et al. (2023), this study's results support the importance of game-related factors, functionality and game design, when considering the advergame's ease of use. According to this study's results, the functionality of the advergame comes mostly to the issue of intuitive controls (Ryan et al., 2006). When the controls do not feel intuitive one can get frustrated (P13) or even demotivated (P14). The game should be designed to be visually appealing (P8) with clear/identifiable colours and graphics (P4, P15). However, game-brand congruence and game content were not important for this study's participants compared to the study of Jami Pour et al. (2023) who listed them as the two other game-related factors. Also, advertising content did not influence the perceived ease of use or perceived usefulness of the advergames in this study, while it did have an effect in the research of Jami Pour et al. (2023).

The prize and the chance of winning were the most important factors for the perceived usefulness of the advergames, when interpreting the interview answers based on technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). Entertainment and self-improvement were the two other factors participants mentioned which could be interpreted as perceived usefulness. When comparing these four factors to the results of Jami Pour et al. (2023) they all align with the player-related factors which had the highest impact on perceived usefulness. Even though earlier gamification research (Aydin, 2018; Bittner and Schipper, 2014) has shown demographic factors like age and gender to affect which of the two, perceived usefulness or perceived ease of use, is more important for them to engage with gamification, there was not found a significant relationship between age or gender in this study. Accordingly, the proposition based on this study's results and technology acceptance model is:

Proposition 4: To support the perceived ease of use of the advergame it should be a simple and familiar game type which has intuitive controls and is quick to play. To support the perceived usefulness of the advergame the most important is to have a motivating prize with a high chance of winning.

The four propositions developed from this study's empirical research results should be researched further and proved quantitatively. In the next section of the conclusions, the practical contributions of the study are discussed. The results of the study's empirical research are considered from a managerial perspective, focusing on who could benefit from the research and what recommendations can be made.

6.2 Practical contributions

The practical benefit of this study is mainly for the marketing managers in the B2C sector, who are willing to use advergames as a part of their marketing mix to promote brand recall (e.g. Chiu, 2019; Vashisht and Royne, 2016), brand attitude (e.g. Tuten and Ashley, 2016; Wise et al., 2008), purchase intention (e.g. Al-Soluiman et al., 2020; Ghosh et al., 2021; Ham et al., 2016), and/or word of mouth (WOM and eWOM) (e.g. Okazaki and Yagüe, 2012; Sung and Lee, 2020; Zhao and Renard, 2018). There is also a benefit for the customer/user experience professionals who are concerned about what kind of advergames one should use to achieve a successful result. One of course should first know their customers' preferences for the advergames and who are the target customers for the advergames.

Mobile loyalty program applications are well suited for the advergames to engage the customers and give them new reason to open the application. The advergames can be used e.g. for advertising brands' products sold in the retail store or for the store's own campaigns as this study's empirical research company has done. When one decides to utilize the advergames in their mobile loyalty program application, the promotion of the advergames should be considered. Some of the interview participants mentioned the advergames should be better promoted, having their own section in the application, because the games were lost with everything else and not very easily noticeable. Additionally, how the advergames are promoted is important. The case company promotes all the advergames highlighting the extrinsic motivation with the text e.g. "Play and win product X!". This could influence the prize being more important for the player/consumer and is more suitable for click-to-win

type of games (e.g. scratch games). Promoting the advergame should vary depending on the game type. If the advergame is played more for inherent interest (e.g. memory game) and not only for extrinsic motivation the text could highlight the intrinsic motivation of the player/consumer e.g. “Challenge your memory and find all the pairs”.

First, when applying the advergames to the company’s mobile loyalty program, one needs to decide the game type or types to be used. The goal can be to try and attract all the customers but then one must be willing to offer multiple different kinds of advergame types (both low game involvement and high game involvement) and possibly at the same time, so the customer has the autonomy to choose the advergame type one wants to play. Second, one needs to consider the game difficulty. If the goal is to attract the customers who play because of the intrinsic motivations of entertainment and self-improvement then one should consider having more challenging, higher game involvement, games (e.g. memory games). If the target group is the more extrinsically motivated customers, the game/games should be easy requiring only low game involvement from the player (e.g. scratch games). Third, the game time should be considered as well. The advergame should be always quick to play but if the customer is only/mostly motivated by the extrinsic reward then one should consider click-to-win type of advergames (e.g. spin the wheel or scratch game) for the player to quickly see if one has won or not. The customers who have internalized the extrinsic reward of the advergame might appreciate the advergames to have a challenge thus would like the game time to be a bit longer (e.g. memory game).

The extrinsic reward was the most important thing for this study’s participants. If there is an extrinsic reward for playing the advergame, the prize supporting the player’s autonomy should be considered. When one gets to choose what kind of prize one receives it increases autonomy (Kim and Ahn, 2017; Ryan et al., 2006). This study’s participants valued the idea of a gift card so if they won from the draw, they would have the opportunity to choose what to spend the money on in the company’s store. A good chance to win is also important regarding the advergame’s extrinsic motivation. When one wins something, it could have a positive effect on the future how many times one plays or tries the next games. As two of the participants (P9 and P16) in the interviews mentioned, one option for an additional reward could be having a discount coupon usually given for all customers as a participation prize so one would “win” something even though the main prize would be drawn among the advergame players.

To avoid frustration and negative impact on the brand it is very important to make sure the advergame works as intended and has intuitive controls. If the advergame reduces the players perceived competence it reduces the motivation to play the advergame as was shown in the interview answers considering catch games and shoot-em-up games. The advergame should be about positive associations as the advergame attitude affects the brand attitude. Therefore, having minus points for hitting something to be avoided is risky as the player's perceived competence could be reduced. Also, for the same reason negative feedback after the advergame should be avoided and as one interview participant (P9) mentioned it is better to only thank for playing the game if one does not win anything (Deci and Cascio, 1972).

It has been shown in the previous research that the more difficult advergames have a higher impact on WOM/eWOM (Vega et al., 2023). If the advergame has higher difficulty level, a challenge, one should consider having achievement-related prizes to better support the perceived competence of the players/consumers. However, there is a risk of demotivating the consumers who prefer very easy advergames, because the more skilled players would take the prizes. Thus, if the company's goal is not on creating WOM/eWOM but improving brand attitude, the click-to-win advergames would suit better.

To conclude, when implementing advergames within a mobile loyalty program application, companies must consider who are their target customers and what is the goal of the advergames. The minimum requirement is to offer quick, functional, and easy-to-play advergames with high chance of winning a reward which is interesting for the players.

6.3 Limitations and future research

This study's empirical research was conducted interviewing the Finnish retail company's consumers, who are also members of the company's online community and have played the company's advergames in the mobile loyalty program application. Thus, the highly focused context limits the results applicability by sampling and self-selection biases, contextual and cultural specificity, platform and game design dependency, and temporal influences.

The possible sampling and self-selection bias might arise because the interview participants are the company's online community members who may not represent the broader consumer base and who might have had a positive predisposition toward the company and the

advergames (Heckman, 1979; Saunders et al., 2009). The contextual and cultural specificity of the study might affect the results not extending to advergames in different industries, formats, or platforms and the participants' motivations to play could be influenced by Finnish cultural values and social norms (Eisenhardt, 1989; Solomon and Russell, 2023). The game design and platform are also limiting the results applicability because more complex advergames and/or advergames played in other platforms (e.g. web pages) could affect the consumers' motivations to play (Hamari et al., 2016; Zhou, 2011). The study has a high temporal influence because it is performed at a specific moment in time and over time trends, technological advancements, and consumer preferences can change drastically (Rogers, 2003).

The interviews were semi-structured and as with every qualitative method there is a possibility to bias in the data because the interaction between the interviewer and participants. The study's sample was diverse enough considering the demographic factors of age and sex, but results could differ with larger sample. The generalizability of the study is limited because of the small sample size of 16 participants and to generalize the findings, especially correlation and causality, to larger population there would be a need for quantitative research with large sample. The sample size of 16 interview participants was large enough for theoretical saturation because there emerged no new theoretical insights in the interviews after the tenth participant (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Hennink and Kaiser, 2021).

Though, considering the time limitation of the study the sample of sixteen interviews could have not been much larger as it was time-consuming to conduct, transcribe, translate and analyse the results. Longitudinal research could have had the advantage of gathering answers from the participants right after they have played a certain advergame in the mobile loyalty program, while this study has a cross-sectional time horizon, data being collected only once, the answers were more based on the memory of the participants and not the experience.

Most of the interviews (14 out of 16) were conducted online via Teams and recorded for transcription. However, two of the sixteen interviews were conducted by phone as it was not possible due to technical issues to do the interviews online via Teams and there are no recordings of these two interviews and the answers were written out while interviewing. If the interviews would have been conducted face to face the participants would not have had these technical issues. There is a possibility to research bias when interpreting the interview

answers from the recordings and there not being another researcher's viewpoint. There is also a risk of misinterpreting the interview answers because it would have been too time consuming to transcribe the interview records word to word. The setting of the interviews can also impact the responses, and while it was convenient and encouraged more openness, the informal setting of interviewing via Teams might risk undermine the formal structure of the research.

The theoretical part of the advergames' characteristics did not have a very strong connection to the empirical part of this study. The reason might be the previous advergame research had been focusing more on the wanted results of the advergames and less on the perspective of the consumer. Game involvement had the strongest link to the empirical research as the three identified characteristics game type, game difficulty, and game time influence the perceived game involvement.

Considering the theories linked to the consumers' motivations, this study is supporting strongest the self-determination theory (SDT) and its sub theories of OIT and CET. The theory of technology acceptance model (TAM) is also supported, and a future research idea could be to test quantitatively the correlation of what things affect the advergame's perceived usefulness to a consumer (TAM) and how the things are affected by the internalization of the extrinsic reward (OIT). The flow theory could be seen as only partially supported by this study just, because the challenge and sense of control (intuitive controls) were the only two factors in the empirical research which could be linked to flow theory. The reason could be the study's advergames being easy to play, not requiring lot of gaming skills would not result in flow experiences where one is completely engaged and immersed in the activity (Catalán et al., 2019b; Hoffman and Novak, 2009; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

For future advergame research on consumers' motivations to play advergames, it is suggested to focus on game involvement and motivation theories. It would also be beneficial to quantitatively research only the extrinsic motivation and how its internalization (OIT) affects consumers playing the advergames, because if there is a reward included in the advergame it is likely one is somehow affected by the extrinsic reward and not purely intrinsically motivated. Another future research idea could be the influence of advergame promotion on the consumer's motivation to play the advergames. Some of the study's interview participants were hoping the advergames would be better promoted in the mobile loyalty program application. One possibility could be to do an experiment testing how

changing the promotion of the advergame affects the motivation to play the advergame. What kind of effects players with different demographics would have if the promotion was more intrinsically motivating or extrinsically motivating? Would the consumers who have internalized the extrinsic motivation prefer the more intrinsically motivating promotion style and/or would it deter the consumers who are only motivated by the extrinsic reward?

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The semi-structured interview questions in Finnish

Vastaajan profiili

Ikä:

Sukupuoli:

Millä laitteella pelaa videopelejä:

Kuinka usein pelaa videopelejä:

Kuinka montaa yrityksen mainospeliä on pelannut:

Suosikki pelityyppi yrityksen mainospeleistä:

Yrityksen mainospeleihin liittyvät kysymykset:

- Mitkä asiat motivoivat sinua pelaamaan yrityksen mainospelejä?
- Miten ja miksi juuri nämä asiat motivoivat sinua pelaamaan yrityksen mainospelejä?
- Mikä oli ensimmäinen asia, joka motivoi sinua aloittamaan yrityksen mainospelien pelaamisen, ja miksi?
- Miten sinua motivoivat asiat vaikuttivat toisiinsa pelatessasi yrityksen mainospelejä?
- Voitko kertoa esimerkin yrityksen mainospelistä, jossa sinua motivoivat asiat tukivat hyvin toisiaan? Entä mainospelistä, jossa jokin asia vähensi motivaatiotasi pelata?
- Mitä tunteita mainospelit ovat herättäneet?
- Miten kehittäisit yrityksen mainospelejä, jotta ne motivoisivat sinua vielä paremmin pelaamaan?
- Mikä olisi uusi pelimuoto yrityksen mainospeleihin, joka motivoisi sinua pelaamaan?
- Mitä mieltä olet ollut mainospelien palkinnoista? Minkälaisia palkintojen pitäisi olla, jotta ne motivoisivat pelaamaan?
- Mitä muita kommentteja tulee mieleesi liittyen mainospeleihin?

Appendix 2. The semi-structured interview questions in English

Participant's profile

Age:

Gender:

Primary gaming device:

How often plays video games:

Number of the company's advergames one has played:

Favourite game type from the company's advergames:

Questions relating to the company's advergames:

- What motivates you to play the company's advergames?
- How and why these things motivated you to play the company's advergames?
- What was the first thing motivating you to start playing the company's advergames, and why?
- What were the interactions and influences of the things motivating you to play the company's advergames?
- Could you tell me an example of an advergame where the things motivating you to play were supporting each other? How about an example of an advergame where your motivation to play was diminished by something?
- What emotions have the advergames evoked?
- How would you develop the company's advergames to better motivate you to play?
- What would be a new advergame type previously not in the company's mobile loyalty application that would motivate you to play?
- What is your opinion of the prizes in the advergames? What kind of prizes would motivate you to play the advergames?
- What other comments do you have regarding the advergames?

Appendix 3. List of codes (page 1/4)

Name	Files	References
(RQ1) Advergame's characteristics	**16**	**171**
Game difficulty	13	41
Achievement	6	7
Likes more challenging games	4	8
Likes the easy games	9	21
Too easy	3	5
Too hard	5	9
Game time	15	36
A counter for the number of times played	1	1
Could play more if	3	3
Game's playtime was too long	2	2
Game's playtime was too short	3	3
Likes the playtime to be longer	1	1
Likes the playtime to be short	9	17
More than one try per day to play the game	5	7
Too many tries to play the game	3	5
Game type	16	94
Describing the games	7	23
Add interactive features	1	1
Dislikes games requiring precision	5	9
Familiar	3	5
For killing time	1	1
Game has felt laggy or clumsy	2	2
Games have been too simple	1	1
Good as they are	6	8
Hardware requirements	1	1
Improve accuracy	2	4
Interesting	5	8
Likes simple games with one click or swipe	5	7
More movement	1	1
Personalization	1	1
Quick to play	3	3
Like each other	1	1
Sound	3	3
Useless	1	1
Variation	5	5
Visual elements	5	13

Appendix 3. List of codes (page 2/4)

Name	Files	References
(RQ2) Intrinsic motivations	**15**	**113**
Autonomy	9	15
Habit or pastime activity	11	16
More than one try per day to play	1	1
Reducing autonomy or controlling	3	3
Tried the product even though did not win	1	1
Voluntary, tried out of interest	9	9
Competence, Challenge-skill fit	13	67
Achievement	5	6
Balanced	11	30
Completing or getting better score is a success	3	5
Too easy	3	8
Too hard	9	16
Game involvement, immersion	7	17
High	5	14
Likes both high and low game involvement	2	2
Low	3	4
Reasons to dislike high game involvement	8	15
Fast pace	3	4
Frustrating	1	1
Long duration	1	1
Require precision	2	2
Too simple	1	1
Reasons to dislike low game involvement	5	6
Functionality	1	1
Short duration	2	2
Too easy	2	3
Too simple, not interesting	2	3
Visual elements	1	1
Reasons to like high game involvement	8	15
Challenge-skill	8	9
Educational	1	1
Entertaining	1	1
Interesting	3	5
Long duration	1	1
Simple	2	2
Visual elements	1	1

Appendix 3. List of codes (page 3/4)

Name	Files	References
Reasons to like low game involvement	9	14
Based on luck	8	12
Easy	5	8
Functionality	1	1
Interesting	4	5
Multiple tries	2	2
Short duration	5	6
Sense of pleasure, satisfaction	9	14
(RQ3) Extrinsic motivations	**16**	**351**
Organismic Integration theory (OIT)	16	65
External regulation	9	44
Identified regulation	7	21
Reward	16	151
Achievement related prizes	6	10
Collecting the prize	7	10
Discount coupon	4	7
Gift card	9	15
Healthy products	2	2
Interesting	15	30
Personal preference	2	2
Seasonal	2	2
Sensible and useful	5	10
Small	11	25
Valuable prizes	6	9
Variation	3	3
Winning, receiving the prize	16	70
Based on chance, drawn	2	5
Better chance, more prizes	9	14
Having more tries to win	2	3
Low chance	6	8
Not affecting game time	2	2
Not winning annoys	5	6
Not winning does not annoy	1	1
Participation prize	1	3
Positive, the goal	12	23
Wants to know quick	5	5

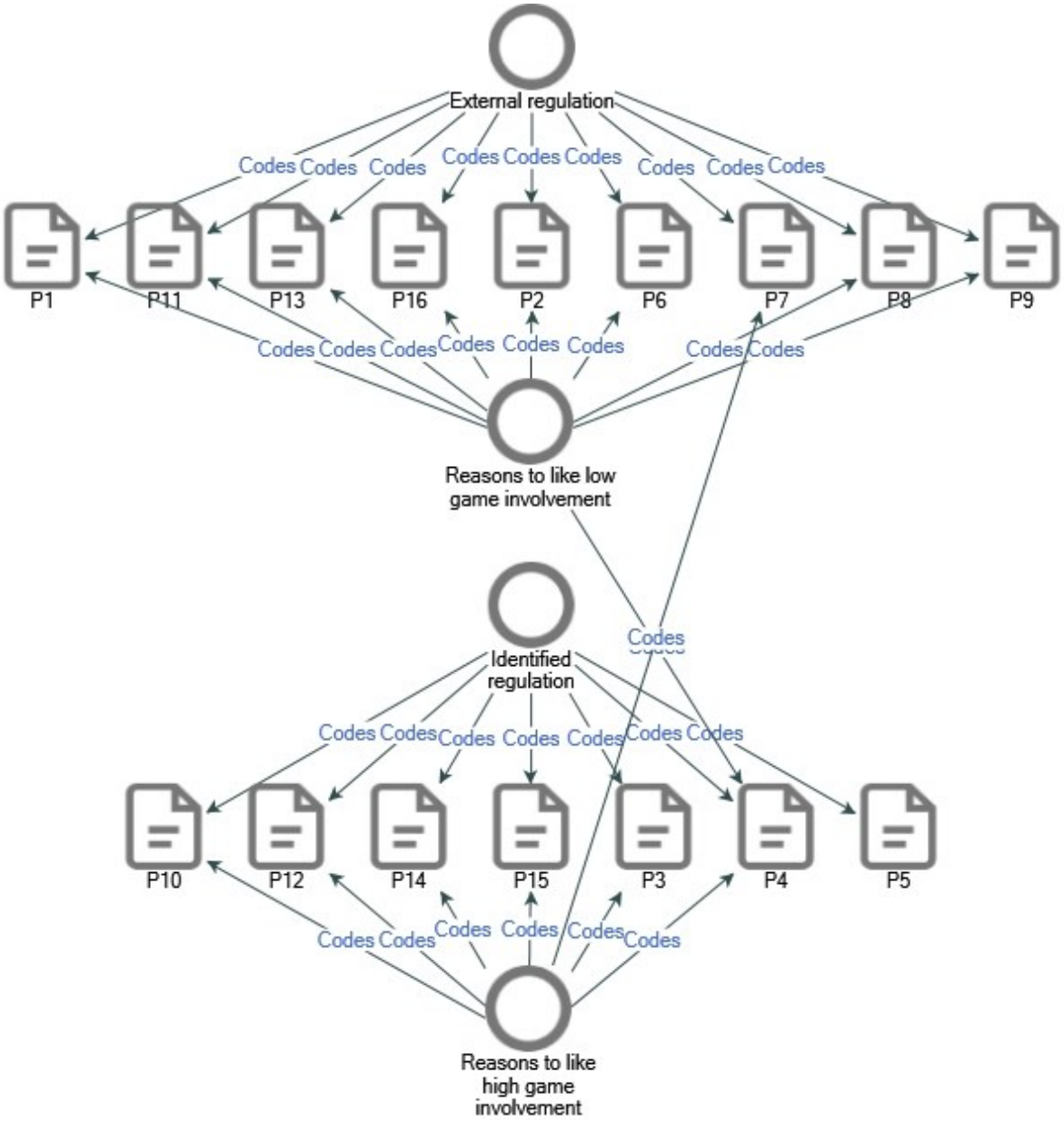
Appendix 3. List of codes (page 4/4)

Name	Files	References
Technology acceptance model (TAM)	16	135
Perceived ease of use	16	64
Familiar	4	7
Functional	8	16
Quick	12	28
Simple	15	46
Perceived usefulness	16	71
Chance of winning	15	26
Entertainment	3	3
Prize	16	55
Self-improvement	5	10
(RQ4) Interactions and influences between intrinsic- and extrinsic motivations	**15**	**58**
Autonomy frustration	10	21
Autonomy supportive reward	10	17
More tries	3	4
Variation to games	1	1
Controlling reward	6	10
The effect of losing	6	9
Annoyed	5	7
No effect	3	3
The effect of winning	10	18
Good feeling	7	8
On playing	8	12
Increase	7	10
No effect	2	2

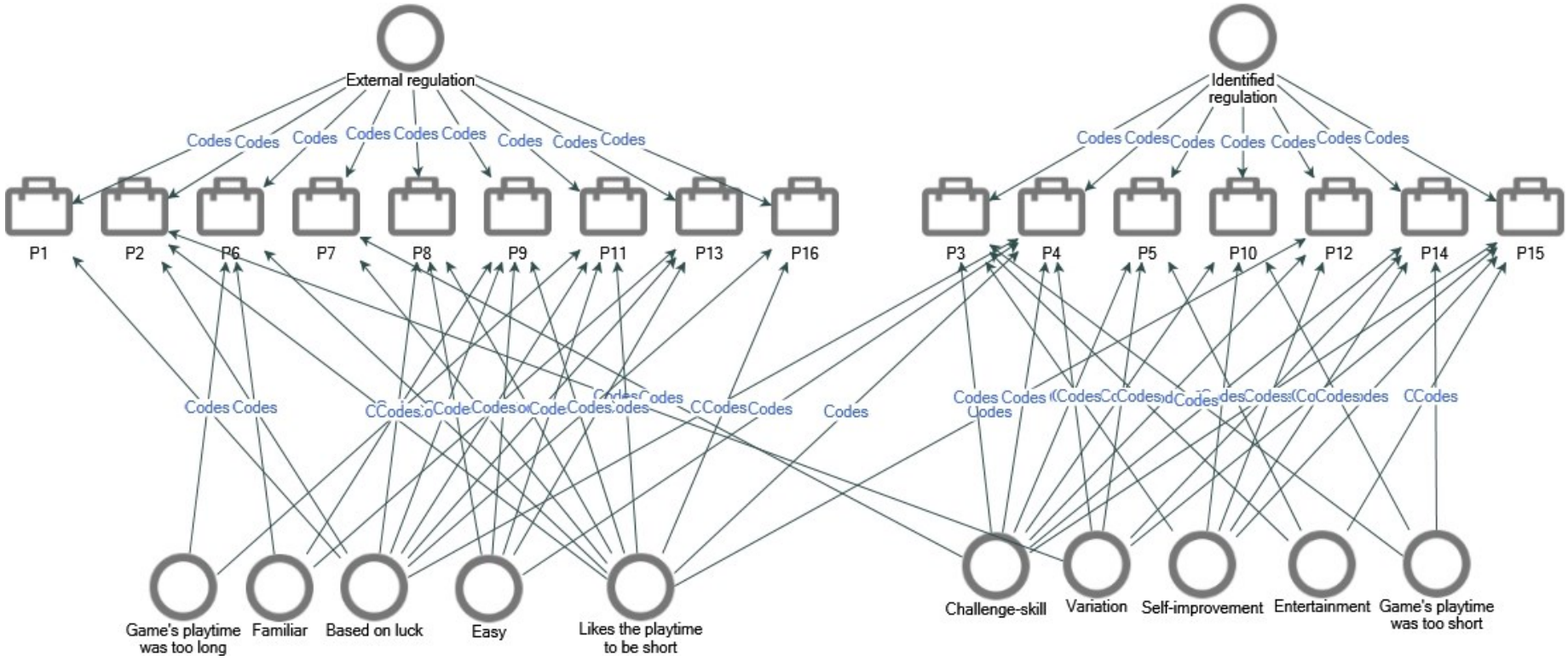
Appendix 4. Participants' demographics

ID	Age	Age group	Gender	Primary gaming device	How often one plays video games	Number of the company's advergames one has played	Favourite advergame type
P1	67	Baby boomer	Male	Mobile	Daily	> 10	Scratch, Spin the wheel
P2	61	Baby boomer	Female	Mobile	Daily	> 10	Did not specify
P3	71	Baby boomer	Female	Mobile	Monthly	20	Memory games
P4	29	Gen Z	Female	Game console, computer, mobile	Daily	< 10	Scratch
P5	68	Baby boomer	Male	Mobile	Monthly	< 10	Did not specify
P6	26	Gen Z	Female	Mobile	Daily	> 20	Scratch
P7	37	Millenial	Female	Mobile	Weekly	10	Memory games
P8	49	Gen X	Female	Mobile	Weekly	> 20	Spin the wheel
P9	50	Gen X	Male	Tablet, mobile, game console, computer	Weekly	10	Did not specify
P10	31	Millenial	Male	Mobile	Daily	< 10	Did not specify
P11	46	Gen X	Male	Game console, computer, mobile	Weekly	10	Scratch, Spin the wheel
P12	56	Gen X	Female	Mobile	Weekly	> 10	Memory games
P13	28	Gen Z	Male	Mobile	Weekly	> 10	Scratch
P14	44	Millenial	Female	Mobile	Daily	> 20	Memory games, spin the wheel
P15	49	Gen X	Male	Mobile, computer	Daily	> 20	Memory games
P16	23	Gen Z	Female	Mobile	Monthly	> 10	Did not specify

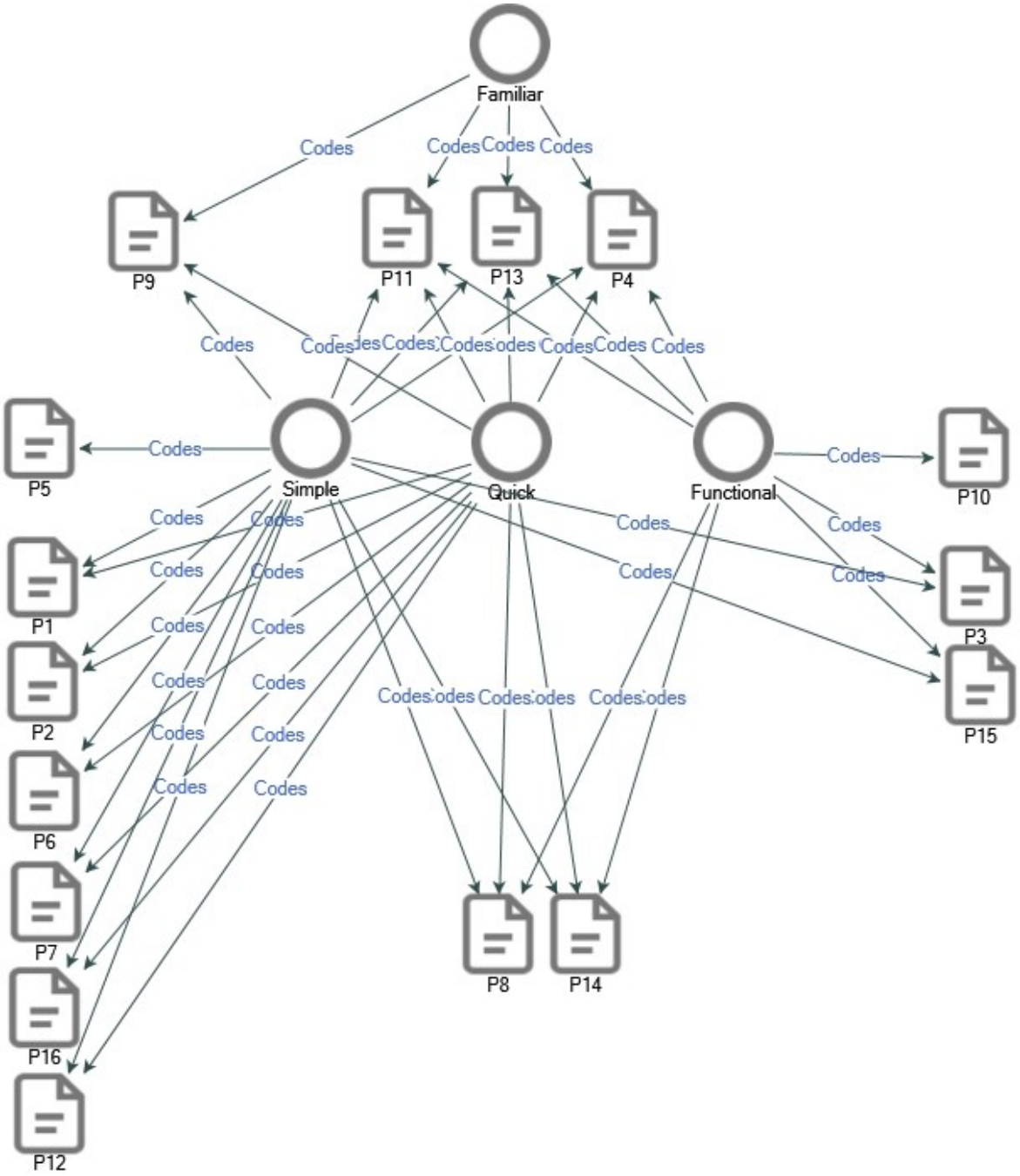
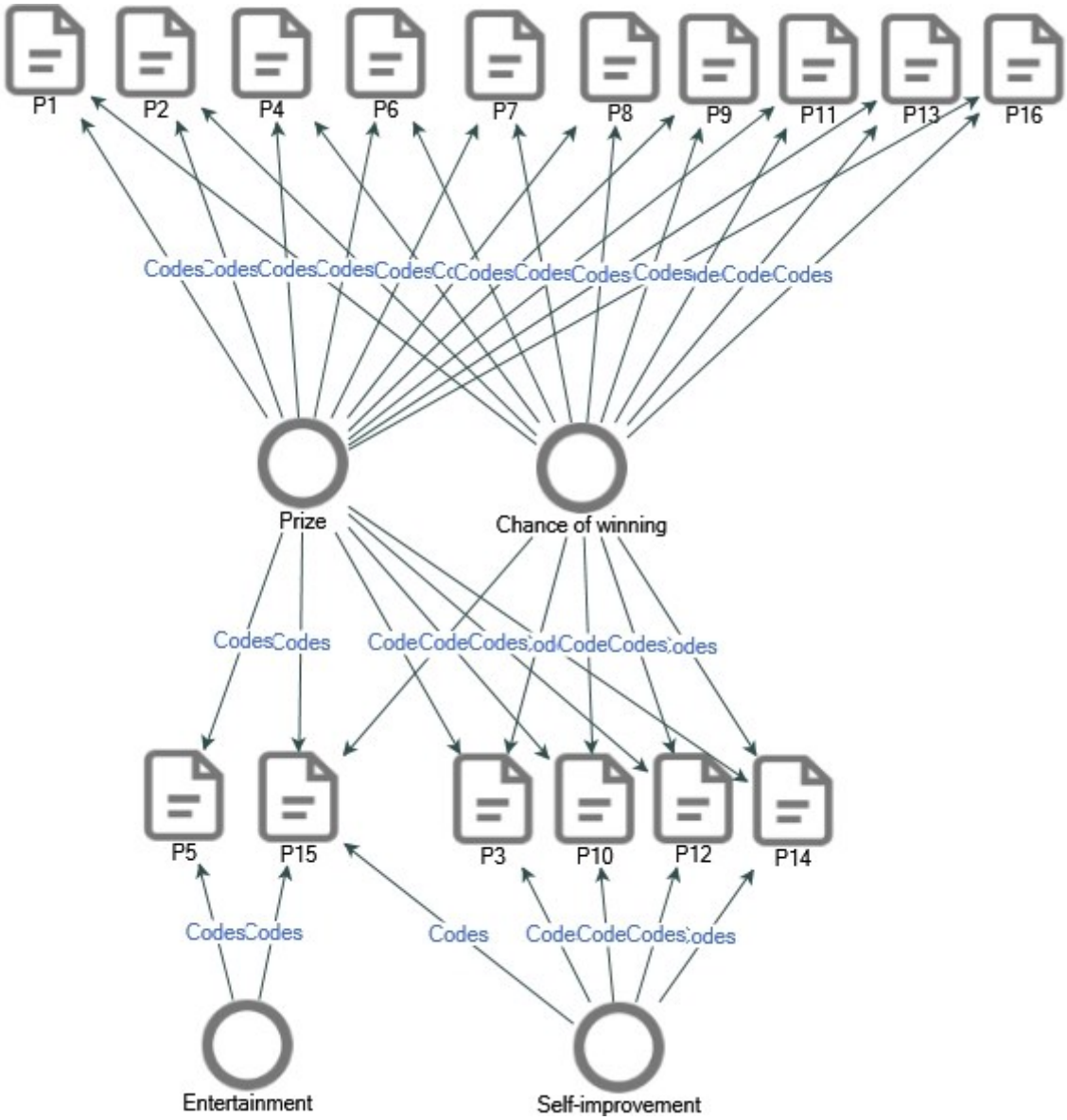
Appendix 5. OIT subtype and game involvement preference



Appendix 6. OIT subtype and motivations to play



Appendix 7. Technology acceptance model (TAM) - Perceived ease of use



Appendix 8. Technology acceptance model (TAM) - Perceived usefulness