



FINANCIAL SERVICES SILVER WINNER

Visa's Video Game Integration

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#### BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Developed around CBS's crime drama, *CSI*, Ubisoft created a video game that mirrored the television shows use of forensic science to solve criminal cases. On the show, investigators evaluate evidence to determine how a specific crime was committed. According to *Nielsen Live+7 Program Audience*, viewership (not including repeats) for *CSI*, among adults 18 and older, reached 26 million in 2005, 24 million in 2006 and 21 million in 2007. Because of our strong industry relationships, Ubisoft offered OMD the opportunity to integrate one of our client's products or services into the video game as part of the game's diagnostics.

In 2006, the video game title was available to play on a personal computer and PlayStation 2. By 2007, the title played on personal computers, Wii and XBOX 360, offering an enhanced gaming environment and diverse audience:

The XBOX 360, for example, allowed for more realistic characters and animation in addition to bringing in a core audience (most played video games for 10+ hours a week).

The Wii introduced new and unique methods of control and interaction while also bringing in a diverse gaming audience (casual gamers equally split between men and women).

#### BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Seeking to leverage the video game environment and communicate their fraud protection features, in 2006 Visa integrated their advertisement into the *CSI 3: Dimensions of Murder* video game. The game featured a crime focused on a missing hotel heiress, and at the time the game launched, identity theft was a significant concern for many consumers. As such, Visa wanted to inform their consumers of the many ways they keeps their customers' account information and purchases safe, as well as secure.

To leverage this message, Visa seamlessly integrated their fraud protection capabilities into the game's storyline via billboards, signage, logos and storyline dialogue. Visa's fraud protection features proved to be critical in solving the crime as players needed the help of Visa to solve the case of the missing hotel heiress.

#### RESEARCH STORY BEHIND CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT

In 2006, video game advertising was still in its infancy. Best practices were not yet available for planning a video game campaign, and marketers/advertisers were still unsure of how to utilize this new medium. However, the gaming environment delivered a diverse and engaged audience that Visa wanted to reach as it offered an advertisement environment unique from other media. Together, Visa and OMD augmented the campaign with consumer research that provided insights in activating this new and exciting medium.

To prepare for their first video game campaign, Visa conducted a two-cell experimental design study to determine the potential impact that this new medium had on its brand equity. The test cell represented gamers who played *CSI 3* and the control cell represented gamers who looked like those in the test cell, but were not exposed to the Visa video game campaign. Both groups were compared against several measures to determine the impression that the video game environment had on establishing awareness of Visa's integration and the subsequent effects of the assimilation on several measures of brand equity such as brand affinity.

Research showed that for those *CSI* gamers who recognized Visa as the credit card sponsor in the game, the integration had a positive impact on their perceptions of Visa, which was significantly higher at a 95% confidence compared to gamers in the control cell.

While the integration had a positive impact on gamers' perceptions of Visa, research showed that there was not enough visuals throughout the game to meet additional branding goals. Given the engaged environment in which gamers played, success could not solely rely on the dialogue; rather, the dialogue, signage, logos, etc. had to continually reinforce each other to produce the desired impact. As such, the key learning from *CSI 3* indicated that future sponsorships should have greater visibility of Visa signage and billboards in order to establish and maintain awareness of Visa, particularly when Visa is not part of the audio dialogue. Furthermore, research from *CSI 3* exposed a new hypothesis that focused on the varying degrees of impact by engagement levels (i.e. engagement with storyline only, with billboards/signage only, and with storyline/billboard/signage).

In 2007, Ubisoft launched another iteration of the *CSI* video game, *CSI 4: Hard Evidence*. During the development phase, Visa and OMD leveraged the research learning from the *CSI 3* campaign to negotiate and weave more placements of signage, logos and billboards within the game.

#### CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION

Continuing to amp up their fraud protection services, visual billboards, signage and logos continued to appear throughout the entire game (five cases in total), increasing frequency to better reinforce Visa visually when not part of the storyline. As a result, impressions increased from 10 minutes in *CSI 3* to 15 minutes in *CSI 4* due to the deeper integration elements. The storyline integration, which was primarily audio driven, weaved Visa into the fourth case, directly emphasizing Visa's fraud protection services while also demonstrating real world product knowledge.

Research for the *CSI 4* campaign leveraged a larger sample size to evaluate the impact of the campaign by comparing the test group to a control group in regards to the varying degrees of gamers' engagement with the sponsorship in the test cell. Engagement with the sponsorship evaluated the halo effect from the varying levels of sponsorship:

Recalled Visa but could not attribute recall to a specific location

Recalled Visa and attributed recall to signage only

Recalled Visa and attributed recall to storyline or signage

Research continued to use a significance test at a 95% confidence to determine the impact the sponsorship had on Visa's brand equity and how the campaign performed in conveying its fraud protection features.

## PROOF OF BUSINESS RESULTS

The research results showed that the multitude of Visa placements maintained a strong presence in that they contributed to strong recall levels for Visa as a sponsor, communicated Visa's fraud protection features and provided a memorable game experience:

Consistent visuals created a lasting impact that contributed to:

Significantly higher sponsorship recall levels for Visa among the test group than those in the control group

A larger share of gamers who recalled the Visa sponsorship in *CSI 4* than those who recalled the sponsorship in *CSI 3*

Gamers who were engaged with the sponsorship were significantly more likely to have a positive impression of Visa than their counterparts in the control group

The integration between the brand and the content created an environment that added to gamers' experience, more so (at a 95% confidence) for gamers in the test cell than those in the control cell

The integration established an emotional connection that exemplified the campaign's success to communicate Visa's fraud protection services

Gamers in the test cell were more likely than those in the control cell to connect with Visa on several fraud protection attributes

Within the test cell, gamers most engaged with the sponsorship had a stronger connection to Visa on several brand equity measures, relating to fraud protection attributes. More so than those less engaged with the Visa sponsorship, at a 95% confidence

The *CSI 4* campaign established best practices for developing and leveraging the various ad models available in video game campaigns. The video game environment showcased the halo effect between integration and product placements. When a client's product or service is successfully integrated into the game and provides value to the game environment, gamers are more likely to associate the brand as part of the game's diagnostics; rather than an intrusive advertisement impeding their game play. By incorporating in-depth research into each campaign, Visa and OMD leveraged their findings, allowing the marketer to learn about a new medium, optimize its communication tactics within the new medium and meet its business objective.