Branded smart phone applications: an efficient marketing strategy?

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Abstract

Advertising through smart phone applications is one of the fastest growing categories in advertising nowadays. Branded game-apps on mobile phones have several very innovative and attractive aspects, they physically engage their customers into a game, creating on a first level an entertainment but mainly they are advertising their products and the brand’s name. Many studies have been written on gaming, customer engagement and marketing strategies, but only few studies has been written on the convergence of mobile phone technology, gaming and marketing. This research is investigating to which extend this innovative way of marketing can be considered as an efficient marketing strategy. In order to get an insight from both sides of the market, semi-structured interviews have been lead with phone-app experts and users. Similar answers were formulated by both the producers and the users, leading me to the conclusion that a game-app is engaging the users into an overall positive dialogue with the brand. The contribution of this exploratory study is a greater understanding of the phenomenon of branded game-apps, in relation to previous studies on marketing, game mechanisms and brand-consumer relationships.

Keywords: marketing – gaming – customer engagement – interactivity – convergence – gamification.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising through smart phone applications is a rapidly growing category in advertising nowadays. Phone applications are very various, they often have the form of practical tools helping the customers in their daily life, or they can take the shape of an interactive game promoting a brand’s message, which is the subject I have chosen to focus on. Marketers want to further involve the customers in new catchy ways, in order to create greater customer loyalty and a better brand image. For this purpose, they are developing branded game-apps, creating on a first level an entertainment but secondly and more importantly they are advertising their products. On the long term, the aim of those game-apps is to increase the brand’s popularity and image and increase the time the users are spending interacting with the brand’s message. People have the natural tendency to be attracted to games and competitions, which makes this marketing strategy attractive for the users. Marketers have developed increased interest in creating their own branded app, defined as software downloadable to a mobile device which prominently displays a brand identity, often with the name of the app and the appearance of a brand logo (Bellman et al. 2011:2).

I have become interested in the subject after having myself acquired an Iphone and discovered all the different phone applications available on the market. I became more interested in applications carrying a brand’s message and in the ways this new technology could change the landscape of advertising. I was especially fascinated by the potential of merging the areas of gaming, phone application technology and advertising. Throughout my thesis, I will use the term “branded game-app” to design this particular kind of marketing, which is not an official term but my own.

2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I am interested in finding out in which situations a game-app is a successful marketing strategy and in which situations it is not suitable. I would also like to get an insight into the player’s motivations and appreciations of game-apps, as well as from the producers (marketers) perspective. In order to get an insight from both sides of the spectrum, I have interviewed three game-app producers to find out about their perspective as to advantages and
disadvantages to choose to launch a game-app, as well as four users of different apps. I have selected four Swedish branded game-apps, two are purely commercial - the Mini Getaway and the Toyota A Glass of Water, and two are administrative - Swedish Armed Forces (further on SAF) Vår Verklighet (Our Reality in my translation) and the Swedish Posts Trygga Händer (Safe Hands in my translation). I found interesting the fact that game-apps are being launched not only for “classical” commercial products, but also other areas not directly commercial like institutions or environmental issues. For each example, I have evaluated the advantages and disadvantages from the producers and the customers perspectives and figure out whether or not it can be considered as a successful marketing strategy. My research questions are therefore:

- What are the player’s motivations to play/not to play? What is their appreciation of game-apps?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of choosing this strategy from the producer’s side?

The knowledge provided from this study could be useful for companies considering the use of this kind of advertising, but also for the general public and the academic field interested in having an overview in the progresses made in the phone app technologies and the potential benefits of integrating a game aspect into non-game fields. I want to contribute to the academic world, by providing a study on branded phone apps using game mechanics as a way to deliver a branded message and I want to evaluate how it is perceived by the customers as well as by the marketers.

Studies have been written before about interactivity (Gao, Rau and Salvendy 2010), advergaming (Wise et al. 2008), urban gaming (Wilken 2010), games and culture (Huizinga 1955), mobile phones technologies (Kopomaa 2000), and a wide range of books and publications on gaming and video games (Egenfeldt Nielsen 2008). Nevertheless, I haven’t found any study on the evaluation of branded game-apps as a marketing strategy. Several areas of our daily lives are going through a process of gamification, which is an upcoming word since 2010. The term will be further investigated in point 4.4.2. In this study I will focus on the gamification of mobile phone applications and will therefore not be writing about the gamification trend of society in general.

My thesis is divided into seven main parts. First I am introducing my research and my personal interest in the subject, as well as my aims and research questions. Then, I am giving
complementary background information about media convergence and new media, loyalty programs, the gaming industry and mobile phones, influences from urban gaming, a definition of “traditional” marketing and some thoughts about brand identity. In a fourth part, I have made a review of previous researches and a literature review of the different theories I will use to answer to my questions. In the next part, I am explaining which methods and which materials I have used. Then I am presenting the results of my research and in the last part I am evaluating my findings in relation to former theories and formulating my conclusions.

3. BACKGROUND

In order to understand better how the media landscape has evolved all the way to game-apps on smart phones, I will give some insights about media convergence and new media, loyalty programs, the gaming industry and mobile phones, influences from urban gaming, a definition of “traditional” marketing and some thoughts about brand identity.

3.1. Media convergence and new media

According to Terry Flew, the concept of new media is integrally bound up with the history of the Internet and The World Wide Web. He defines new media as the convergence of computing, information technologies, communication networks and media content (Flew 2008). Henry Jenkins defines media convergence as “the flow of content across multiple media platforms” (Jenkins 2006:2). Flew claims that new media was born from the emergence and mass popularization of the Internet, and the convergence across a wide range of platforms and devices. (Flew 2008). “The second element of convergence is the morphing of devices (computers, mobile phones, televisions etc.) as they become multi-purpose conduits for a range of activities involving digital media” (Flew 2008: 23). He also claims that “(…) The Internet has promoted the convergence of modes of communication from one-to-one (e.g. emails), one-to-many (e.g. websites), and many-to-many (interactive ‘real time’ online spaces)” (Flew 2008:36).
3.2. Loyalty programs

How have we evolved to game-apps? Game-apps come from a long tradition of loyalty programs. It is around 1930 that the first loyalty programs appeared, with the strategy “buy 10, get 11th for free”, encouraging those who are most likely to pay by getting them free products. In fact, the customer is at the end paying more, but has the feeling of having gotten a favor from the brand/company. According to Gabe Zichermann at the Gamification Summit 2011, the general trend of our modern society is moving towards engagement, a new form coming from the loyalty program tradition. Wanda Meloni at the Gamification Summit 2011 explained that consumer engagement combined to loyalty began in the 2000s, when customer could customize their products by adding some personified details to the products, choose the color etc. Another speaker from the Gamification Summit 2011, Amy Joe Kim, claims that gamification started with loyalty programs. She warned nevertheless about the dangers of overusing game mechanics, as it is not only about the game mechanics but about the experience.

3.3. The game industry and mobile phones

Game-apps are the continuation of a long history of gaming combined with the technology of handheld mobile devices. According to Flew: “The global interactive games industry is large and growing, and is at the forefront of many of the most significant innovations in new media” (Flew 2008: 126). According to him, there are two major kinds of game, the video games played on a console in the home environment and the games played online (MMOG: multi-player online games) through the internet (Flew 2008). There is a third emerging type of gaming: games on handheld mobile devices such as mobile phones, which will develop further with the progress made by wireless technologies (Flew 2008). In Sweden, wireless technologies are already advanced enough to allow players to play from anywhere anytime, if they have an internet subscription on their phones. The app phenomenon has risen with the launch of the iPhone from Apple, which has revolutionized the mobile phone industry. Iphone users use the Apple App Store to find applications, downloadable immediately for free or for a fee. These apps range from tools for e-mailing and text messaging, to maps and direction finders, through to books, games, and online shopping programs.
3.4. Influence from urban gaming

According to me, game-apps have been influenced by urban games also called pervasive games or location-based games, and live action role-playing game (also called LARPs), as many similarities can be found. All urban games have the characteristic to take place in public spaces, often in cities or a defined area within the city. According to Ed Grabianowski “The play space is always much larger in scale than traditional games - in fact, it could be said that they occur at "human scale", rather than a miniature scale on a tabletop, or as an abstraction in a computer game” (Grabianowski 2005). The participants of LARPs and urban games physically act out their characters’ actions within a fictional setting represented in the real world, while interacting with each other in character. It involves role playing and it is made for multiple players in urban areas. These games have been developed in the 1970s and became more popular in the 1980s. Nowadays, all urban games incorporate communication technology, such as cell phones, GPS receivers, digital cameras, and the Internet. “People around the world have been putting these technologies to innovative use, creating "experiences" in public settings that are part game, part performance art, and part sociology experiment” (Grabianowski 2005). Game-apps are similar to urban and LARP games, as many of them are location-based (Mini, Trygga Händer), the positioning of the players is made by GPS on cell phones connected to the Internet. The difference is that urban games are purely for entertaining purposes, whereas game-apps are carrying a brand’s message and are a marketing strategy. Also the blur between the real world and the virtual world is a common characteristic, as both types take place outside while being monitored on the phone screen.

Game-apps are also not to be confused with augmented reality apps. Ronald Azuma offered the following definition: Augmented reality (AR) is about augmenting the real world environment with virtual information by improving people’s senses and skills. AR mixes virtual characters with the actual world. There are three common characteristics of AR scenes: the combination of real world environment with computer characters, interactive scenes, and scenes in 3D (Azuma 1997). Game-apps are using certain features of augmented reality games like the use of a GPS positioning and the interaction between real life and virtual life and AR games might have been a source of inspiration for game-app developers.
3.5. “Traditional marketing”

Game-apps as a new marketing strategy involve a comparison to “traditional” marketing strategies. Game-apps as a marketing strategy are new in the sense that game systems are being taken to new spaces like marketing, which is a combination which hasn’t been fully used before. What is the history of a “traditional” marketing strategy? Marketing rose in the 1950s and especially in the 1960s, when Mc Carthy introduced the four Ps: develop a product, determine the price, do the promotion, and set up the place of distribution, which summed up what was needed from marketing back in those days (Kotler 2010). According to Philip Kotler, marketing has evolved through three stages over the years, marketing 1.0, marketing 2.0 and marketing 3.0. Marketing 1.0 rose during the industrial era, when “marketing was about selling the factory’s output of products to all who would buy them. The products were fairly basic and were designed to serve a mass market. The goal was to standardize and scale up to bring about the lowest possible costs of production so that these goods could be prized lower and made more affordable to more buyers” (Kotler 2010:3). Marketing 2.0 is the product of today’s information age. “The job of marketing is no longer that simple. Today’s consumers are well informed and can easily compare several similar product offerings. (…) The marketer must segment the market and develop a superior product for a specific target market. (…) Today’s marketers try to touch the consumer’s mind and heart. Unfortunately, the consumer-centric approach implicitly assumes the view that consumers are passive targets of marketing campaigns” (Kotler 2010:4). Now, we are experiencing the age of marketing 3.0, where consumers are treated as whole human beings with minds, hearts and spirits. “They (the customers) look for not only functional and emotional fulfillment but also human spirit fulfillment in the products and services they chose” (Kotler 2010:4). Marketing 3.0 is also called new wave technology enabling connectivity and interactivity of individuals and groups through cheap computers, cheap phones and low-cost internet. “In the age of participation, people create news, ideas, and entertainment as well as consume them” (Kotler 2010:7). According to him, consumers nowadays have lost their trust in business practices. “Marketing is considered the same as selling, using the art of persuasion, and even some manipulation” (Kotler 2010:31). “To succeed, companies should understand that consumers increasingly appreciate cocreation, communitization and characters” (Kotler 2010:32). The main difference between a “traditional” marketing strategy and game-apps is that nowadays, marketers emphasize the importance of an interpersonal communication as a two-way process while traditional mass communication is very often a one way process. “We have moved from
a product centered marketing to a service-dominant approach, in which intangibility, exchange processes and relationships are central” (Vargo & Lusch 2004:2). Core marketing activities now include “interactivity, integration, customisation and coproduction” (Vargo and Lusch 2004:11).

3.6. Brand identity

One of the purposes of creating a game-app for a brand is to increase the company’s brand identity. Kotler defines the term in the following way: “Brand identity is about positioning your brand in the minds of the consumers. The positioning should be unique for your brand to be heard and noticed in the cluttered marketplace. It should also be relevant to the rational needs and wants of the consumers. (…) It is about being credible, fulfilling your promise, and establishing consumers’ trust in your brand” (Kotler 2010:36).

4. THEORETICAL FRAME AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Games have been analyzed from a psychological perspective analyzing the emotions provoked by gaming, as studied in N. Lazzaro’s publication (Lazzaro 2004), studies have been written on how to engage the customer by games (McGonigal 2009) and about the process of gamification (Zicherman, Ekval and Vukovic). Studies have been made on advergaming and advertainment (Kretchmer, Egenfeldt Nielsen et al.), interactivity (Flew), customer loyalty (Zichermann) and brand engagement (Tuten). New knowledge will be generated by interviewing users and experts in order to get a better understanding of the game-app phenomenon in general. Game-apps as a marketing strategy have not yet been researched on, as it is a relatively recent technological trend. The aim of this study is to summarize and analyze the aspects that make game-apps an attractive marketing strategy for both users and advertisers. Expert interviews have generated new knowledge, as to how game mechanics are used to create customer loyalty and engagement. User interviews have made me understand the players appreciations and motivations to play. I have focused my study on the Swedish market, which is very developed in new technologies and can be considered a representative for other developed countries trend. The area of research being relatively new,
definitions tend to be rather blurry between terms like gamification, advergame, funware etc, which I will intend to clarify in this part.

4.1. Psychological perspective: emotions in games

In this study I want to investigate the psychological motives for a player to play a game, in order to understand which mechanisms make players want to play. According to Jane McGonical (2011), games create a positive feeling making us feel that we achieved something and feel therefore satisfied. She also wrote, “Games are unnecessary obstacles that we volunteer to tackle” (McGonical 2009). She explains in her book that games create “eustress” which is a positive stress, we experience the same psychological and physical processes than with a negative stress, but with the difference that we chose it and therefore enjoy it. In her book she also develops the idea of fun failure, showing that gamers spent most of their time failing but they enjoy it, on the opposite of real life, where failure is discouraging (McGonigal 2009).

In his study Nick Yee (2007) discovered three primary motivations for game participation: achievement, the desire to advance in the game’s hierarchy, master its mechanics, and compete against other participants; social, the desire to have positive interactions with other people and work toward a common goal together; and immersion, the desire to exercise imagination, consume compelling content, and think about something other than ordinary, everyday work. N. Lazzaro is going even further than Nick Yee into the topic of emotions and gaming (Lazzaro 2004). She comes to the conclusion that people play games not so much for the game itself, but for the experience the game creates. XEODesign, where N. Lazzaro works, conducted a research study with 15 hardcore gamers, 15 casual gamers, plus 15 non-players. They found four key elements releasing emotions during play: Hard Fun, Easy Fun, Altered States and the People Factor. Hard Fun creates positive emotion by doing an effort to reach a goal. Players like to deal with challenge, strategy, and problem solving. Players are triggered by emotions such as frustration, when they lose and fiero (an Italian word for personal triumph), when they win. Easy fun is the pure enjoyment of playing a game, they are curious and they simply enjoy being focused, rather than triggered by the possibility of winning. Another emotion raised by games according to N. Lazzaro is Altered States: players report that they enjoy playing because it creates feelings and changes inside them. These
players play for internal sensations such as excitement or relief from their thoughts. The people factor is the enjoyment from playing with others. The main emotions include amusement, schadenfreude (pleasure from the misfortune of others), and naches (pleasure or pride from the accomplishments of a child or mentee). This knowledge will help me understand the player’s motivations to play game-apps.

Game-apps have also a strong social bonding aspect, as the event is gathering people around a common interest for a common cause and gamers are physically interacting with each other while competing to win a prize, points or a status. In my interviews with the users, I will try to prove that one of the motivations to play game-apps is because it creates social contact.

N. Lazzaro, N. Yee, and J. McGonigal all have in common the conclusion, that playing games is something positive. J. Mc Gonigal goes even further than this in her book by proving that games can turn us into better people by engaging us in common causes. This theory has to be taken with distance, as according to me, games can also have many negative aspects. For example, they are very addictive and some people get caught up into a dependence spiral, cutting them out from reality. Games are very manipulative, as for example when it is used for marketing purposes. Players get caught up by attractive game mechanisms and are being subjected to commercial purposes, without really being aware of it, which is not really an honest way. Game-apps have something false into them, as they pretend to be something else than they are, they pretend to provide pure entertainment, but in fact, they are trying to catch the customer’s attention and make them interact longer with a brand’s name. As I mentioned earlier, this concept is developed by Kotler (2010), who says that “marketing is considered the same as selling, using the art of persuasion, and even some manipulation” (Kotler 2010:31).

Another interesting aspect of N. Lazzaro’s study is the interview of non-players. She found out that many never play as adults, finding games meaningless or a waste of time, in a similar way job responsibilities and raising families reduces game play. Some others reject games because of their moral theme or graphic violence. Interestingly several that have tried playing games in the past actively avoid games because “they are too addictive.” For them it is better not to play than risk developing a bad habit. This statement could be interesting to compare to the responses of the players I intend to interview. This knowledge could give a further understanding, as to why people don’t want to play game-apps.

Economist Edward Castranova (2007), who studies multiplayer online games (MMO), identifies “positive emotions” as the single most important motivation for playing. He argues
that most players turn to games specifically to produce the emotional high associated with accomplishing something concrete, feeling capable, and being recognized for their successes. Theories of positive psychology can also be applied to the theory that games create engagement. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow, first introduced in 1972 defines flow as a positive emotional state, or as the happiness we experience when we are fully engaged in something in addition to receiving feedback that we are making progress toward a goal (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). After a certain amount of time spent on games, we burn out on flow and start wonder if we are not missing out on life: the player regret (McGonigal 2009). This theories are interesting to apply to the players I have interviewed, as to positive emotions is their strongest motivation for playing game-apps, or whether it is something else.

4.2. Gamification, funware and game mechanics

Seth Priebatsch, the founder of the Scavenger Hunt\textsuperscript{1} underlines in the conference TEDxBoston 2010: “Last decade was all about the social, next decade will be all about games” (Priebatsch: 2010). In my study, the term gamification has a big importance and I will define it and summarize what has already been written and said on the subject. The concept is being more and more talked about and the first summit on this topic was held in San Francisco in 2011 bringing together top leaders in game mechanics and engagement science. Gabe Zicherman defines gamification in the following way, it is the process of using game thinking and game mechanics to solve problems and engage users (Zicherman: 2010). The general idea behind this summit is the discussion of the increasing role of game mechanics for advertising and promotional purposes. G. Zicherman traces gamification tendencies from the beginning of the 1950’ with the Frequent Flyer Programs, rewarding the customers flying the most with an airline through a system of points. Since then, many businesses have gamified their marketing strategies by allowing customers to earn points, badges and see their positions in a leader board (Zicherman: 2010). Game mechanics are used to create greater customer engagement. G. Zicherman gives the example of Starbucks and the special card where you can collect point, allowing you to get the 10\textsuperscript{th} coffee for free, which is a loyalty program used

\textsuperscript{1} SCVNGR is a social location-based gaming platform for mobile phones. By going places and doing challenges, players can earn points, unlock badges and real-world rewards, such as discounts or free items and share their occupations to their social network.
since the 1930s. This procedure is supposed to increase customer loyalty, by triggering the consumer’s natural sense of competition. Zicherman developed the concept of funware, he defines it as the use of game mechanics in non-game contexts to encourage desired user actions and generate customer loyalty (Zicherman: 2010). Funware typically employs game mechanics such as points, leader boards, badges, challenges and levels. Branded game-apps can therefore be defined as funware, because they use game mechanics for advertising purposes (non-game context) to generate loyalty.

A study on gamification has been written by two students from Stockholm University (Ekval and Vukovic 2012) in the spring of 2012. The aim of the study is to explore the word gamification and in which ways it can be integrated in advertising, the possibilities and challenges it creates. The students have chosen to respond to their questions by leading expert interviews with gamification experts and advertising experts, in order to compare the answers. In their study, they explain the difficulties the experts encountered to make a difference between advertgaming and gamification, as the subject is so recent and relatively unexplored (Ekval and Vukovic 2012). They conclude that gamification doesn’t suit any company or products, but it can in some cases lead to a greater customer engagement and customer loyalty through interactivity (Ekval and Vukovic 2012:34). They claim that the customers are actively involved on a deeper level than through traditional commercials and remember the brand’s message for a longer time. The most important factor to succeed in a gamification campaign is to come up with a creative and effective idea (Ekval and Vukovic 2012:34).

4.3. Advergaming and advertainment

Another important term to consider in my study is advergaming, a mix between advertising and gaming. Zichermann defines the term in the following way: “Advergames are games made explicitly to market products. The most common examples are small browser-based games that are tied to a specific promotion where typical designs are associated with simple and quick-play experiences (…)” An advergame has usually a simple design, simple rules and a short playing time, which makes it easy to distribute on different platforms, such as on Web sites, via e-mail (tell a friend, viral marketing) or on mobile phones (Cauberghe and De Pelsmacker 2010). Advergames are computer games specifically created to function
as advertisements to promote brands, and therefore branded phone-apps can be also seen as advergames.

Advertainment is another term used to describe the fusion between advertising and entertainment, referring to video games used for marketing purposes (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008). It belongs under the definition of “serious games”. “Today the label refers to a broad swathe of video games produced, marketed or used for purposes other than pure entertainment, these include but are not limited to, educational computer games, edutainment and advertainment, and also health games and political games” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:205). “Global brands in particular have been eager to produce advertainment titles, to attract traffic to their websites and increase brand awareness (…)” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:206). “There is limited research into advertainment but it is considered one of the best means to draw visitors to web sites. And by making these interactive commercials fun for the consumer, these games facilitate exposure to the brand that can last a lot longer than a typical commercial” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:206). The SAF app and the Glass of Water app can be considered to be educational game-apps, the former is a mental and physical preparation to the military service, the latter a campaign promoting eco-driving. Educational games for military purposes has been used since the 1970s under the form of simulations and strategic war games, as well as a teaching tool in some schools (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008). “Games cannot be said to be more effective than other teaching forms, although most studies have offered evidence of better retention over time” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:209). “Indeed the preference of students for games fits well with the increased motivation consistently found when examining the educational use of games” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:210)

4.4. Brand engagement, customer loyalty and interactivity

Game-apps create a greater brand engagement and customer loyalty. Games have a high degree of stickiness, referring to the ability of a medium to attract an audience and keep it. In the case of a webpage, it refers to the amount of time spent on it and repeated visits (Zichermann 2010). According to him, stickiness is called loyalty outside the world of the net. “Loyalty is the most enduring bond between a product, brand, or company and its customers. Loyalty is the consumers expression of brand preference and their repayment of the equity you’ve invested in the relationship” (Zicherman 2010:13). According to him, in the offline
world, the most successful loyalty programs are those run by airlines (like the Frequent Flyer Program or FFP) and other hospitality companies, like for example collecting points at your local restaurant or while grocery shopping. Loyalty programs work on the same base as game and in particular like branded game-apps. The users are driven by the motivation of one day winning those prizes.

L. Tuten (2008:76) argues „For marketers, social virtual worlds represent an enormous opportunity for branding by extending the time consumers spend with a brand’s message from moments to minutes. Indeed, the average amount of time spent by session in social virtual worlds ranges from as little as twenty minutes to more than two hours- substantially more than the typical thirty seconds of attention garnered by a television commercial”. Game-apps are about engaging the customers further into a dialogue with the brand. “Brand engagement starts with a desire to do more than just push brand messages through traditional channels to a target audience. Today, consumers want to be involved. They want to co-create a brand’s message. They want interaction with the brand and with others interested in the brand” (Tuten 2008:127).

Game-apps are also based on interactivity between the customer and the brand, we are dealing with a two-way communication. “Interactivity is generally seen as a central feature of new media, although there is considerable debate about its meaning. It is typically presented as a feature of new media that distinguishes them from ‘old media’, which could only offer passive consumption” (Flew 2008: 28). “Some of the distinctive features of digital games are user interactivity, immersion in a virtual environment, social interaction within the game, and the capacity of players to become co-creators of content, especially in multi-player games” (Flew 2008: 138). “The engagement thus comes because the player is the performer, and the game evaluates the performance and adapts to it” (Flew 2008: 139).

5. METHODS AND MATERIALS

My study’s aim is to give an overview of two different types of branded game-apps in use in Sweden: two commercial ones and two made for institutions. This mapping-out comes from my own observations of the game-app market and I found interesting that game-apps are not only used for purely commercial products, but also for stately institutions. I have chosen
two examples for each category, which I will analyze closely and complement to the expert’s responses, as well as to the users responses. I have chosen game-apps from companies/institutions from a comparable size and importance, in order to make them comparable. I have chosen two car brands for the commercial aspect: the Mini Cooper and Toyota. The Swedish post and the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) for the institutions part. The expert respondents were all involved in the production on the game-apps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Name of app</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Length</th>
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<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td>2012/02/09</td>
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<tr>
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<td>“Vår Verklighet” (SAF)</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012/04/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satchi</td>
<td>A Glass of Water (Toyota)</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>45 min</td>
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<td>Mini Getaway</td>
<td>Email</td>
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<tr>
<td>JG (14)</td>
<td>“Trygga Händer” (Swedish Post)</td>
<td>Skype chat</td>
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5.1. Sampling

While doing the sampling for the selection of the interviewees I have selected respondents located in Stockholm, as a common ground for social and cultural meanings, as described in Lindhof and Taylor: “Sites and settings are geographic (or simulated) places that have social and cultural meanings for people. (…) Sites and settings are most important as sampling units when one wants to study how people interact with natural or built environments, or how acts
of communication exhibit regularity or variation in terms of where they occur.” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 121). I have recruited three marketing experts, who have worked directly with the selected game-apps and four players that have played with the apps. I approached the experts via email and the one’s I interviewed are the one’s who responded positively to my interview request. “The researcher recruits persons for qualitative interviews because they have had experiences, or possess knowledge and/or expertise, that are important to the research questions.” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 121). I have recruited the users for having played with the selected game-apps in the time period of their launch. I contacted them randomly from the leader board of the best results on facebook for the SAF app, through youtube comments for the Post app, and via facebook comments on the official app page for the Mini app. “Activities are the doings of individuals or groups – extended social performances, often ritualistic, enacted in specific settings and time periods. (…) Events are episodes of behavior that, together, constitute an activity.” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 121). The activity of the players is to play with the game-apps at a certain time when the app was launched and the experts activity was the creation and launch of the game-apps. For the users selection, I have chosen the strategy of “maximum variation sampling” as developed by Lindlof and Taylor (2002:123). “(…) maximum variation sampling taps into a wide range of qualities, attributes, situations, or incidents within the boundaries of the research problem. As the name of this strategy suggests, the researcher seeks to study the variation in a communication phenomenon. (…) It is not as important if the number of exemplars does not match their actual distribution in the population.” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002:123). Indeed I have selected four players of different ages and occupations. For the experts sampling, I have chosen the “purposeful sampling”, explained in the following way by Schwandt: “Sites or cases are chosen because there may be good reason to believe that ‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating some established theory” (Schwandt in Lindlof and Taylor 2002:122). As to the question of sample size, Lindlof and Taylor say: “We sample persons, settings, activities and so on until a critical threshold of interpretative competence has been reached – when, for example, we cease to be surprised by what we observe or we notice that our concepts and propositions are not disconfirmed as we continue to add new data.” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 129) This has revealed itself to be especially true in the case of my expert respondents, where I realized the answers resembled each other. Similar features have been observed during some of the users interviews, but with some aspects that would have need further confirmations from more users.
5.2. Reliability

“The question of reliability has to do with the consistency of observations: whether a research instrument (e.g., questionnaire, experimental test, human observer) will yield the same results every time it is applied. If it does yield roughly the same results time after time, then it can be said that the instrument is dependable for the purpose at hand” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002:239). While reading the interviews I realized that in most cases, similar answers were provided in two out of three interviews in the expert case and two or three similar answers out of four for the users responses. I have developed two sets of questionnaire to use during my semi-structured interview, one for the users and one for the experts. A questionnaire-based interview was a relevant method, as the same questions were asked to all the participants of each category. My answers can therefore be considered as reliable.

5.3. Producer’s perspective: face to face semi structured interviews

In order to get an insight of the phenomena I have conducted semi-structured interviews with three experts in the field designing the apps and working for advertising agencies. I have used in-depth, semi structured interviews because “if what you need to find out cannot be answered simply or briefly, if you anticipate that you may need to ask people to explain their answers or give examples or describe their experiences, then you rely on in-depths interviews (Rubin and Rubin: 2005). I have followed an open-end interview guide in English covering the topics that needs to be discussed, to help me and the interviewee to cover the topic as fully as possible. Nevertheless, I left room for follow-up questions and spontaneous responses and inputs from the interviewees. “As in normal conversations, questions and answers follow each other in a logical fashion as people take turns talking. Researchers listen to each answer and determine the next question based on what was said.” (Rubin and Rubin 2005:12). I also altered slightly the questions depending on the app I was interested in knowing more about. I have tried to say as little as possible during the interview, to let the interviewees develop their thoughts fully without any encouragements from my side. I have had an interview with the person responsible for the development of the Mini Cooper Getaway app from the advertising company Jung von Matt, which I will call JVM throughout the thesis. The second respondent
is the developer of the Glass of Water app - Saatchi and Saatchi Stockholm – which I will call Satchi throughout the thesis. The third person was the developer of the Swedish Armed Force app (DDB), which I will be referring to as DDB. The interviews took about 45 min and were recorded on camera and on my Iphone. I met up with them in their office during work hours and was offered a cup of coffee. The atmosphere during the interviews was relaxed, but serious. The respondent from JVM even printed out an official evaluation report of the Mini Cooper campaign, including total number of players, statistics, a short reception study, which turned out to be very useful for my research. The interview with DDB took place over email, as the respondent didn’t have enough time to meet face to face. Face to face semi-structured interviews with phone apps experts was the best method to collect their appreciations in a relaxed atmosphere. The email interview fulfilled its role as well, but the data gathered were not as complete as from the face-to-face interviews.

5.4. User interviews over email: evaluation of the method

In order to find former users of game apps, I did an intensive research work over the internet and contacted over 150 private persons over social networks, forums, youtube etc. In the end, I got to ask my questions to three persons over email, skype chat and I met one person face to face. Two of my respondents played the Mini Cooper Getaway app, one played the Swedish Post’s app and the last one played the SAF app. It proved itself very hard to get private persons to respond to a researcher’s questions, when approached as a “stranger” on the net. For a further researcher, I would suggest offering something in return like a cinema ticket, a lunch or some pocket money. Personal contacts and/or friends of friends might also be a good method. The face-to-face user interview about the SAF app revealed itself to be the most fruitful and interesting one, as I got a vast amount of information by meeting up in person. I met my respondent in a coffee place in the center of Stockholm and recorded our hourly conversation with the recording function of my phone. The interview took place in a friendly atmosphere. We talked for about one hour, it was a very good method because I could ask follow-up questions and the respondent could talk for an unlimited amount of time, without being bothered to write everything down in an email. It would have been the optimal method to do only face-to-face user interviews, but I experienced difficulties during the method project.
course to convince individual persons to meet me in person, when I approached them with a message on facebook. Also, I didn’t offer any money or reward, just the price of a coffee, which could also be the reason for their non-interest. This is why I sent my questions over email, facebook or skype chat to the first three users. This method also worked out well, even though the responses were not as extensive as during a face-to-face meeting. The email questions have to be as clear and simple as possible to avoid misunderstandings. The positive aspect of a skype interview, is that the respondent can ask directly if he/she doesn’t understand the question as it is taking place in real time. And the other way around, I, as the interviewer could ask for further explanations in case it is needed.

Combining an audience and a production perspective has given me an insight on the phenomenon from both sides of the market. After having analyzed the reception from the audience’s and from the production’s perspective while considering the process of game and fun mechanics from a theoretical point of view, I am able to balance negative and positive aspects of this upcoming marketing strategy and draw conclusions as to whether or not it is a successful advertisement strategy.

5.5. Materials

I have chosen to focus on two kinds of branded game-apps in this study: the one’s promoting commercial products and the one’s promoting institutions. I have then selected two relevant concrete examples for each category. I selected these two categories, as I found them a good representation of a broad market: commercial products being driven by market forces and institutions by the state and the government. All four apps could be found on the Apple app store and were free of charge. I have decided to focus on the Swedish app market, therefore all four apps have been developed and launched in Sweden. In order to understand how the game-apps work in practice, I have myself downloaded two out of the four selected on my phone and tried them before leading the interviews (SAF and A Glass of Water). The reason why I couldn’t try out the other two was because they were limited in time and not accessible for download at the time of my research.

5.5.1. Commercial products
The first category is the game-apps made for commercial products. I want to examine closely the Mini Cooper Getaway campaign that took place in Stockholm in October 2010. The campaign lasted one week and anyone who had an iPhone and downloaded the app could compete with other players to win an actual Mini car. Twice a day, a car started driving in the center of Stockholm and in order to win it, you had to “catch” it on your phone screen for a minute by staying closer than 50 meter to it. Once “caught”, the virtual car could be pinpointed then grabbed by other players as soon as they were closer than 50 meters of it. An interactive map of the center of Stockholm showed you your position, the other player’s positions and the position of the car. The winner was the one who had the virtual car displayed on the phone by the game’s end.

Illustration to the Mini Getaway app. Taken from the webpage www.popsop.com.

A Glass of water is a game-app developed from Toyota Sweden encouraging drivers to drive safely and to reduce their fuel consumption. The app is a virtual glass of water that reacts to your driving like a real glass full of water. The aim is to spill as little water as possible, as you drive. After each drive you can analyze your results and see on a map where you could improve your driving in the future. The results were automatically uploaded to the official Glass of Water website and compared to other participant’s scores.
5.5.2. Institutions

Institutions have also launched game-apps to promote themselves. For example, the Swedish Armed Forces have created an app called Vår Verklighet (Our Reality in an English translation) aiming to find new recruits for the Swedish military service. I will name this app the SAF app. It consists in a series of test testing your rapidity, logic, memory, personality and also your physical abilities. Each task begins at random times of the day and has to be completed immediately in order to be acknowledged as completed. The aim of this campaign is to know whether you “have what it takes” to be in the SAF. The results of the test can then be shared on facebook and you can compare your results to those of your friends. According to Wanda Meloni, military and game technology work closely together, as well as films and games etc (Meloni 2011).
The second game-app I chose was made by the Swedish Post and it is called “Trygga Händer” (Safe Hands). I will call this app the Post’s app further on. The goal of the game is to deliver a virtual package with a virtual bike to the nearest post office, without dropping it on the way. Several persons can hold the same virtual package at the same time, so you have to be quick and well-balanced, as you are holding the package as straight as possible in your phone. If you make it, you win the secret content and it is physically delivered to your address within one day.
6. RESULTS/ANALYSIS

In a first part, I have mapped out the recurrent themes mentioned by both the experts and the users. I have chosen to consider a theme recurrent when two out of three expert respondents and when two out of three users had a similar opinion. My work is a pioneer study, therefore the responses presented below cannot be considered as totally representative, especially when it comes to the number of interviewed users which was too small to be able to make definitive conclusions. Further researches in this area would be needed to fully understand the game-app phenomenon. For a question of privacy, I will not use the respondent’s real names, but the company name for the experts and initials for the users.

6.1. Recurrent themes experts

Interaction and customer engagement

All three expert interviewees emphasized the importance of the term interaction and customer engagement. Those two terms are extremely important to understand the gamification phenomenon, as both J. McGonical and G. Zicherman emphasize. JVM said about the Mini app: “We were the first ones to use the interaction part, the fact that you competed against other people that you could see in your phone. The technique was not new, but we were the first to make it work in a simple way, we took all the technique and packed it in a new way.” DDB furthermore explains the relation between entertainment and customer engagement: “People like entertainment, and if something is free, and will entertain them, then they will engage with it and spend time with it.” This is in other words, the definition of stickiness, as mentioned in the theory part, developed by Zichermann. Nowadays, marketers are interested in getting their customers to interact with the brand’s name for as long time as possible, in order for them to remember the brand’s message for a longer time and eventually increase their popularity and sales. Satchi: “What we are all trying to do at this very moment is to get as many people as possible to engage with the brand. We are trying to come up with ideas and actually make people interact with the brand and spend time with the brand. Because then, the message stays in their mind and get them to understand your values, and to like your brand”. Satchi explained that there is a direct relation between a user downloading the app and the registration on the official webpage: “75% of the people downloading the app also registered on the Toyota A Glass of Water webpage. So, that was a pretty good
measurement, because then you could see how they actually interact with the game and with the campaign.” A game-app can therefore be considered as a good choice of strategy to increase the user’s visits to your webpage, the so-called stickiness.

**Relevance**

Another important factor to create a successful game-app is relevance according to all three experts. When I asked DDB about the key element to make a successful game-app in terms of popularity, he responded: “Relevance obviously, both for brand as well as consumer, it should get your attention and deliver your message as clearly and quickly as possible.” And specifically about the relevance of the SAF app: “Obviously the app cannot be compared to the real thing (military service), but some aspects of the missions gave a good idea of whether you would consider this a complete nuisance or something that matters.” Satchi is expressing the same thought: “What we see more and more is that it has to make sense to people, not just coming up with another Angry Birds game or whatever. There must be a link to the brand, there must be a purpose that people understand, because people are not stupid, I don’t think they have ever been, but we, as an industry tend or use to consider people as more or less stupid and also brands use to do that earlier and I think we have to change that.” Satchi then explained the Toyota long-term philosophy striving for zero emission from the production (recyclable materials) to the actual car. Toyota approached Satchi about the possibility to make a campaign with an environmental vision. Satchi then proposed to not only focus on the actual product, but to include the driver and it’s driving as well for a more sustainable world. This is how they decided to make an eco-driving campaign. Satchi: “Talking about eco-driving is normally extremely boring and un-engaging because it speaks directly against what driving a car is all about: it’s about having fun, big engines, accelerations, all those things that people normally think is fun, so we had to come up with something that was engaging and relevant but still had a dimension of fun and challenges.” JVM also emphasizes the importance of coming up with a relevant game-app idea: “The main reason why it (the Mini game-app) worked was because it fitted so well with the brand, because people in the Mini brand stand for fun and play. It was a fantastic match between the game, the brand and the car.”
Two of the experts I interviewed explained that a game-app alone without the support of a traditional advertising campaign in the media wouldn’t get enough attention. I asked Satchi whether a traditional or a game-app works best, he answered: “I would say, it all depends on how you do it, because it could be extremely effective to do something really engaging at the heart of the campaign and then you try to do advertising in order to get people to interact with the brand and then it’s extremely effective I think. It all depends on the content and what the game is all about.” DDB’s answer was “You can't really compare the two, in some ways a television commercial will always be more effective, or a print, or whatever you do - and in other ways mobile communication and specifically all the smart phone-functionalities allow for richer, more intriguing experiences. Historically - we have always built long interactive puzzle/logical-thinking game/mission-type based websites for the SAF. So this app was in a way a development of the old communication platform ‘Do you have what it takes?’” JVM’s answer also proved that a game-app might be a good complementary advertising campaign, as the costs to produce an app are lower than a traditional printed add:” It was part of a bigger campaign though, so we did also TV spots, adds and stuff. The cost for the app and for everything that had to do with the game was relatively low because the car you could win costs about the same price as a full page add in DN”. There is also the cost aspect, as game-apps seem to be cheaper to produce than a traditional campaign, it adds a new reason to develop a game-app in addition to a traditional campaign. Satchi said on the topic: “The app in itself are of course cheaper to produce, depending how complicated it is, but globally I would say it is cheaper, but you also have to produce a campaign on top of that in order to make people aware of it.”

I asked Satchi whether advertising through game-apps is the new upcoming marketing strategy, he answered: “As a sustainable marketing strategy, I would say no, it is not efficient. I think that if you only have one game, considered as isolated, a game will always be – if it is not exceptionally good- it will always be very short as a campaign. Normally, it is only for a short period of time that you can use a game as something engaging.” The campaign aiming to raise the attention around the Glass of Water app was limited in time, but the app itself could still be downloaded over a year after, but without getting so many registrations anymore. The Mini app was only available for downloads for the week of the campaign, same thing for the Swedish Post app. The SAF app was of a longer nature than the other apps and
can still be played today, over a year later. “The campaign ran for 4 weeks, and ended on the last day that they accepted applications (for the military service). It was limited by the media-spend, but the app is still playable and works in exactly the same way beyond the campaign period. This was not specifically requested by the client, it just so happened due to the nature of the app”.

**Promote the brand**

One of the primary goals of marketers with game-apps is to promote the brand and the brand’s name. Satchi: “It is always about promoting the brand, and they are trying to sell cars. In the long run, yes, but it’s not about direct sales, they are trying to emphasize the fact that they are the environmental leader and to fortify their environmental leadership here in Sweden and all over the world also.” According to Tuten, the brand and the event (game-app) has to complement each other well in order to be considered as successful. “This is a common benefit associated with event sponsorships in order to get benefits from the brand-event association. Like event sponsorship, a prerequisite for success is congruence between the brand’s image and the image and atmosphere associated with the game” (Tuten 2008:145).

**Future of game-apps?**

I asked the experts about their opinion on the future of game-apps, whether the trend will continue or diminish. Satchi’s opinion is that gaming will certainly continue growing, but he wasn’t so sure about game-apps, as he thought there are already way too many bad apps based on irrelevant ideas: “We have to distinguish between apps and games, I think games will become more popular, but I don’t think apps will become more popular, they would have to be better in order to capture the client’s attention. There are already way too many apps and too many bad games and bad apps, so in order to be successful in the future, we have to come up with better ideas and more relevant ideas, otherwise they will not be used, they will not be spread.” JVM was on the other hand positive about the growth of game-apps and gaming in general: “Games, more developed technology, the more the bandwith grows and the more technology develops, the more opportunities there are. So of course, it is growing. It is also quite fun, people play around with possibilities, some people do really fantastic stuff. Everybody is gaming right now, people love games. Another thing is that people tend to copy success”. DDB about the future of game-apps: “It will grow. And a consequence of this is that
it will raise the bar, and make it more difficult to stand out.” So in general, the experts thought that the phenomenon of gaming would continue growing, and therefore phone apps would grow as well to a certain extend. App developers have to come up with more relevant and original ideas to stand out from the mass of game-apps available on the market.

Utility app versus entertaining app

According to Satchi, you have to choose as a brand whether you want to create a pure entertaining app or if you want to create something useful for the customers: “If you chose to go just for the entertainment route, it’s a tougher way, you have to invest more, you have to have a bigger idea to create a bigger game. Otherwise you can create something that is more of a utility, something that could actually complement your offering as a brand, like a service or a help in your everyday life. I think those are the two options, either you go for the fun part, make people interact there, or you create something smart in a rational way, here is something you need, and we can provide that as a brand, it makes it easier and better, which makes you like us more and make you buy more etc.” I asked whether it is possible to combine the two options and if that would be the way to reach a guaranteed success, he answered: “You can of course combine the two, but that’s if you go the smart, helpful way and you make that gamified, and attractive, then of course that’s the best way you could do it. That’s what we tried with the Glass of Water, and I think we succeeded pretty well, but not the entire way of course.” JVM: “We have gotten the question from some others, Google for example, asked if we could you do something just like that (Mini app) for them. And then we said no, because, as I said in the beginning, you have to always start with the brand and with the target group to create something. So we have made another app for google, not a game-app, but a useful app.” In the same way, the user AS appreciated the fact that the SAF app was fun and informative at the same time: “It was entertaining and at the same time it was very informative. For the people taking it seriously, it was really good for them, but for the ones who are just looking to have fun, it was also purely entertaining. There were two kinds of people playing that app, and it was beneficial for both of them. The serious one’s were perhaps already selected for the military and used the app to train a little more”.


A game-app has to give you something in return

Both Satchi and JVM agree on the fact that a successful game-app should give the customer something in return (awards, a useful tool, an experience etc) and should not only be pure entertainment. Satchi: “People are enlightened today. We should really be respectful and we should come up with something they engage and spent time with us, so we have to give them something back. May that be an award, may that be something that enriches their lives. It has to have a purpose.” JVM: “The app has to be good for you as well, and not only give away free stuff. That’s not enough. It has to give you an experience, either social, or fun or eternal life or something”. Indeed, the Glass of Water aimed for an ecological cause, the Military app aimed for a military training, the Swedish post’s app and the Mini gave a fun experience with the possibility to win a prize. It is good to come up with something new in advertising, as people tend to be bored by traditional marketing campaigns. JVM: “The disadvantage is like with everything, people have done and seen everything. So you have to create something new or at least a new experience. People get blasé, and when it is obviously advertising, people don’t care about it. It has to give you something. At least a win win situation, you have to win something.” DDB was asked about the disadvantages of choosing a game-app as a marketing strategy, he said: “Game-apps have a very long development time, and the competition for people's attention is severe in the category. The consequence of this increased competition is that it will raise the bar, and make it more difficult to stand out.”

Creating a buzz

Both Satchi and JVM highlighted the fact that an important point of the campaign was to make people talk about them. Satchi: “It was a kick-off, we handed out real glasses of water in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö during one morning. We did it to get people’s mind and heads about this eco-driving thing, that you can do something yourself actually and it is not just about the car. It was to create awareness, we also did TV spots.” JVM: “When they released this new car, we wanted to make a buzz and make people talk about it and interact with the brand. And since many people want the car, we thought that a chase would be a good idea, and this is how the game idea came up. The game itself was a result of the problem, we didn’t think: oh now, we have to come up with a cool game, we didn’t think about games at all in the first place.”
Both JVM and Satchi mentioned the fact that a game-app should be exciting and entertaining in order to reach popularity amongst the users. JVM emphasized the importance of making the game-app fun all the time, from the beginning till the end: “We created a good principle, we would like to live after: one is that, it should be very simple of course, so simple that everybody should be able to do it, but still so hard, that it’s a challenge. And if you want people to interact, you also have to make it fun all the time. Normally, a competition or a game is about making you do something dull, really dull like inventing a slogan or running or whatever to have the chance to win something fun. In our case, we always try to make every second count, and even if you lose, you should have a fun experience, because otherwise people won’t interact.”

DDB: “The only real advantage is that it allows for a more exciting and interesting way to interact with the target group - and along with that, the fact that the target group is young men and women between 18 and 25 - meaning they are adept and well accustomed to this type of experience. The primary target group is "socially engaged" people between 18-21. The secondary target group is 18-25 and includes "excitement seekers." DDB also mentioned that the design of the game has also an importance, and the fact that the story should be intriguing. DDB: “It needs to be cutting edge, if the design is horrible, or the UI unintelligible, or the actual story is dull and doesn't intrigue you - it will most likely do you more harm than good.” That is an interesting comment, as all apps I have chosen to analyze have an exciting aspect into them. The Glass of Water is exciting, as it has a game aspect into to challenging the users, and a deeper eco-driving meaning as well. The Mini has a really exciting cat and mouse game aspect, where the users are chasing and then trying to escape from the other users. The Swedish post app works on a similar model than the Mini, more focused on the time aspect, who can deliver the package the quickest from all users having it at the same time. Both JVM and Satchi said that games are perceived as something positive by most of the users, as it involves having fun and competing against others. A friendly attitude from the customer’s side is a great starting point to a successful marketing campaign. JVM: “People love to play, that’s the base. They love to have fun and play. One advantage is that most people love to play, and you have a friendly attitude when you see a game. You view it immediately as something positive.” Satchi: “You know, you wake up the competitive spirit in people and that’s the good thing about games”.

All three respondents pointed out the fact that the blur between reality and virtuality is what creates an exciting and engaging game-app. The border has gotten even thinner over the
last year and a half according to Satchi. JVM: “The other thing that is really important to make a success, it was digital and analogue combined, a mix between the real and the digital, that collision creates excitement. It’s virtual for real.” Satchi: “Merging the reality and the digital is what has changed a little bit since the last year and a half, but not so radical changes for the Glass of Water because it was already close-by. We actually had an app that could affect the way you were driving, even though it wasn’t connected in that sense.”

Prizes
Prizes are a good motivation for the users to play, like showed the examples of the Mini and the Post app. But interestingly, it is not the only possible motivation. The Glass of Water gives the proof of an eco-friendly driving and the SAF, the proof of knowing that one ‘got what it takes’ to be recruited in the military. Satchi: “It worked even without a prize, because we set it up as a competition with yourself, a kind of a challenge-yourself, but you could also invite other people to challenge them and see who actually reaches the biggest change, the biggest reduction of fuel consumption.” DDB: “No prizes, but if you like it, and think a life as a soldier or marine would be exciting - you were encouraged to apply for a position.”

Gamification
All three experts were asked about the term gamification. For them, the term was not new, they said it has been around for a long time already. Gamification is nevertheless still a great way to engage people to interact with a brand with the condition that the product is suitable for it. Satchi “Gamification is a way to engage people, it’s a lot of triggers. You know, you wake up the competitive spirit in people and that’s the good thing about it, you get them to engage and interact with your brand, so that’s the positive sights of gamification.” DDB: “The gamification in itself is nothing new in my opinion, it's an old trick to engage people and create an interest in a brand.” JVM: “No, gamification in itself is not a new marketing strategy. It is more the results of an insight about the target group combined with the DNA of the brand. Sometimes it could be the solution to a problem, the execution of an idea based on an insight. We never start looking for games, it has to suit the product”.
Reception of the campaigns

In my study I am trying to evaluate the success of the game-apps, but it poses the problem of measurement. How is success evaluated? According to Tuten, the most common indicators include number of players, number of active players, number of lurkers, rate of player registration from launch or for specific events, number of player generated messages, traffic at sites affiliated with the game-app, number of forum posting/social media posting, and average play time (Tuten 2008). This numbers could be retrieved from the expert interviews, if they have done an audience reception study. The respondent from JVM gave me an official study of the Mini Getaway campaign, but I don’t dispose of such data for the other game-apps. The campaign ran for a week and attracted 11 000 players, each player playing on average five hours and six minutes, the campaign web site minigetaway.com attracted 32 000 visits with the game generating interest from online followers from 90 countries. As to the target group of the campaign JVM stated it was intended “For people who are mentally young. In order to win you had to have a driving license and be therefore over 18 years old. The oldest people playing, I think they were over 50. If you watch the case study movies, you will see a guy who is driving around and he is over 50, he was really excited”. JVM also convinced an influential gaming blogger with 129 000 online followers to post a short video about the game, which attracted 50 000 ‘likes’ in just six hours. The ‘Mini Getaway’ teaser for the game-app on You Tube generated 160 000 views and 30 000 tweets on Twitter. The sales of the Mini cars over the six months following the launch campaign increased by 92% year on year. The numbers and statistics show just how successful the Mini campaign was.

Satchi evaluated the success of A Glass of Water in the following way: “I would say it was a big success. Downloads is one way to measure success, that could be one thing. And we got something like 200 000 downloads, which was pretty big for a Swedish campaign. Then, also the repeat rate is important, meaning how many registrations did we actually get. You could download the app, without registering to the program. We had 75% of the people downloading the app also registering on the Toyota A Glass of Water webpage. So, that was a pretty good measurement, because then you could see how they actually interact with the game and with the campaign”. DDB: “By results, during the campaign all targets were broken. There were 12 people applying for each job, 6 was the target. Over 300k site visits, 100k was the target - and downloads of the app were 10-15,000 over the set target”. 

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**Target audiences**

During the expert interviews, I tried to get a clearer picture of the target audiences. I was especially interest to know whether it was aimed to a younger crowd. I asked Satchi about the target audience, he answered: “It was meant for people that care about environment, people who could consider an eco-friendly car and are aware of realities. That was the specific target, or urban people I would say.” I also asked him, whether game-apps are aimed for a younger audience: Satchi: “It depends on the nature of the game, but it also depends on how you define young people. If you consider people between 40 and 50 young, I would say yes, but if you consider them old, I would say no.” JVM: “Mini is a special, cool brand. The target group is mentally young, there is no specific target group but rather people that are young in mind and they really believe this brand and this car is really cool, so they want it.” While browsing through the leader board of the SAF app, I noticed that many of the users were young men, which doesn’t seem so surprising due to the nature of the military service. What I found more surprising was the fact, that many users were actually recruits or employees at the SAF. I could conclude this from their profile pictures, as they were wearing military outfits, driving military engines etc, but some of them also had SAF indicated as their employer/occupation/network or other. This observation made me realize just how big of an impact this game-app might have had in the recruitment process of these young men, considering how many were actually recruited after having played intensively enough with the app to be listed in the top scores. But throughout the interview with one of the user (AS), I got to know that his friend got to know about the app only once arrived at the camp, where new recruits were talking about it. As thought that many users of this app took it as a serious military preparation, but some others did it just for fun for a short time. I asked him whether he thought the app raised attention to the Swedish military, he answered: “Yes. And also the military service can look at the user’s results and see if he/she was a serious player, or just one doing it for fun. They could just invite them to their facility to do some tests and if the guy declines, probably he was just joking around.” AS himself was also considering joining the SAF for a while, which is why he downloaded the app.

The key elements to make a successful game-app are summed up by Satchi:” Make it engaging, make it fun and make it sort of relevant for the people. There are no negative aspects, it doesn’t hurt and will not harm your brand, but if you want to be successful you have to have something good, otherwise you won’t get through. It all depends on how you do it, because people are getting fed-up with little crappy apps and there are more important
things in life than spending time on a crappy app from a brand. We should really be respectful and we should come up with something they engage and spent time with, so we have to give them something back. May that be an award, may that be something that enriches their lives. It has to have a purpose”.

6.2. Recurrent themes: users

AS is a 21 year old Swedish man who downloaded and played with the SAF app for over one month. I met him for a face-to-face interview for about one hour. I contacted him by email, after I saw that we had a friend in common (on facebook), which I think convinced him to agree to meet me. I contacted over 100 people, that I found on the leader board of the SAF app, but no one responded.

I have two respondents for the Mini app, the first one is HI, a 36 year old Swedish Online Site Manager. I got his email address from AK, who recommended him as a respondent. AK is a 36 year old Swedish woman, working within the area of social media and mobile channels. I contacted her on the Mini support facebook page. JG is a 14 year old Swedish school boy, that I contacted through youtube, after I saw that he commented on the Swedish post’s trailer for the app. I interviewed him twice via skype chat, the second time was to ask some follow-up questions. Many of the user’s responses are reflecting the same ideas as the experts.

Game-apps promote the brand (brand awareness)

Three of the users agreed on the fact that game-apps promote the brand and increase brand awareness: AS “Using apps is THE way to promote and using mobile phones to it’s full potential, making people do ridiculous stuff or great stuff or serious stuff.” HI: “I am sure that Mini’s brand awareness did go up a lot.” JG: “The post is just delivering mails and stuff so it’s nothing spectacular but I do think it did affect me unconsciously. I will still use the service as usual so no again, it won’t make them a profit or anything but the view on them might have change slightly.” AS pointed out the fact that game-apps reach out to people, as all companies start to launch their own apps. AS: “I think they are a good way to reach out to people, since most people nowadays do have a smart phone with apps, with the iTune store, App Store and I’m sure Samsung and Nokia also have their own app store. The smart phone market is constantly increasing in numbers. I do believe that the reason for apps being so huge it is
connected to the launching of the Apple Iphone. So, I think it is a great thing and it opens a lot of doors, and nowadays it is through apps that people get information, as all the big companies have apps nowadays. I think they just want to branch out and explore the possibilities with the apps. Every brand is trying to reach out and the SAF is doing the same.”

Target group

I asked my respondents about who they thought the target group was for each game-app, they had divided opinions whether it is aimed for the younger audience or for the entire population. AS: “They do that to increase the interaction with the younger audience and increase customer loyalty in general”. On the other hand, HI said as to whether game-apps are suitable for anyone : “Sure, why not? If you like gaming, I can't see why not.” HK:” No, I think that games where you have to run around town are suitable for a certain kind of people: competitive, younger and early adopters. Most of us doesn’t have the time to run around chasing imaginary cars.”

I asked HK about when it would be better to use traditional media for advertising and when to use a game-app, she answered: “I would say that it depends on who you want to reach. Younger people surely will play the game, 30+ parents spend more time in front of the TV and will probably be more engaged in commercials on TV or on social channels.” JG thought the post’s app was most suitable for the age group 13-25, he explains: ”Because I can’t see myself playing that game if I am over 25, as I would probably have other stuff that would keep me busy work/studies, girlfriend etc. I think those who play even when they are above 15 will not make it big in life. Collecting points in school is positive but collecting points in a game is just time consuming.” His response can be the reflection of McGonigal’s definition of player regret (McGonigal 2009), where she states that after a certain amount of time spent on games, the player burn out on flow and start wonder if he/she is not missing out on life. I asked AS, whether the military app was suitable for anyone: “The sex doesn’t matter, but it’s the mental ability that counts. If you are 11 years old, I don’t think you should do it. It requires a certain age, the perfect age would be between 16 and 18, or let’s say 15 upwards. When they are younger than 13, 14, they are still controlled by emotions, and that’s not something you want in the military, you want them to be clear minded and use their logic and the best solutions to the situations.”
Future of game-apps

All the respondents were positive about the continuation of the rise of game-apps and apps in general. Several of them suggested ideas for future apps. AS: “Before, you had to use a computer to use all those social tools, but now it is possible on the mobile phone, everything is mobile now. Mobile phones are getting more and more power, better speed, processor, camera etc. I think that in a couple of years, every single brand will have their own app. It’s quite a good thing, as smart phone users are constantly increasing and this is the way now to reach out to more people, by using apps. Even artists have apps. One app I am waiting for is an app that actually collects every single music release, each day, each hour. That is something hard to do. I think it’s not possible really because it’s seven billion people all over the world.” I asked AS if he would download a similar app (SAF) in the future: “Yes, of course, I’m always up for something new, I am always curious about stuff.” According to him, we have to thank Apple for the rapid development and popularity of phone apps. He predicts a growth for a couple of years and a decrease after that, as any trend does: “Apps are already very popular. I would say it will still be on the top (apps) for 2 or 3 years, maybe they will fall, I don’t know, trends come and go. A growing professions nowadays is app developers, the term didn’t even exist a couple of years ago. It is mainly thanks to Apple and their Iphone that apps became big.” HK about the future of game-apps “I hope they will become more popular and yes, I think they will. The Mini app has got prizes and many credits, so it is clear that the concept will be imitated, I am convinced about it.” HI would also download a new app of this kind in the future, as he “likes to test stuff” and he thinks game-apps will become more popular in the future. JG was also positive about game-apps in the future, he especially appreciated the fact that you had to be outside to play the post’s app: “It’s a challenge, the game is hard, its fun, you have to go outside and move to be able to play it, and a prize is involved. It’s better than sitting at home in front of your computer.” JG about whether girls play as much as boys: “No, they have other interests. Girls play Barbie games and other games until they reach a certain age and then they stop playing because the interest in gone for that, maybe we haven’t found anything that is in their interest yet. The game for girl has not yet been invented, we have to develop a game that brings up their childish side to the surface”.

Motivation to play

I asked the players about their motivations to play. They played because it was “cool”, new and exciting. You could win a prize while playing outside, the blur between reality and
virtuality especially attracted them. HI: “Mini because it was something really cool.” JG:” That it was something completely new and also that you were outside moving while playing a game. I love competitions in general. I also liked that you could win a prize. AS:” Curiosity. I found it quite exciting actually, you get to do all these things that you do in the military. I think that people are naturally looking for excitement. And that app sometimes gave that feeling.” Two of the users mentioned the fact that the blur between reality and virtuality was the element that made the competition exciting. HI: “Mini was completely new and mixed mobile with physical reality. I really liked that combo.” HK:”The combination of virtuality and reality was new and exciting”.

**Negative aspects**

AS (SAF) mentioned that it was really easy to cheat on the missions as no proofs were requested: “The developers don’t know if they are actually doing it, or if they are just waiting 15 minutes and click ok. So, it is really up to the person to take it seriously or not. I did it seriously except for that mission “remain hidden”, when I just shut my door. That was the only time I “cheated”, as I was really tired and wanted to stay home. I played for almost a month, sometimes I forgot about it, I would say that I fulfilled about 10 missions. After a while, I just got bored and thought that people are going to see me as a weird person in doing all these maneuvers like stalking etc. I think that they should actually redo the app, because all these things they tell us to do, there is no proof that you can actually do it. They should maybe use more the possibilities of the phone, like the gravity function, logic test like puzzles etc, so that you can prove that you did it.” HI only mentioned the time consumption as a negative aspect. HK: “The Mini app didn’t work hundred percent all the time. When you caught the Mini, you had to keep it for a certain time – but it wasn’t like that. You lost the car instantly when someone was near you.” JG said that a negative aspect about the post app was that it didn’t work on the Iphone 3G (that he had), so he had to borrow a friend’s phone. JG raised the question of game-apps causing traffic problems. JG: “I heard many didn’t like the app because of the danger it represented with the traffic: you could get hit by a car etc because you were running around looking on your screen, but if you are careful enough that wouldn’t happen.” One of the experts also raised the same topic. JVM: “The final day, the police said there were about 4000 people gathered on Valhallavägen, by Strandvägen, Östermalm. The traffic was blocked, the buses couldn’t drive so they called the police. People were standing and talking, it was really great.”
Prizes

The users playing with apps that include prizes were positive about prizes being a real motivation to play the game. The users playing with the game-apps not having a prize (SAF, A Glass of Water) mentioned that a prize would have stimulated them more. AS: “If there was a prize, people would interact with it more.” HK “I would download a new game-app if the prize is cool and if it takes place in Stockholm. The great prize to win was a motivation for me to play”. HI: “A new car? Sure it was a great motivation! If the prize was just glory, I wouldn't have played so much.” JG about whether the prizes to win were a motivation to play: “Yes. But it actually depends, if there is a limited amount of players playing (in the posts app, it was about 125 person playing), if there would have been a lot more it wouldn’t have been a motivation as I wouldn’t believe I have a chance to win and the odds would have been against me. I don’t think many would play this game without being able to win something, as it might get boring after first attempt”. AS: “A prize would have turned it more into a competition, even though it is already a competition with a leader board and people are motivated to beat others scores. I just did it for fun, I didn’t even know there was a leader board until the very end. I just played and then deleted the app.”

Game-apps create social contact

Three out of my four respondents agreed that game-apps create social contact, some of them even became friends with other players thanks to game-app. AS: “Yes, I met a couple of friends through game-apps, a lot of international friends and we are still in contact virtually. I also met some Swedes, who I actually met face to face. I don’t mind meeting people from anywhere, I don’t judge anyone, I don’t care how you look or what your sexuality is. Many game-apps have chat functions, like Wordfeud or Rumble. I always like to use it, for me it’s not fun to play with strangers, it’s also fun to get to know them a little more. So the social aspect is important for me”. But the SAF app didn’t have a chat function: “No, it was every man on its own. You could see the leader board, but it’s not like I would contact them to say: ‘I saw you were in the top results! I also use the app, let’s be friends’. That would be weird”. HK also stated that she met different other players while playing (strangers), and that it was impossible to avoid, as it was a relatively small playing area and so many people played at the same time. She also had several friends playing. HK said that she often shares her gaming results through social network sites. HI: “I met some Mini-gamers out on the field so there
was a social aspect to it, at least a minor”. JG was the only one who didn’t think game-apps were creating social contact, he played alone and didn’t meet any other players. He explained that the game wasn’t so wide-spread, so the chances to meet another player was relatively small. I asked him whether he usually shares his results on social networks, he said: “No never, I never understood why that even is an option. I don’t care if someone else posted their results. Also it fills the news bar with junk for everyone. And I am not that social.”

**Competition aspect**

Many of the users appreciated the competition aspect in the game-apps, as it was a motivation to play. AS: “I think competition is fun, I don’t take it too seriously. I think competition is good for someone’s confidence, it boozes your confidence” and “There are two kinds. In competitions it’s about winning or loosing, and then there is this game about gathering things, like powers, points, friends etc. It can benefit you, but also break you. Even though it’s a virtual world, you still put yourself in there, you put your mind into it, you focus on it. It’s like a real world, but its fiction. It’s like when you watch a movie, you get emotionally attached or something. Everything can be broken down into a competition. It can be anything, who eats the most, you runs fastest etc. I asked HI to define a game-app, he answered: “Where I can compete against myself or others, in some sort of game or challenge”. HK’s general thoughts about the Mini app was that it was a “fantastically funny competition”. JG also stated that he loves competitions in general. AS even stated that competition is a natural behavior for the human kind: “Games can be found anywhere. Competitions can be found anywhere. It doesn’t have to be video games. It can be who eats the most, drinks the most, who buys the most etc, that’s also a kind of competition. Every company competes with other companies, it’s an instinct of survival.”

**Game-apps are addictive**

Many of the users found game-apps addictive, and JG even admitted he kept himself away from playing games too much, as he knew how addictive they can be. I asked JG whether he plays other kind of games, like video games for example: “Yes, they are amusing, but I have tried to stay away from the games as much as possible lately, because they really are addictive”. AS: “At one point, yes it was addictive, because it was exhillarating. It was exciting to participate in something bigger. But then, eventually I got bored after a month. But if it would be really boring, I wouldn’t last a day, but I still kept going. I don’t regret this
experience, I didn’t waste my time”. HK “Yes, it was addictive because it was fun and social”. HI too found it addictive, as he was out hunting several times. AS: “Yes, it’s good to have fun and good to remember it. If you manage to do an addictive game, that’s even better because they will come back to it, play more and eventually check out the other functions or the webpage. Gaming and marketing is a good combination, as people use their phones for anything nowadays and 10-15% of gaming”.

*Game-apps are more effective than “traditional” commercials*

Two of the users noted that game-apps might be more effective than traditional commercials, especially when aimed at a younger audience. An older crowd would probably be best reached via traditional commercials. AS: “It depends on the time when you put on the commercial on TV, the best times would be between 7 to 9 pm. On the other hand, people don’t watch commercial anymore, they switch to other channels. Some people avoiding TV commercials, reach for their phones instead and look for something to do. Then you should market in the phone, you have to put your commercials in other apps, but sometimes people buy the app instead and skip the commercial completely. Mobile app marketing is a great thing to do, it’s the thing now to interact with the people through apps and games, so they can enjoy it and not just reading and swiping it off. You want the customer to feel that this is also made for me, that is the best target you can have, manage to reach out to anyone, not just a specific target group.” HK also though that apps are definitely more effective than traditional commercials, but when as to the question in which situations it would be better to have a game-app as a marketing strategy and when to have a traditional commercial, she answered: “I would say that it depends on who you want to reach. Younger people surely will play the game - 30+ parents spend more time in front of the TV and will probably be more engaged in commercials on TV or on social channels.”

*By creating a game-app, a company is perceived as innovative*

AS: “I respect the organization. I respect them perhaps even more for trying to reach out to people through innovative strategies.” HK said that after playing the Mini competition, her opinion about them was that they were an innovative company, but that otherwise her thoughts about the product stayed the same as before: “The marketing strategy was brilliant. The company got a lot of free PR”. JG: “I liked the fact that it was something completely new and also that you were outside moving while playing a game. I love competitions in general. I also liked that you could win a prize”. 
A shorter campaign might be more effective

Two of the users tended to agree that a shorter campaign might be more effective. AS: “Maybe a shorter campaign is more effective, something that is not available for a long time has always attracted people (limited editions, special editions), most people are attracted to all those unique things. That’s a good strategy”. JG: “If the logo is up for too long, it gets annoying then. But it is usually not out for too long”. But then, he also said that as long a game-app stays entertaining, it can be out for years. A shorter campaign seems to be more effective, but developers should also think about how to make it entertaining for a longer period.

Users interact with the brand for a longer time

As the experts pointed out, the most important point of a game-app is that the users interact with the brand for a longer time than with traditional commercial, which has been proven by the interviews with the different users. HK participated in the Mini competition for five days. HI: “I used the Mini app for the whole game period. I was out hunting the damn car a lot!” JG only played twice, but only because the app didn’t work in his phone, otherwise he would have played more often he said. AS: “I played for almost a month, sometimes I forgot about it, I would say that I fulfilled about 10 missions. I did it seriously except for that mission “remain hidden”, when I just shut my door. That was the only time I “cheated”, as I was really tired and wanted to stay home.”

7. DISCUSSION

In this study, I looked to answer to the question as to whether or not and to which extent branded game-apps is a successful marketing strategy for a brand. I was also interested in analyzing the perception of the campaigns by the users. I collected extended responses through interviews from both experts and users. Several elements have been repeatedly mentioned by both the experts and the users and were equally reflected in former researches and theories of communication. The limitation of my study is the limited amount of interviewed users (four in total), which makes it difficult to draw conclusions. It would have been good to interview a fourth expert about the Swedish Post app and a user for the Glass of
Water. For a more detailed insight into the phenomenon, it would have been good to interview around ten users. Finding users willing to answer my questions revealed itself to be a difficult task, as I wasn’t offering any rewards, and the users perhaps felt that they wouldn’t get anything in return for their time. I contacted nevertheless about 150 users through facebook, youtube, blogs and personal emails. It was easier to find experts and three respondents were just about the perfect amount to get an understanding of the expert view on the topic. For a further researcher wanting to explore the subject on a deeper level, I would recommend to propose some kind of reward to the users. A further research could be a quantitative analysis of the number of active users of game-apps and see whether or not a game-app practically increases the number of sales of a product. My work is nevertheless an exploratory study on the new phenomenon of game-apps as a marketing strategy and it gives first impressions on the subject.

According to McGonical (2011), games create a positive feeling making us feel that we achieved something and feel therefore satisfied. She also came up with the word eustress, which is a positive stress than we enjoy because we volunteer to experience it. The concept of positive feelings given by game experiences was also developed by researcher Lazzaro that she defines as Hard Fun. Hard Fun is reached when players do an effort to reach a goal, which creates positive emotions. According to her, players like to deal with challenge, strategy, and problem solving (Lazzaro 2004). While interviewing the users, this theory got partly confirmed, as all the users had a positive feedback to the game-app they tried. They found this technique of advertising exciting and new. Another factor Lazzaro develops is the People Factor, defined as the enjoyment from playing with others (Lazzaro 2004). The respondents experiences confirmed this theory, as three out of four users agreed that game-apps created social contact. AS said that the social aspect was important for him and he frequently used the chat function to get to know his opponents. Equally, HK and HI mentioned that they met other Mini-users out on the playing field. On the other hand, JG didn’t agree with this statement, as he didn’t meet any other players and played alone. N. Lazzaro, N. Yee, and J. McGonigal all have in common the conclusion, that playing games is something positive. McGonigal goes even further in her book by proving that games can turn us into better people by engaging us in common causes. This theory has been proven to be partly true in the case of the Glass of Water app, aiming to raise consciousness about eco-driving, which is a common cause. In the case of commercial game-apps, I wouldn’t say that they engaged people in a
common cause, but rather in a common race to win a glorious prize (a Mini car, a mysterious content from the Post).

The term gamification has had an important place in my study. Gabe Zicherman defines gamification as the process of using game thinking and game mechanics to solve problems and engage users, like for example for marketing purposes (Zicherman: 2010). Gamification is supposed to increase customer loyalty, by triggering the consumers natural sense of competition. I have asked the experts for their opinion on the term gamification. For them, the term was not new, they said it has been around for a long time already. They nevertheless agreed that it still is a great way to engage people to interact with a brand. The condition for success is that the product is suitable for gamification. The SAF app and the Glass of Water app can be considered to be educational game-apps, the former is a mental and physical preparation to the military service, the latter a campaign promoting eco-driving. Educational games for military purposes has been used since the 1970s under the form of simulations and strategic war games, as well as a teaching tool in some schools (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008). “Games cannot be said to be more effective than other teaching forms, although most studies have offered evidence of better retention over time” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:209). “Indeed the preference of students for games fits well with the increased motivation consistently found when examining the educational use of games” (Egenfeldt Nielsen et al. 2008:210).

An important factor to create a successful game-app is according to all three experts relevancy. A game-app should be suitable to the brand’s message, as well as to the customer. The customer must be able to see a benefit in using the app. The four apps I have analyzed can all be considered as successful, which leads to the conclusion that car brands, eco-driving (Toyota), the SAF and the Swedish Post are products suitable for gamification. I asked the experts, whether they could give an example of a product unsuitable for gamification, but they were not able to give me any concrete examples. The fact that the experts didn’t have an answer and the fact that successful game-apps have been created by both commercial actors, institutions and an ecological cause makes me wonder, whether gamification could suit any product after all. The two JMK students who have written a bachelor thesis on this topic also concluded that gamification doesn’t suit any company or products, but it can in some cases lead to a greater customer engagement and customer loyalty through interactivity. The customers are actively involved on a deeper level than through traditional commercials and remember the brand’s message for a longer time. At the Gamification Summit 2011, W.
Meloni presented her results of several interviews with top consultants in the gaming industry. She found out that 44% of the clients were looking for user engagement through the help of game mechanics, 22% for brand awareness and 33% for brand loyalty. This survey was made in the USA, but I think it still gives an idea of what marketers are looking for in general. She also predicts a growth of 150% for the next two years in terms of gamification projects.

Game-apps supposedly create a greater brand engagement and customer loyalty. The hypothesis that game-apps are about engaging the customers further into a dialogue with the brand has been affirmed by all three experts I interviewed. Furthermore, several of the interviewed users stated that they spend a long time playing with the apps, as they were enjoying it. Both JVM and Satchi said that games are perceived as something positive by most of the people, as it involves having fun and competing against others. And furthermore, that a friendly attitude from the customer’s side is a great starting point to a successful marketing campaign. Some of the users said that their opinion of the brand has changed to the better, as they perceive them as an innovative company. Three of the users agreed on the fact that game-apps promote the brand and increase brand awareness. In other words, game-apps create a direct communication between the brand and the customer. Furthermore, both Satchi and JVM highlighted the fact that an important point of the campaign was to make people talk about them or “create a buzz”. L.Tuten argues that social virtual worlds increase the customers time spent with the brand’s message and is definitely longer than with a traditional commercial (Tuten 2008). I can conclude from the users and experts interviews, that users interact with the brand for a longer time when using a game-app.

Zicherman claims that a good product offer has to go hand in hand with a fun game and that most marketing methods can benefit from a connection to games. Nevertheless, according to him commercials and prints ads will continue to serve a purpose: both methods can work in complement of each other (Zicherman 2010). These claims resume some of the experts answers, who said that the best option is to combine a game-app to a “traditional” campaign. “Traditional” here is understood as printed ads and TV commercials. Two of the experts I interviewed explained that a game-app alone without the support of a traditional advertising campaign in the media wouldn’t get enough attention. Satchi claimed that a game-app will always be very short as a campaign, unless it is exceptionally good. According to him, a game is engaging for a limited amount of time. Furthermore, two of the users tended to agree that a shorter campaign might be more effective. These answers lead towards the statement, that a game-apps work best a complement to a “traditional” campaign.
I asked two of the experts about their opinion on the future of game-apps, whether the trend will continue growing or rather diminish and disappear. Satchi’s opinion is that gaming as an industry will certainly continue growing, but he wasn’t so sure about game-apps in particular. JVM was on the other hand positive about the growth of game-apps and gaming in general. The opinions were therefore divided as to the future growth of game-apps as a trend. On the user’s side, they were positive about the continuation of the rise of game-apps and apps in general. An interesting point has been made by JVM, who pointed out the importance of coming up with something new. App developers have to come up with more relevant and original ideas to stand out from the mass of game-apps available on the market. Both Satchi and JVM agree on the fact that a successful game-app should give the customer something in return (awards, a useful tool, an experience etc) and should not only be pure entertainment. According to Satchi, you have to choose as a brand whether you want to create a pure entertaining app or if you want to create something useful for the customers, the best being of course to combine both types of game-apps, if you can. Both JVM and Satchi mentioned the fact that a game-app should be exciting and entertaining in order to reach popularity amongst the users.

What exactly makes a game-app fun? All three expert respondents pointed out the fact that the blur between reality and virtuality is what creates an exciting and engaging game-app. In a similar way, two of the users mentioned the fact that the blur between reality and virtuality was the element that made the competition exciting. JVM emphasized the importance of making the game-app fun all the time, from the beginning till the end. In a similar way, prizes are a good motivation for the users to play, like showed the examples of the Mini and the Post app. All the interviewed users considered a prize as a real motivation to play a game-app. But interestingly, it is not the only possible motivation as the Glass of Water encourages an eco-friendly driving and the SAF, the proof of knowing that one “got what it takes” to be recruited in the military. None of them included prizes or awards. Nevertheless, the users using game-apps not having a prize (SAF, A Glass of Water) mentioned that a prize would have stimulated them more.

I raised the question of target audience during my interviews, which raised different answers. Both Satchi and JVM agreed that their game-apps were not only aimed for a younger audience, but “for people that care about environment, not for young people in particular” (Satchi) and JVM “for people young in mind”. Nevertheless, the target group for the SAF app was specified, on the opposite to the other apps: young men and women between the age of 18 to 25 (DDB). I asked the users about which they thought was the target group for each
game-app, they had divided opinions whether it is aimed for the younger audience or for the entire population. AS: “They do that to increase the interaction with the younger audience and increase customer loyalty in general”. HI thought that game-apps are suitable for anyone, whereas for AS it was perfect for 16 to 18 and for JG: 13 to 25. Two of the users noted that game-apps might be more effective than traditional commercials, especially when aimed at a younger audience. An older crowd would probably be best reached via traditional commercials. Statistically, more answers tended to say that game-apps seem to be oriented more towards a younger crowd. This could be explained by Zicherman’s concept of Generation G: defined as all the persons born between 1998 and 2000, representing the first large demographic group whose principal form of entertainment is games and who grew up with the Internet (Zicherman 2010). “The gaming industry recognizes that children playing games regularly at a young age are most likely to set patterns of play that will stay with them as they grow up” (Zicherman 2010:166). This generation G is the generation most inclined to play games and game-apps, because of their upbringing surrounded by the Internet and games. It is interesting to note that according to two of the experts, this is not the primary target group, but most of the users understand this group to be the target of game-app campaigns.

What are the negative aspects of branded game-apps? An aspect of gaming that is often talked about in the media is the gamers developed addiction and non-social behavior. One of the players (JG) mentioned the addictive aspects of gaming and his decision to “keep away from them”. The depiction of games as a non-social phenomenon has not been proven to be true in this study, on the opposite, the hypothesis that game create social contact has been approved to be true by both the users and the experts. This vision is emphasized by Flew: “Digital games are proving to be increasingly social – a trend that works against the mainstream media’s portrayal of players as isolated, usually adolescent, boys, hidden away in darkened bedrooms, failing to engage with the social world” (Flew 2008: 135). Furthermore, the picture of gamers being mostly young men is proven to be a false picture, as the gender balance is quasi-equal nowadays, at the same time as the average age of the players is increasing: “Recent statistics show that between 40 and 50 percent of computer game players are women, and that the average age of players is increasing, and is now between the late twenties and early thirties” (ESA 2006, Brand 2007, in Flew 2008:135). Another aspect of gaming that is being overly discussed is the relationship of games and violence. Flew argues that this is mostly the consequence of a moral panic provoked by an over-mediatisation of the topic. “It is often argued, particularly in the mainstream media, that digital games cause violence. The ‘effects-based’ research which gives rise to the ‘computer games cause
violence’ discourse is mostly psychology-based research, often linked to ‘moral panic’ discourses, particularly after horrific events such as the shooting of schoolchildren at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999. (...) Behaviouralist, cause-and-effect models often take insufficient account of the relevance of cultural contexts and the ways in which media are actually implicated in the circulation of meanings in our cultures” (Flew 2008: 135-136). I agree with Flew’s opinion and I do believe we are experiencing a moral panic about the relation between game and violence. The only danger I could see in game-apps is a slightly manipulative aspect, as players get caught up by attractive game mechanisms and are being subjected to commercial purposes, without always being aware of it, as they are primarily seeking entertainment. Game-apps pretend to provide pure entertainment, but in fact, it is a marketing strategy aiming to catch the customer’s attention and make them interact longer with a brand’s name. As to the addiction aspect, I do believe there is a small percentage of the population that could get “hooked up” by addictive game mechanisms. This danger doesn’t really apply to game-apps, as they are often limited in time and of a simple design, which doesn’t allow for progression into higher levels.

Another negative aspect of branded game-apps as a marketing strategy is the finding that they cannot function as an independent campaign, they need to be supported by more traditional marketing strategies such as TV spots, printed ads etc. According to the experts, a game-app launched independently would not raise enough attention and therefore would not fulfill its purpose as a marketing strategy. Most game-apps are also limited in time, which raises the problem of durability and long-term marketing. It seems to be difficult to create a game-app that would function for a longer period of time, especially as they are based on competitions between users. The fun aspect of competing against each other might not remain entertaining for a longer period. A future challenge for game-app developers could be to find a way to create a fun game-app that remains entertaining for a longer period.

Game-apps are trendy right now, as many brands and companies are looking into developing and app of their own. There is a certain hype about this new phenomenon, as there has been before about other new technologies. People tend to be overly positive about the possibilities created by gamification, as proven by McGonigal and her opinion that “games will change the world”. This statement has to be therefore taken with moderation, as games also have negative aspects. “A recurring feature of the development of the Internet and the popularization of digital media technologies has been their capacity to generate hype about how these technologies will change everything, typically for the better. (...) The new is ‘the cutting edge’, the ‘avant-garde’, the place for forward thinking people to be” (Flew 2008:27).
Nevertheless, to create a hype around the phenomenon is part of the campaign, the aim being to raise people’s attention. Satchi and JVM highlighted the importance of “creating a buzz”. Game-apps as something trendy could also be the subject of a copy cat phenomenon, as people tend to copy something successful. This represents the danger of an overuse of game mechanics and might provoke the opposite effect on desired effect on the users. JVM: “Everybody is gaming right now, people love games. Another thing is that people tend to copy success”. Copying success is a natural behavior, but it should not be used too many times in order to avoid to see the customers getting bored. Satchi: “It all depends on how you do it, because people are getting fed-up with little crappy apps and there are more important things in life than spending time on a crappy app from a brand”.

8. CONCLUSION

In this exploratory study, my aim was to look closer to the branded game-app phenomenon and I was interested in finding out their advantages and disadvantages as a marketing tool. Earlier theories have discussed the positive aspects of games, and this has been confirmed in general by the results of my thesis. Branded game-apps are positive for a brand because they create a greater customer engagement, an interaction between the brand and the customer and in the long run a greater loyalty. Users playing a branded game-app seem to have a better opinion on the company, as they perceive the company as innovative. The users enjoy playing with a game-app because it creates social contact with other users and offers them something entertaining. The blur between reality and virtuality is especially appealing for the users, as it is something new. The conditions to make an efficient branded game-app is to come up with something relevant, it has to suit the brand’s message and it has to give the user something in return: an experience, a contact to the social network, the feeling of doing something for the world etc. JVM emphasized the importance of making the game-app fun all the time, even when loosing. Some scholars like McGonigal and Zichermann went even further in this direction and claim that games have the ability to change the world for the better. According to them, games can help us solve our problems like obesity, education, reforming government etc by a common engagement into a common cause. According to McGonigal, if we all work together we can achieve great results and games can help us with that by simulating our competiveness (McGonigal 2011). Zicherman at the Gamification Summit 2011 claims that in the future, games would support our real life (emotional, sports,
health) by being more real, so there won’t be any more “escaping from real life”. We can see
the first steps of this hypothesis getting into practice with game-apps such as the Glass of
Water, encouraging eco-driving. Furthermore, game-apps encouraging charity donations are
being launched and reach considerable success in fund raising, like for example The Long
Run. In general, I found interesting the fact that institutions and companies striving for a
deeper cause can function as game-apps as well and not only commercial actors. Could
gamification suit any product or brand in the end? I have collected some interesting opinions
about this topic by watching videos from the Gamification Summit 2011. According to
Lazzarro, the best games are those that make sense, like when your action actually changes
something in the real world, like when it is for a charity action for example. Sebastian
Dieterding is equally recommending anything that is meaningful and interesting to the user,
like health or a connection to the user’s community. Josh Kramer mentioned that many
companies think it is enough to through in a leader board and points, but that is not enough,
there has to be a meaning behind. My conclusion is that gamification could be suitable for any
brand, if the user seems a meaning in it, if it gives him something valuable in return.
Gamification is not a new term, it has been around for a long time already, what is new is the
convergence of mobile phone, gaming and marketing. Are branded game-apps just a new
trend or are they here to stay? Experts were positive about the future of gaming, but some
expressed doubts about the future of game-app, as they would always need to be combined
with a traditional marketing campaign to raise people’s attention. So, there is no sign yet that
games would substitute traditional advertisement in the near future. Both marketing strategies
work together and complement each other. Our society is nevertheless changing, and in
particular the way we consume media. The boom of smart phones has made it possible to
have access to the internet all day long, wherever we are. Whenever we have a spare moment,
we look into our phones to browse the net, play some games or use an app. The rise and
popularity of phone apps could be explained by the fact, that we have more spare moments,
like when we commute to work for example and want to “kill some time”. DDB even claimed
that apps are subsequently replacing books, newspapers etc that people use while commuting
to work/school, which emphasizes even more their importance and perhaps even their rise in
the future. Nevertheless, games remain an entertainment and there are more important things
in life than spent too much time on them, as noted by Satchi and by JG. The thesis also rises
the social question of prolonged youth and the phenomenon of people “feeling” young longer,
but not being it, as some experts said that game-apps are for users “feeling young” and not for
a particular target group. This finding is interesting, as the average game user is getting older,
as developed by Flew. It opens up the social question of prolonged youth. Will we experience a growth of old gamers in the future? Is the entire population going to play games in the end? A further research could explore further the player community in a quantitative analysis enlightening the real impact made by game-apps on users as a marketing strategy.

In this thesis, I intended to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of branded game-apps as a marketing strategy and discussed their positive and negative aspects, as well as player motivations to play. I have contributed to the media and communication field by introducing a new dialogue on new possibilities raised by the convergence of mobile phones, games and marketing.


**Online source:**


APPENDIX

Interview guideline expert

- What exactly is your role in the production of the Mini Cooper getaway competition? Are you the one behind the idea?
- What were the goals of the campaign? (Is it to increase customer loyalty, to get attention by doing something innovative...?)
- Have you been working on other game-apps for other clients? Which one’s?

1) The game-app phenomena
- What are the reasons for the rapid development of game-apps according to you?
- Do you think this kind of marketing strategy will continue growing in Sweden/in the rest of the world or will it decrease? Why?
- What are the advantages of choosing a game-app as a marketing strategy for a brand?
- What are the disadvantages of choosing a game-app as a marketing strategy for a brand?

2) Reception of the campaign
- Did you have a specific target group?
- How would you evaluate the success of the campaign? Have you made any official evaluation, (a reception study, evaluation..?) Could I perhaps use it for my research?
- What was the feedback from the audience? What did they enjoy most? Were there any negative aspects?
- Do you know if the campaign had a direct impact on the sales?

3) Game-apps versus classical advertisements
- Why do you think Mini Cooper chose this particular strategy and not another kind of advertising?
- Do you think branded game-apps are more effective than “classical” advertisements? If yes, in which situations/in relation to which product? If not, why?
- Would you say that game-apps create a greater customer loyalty than classical commercials?
- Did you have other ideas for the realisation of the same campaign? Which one’s?
- Do you know about other campaign similar to this one that took place in Sweden?
- Are the costs lower or higher to create a game-app than a classical advertisement?

4) The gamification process

- How would you define the term *gamification*? And the term *advergaming*?
- Would you say the Mini Cooper was an advergaming?
- Why do you think people are interested in playing game-apps in general?
- Did you ever develop a game-app that didn’t work at all? Can you explain why you think it didn’t work?
- Are the persons designing the game-apps active players themselves?

*Interview transcript with JVM (2012-02-09)*

MV: The topic of my research is gamification of smart phone application: a new marketing strategy.

JVM: No, gamification in itself is not a new marketing strategy. It is more the results of an insight about the target group combined with the DNA of the brand. Sometimes it could be the solution, it is always the solution of a problem, the execution of an idea based on an insight. We never start looking for games, it has to suit the product.

MV: What exactly do you mean?

JVM: We tried to get into the problem, and if we talk about Mini, Mini is a special car as you know, its a car people, or mostly men, dream about since they are young, you read about it in comic books, you may have seen them in the racing world, in movies, you dream about it. Mini is a special, cool brand. People, the target group is mentally young, there is no specific target group but rather people that are young in mind and they really believe this brand and this car is really cool, so they want it. It is also expensive, so a lot of people who want it, can’t afford it. And when they released this new car, we wanted to make a buzz and make people talk about it and interact with the brand. And since many people want the car, we thought that a chase would be a good idea, and this is how the game idea came up. The game itself was a
result of the problem, we didn’t think: oh now, we have to come up with a cool game, we didn’t think about games at all in the first place.

MV: Where you the first ones to come up with this hunt aspect?

JVM: There has been treasure hunts for example.

MV: Like the Telia Treasure Hunt, for example?

JVM: Oh yes, but that was afterwards. The hunting aspect with your smartphone, when you use a map or something to find a treasure, a smartphone or whatever it has been used many times. But we were the first ones to use an interaction part, that you competed against other people that you could see in your phone. The technique was not new, but we were the first to make it work in a simple way, we took all the technique and packed it in a new way. So, we were the world’s first there, the main thing is that. The main reason why it worked was because it fitted so well with the brand, because people in the Mini brand stands for fun and play. The whole car is invented for people in the cities that want to escape from the city to the countryside. This is why it was called Mini Countryman, it was especially made, it was a bit bigger Mini, so you have room to take more people to the countryside. The concept of the campaign is Getaway, to escape from the city. And in the game, it’s all about Getaway, you take the car in your Iphone and then you get away.

MV: You got away from the other gamers in other words?

JVM: Yes, it was a fantastic match between the game, the brand and the car.

MV: Are you the one behind the idea?

JVM: It was me and my partner.

MV: Did Mini approach you and ask you to create a new campaign?

JVM: Yes, we have been working for MINI since we started the agency. It’s BMW and MINI, we do advertising for both companies. We do all kinds of advertising at Jung von Matt.

MV: Did they suggest a game?

JVM: No, they told us: we are launching this new car, it’s called Countryman and the key concept is Getaway, can you help us launch it?
MV: What were the main goals of the campaign?

JVM: Sales of course, to sell new cars. It was the most important campaign for Mini for the last 10 years, because 10 years ago they redesigned the whole car which was a big thing, and this was the second most important campaign since the launch of the new Mini style. Sales was one goal and another goal was to make people talk about it, create a buzz about Mini.

MV: Did it succeed?

JVM: Yes, over 11,000 people played the game during the week. They played in average 5 hours per person. Normally, if you do a campaign, people might look for 30 seconds on a TV spot, or read your add for one minute. Five hours per person interacting with a brand is almost never heard of. It’s a long time and people had fun all the time. That created many hundred thousands posts about it on the internet (the precise numbers are in the document I gave you). People from 90 countries followed the campaign and the sales, one year after, are still high. They almost doubled the sales, not only of the new model, but also of all other models as well. So it was really a huge thing. When you talk about gaming and about how to create a good game and applications, we created a good principle, we would like to live after: one is that, it should be very simple of course, so simple that everybody should be able to do it, but still so hard, that it’s a challenge. And if you want people to interact, you also have to make it fun ALL THE TIME. Normally, a competition or a game is about making you do something dull, really dull like inventing a slogan or running or whatever to have the chance to win something fun. In our case, we always try to make every second count, and even if you loose, you should have a fun experience, because otherwise people won’t interact. So, playing this game was fun all the time. It was like a cat and mouse game, and even for us who prepared the campaign three months before, when we went out and tried to catch the car for a couple of seconds, we got goose bumbs: I got the Mini! So, it was in the game that it was cool and fun all the time. That’s a very important principle.

MV: Are you planning to make something similar in the future again?

JVM: Actually, since it was a success, we have made this campaign in Tokyo, Copenhagen, it has been used for several markets. It was almost the exact same idea. We have gotten the question from some others, Google for example, could you do something just like that for us? And then we said no, because, as I said in the beginning, you have to always start with the brand and with the target group to create something. So we have made other apps, not game-
apps, but other useful apps, for example for Google. We have actually another game-app that is really close to being produced for another brand, which I can’t tell you. It will be launched hopefully this summer in the US.

MV: What are the reasons for the rapid development of game-apps, according to you? It seems to be a boom in game-apps right now.

JVM: People tend to copy success I think, that’s one thing. And everybody is gaming right now, people love games, so when you think rationally, hmm, we should do a game, it’s like a cliché maybe?

MV: Why do you think people are interested in games in general?

JVM: People love to play. It’s a basic. They love to have fun and play. But people think, but I think it’s totally wrong, that the technique itself will do the work for you. But the technique is nothing. The idea is everything. You need to have a great, simple idea. The technology can help you, but it is not everything. We have collaborated with different schools like Hyper Island and all programming and all creative schools and given them tasks to come up with. And 99 percents of the ideas we got, are always technology based. Then we ask people: why should anybody interact with it, it’s cool, it’s just technology, there has to be an idea, an insight, something in it for you. A lot of people tend to forget that.

MV: Do you think this phenomenon will continue growing?

JVM: Probably. Games, more developed technology, the more the bandwidth grows and the more technology develops, the more opportunities there are. So of course, it is growing. It is also quite fun, people play around with possibilities, so some people do really fantastic stuff. So it’s good to try.

MV: What are the advantages and disadvantages of choosing a game-app?

JVM: One advantage is that most people love to play, and you have a friendly attitude when you see a game. You view it immediately as something positive. And then when you get to know about it, that’s an advantage. People like games.

MV: It is also a positive social aspect into it.

JVM: Absolutely. The disadvantage is like with everything, people have done and seen everything. So you have to create something new or at least a new experience. People get
blasé, and when it is obviously advertising, people don’t care about it. It has to give you something. At least a win-win situation, you have to win something. You can’t force people to do the errance of the brand. It has to be good for you as well, and not only give away free stuff. That’s not enough. It has to give you an experience, either social, or fun or eternal life or something.

MV: I find interesting that game-apps are also developing in other areas like the humanitarian app The Long Run for example. It is not necessarily about commercial products.

JVM: The first time I heard about this kind of app like The long run, was on the same principle, you gave away some money for each time you snused. This technique is not new anymore, it has been done before. It is hard to come up with something new.

MV: To come back to the Mini Cooper, who was the target group?

JVM: For people who are mentally young. It was fun, because in order to win you had to have a driving license and be therefore over 18 years old. The oldest people playing, I think they were over 50. If you watch the case study movies, you will see a guy who is driving around and he is over 50, he was really excited.

MV: What was the feedback of the audience?

JVM: Please do it again and please do it in our cities.

MV: Where did you get the feedback from?

JVM: We had a facebook page and there were lots of tweeds and blog entries about it.

MV: What did the users enjoy most?

JVM: A couple of things. One thing was that it was so social, it really connected people, thousands of people out in the streets. The final day, the police said there were about 4000 people gathered on Valhallavägen, by Strandvägen, Östermalm. The traffic was blocked, the buses couldn’t drive so they called the police. People were standing and talking, it was really great. People discussed strategy before the game started, and also after the game. We even talked about building in a chat channel in the app, but we wanted to keep it as clean as possible, because people have facebook and they use twitter, so they used that. The other thing that is really important to make a success, it was digital and analogue combined, a mix between the real and the digital, that collision creates excitement. It’s virtual for real. A lot of
people said that to play was like a GTA: it is a classic action game (Grand Theft Auto). You have to go around a city and steal stuff and act and so on. It’s a virtual game, that you play on a game console. This one they call GTA for real in the gamers language. In that game, you steal cars and try to keep away from the police, in that case and from other people. In the Mini Getaway, you took a car and tried to keep away from others by running, but still it was virtual because it was your phone. So the Mini campaign had that kind of feeling, but it was in real life. That mix of virtual reality and real reality that’s very cool stuff. People dressed up in running clothes and ran for hours. A lot of students play gaming actually. We met some of them, who said they wanted to take a break, so I’ll put on my running clothes.

MV: Were there any negative aspects about the Mini game?

JVM: No, not really. Of course, people had different comments and ideas about things to change in the game, which we had to handle. We had an official page for taking care of that, where we took care of responding to people’s comments, when something didn’t work, people complained and so we said that we will sort it out, and then we did. So we had people standing by, the game was on for seven days. So we were awake almost 24/7. So, people had opinions on different things. I think that is a good thing, if you talk to them and respond and explain why you change something and why you don’t. We had a person responsible to respond the users.

MV: Did you have other ideas for the same campaign?

JVM: Actually, it was the main idea and the client bought it. We dismissed the other ideas by ourselves before presenting it to the client. The client had really great courage and trusted us to do it. We presented it 1,5 years ago, which doesn’t sound like a long time, but technically it is a very long time, because things happens fast and when we did it, no one had the technology to go with. Because of that, the client had to trust that we could solve it technically. There wasn’t any evidence that it could work at that time. In theory, it could work, it should work and it did work, but since nobody had done it, they couldn’t be 100 % sure.

MV: What is the cost of a game-app like the Mini? Is it lower than a “traditional” advertisement?

JVM: It is. It was part of a bigger campaign though, so we did also TV spots, adds and stuff. The cost for the app and for everything that had to do with the game was relatively low
because the car that you could win costs about the same price as a full page add in DN. Of course we had production costs and everything, so it was not cheap that way, but the Mini cost was low.

MV: Do you think game-apps are more effective than classical advertisements?

JVM: You can’t say for sure. Depends on the idea.

MV: Do you have any examples in which situation it wouldn’t be so effective? Does it depend on the product?

JVM: Yes, it depends on the product and on the idea. People get more and more tired of advertising, as you know. So you have to create better and more involving ideas. But there is no simple solution for that. One media could be better, but it depends on the idea.

MV: Does game-apps create a greater customer loyalty?

JVM: They could do. If it is based on the target group’s real needs and what you give them is relevant and they have fun. Then, it could absolutely create customer loyalty.

MV: Is this called advergame? A mix of advertising and gaming.

JVM: Yes, I heard the term but we don’t really use it. We are more thinking about an idea first and how to get it out. If you have different names, there is a risk that you concentrate too much on the media before the idea.

MV: Did you ever develop a game-app that didn’t work at all?

JVM: Yes, absolutely. You shouldn’t be afraid of doing mistakes, you have to try it.

MV: Why didn’t they work?

JVM: Not relevant enough I would say. Not relevant enough for the target group.

MV: Are you playing games yourself? Are the game-app developers at JVM gamers?

JVM: Yes, we have gamers here. But I think, we in the project team, none of us are really hard core gamers. We know about it and we try to test everything but we are not the kind of people gaming ten hours a day.

MV: Do you have any recommendation for my research: books, articles, companies?
JVM: Nothing comes to my mind directly. We know a lot of developers that make the apps, but it’s like Monterosa, doing the technical side. Normally the people doing that, are game developers, that’s their main occupation. One company doing electronic arts is called DICE, but they are not into marketing. You could try DDB, they did the SAF app. They do games and they probably also thought about the marketing-sales aspect from their point of view. They do product placement in games and that’s another side of this topic.

MV: Is there any aspect of branded game-apps that I didn’t think about?

JVM: Probably. In one way, we are maybe not the right to ask about games, as we are not focused on that so much. It was the result of a specific project.

MV: Any last thoughts?

JVM: A game-app should be fun every second. The experience of playing has to be fun, I think, and it should also has to do something with the brand, so it should be specific for that brand and the treasure hunt aspect: find something valuable! It could be used for any brand, so that’s not good, it should be specific for your brand, otherwise it’s bad advertising in my opinion.

MV: But this kind of advertising is leaving out a big part of the population: children and the elderly, who don’t own an Iphone for example.

JVM: Yes, that’s true. A special platform should be created for these groups. If you read statistics, the people using facebook are much older than you think. A simple facebook game could be great for them. A lot of people play Farmville for example, so you have to adapt the platform to the target group.

MV: What are you working on right now?

JVM: An advertising for the subway for retirements and we are developing an app in Japan. It’s a fun new world, where anybody can work with anybody wherever in the world. It’s fantastic I think. Google called us one day from California, we had never met them, now we have: Could you do an app for us?

MV: Thank you very much for your time and answers!

JVM: You are welcome, hope this helped and email me if you have any further questions.
1) **Game-apps**
- What is a game-app, according to you?
- What do you think about game-apps in general?
- Which game-apps have you downloaded and played?
- Which one was your favourite? Why?
- How many times did you play with that game-app (the one I chose)? How long did you play in total?

2) **Motivations:**
- Why did you choose to download that particular app? What attracted you about it?
- What were your general impressions?
- What did you enjoy most about this experience?
- What did you think about the prizes to win? Was it a motivation to play?

3) **Social aspects**
- Do you usually share your results with your social network? Why/why not?
- Did you get to know other people playing (strangers)? Do you think game-apps are facilitating social contact with strangers?
- Did you play alone or with a friend? Motivate why.
- Do you like competing against others?
- Do you like games in general? Do you play any other kind of games regularly?

4) **Negative aspects**
- Was there anything negative about this experience?
- Do you think this game-app is suitable for anyone? Motivate answer.
- Do you think the game-app was addictive? Yes/No- why/why not?

5) **Game-apps as a marketing strategy**
- What is more effective according to you: a game-app or a “traditional” commercial like a tv spot or a billboard?
According to you, when is it better to have a game-app as a marketing strategy and when is it better to have a traditional commercial? Give examples of specific products or services.

Did your opinion on the brand change after having played the game-app? How?

Have you heard about any other apps/games of that kind?

Would you download a new app of this kind and play? Why or why not?

Do you think this kind of app will become more popular in the future?

And a last question, what is your age and your occupation? (Respond only if you want)

Interview transcript AS (2012-04-15)

MV: What is a branded game-app according to you? What is your own definition?

AS: I think they are a good way to reach out to people, since most people nowadays do have a smart phone with apps, with the Itune store, App Store and I’m sure Samsung and Nokia also have their own app store. The smart phone market is constantly increasing in numbers. I do believe that the reason for apps being so huge it is connected to the launching of the Apple Iphone, because before there wasn’t such a thing as App developers. Photoshop and Norton could be considered as applications on computers, but there wasn’t a big market for cell phones apps back then. So, I think it is a great thing and it opens a lot of doors, and nowadays it is through apps that people get information, as all the big companies have apps nowadays, System Bolaget, HM, Ikea even have their own apps. I think they just want to branch out and explore the possibilities with the apps.

MV: What about companies inserting game aspects into their app?

AS: Yes, they do that to increase the interaction with the younger audience and increase customer loyalty in general. I don’t know how System Bolaget or HM would do a game, but there are some companies that can fuse in the game aspect in an app, but sometimes it doesn’t really work, because it still sends the same message. For example, System Bolaget, there is no age restriction really, everyone can download anything they want, of course they say this content is from 17 years old, but who cares about that anymore. When it comes to the apps and games, 13-14 years old buy games for 18+, they don’t care. I mean, that wasn’t possible 20-30 years ago, because people where not as open minded. Now, with the media revolution, everything is going in such a quick pace, that everything is acceptable, nothing is excluded,
nothing is too much anymore. So, it is much more open with apps, I think that in a couple of years, every single brand will have their own app. It’s quite a good thing, as smart phone users are constantly increasing and this is the way now to reach out to more people, by using apps. Even artists have apps.

MV: Which apps have you downloaded?

AS: I have downloaded a lot, but not using them all that much. The ones I am constantly using is Facebook, Reseplanerare Stockholm (local traffic), msn messenger, Skype, all the social tools. Before, you had to use a computer to use all those social tools, but now it is possible on the mobile phone, everything is mobile now.

MV: What did you think about the SAF app?

AS: Every brand is trying to reach out and the Military service is doing the same. I think it’s a good thing, as it shows a bit how it is like at the Military training, even though you don’t do the same stuff as they do, but you can get a sample of how it is. My cousin also has this app and he did the mission “stalk a person for 15 minutes without being seen”. Somehow, a third person watching it could wonder: “what the hell is he doing”?

MV: How do you prove that you did it?

AS: There is no proof really. That’s a negative aspect. The developers don’t know if they are actually doing it, or if they are just waiting 15 minutes and click ok. So, it really is up to the person to take it seriously or not. I took it seriously a couple of times, and then I just got bored, I don’t want to do this anymore, I think people are going to see me as a weird person in doing all these maneuvers.

MV: How many missions did you fulfill?

AS: I don’t remember, as this app is like a year and a half old. Once I remained hidden for a couple of minutes and I was in my room, so I just shut the door. But when I was outside, it’s not that easy in a city (to remain hidden), and where I live there are not so many people walking around so it’s a lot easier. So, I think that they should actually redo the app, because all these things they tell us to do, there is no proof that you can actually do it. They should maybe use more the possibilities of the phone, like the gravity function, logic test like puzzles etc, so that you can prove that you did it. They should do something like that instead. Or questions like if this happens, what would be your first priority. Instead of stalking someone
for 15 minutes, they don’t know if you are doing it. And if the person notices you are stalking, he/she could sue you etc, calling you weird etc.

MV: What was positive about this app?

AS: I found it quite exciting actually, you get to do all these things that you do in the military. I think that people are naturally looking for excitement. And that app sometimes gave that feeling. Another app working on a similar base is the official “Inception” app from the movie. It also makes you do stuff like this. Like walk for 5 minutes in a certain pace.

MV: This reminds me of the Unbottle yourself app from Carlsberg. (Explains the rule of the app).

AS: Using apps is THE way to promote and using mobile phones to it’s full potential, making people do ridiculous stuff or great stuff or serious stuff.

MV: How many times did you play with the military app?

AS: I played for almost a month, sometimes I forgot about it, I would say about 10 missions and I fulfilled them. I did it seriously except for that mission “remain hidden”, when I just shut my door. That was the only time I “cheated”, as I was really tired and wanted to stay home.

MV: The missions took place 3 times a day, right?

AS: Yes, I think it was 3 times a day, quite intensive.

MV: You must have been really good, as I found you on the leader board.

AS: WHAT? I had no idea I was there!

MV: Where did you hear about the app?

AS: It was actually my friend, who tipped me about it, as he was actually on his way to the military service.

MV: Did you friend take the app as a real preparation to the actual military service?

AS: No, he was already recruited and when he got there, he heard about the app from other recruits.
MV: When I looked for users, I saw that many of the users were actually recruited and/or were working for the military, as I could see from the profile pictures and information. Do you think they took the app as a serious preparation?

AS: Yes, many took it seriously. It is a good thing for them to do. On the other hand, there were users who played it just for fun for a short time.

MV: Would you say that the app raised attention to the Swedish military?

AS: Yes. And also the Military service can also look at the user’s results and see if he/she was a serious player, or just one doing it for fun. They could just invite them to their facility to do some tests and if the guy declines, probably he was just joking around.

MV: Are you yourself interested in joining the Swedish Armed Forces?

AS: I am, but I don’t think that it’s my calling really, it’s not the right thing to do for me. It’s for 9 months, so it’s a lot of time going away and I don’t like going away, it’s not for the family, it’s not for the friends, it’s not social community and stuff, it’s because I would miss out on a lot of music. That’s the only reason, I want to stay connected to the outside world, music is a big part of my life.

MV: What was your motivation for downloading the app?

AS: Curiosity. Why not try something new? It wasn’t like “oh my god, I have been waiting for this for so long!” One app I am waiting for is an app that actually collects every single music release, each day, each hour. That is something hard to do, I think it’s not possible really because it’s seven billion people all over the world.

MV: What were the aims of the campaign according to you?

AS: The Armed Forces wanted to check in which conditions the men and women are (mentally and physically) and if they dare to do stuff. Like you said, they don’t know if they did it for real. It was easy to cheat. That’s sad, because I want them to find people that are really appropriate for the military. There are all kind of people downloading that app. I don’t think it’s a bad app, I just think they should do something else, instead of an app. Yes, of course people use their phones and of course people download it, but it’s still not the right direction.

MV: What would be your suggestion then?
AS: I don’t know. I just think that military wise, strategically, that this would work out in a better way. It’s a good concept. Their main purpose is to raise attention to your brand or your product. It could be a very simple app that shows the brand’s name and their products. And people would then know about that brand and eventually checking it out.

MV: Was there a prize to win?

AS: I don’t remember actually. If there was a prize, people would interact with it more.

MV: Do you think it was more of a preparation for the military or just some kind of entertainment?

AS: Both. It was entertaining and at the same time it was very informative. For the people taking it seriously, it was really good for them, but for the ones who are just looking to have fun, it is also purely entertaining. There were two kinds of people playing that app, and it was beneficial for both of them. The serious one’s, were perhaps already selected for the military and used the app to train a little more.

MV: Do you think game-apps are creating social contact with strangers?

AS: Yes, I met a couple of friends through game-apps, a lot of international friends and we are still in contact virtually. I also met some Swedes, who I actually met face to face. I don’t mind meeting people from anywhere, I don’t judge anyone, I don’t care how you look or what your sexuality is. As long as you don’t kill me I don’t mind, or judge me. People think that Muslim people are going to bomb you, but that is not the case. The Muslims are quite different that how the media is portraying them to be, they are not all terrorists. There are two sides of the coin.

MV: How did you get in contact with those people?

AS: Many game-apps have chat functions, like Wordfeud or Rumble. I always like to use it, for me it’s not fun to play with strangers, it’s also fun to get to know them a little more. So the social aspect is important for me.

MV: What about the SAF app, was there a chat function?

AS: No, it was every man on its own. You could see the leader board, but it’s not like I would contact them to say: “I saw you were in the top results! I also use the app, let’s be friends”. That would be weird.
MV: Do you like competitions in general?

AS: I think competition is fun, I don’t take it too seriously. I think competition is good for someone’s confidence, it boozes your confidence. Example in video games or games or apps, people tend to move into some sort of dream world, when they get bored. My dream world is to take a walk and listen to music. With games, it is the same thing. There are two kinds. In competitions it’s about winning or loosing, and then there is this game about gathering things, like powers, points, friends etc. It can benefit you, but also break you. Even though it’s a virtual world, you still put yourself in there, you put your mind into it, you focus on it. It’s like a real world, but it’s fiction. It’s like when you watch a movie, you get emotionally attached or something. Everything can be broken down into a competition. It can be anything, you eats the most, you runs fastest. I don’t think it’s something natural, we all have this survival instinct, it doesn’t have to be a competition. I do believe that humans by natural causes are selfish and they look out for themselves and that’s the main important thing. It’s always the inside world first, the outside world comes in a second position.

MV: Do you think that games are a natural part of our lives?

AS: Yes, games can be found anywhere. Competitions can be found anywhere. It doesn’t have to be video games. It can be who eats the most, drinks the most, who buys the most etc, that’s also a kind of competition. Every company competes with other companies, it’s an instinct of survival.

MV: Do you play other games?

AS: I play video games, chess, checkers, Monopoly. Monopoly is actually a good way to use your strategic mind, at the same time as Tetris is also good for your mind, because you have to think quickly. Chess also teaches you to be strategic. Video games, of course the media depicts them as violent, but I don’t think it’s their fault, because there has always been an age limitation.

MV: What were the negative aspects of the SAF app?

AS: The main negative aspect is that there was no way to prove that people actually did it. A prize would have turned it more into a competition, even though it is already a competition with a leader board and people are motivated to beat others scores. I just did it for fun, I didn’t even know there was a leader board until the very end. I just played and then deleted the app.
MV: Where the missions easy or difficult to fulfill?

AS: Very average, different levels of difficulty. It wasn’t too hard, the only problem would be the third person watching you and see you as a psycho, hiding in corners and stalking people.

MV: Did it go gradually in difficulty?

AS: No, it was random.

MV: I would have probably done it from easy to hard, just like any game.

AS: Yes, but maybe they wanted to create a preparation to random missions in the military service, as you never know what you have to do next.

MV: I also saw TV commercial for the military service, where people had to decode hidden messages, solve riddles etc.

AS: Yes, they did that you make a selection, if you couldn’t solve it, then you weren’t qualified for the military. That’s a very good advertisement, because it triggers you before and stimulates people to figure it out. The commercial could affect them and make them think that maybe they are qualified for this and start thinking about it more often. The commercial is quite hard hitting telling you what you cannot do. The aim is to provoke people.

MV: Do you think the app was suitable for anyone? (Age, sex)

AS: Sex doesn’t matter, but it’s the mental ability that counts. If you are 11 years old, I don’t think you should do it. It requires a certain age, the perfect age would be between 16 and 18, or let’s say 15 upwards. When they are younger than 13, 14, they are still controlled by emotions, and that’s not something you want in the military, you want them to be clear minded and use their logic and the best solutions to the situations.

MV: Was this app addictive?

AS: At one point, yes, because it was exhilarating. It was exciting to participate in something bigger. But then, eventually I got bored after a month. But if it would be really boring, I wouldn’t last a day, but I still kept going. I don’t regret this experience, I didn’t waste my time.

MV: So in general, you would rate this app as a success?
AS: Yes, for me, it was. Out of ten, I would give it a seven.

MV: Is a game-app more effective than a billboard, TV spot etc?

AS: It depends on the time when you put on the commercial on TV, the best times would be between 7 to 9 pm. On the other hand, people don’t watch commercial anymore, they switch to other channels. Some people avoiding TV commercials, reach for their phones instead and look for something to do. Then you should market in the phone, you have to put your commercials in other apps, but sometimes people buy the app instead and skip the commercial completely. Mobile app marketing is a great thing to do, it’s the THING now through apps, through games, interact with the people, enjoy the app, not just reading and swiping it off. You want the customer to feel that this is also made for me, that is the best target you can have, manage to reach out to anyone, not just a specific target group.

MV: Is an app with a game aspect into it even better than a normal app?

AS: Yes, it’s good to have fun and good to remember it. If you manage to do an addictive game, that’s even better because they will come back to it, play more and eventually check out the other functions or the webpage. Gaming and marketing is a good combination, as people use their phones for anything nowadays and 10-15% of gaming.

MV: Is an app suitable for all products?

AS: Well, even the military service has one. It’s black and white really, all the brands and products have positive and negative aspects. If the app is more accessible, it is more successful. If the app is easy, people will come back to it, like the System Bolaget app (checking the stocks and finding the closest shop) or the transportation app.

MV: Did you opinion on the Swedish Armed Forces changed after the app?

AS: No, I respect the organization. I respect them perhaps even more for trying to reach out to people through innovative strategies.

MV: What about the length of the campaign? Is it good that you can still download it a year later, or would it be more efficient with a shorter campaign?

AS: Yes, it’s good that you can still download it, as nowadays so many teenagers have smartphones and the app might raise their attention. Maybe a shorter campaign is more effective,
something that is not available for a long time has always attracted people (limited editions, special editions), most people are attracted to all those unique things. That’s a good strategy.

MV: Would you download a new app of this kind in the future?

AS: Yes, of course, I’m always up for something new, I am always curious about stuff.

MV: Will branded game-apps become more popular in the future?

AS: It already is very popular. Mobile phones are getting more and more power, better speed, processor, camera etc. I would say it will still be on the top (apps) for 2 or 3 years, maybe they will fall, I don’t know, trends come and go. A growing professions nowadays is app developers, the term didn’t even exist a couple of years ago. It is mainly thanks to Apple and their Iphone that apps became big. I am actually going to an interview at Apple tomorrow.

MV: What is your occupation?

AS: Applying for jobs and helping out my mother with her restaurant.