

Chapter 6

Is Persuasion in the Eye of the Beholder?

A Study on the Use of Persuasive Technology and Its Effect

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing is being revolutionized by technological advancements in many fields, such as artificial intelligence and persuasive technologies. Persuasive technology still generates disagreements, both on the marketer side, by setting up a persuasive system, and on the consumer side, who is responsible for accepting and instilling. This chapter presents a case study, which focuses on a Portuguese sports betting app – Placard. The aim is to examine Placard gamblers' behaviors, attitudes, and preferences, and how their user experience is influenced by the persuasive technologies embedded in this app. The main results allow a conclude that, no matter how much persuasive technology is programmed, and designed to change a certain behavior, it will always depend on the user, as well as on the different factors that influence their decision. The persuasive sports betting platform itself also needs to provide a better user experience to trigger less resistance. These results are discussed for the benefit of future digital marketing strategies and tactics withing online gambling.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is experiencing a profound transformation with all the technological advancements that are taking place. In particular, the fast-paced changes introduced by artificial intelligence (AI) and persuasive technologies are altering the landscape for brands and consumers. AI can analyze vast amounts of consumer data to personalize advertising or recommendations, enhance targeting, and obtain and analyze vast amounts of data about consumers, allowing to optimize campaigns. Persuasive technologies, by employing behavioral psychology, can influence consumers' behavior through persuasive design and personalized messaging. Both technologies are changing the way brands interact with their consumers.

A topic that has aroused a growing interest for both practitioners and the scientific community is the use of technology as a vehicle for persuasion (Törning & Oinas-Kukkonen, 2009). Persuasive technology (PT), that refers to “interactive computing systems designed to change people’s attitudes and behaviors” (Fogg, 2003, p.1), has the power to shape how people act and experience reality (Nyström & Stibe, 2020). Increasingly developed and used commercially (Ahmad et al., 2020), PT can be used in many devices, from computers to smartphones, mobile applications (apps), or even on artificial intelligence-based persuasive technologies. Indeed, AI can also act as a form of PT as it can acquire large amounts of user’s data, find connections not visible to a human, profile users, and aim at persuading them, resulting in Persuasive Technology (Faraoni, 2023). At this purpose, Kahana (2023) claims that the recent developments of artificial intelligence are leading us into a new era, an era where the power of technology to persuade people toward desired individual and collective behaviors comes with an unprecedented “augmentation” factor fueled by AI. However, this area remains largely uncharted (Kahana, 2023).

The fast and exponential evolution of technology has reconfigured a specific domain: gambling. The gambling industry is considered to be one of the most rapidly ever-growing and changing industries in the world (Industry Insight, 2022). This multimillion-dollar global industry was valued in 2022 at USD \$449.04 billion and is expected to grow to \$702.45 billion in 2023, according to the Global Gambling Market Report (2023). Contributing to this growth is online gambling, one of the main trends in the global gambling industry (Statista, 2023a), along with the evolution and increased use of several technologies, ranging from virtual reality and augmented reality to persuasive technology and artificial intelligence. Digital and mobile technology has facilitated and disseminated the gambling process, by granting gamblers easy access, anytime and anywhere (Drosatos et al., 2018) to a plethora of immersive and engaging gambling digital platforms, and, at the same time, enabling the immediacy of betting. This allows, for example, bettors to predict and bet on certain outcomes during events, in real-time (Albarrán-Torres & Goggin, 2017).

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