Street Art & Urban Creativity | Vol. 11, No. 8, 2025 | ISSN 2183-9956
Street Art & Urban Creativity. Scientific Journal
https://doi.org/10.62161/sauc.v11.6074

INTEGRATED ADVERTISING IN VIDEO GAMES
Persuassive Communication Strategies and Perception in Generation Z

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KEYWORDS
Advertising
Games as a service
Young people
Branded entertainment
Persuasive communication
Roblox
Fortnite

ABSTRACT
This study examines how Generation Z perceives advertising in Roblox and Fortnite, video games that integrate brands into immersive experiences. A longitudinal study was conducted between 2022 and 2025. The results indicate that advertising is viewed positively when it does not interfere with gameplay and is associated with emotions or cultural elements. Roblox stands out for its persistent brand universes and connection to physical products, while Fortnite excels in high-impact global collaborations. In both cases, the avatar functions as a symbolic identity. Nevertheless, risks such as social pressure, impulsive spending, and progressive monetisation emerge.

Received: 01 / 09 / 2025
Accepted: 14 / 12 / 2025

1. Introduction

In recent decades, video games have ceased to be a form of residual leisure. Today, they generate millions in revenue, becoming one of the driving forces behind the digital economy and today's cultural and creative industries. The case of Spain is illustrative: between 2022 and 2024, turnover grew by 3% and the number of players increased by 10.22% (AEVI, 2024). This progress not only consolidates video games as an economic pillar but has also changed the way users relate to this medium. And, incidentally, it has changed the rules of cultural consumption, especially among Generation Z.

The growth of the sector has forced brands to rethink their communication. One-way messages are no longer enough: now, formulas that focus on immersion, participation and entertainment are sought (De Aguilera-Moyano *et al.*, 2015; Piccioni, 2023). In this context, the ability to articulate immersive narratives is proving to be an essential element in sustaining the attention and engagement of audiences (Barahona *et al.,* 2024), especially in interactive environments such as video games.

Generation *Z*—or centennials—born between 1997 and 2012, have grown up in interactive environments with technology as a constant companion. The way they spend their free time differs from that of previous generations: they are more active in creating their own digital environment, they value authenticity and personalisation, and they expect an emotional connection with brands (Llopis-Amorós, 2019). However, this very involvement exposes them to monetisation dynamics that can condition their gaming experience.

In this landscape, advertising is no longer a visual interruption or an explicit mention. It is integrated into the content they consume, and in the case of video games, it can appear in the narrative or in the reward system. This has given rise to strategies such as *advergaming*, *product placement*, and programmatic advertising. All of these are part of *branded entertainment,* which aims to create memorable and interactive experiences that encourage *engagement* (Winkler & Buckner, 2006; Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007; Vieira *et al.*, 2021).

This type of persuasive communication is intensified in titles that follow the *Game-as-a-Service* (GaaS) model. Constant content updates allow brands to appear dynamically and temporarily: special events, exclusive collaborations, or customisable digital products. But it is not all positive. These techniques can lead to dark patterns: designs that influence player behaviour without their fully informed consent (Hidalgo Cerezo, 2019; Zagal *et al.*, 2013; Zendle & Cairns, 2018).

In a rapidly changing market with new forms of cultural consumption, it is essential to analyse how brands have adapted their communication strategies to the interactive ecosystem offered by video games.

1.1. Branded entertainment in video games

Video games have established themselves as a hybrid space for leisure, community and consumption, where brands have found new forms of communication. *Advergaming* can take the form of games created directly by brands or titles that integrate advertising resources into existing environments (Vieira *et al.*, 2021; Winkler & Buckner, 2006). In this way, a distinction can be made between *advergames,* advertising around the game (AGA) and advertising within the game (IGA).

Advergames are video games designed and developed directly by advertisers with an explicit promotional purpose. They are generally offered free of charge, feature simple mechanics, short gameplay and immediate rewards, which enhances their accessibility and potential for virality (Redondo, 2012). In the context of *branded entertainment, advergames* represent the most direct way to turn a video game into a narrative and experiential vehicle for the brand.

AGA, on the other hand, consists of inserting advertising messages into the game environment without integrating them into the narrative or interactive mechanics. It works in a similar way to traditional advertising: it interrupts the player's experience to capture their attention. It is common in video games for mobile devices and usually takes four main formats: *banner* ads, interstitials, sponsorships, and cross-promotions (Smith *et al.,* 2014). In the context of *branded entertainment,* AGA acts as a peripheral reinforcement that, although not part of the gameplay, can complement the brand's communication strategy.

In contrast, IGA is defined as the integration of messages or persuasive elements, designed for a real advertiser, within the interactive components of a video game that has not been developed by that advertiser (De-la-Vara-López & De-Marchis, 2024). These elements can range from the mere visual presence of logos or products to their active use by the player. Unlike AGA, IGA is organically incorporated into the game universe, which promotes immersion and narrative coherence. Within *branded entertainment,* this format is key to generating memorable experiences in which the brand is perceived as a natural part of the virtual world. It is precisely these types of experiences that are most appealing to Generation Z.

Both integrated and peripheral formats can present different levels of interaction with the player. Rodríguez García y Baños González (2009) propose three:

- Static: logos or references without interaction.
- Interactive: the player can use the product.
- Hyperactive: objects that personalise the experience, such as costumes, items or gestures, often under *freemium* or pay-to-play models.

This typology remains valid and can be extrapolated to today's immersive environments—such as Roblox, Fortnite, ZEPETO, or Spatial—where the avatar becomes a key interface for users' identity and an essential vehicle for symbolic consumption.

A fourth modality is added to these levels: their "own universe". These are persistent virtual worlds designed by the brand, with specific aesthetics, narratives and mechanics. Paradigmatic examples are Gucci Town and Vans World in Roblox, where the experience is not limited to inserting isolated products, but is configured as an autonomous ecosystem of interaction and consumption.

Platforms such as Roblox and Fortnite have thus promoted *branded entertainment* that is not based solely on visual exposure, but also on interactivity, temporality and the creation of collective experiences. Live events, brand collaborations and activations developed by large companies generate phenomena of mass participation and symbolic consumption, fuelled by *fear of missing out (*FOMO) dynamics *and* aimed at young audiences who are particularly receptive to these forms of experiential communication (Batat, 2022; O'Reilly, 2025).

1.2. Digital economy strategies in video games

The advertising strategies described in the previous section are part of a broader economic framework, defined by digital business models that have transformed the way video games are monetised. Within the framework of video games as a service *(*GaaS) and *Free-to-Play (*F2P) economies*,* the global video game market reached $187.7 billion in 2024, driven by recurring revenue models based on microtransactions, seasonal content and subscriptions (Newzoo, 2024). These economies remove the barrier to entry through free access, but rely on sophisticated monetisation mechanisms organised around three main axes:

- *In-app purchases* (IAP),
- Integrated advertising (from banners and videos to sponsored worlds and immersive experiences),
- Subscriptions and season passes.

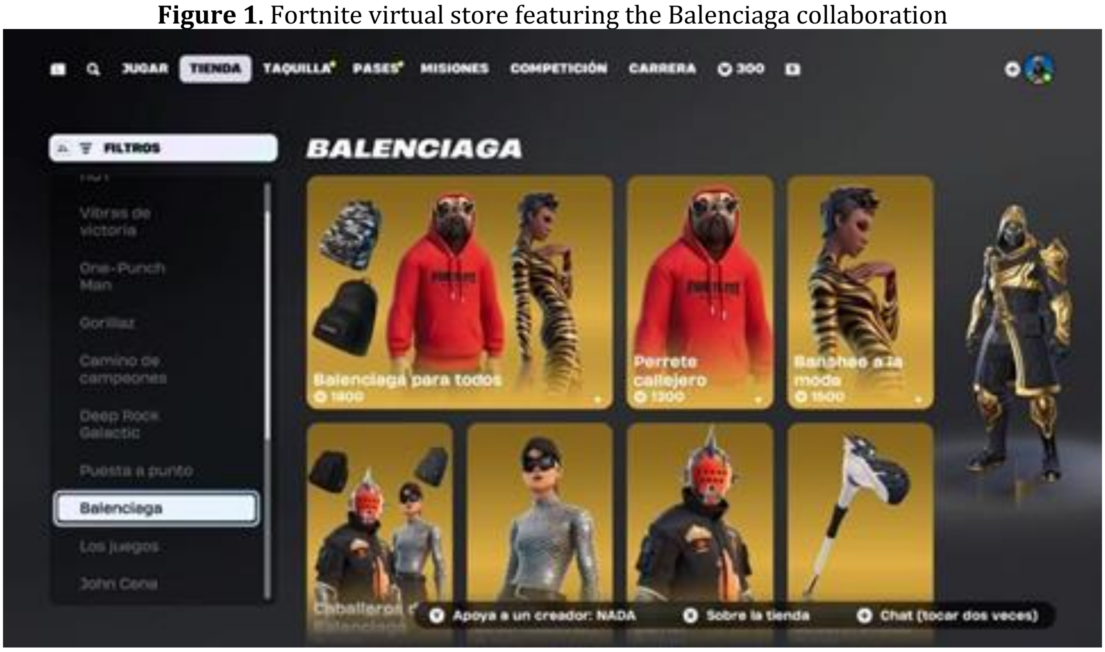
In relation to these concepts, Lehdonvirta and Castronova (2014) point out that virtual economies are deliberately designed to generate artificial scarcity, establish internal markets, and regulate the value of digital goods. To do this, they apply classic principles of microeconomics—supply, demand, market equilibrium—to playful environments. This perspective allows us to understand that F2P and GaaS strategies not only monetise the experience, but also configure authentic economic systems interconnected with the global economy.

In this regard, various authors, including Hidalgo Cerezo (2019), Zagal *et al*. (2013), Zendle and Cairns (2018) and the ACM (2023) have highlighted the risks associated with persuasive designs such as daily rewards, virtual currencies with opaque conversion or loot boxes, given their similarity to gambling dynamics and their impact on young players. These monetisation dynamics are intertwined with the *branded entertainment* strategies described in the previous section, integrating the brand into the gaming experience.

In this scenario, Roblox Corporation structures its economy around its virtual currency (Robux), in-app purchases, and immersive sponsorships. Roblox (n.d.) states in its *Advertising Standards* that it restricts advertising exposure to children under 13 and requires transparency in commercial communications. In 2024, e.l.f. Cosmetics became the first beauty brand to enable real commerce within Roblox through a virtual kiosk. Users in the United States could purchase physical products—such as a limited-edition sweatshirt, lip balm, and sunscreen—and receive a digital equivalent for their avatar (Silberstein, 2024). This in-game e-commerce pilot reinforces the trend toward hybrid commerce models that directly connect symbolic consumption with material consumption.

For its part, Epic Games focuses Fortnite's economy on battle passes and cosmetics, boosted by temporary collaborations and live events with broad cultural reach. Travis Scott's Astronomical concert in 2020 reached 12.3 million concurrent participants in a single session, according to official company data released in the mainstream media. In the fashion arena, the 2021 collaboration between Balenciaga and Fortnite integrated *skins* and digital objects with activations in physical stores, a case cited as an early example of *phygital* integration in a mass environment by publications specialising in *retail and* fashion (Maguire, 2021).

Figure 1. Fortnite virtual store featuring the Balenciaga collaboration



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

Figure 1 shows the digital accessories available to customise avatars as part of the Balenciaga and Fortnite collaboration (2021). This integration of fashion into the metaverse is an early example of convergence between digital culture and *branding* strategies, where brands transfer their symbolic universes to immersive environments through *skins* and virtual objects.

In this way, Roblox prioritises the creation of persistent universes by users and brands, with hybrid commerce integrated into the experience, while Fortnite relies on ephemeral events and global franchises to boost demand for cosmetics and passes. Both cases illustrate the diversity of F2P strategies that structure the relationship between integrated advertising, avatars and digital identity among young audiences.

As Jordan and Richterich (2022) point out, these models operate at the intersection between the digital economy and the creative economy, where cultural production and technological infrastructure feed into each other. In both cases, monetisation is intertwined with the construction of symbolic universes and immersive experiences, consolidating video games as a key node in the contemporary digital economy and reinforcing *branded entertainment* strategies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the research is to analyse *branded entertainment* and monetisation strategies in Roblox and Fortnite, evaluating their integration into the gaming experience and their impact on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of Generation Z, as well as the cultural and ethical implications derived from them. To achieve the overall objective, the following specific objectives are defined:

1. To examine the differences and similarities between Roblox and Fortnite in terms of advertising formats, *engagement* dynamics (FOMO, limited rewards, personalisation) and brand relationship models, identifying their influence on immersion and advertising acceptance.
2. To assess the degree of critical awareness among players regarding the commercial strategies present on these platforms and to propose guidelines for more ethical advertising design and for strengthening media literacy in digital gaming environments.

2.2. Research methods

This study adopts a mixed approach with quantitative and qualitative techniques, aimed at exploring the perception and impact of persuasive advertising strategies in video games on Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012). As observed in previous research, it is essential to understand the reactions of video gamers exposed to advertising stimuli in order to better understand their effectiveness (Niño *et al.,* 2019). In this regard, the research is structured as a longitudinal study, with two distinct phases that allow for the observation of possible variations in young people's relationship with video games and integrated advertising, marked by the post-pandemic context and the return to more face-to-face social dynamics.

The first phase was conducted in November 2022, at a time when the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on digital habits was still being felt. During this period, there was a significant increase in the use of video games and virtual platforms, which attracted advertising investment to these environments. The second phase took place between May and June 2025.

In both phases, convenience sampling was applied, using an online questionnaire (Google Forms) completed in the classroom. The survey included 29 mixed-format questions (dichotomous, multiple-choice and open-ended) and was designed to collect information on:

- Sociodemographic data (gender, age, education).
- Knowledge and use of virtual platforms.
- Recall of specific campaigns and brands.
- Perception of brand integration in video games.
- Level of acceptance of different advertising formats (videos, *skins*, branded worlds, etc.).
- Attitude towards so-called dark patterns.

In 2022, 80 valid responses were obtained, and in 2025, a total of 92, all from first and third-year students in the Advertising and Public Relations Degree programme at the Complutense University of Madrid. Based on these responses, the participants most relevant to the object of study were identified, following three main criteria: (1) being active video game players at least once a week, (2) having provided more detailed responses, and (3) declaring knowledge or experience with Fortnite and/or Roblox. These participants were selected for the next qualitative phase.

With this sample, online focus groups were organised through Google Meet. In 2022, 18 students participated in two sessions (N=10 and N=8), while in 2025, two additional groups were formed with a total of 15 participants (N=8 and N=7). To ensure diversity of perceptions, the groups were formed according to criteria of gender balance, in addition to previous experience in the use of video games.

Each session, lasting approximately 90 minutes, followed a semi-structured script that revisited the topics in the questionnaire and allowed for in-depth discussion of key issues such as gaming habits, knowledge of the metaverse and *advergaming,* avatar creation, experiences with brands, remembered advertising formats, dynamics associated with FOMO, valued rewards, purchases with virtual currency, and perceptions of the economic and ethical impact of advertising on the gaming experience.

Likewise, in June 2025, a systematic content analysis was carried out on the video games Roblox and Fortnite, chosen for their high profile, interactive richness and advertising sophistication. Fortnite has evolved from its initial *battle royale* format into a cultural and social ecosystem that integrates virtual concerts, collaborations with fashion, film and music brands, as well as *phygital* experiences that connect symbolic consumption with the material. Roblox, for its part, is configured as a platform for the creation and consumption of virtual worlds, where brands can develop "their own universes" that transcend the mere insertion of products to become persistent environments of interaction and consumption.

The relevance of analysing Fortnite and Roblox is reinforced by their prominent position in the 2024 global revenue *rankings*. In the PC and console market, Fortnite is among the titles with the highest revenues (Simon, 2024), while Roblox is also among the leading revenue generators in mobile video games (Clement, 2025). In this sense, Fortnite and Roblox not only represent two of the most influential environments for Generation Z but also offer an ideal framework for studying how integrated advertising can generate memorable experiences, reinforce *engagement* and, at the same time, raise ethical challenges related to transparency and the exposure of young audiences to advanced persuasive strategies.

The analysis was based on a matrix of persuasive techniques grounded in the theoretical models of Cialdini (1984), Fogg (2009), Zagal et al. (2013), and contemporary taxonomies applied to the *Game-as-a-Service (GaaS)* model (Brignull *et al.*, 2023; Goodstein, 2021; Veiga *et al.*, 2025). The variables observed included:

- Artificial urgency and time-based rewards
- Scheduled scarcity
- Personalisation (free or paid)
- Social pressure (rankings, achievements)
- Participation in brand experiences
- Direct interaction with branded objects or environments
- Emotional and progressive monetisation.

In addition to persuasive techniques, the presence of brands in each universe is analysed, taking into account brands named by *focus group* participants and following the classification of Rodríguez García and Baños González (2009): static, when there is visual presence without interaction (logos, posters, decorations); interactive, when the user can manipulate or use brand elements; special events, which involve ephemeral actions such as concerts or launches; and own universe, when the brand develops a persistent world within the game with its own aesthetics and mechanics.

3. Results

3.1. Surveys

In terms of video games and virtual platforms, in 2022 students reported being familiar mainly with Fortnite (86.7%), Minecraft (83.3%) and, to a lesser extent, Roblox (30%). In terms of use, 56.7% had played Fortnite, 50% had played Minecraft and only 6% had played Roblox. In 2025, the data reflects an increase in awareness of the three platforms: Fortnite (98%), Minecraft (95%) and Roblox (91.7%). In terms of usage, 83.3% said they had played Fortnite, 66.7% Minecraft and 50% Roblox.

Regarding the recall of specific campaigns and brands, Lego, Coca-Cola and Nike are mentioned repeatedly in both study periods. In 2022, fashion brands such as Ray-Ban, Balenciaga, Gucci, Zara, H&M and Prada predominated, along with music and entertainment collaborations such as Ariana Grande, Travis Scott, Marvel and Spiderman. In 2025, recall expanded to include food and beverage brands such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Red Bull, Starbucks, Burger King, McDonald's, Kinder and Nesquik, as well as new collaborations in Fortnite and Roblox with brands such as Marvel, Star Wars and DC.

In relation to the integration of brands in video games, students positively rated those linked to *skins*, clothing, virtual concerts, or cultural collaborations, provided they were perceived as a natural part of the game. Among the examples cited, in 2022, fashion, car, and fast-food brands integrated into video games such as Animal Crossing, Mario Kart, Rocket League, and Cyberpunk 2077 were mentioned. In 2025, however, students recalled the presence of clothing, beverage and entertainment brands in titles such as Fortnite, FIFA and Death Stranding, highlighting names such as Marvel, Nike, Jordan, Balenciaga and Monster. *Skins,* decorative elements and music linked to artists and fashion brands were also mentioned.

Regarding the level of acceptance of advertising, in 2022, 46% rated it as annoying or invasive, especially when it interrupted the flow of the game, compared to 54% who accepted it (33% positively and 2% conditionally, provided it did not alter the gaming experience). In 2025, acceptance increases to 67%, with 42% considering it appropriate if it is integrated naturally and 25% justifying it as necessary to keep the titles free. However, 17% still perceive it as excessive due to the saturation of advertisements. At the same time, there is a growing interest in obtaining benefits in exchange for advertising exposure: in 2022, 61% advocated being remunerated and 71% asked to be able to choose the type of advertisement, figures that rose to 67% and 83% respectively in 2025.

Finally, with regard to dark patterns, practices related to FOMO and limited rewards were identified in both years. In 2022, 40% of students said they had played motivated by not wanting to lose temporary benefits, 35% acknowledged doing so occasionally, and 25% denied being affected by these dynamics. In 2025, 58% acknowledged having acted under this influence and 33% occasionally. In terms of the most valued types of rewards, in 2022 functional rewards (advantages and skills) predominated, while in 2025 they diversified into aesthetic objects (42%), functional objects (33%), special experiences (17%), and social benefits such as public recognition (8%). In both years, in-game purchases remained low (10% in 2022 and 8% in 2025), focusing mainly on aesthetic customisation.

3.2. Focus groups

In 2022, more than half of the participants said they were familiar with the metaverse, which they mainly defined as a virtual world of interaction linked to Meta. In 2025, the proportion remained stable, although the descriptions took on a more technological tone, referring to 3D environments with avatars and immersive experiences. In terms of brands associated with this term, in 2022 Meta stood out alongside fashion and consumer brands such as Ray-Ban, Nike, Zara, H&M, Gucci, Balenciaga, Adidas and Coca-Cola, while in 2025, mentions of technology and video game companies such as Epic Games, Google, Unity, Microsoft, Apple, Roblox Corporation and Instagram predominated, in addition to recurring references to Meta, Nike and Amazon.

With regard to *advergaming*, in 2022 only 6 out of 18 said they were familiar with the concept. They described it as "video games created by brands for advertising purposes" or "a form of advertising in which companies pay to include their products in games". By 2025, awareness had increased: 9 out of 15 defined it as "video games that serve an advertising purpose," "a marketing technique that creates video games to promote something," or "a strategy through which companies connect with their audience through games." Among the most cited brands in 2022 were Adidas, Nike, Eastpak, Lego, Zara, Balenciaga, FIFA, Nintendo, Fortnite, Among Us, and Fall Guys; in 2025, students mentioned Epic Games, Roblox, Rockstar Games, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Pepsi, and Nike.

In terms of gaming frequency, in 2022 half of the participants played between once and twice a week. In 2025, eight out of fifteen said they played three or four times a week and one almost daily. Fortnite, Minecraft and Roblox were known to all, although not everyone had played them. Most had tried Fortnite and Minecraft, while Roblox was less widely used. In terms of affinity, students indicated a greater preference for Fortnite, which they identified as their platform of choice, while Roblox appeared to be more linked to brand campaigns and collaborations, such as Gucci, Mango, Vans, Fenty Beauty, Warner Bros, H&M, Givenchy, Tommy Hilfiger, Walmart, and Nike, among others. At this point, a tension emerged between belonging and differentiation: "wearing the same *skin* as everyone else" functions as a group marker, while the acquisition and customisation of *skins* is aimed at singularising identity and projecting the player's prominence (e.g., Batman's car, Messi's *skin*).

In contrast, Fortnite is more closely associated with immersive entertainment experiences, such as concerts by Travis Scott or Ariana Grande, and collaborations with Lego, Balenciaga, Marvel, Star Wars, and the Coachella festival. Participants highlighted Fortnite modes such as Battle Royale and Blitz Royale, the relevance of in-store promotions, the ability to customise avatars, and the appeal of level progression. In the case of Roblox, the most valued aspect was the community that is generated around the platform and the interaction between players.

Perceptions of advertising showed clear differences between the two periods. In 2022, half of the participants (9 out of 18) said that it had no impact on them at all: "it doesn't affect me at all" or "I don't think that, as a video game user, advertising has any impact on me". The rest pointed out various effects: some on the direct experience ("you pay more attention, as it interrupts the game"), others on the social dimension ("contributing to a capitalist society", "rejection"). There were also those who considered it an opportunity for brands: "it's a good way to reach young people", "it has a positive impact for the advertiser if it doesn't interrupt the player", and several highlighted that it could spark interest in real products: "in wanting it physically", "they introduce you to certain products".

In 2025, a clearer majority (10 out of 15) agreed that advertising can be positive if it is well implemented: "the brand reaches more viewers and can improve the player's experience," "it combines active attention with positive emotions, which makes you remember the brand better," or "I am impressed by those that are well done, subtle and brief." A minority (5 out of 15) remained critical, warning that "it interrupts the flow of the game," "it could be invasive if poorly implemented," or that it ends up "encouraging you to buy what you see in the video game in person."

In terms of gameplay dynamics, several students acknowledged pressures linked to FOMO, such as attending virtual concerts or advancing more quickly in the game. In 2022, the most valued rewards were aesthetic items — "*skins,* clothing, emotes" — while in 2025, interest expanded to include special experiences such as concerts or exclusive events, without neglecting functional advantages. In both years, social rewards linked to *rankings* or public recognition were also mentioned. Beyond these motivations, one participant alluded to the competitive impulse itself and the intensity of the gaming experience, noting that "it's not so much about the reward, but about wanting to finish the game," which connects to more aggressive monetisation dynamics, in which players end up paying to continue advancing.

With regard to purchases, almost all of them said they had not spent money on virtual currencies such as V-Bucks or Robux. In 2022, only three acknowledged any occasional spending; in 2025, six out of 15 admitted to making micro-payments. One student mentioned buying keys on the Steam market to open boxes in CS:GO, while one participant explained that she made purchases motivated by the desire to have in real life what she saw in the video game. As another pointed out, "even though I don't like spending money, sometimes peer pressure makes you want the same *skin* that everyone else has." This practice was observed more frequently among males, who referred to functional or competitive items, compared to females, who referred mainly to aesthetic elements.

3.3. Content analysis

A comparative analysis of Roblox and Fortnite reveals a variety of advertising strategies that combine persuasive communication techniques with immersive dynamics specific to each environment.

Both platforms operate under the *Game-as-a-Service (GaaS)* model, which allows for constant content updates and flexible brand integration. However, they differ substantially in the way they structure their advertising strategies, the type of experiences they offer, and the degree of control they exercise over the commercial environment.

The following table (Table 1) summarises the main persuasive techniques used in Roblox and Fortnite, classified according to their dynamics of urgency, scarcity, reward, personalisation, and narrative integration.

Table 1. Comparative table

Persuasive Technique	Roblox	Fortnite
Urgency/Limited time	Daily events, *login* rewards	Limited-time exclusive skins and items
Artificial scarcity	Rare items, restricted access by level	Rotating shops with temporary offers
Progressive rewards	Level ups and scaled virtual currencies	Battle pass with gradual unlocking
Gamification of consumption	Kiosks, missions, coins for purchasing clothing	Challenges with aesthetic rewards
Paid customisation	Avatars, clothing, gestures, items	Skins, backpacks, wings, dances
Social pressure / Rankings	Rankings based on matches won or points	Shared achievements, public matches, replays
Transmedia narrative	Limited to sponsored worlds	Integration with Marvel, Star Wars, concerts
Participation in *live* events	Gucci Town, Vans World, Warner Bros tickets	Travis Scott, Ariana Grande, Lego
Monetisation model	Programmatic; revenue from impressions and visits to sponsored worlds	Microtransactions, premium collaborations, special events
Ad types	Immersive video, static 3D image, teleportation portals	Events, *skins*, themed worlds
Conditions for advertisers	Policy review: *targeting* children under 13 is not permitted	Direct collaboration with *Epic Games*; no open system
Control for minors	Strict age filter; advertisements visible only to 13+	Complies with COPPA and ESRB, but no visible restrictions
Brand presence formats	Static, interactive, hyperactive (freemium/paid); avatarisation	Full integration into narrative and aesthetics; episodic experience
Brand examples	Gucci, H&M, Givenchy, Tommy Hilfiger, Walmart, Nike	Marvel, LEGO, Balenciaga, Star Wars, Travis Scott, Coachella
Legal controversies	Criticism for ambiguity between gaming and advertising; recent regulation	Lawsuits for child manipulation; criticism for use of FOMO

Source: Own elaboration, 2025

Both platforms implement persuasion techniques such as artificial urgency, escalating rewards, social pressure, and emotional monetisation, but their intensity varies. Roblox generates daily loyalty through *login* routines, missions, and seasonal *drops*. Fortnite triggers emotional peaks through ephemeral events, with an aesthetic and cultural charge that transcends the playful.

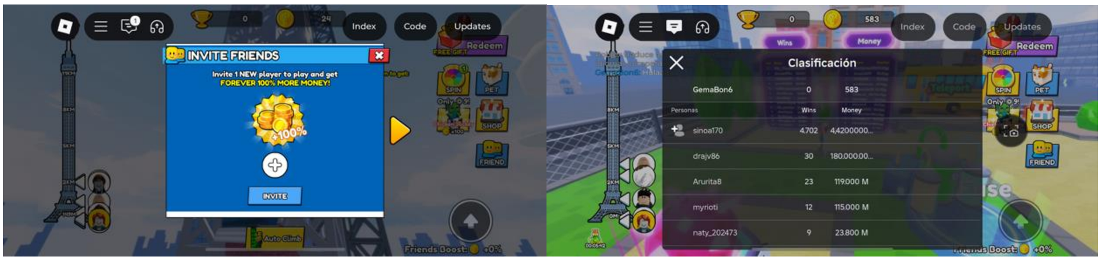
The following images (Figure 2 and Figure 3) visually illustrate these dynamics: from battle pass rewards to the Fortnite store, or competitive *rankings* and reward systems in Roblox.

Figure 2. Rewards in Fortnite

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

One of the most relevant elements in the monetisation of these platforms is the use of virtual currency. In Roblox, users employ Robux, which can be purchased or earned in limited quantities and are used to customise avatars, access brand experiences, or purchase both digital and physical products. In Fortnite, the economy revolves around V-Bucks, which are obtained through direct purchase or through the battle pass. This currency unlocks *skins,* gestures, and aesthetic objects that reinforce personalisation and emotional engagement with the virtual environment and the brands that inhabit it. In both cases, the circulation of digital currency boosts the internal economy and consolidates the symbolic consumption model in immersive environments.

Figure 3. Currencies and invitations



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

In addition, Roblox allows physical product catalogues to be integrated into the environment itself, as is the case with Fenty Beauty or Twin Atlas, where users can purchase lip-gloss or a sweatshirt that also exists in the real world. This fusion of gaming and physical consumption turns the advertising experience into an extension of youth lifestyle. The most visible brands in these environments focus on aesthetics and continuous interaction, favouring formats such as kiosks, branded coins, unlockable challenges and rewards for customisation.

In contrast, Fortnite prioritises a more closed logic, based on spectacle and temporary exclusivity. Brands do not design persistent environments but rather insert themselves into specific high-impact moments, such as concerts (Travis Scott or Ariana Grande), collaborations with narrative sagas such as Marvel, Star Wars or LEGO, or limited-edition *skin* launches. Of the fifteen brands analysed, only two have created their own worlds within the game, such as Coachella and Star Wars, reinforcing a model based on episodic narratives and short-lived global actions. In this context, persuasive strategies rely on techniques such as programmed scarcity, time-limited rewards and aspirational aesthetics. Users are encouraged to spend tees or V-Bucks so as not to lose unique items or visual identities associated with cultural capital. This dynamic is reinforced by elements of social pressure—such as public *rankings* or replays—and reward mechanics that link progress to financial investment.

The visual representation of insertion strategies also varies: Roblox focuses on a diversity of formats—static, interactive, hyperactive presence and its own universes—while Fortnite concentrates its offering on *skins,* customisable items and mass events.

Table 2. Types of brand advertising presence on Roblox

Marca	Estática	Interactiva	Eventos	Universo propio
Nike	No	Sí	Sí	Sí
Escada	Sí	No	No	Sí
Gucci	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Hyundai	Sí	Sí	No	Sí
Mango	Sí	No	No	No
Vans	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Samsung	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
IKEA	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Fenty Beauty	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Warner Bros	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Carrefour	Sí	No	No	No
Walmart	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Tommy Hilfiger	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Givenchy	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
H&M	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Harrods	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Burberry	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Nicki Minaj	Sí	Sí	Sí	No

Source**:** Own elaboration, 2025

Table 2 shows the diversity of advertising insertion strategies used by companies in the virtual universe of Roblox, grouped according to the type of presence: static, interactive, special events and implementation of their own universes.

One of the most widespread resources among brands is static presence, visible in most cases through logos, displayed products or decorative settings that reinforce visual identity without requiring direct interaction.

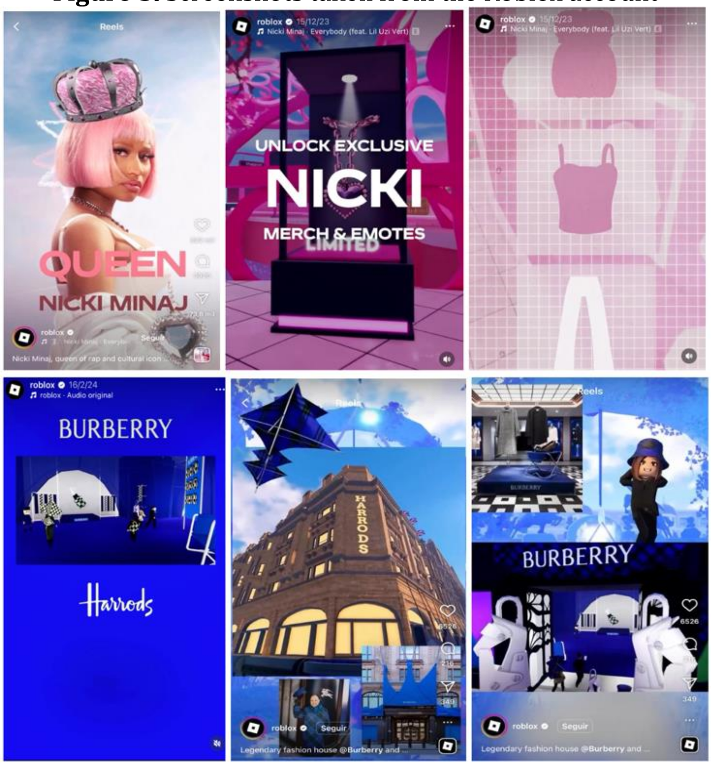
Interactivity, meanwhile, has taken on special prominence as a key resource for *engagement.* Spaces such as Nikeland, Gucci Town, Samsung Superstar Galaxy, and Vans World invite users to actively participate through mini-games, exploration of spaces, or character customisation, creating a more intense emotional connection with the brand.

Figure 4. Screenshots taken in Nikeland and Vans World

Source**:** Own elaboration, 2025

The deployment of special or hyperactive events has established itself as a key strategy for generating peaks of attention and virality in virtual environments. These ephemeral experiences—such as Gucci Bloom Launch, Nicki Minaj's musical collaborations, or seasonal *drops* from Fenty, Harrods, or Burberry—are based on dynamics of urgency and exclusivity that encourage mass participation. In particular, seasonal *drops* refer to the limited release of virtual products or rewards associated with strategic moments in the calendar—Christmas, spring, cultural festivals, among others. Their temporary nature triggers FOMO, which motivates repeat visits and encourages users to return. The figure of Nicki Minaj—rapper and global pop icon—exemplifies this strategy by integrating virtual concerts with the restricted sale of *merchandise* and emotes (animations and digital gestures that allow avatars to express themselves through dances, greetings, or other actions), merging music, fashion, and digital identity into a single ecosystem.

Figure 5. Screenshots taken from the Roblox account



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

Finally, the development of proprietary universes represents the most advanced level of advertising integration in the metaverse. Notable examples include fashion and lifestyle brands such as Gucci, H&M, Tommy Hilfiger, Burberry and Givenchy, which have created persistent and thematically cohesive environments where the brand is not only displayed but inhabited. These spaces extend the experience beyond the specific campaign and reinforce user loyalty.

Fortnite, on the other hand, favours the logic of scarcity and exclusivity. Collaborations with companies such as Marvel or artists such as Travis Scott are activated as massive, limited events, generating FOMO and reinforcing players' identity through unique *skins* and objects. The transmedia narrative enhances emotional connection and brand recall, turning each action into a collective experience with high visual and cultural impact.

Table 3. Types of brand advertising presence in Fortnite

Marca	Estática	Interactiva	Eventos	Universo propio
Travis Scott	No	Sí	Sí	No
Ariana Grande	No	Sí	Sí	No
Lego	No	Sí	Sí	Sí
Star Wars	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Marvel	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Balenciaga	Sí	Sí	No	No
Nike	Sí	Sí	No	No
Coachella	Sí	Sí	Sí	Sí
Ferrari	Sí	Sí	No	No
Naruto	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
JBalvin	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Moncler	Sí	Sí	No	No
FIFA	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Wu-Tang Clan	Sí	Sí	Sí	No
Wu Wear	Sí	Sí	Sí	No

Source**:** Own elaboration, 2025

The data extracted from the advertising presence maps (Table 2 and Table 3) reveal notable differences in the way Roblox and Fortnite articulate brand identity within their environments. In Roblox, 10 of the 18 brands analysed have developed their own universe, i.e. a virtual space designed specifically to represent their mission, vision and values, with customised mechanics, narrative and aesthetics. These worlds function as authentic "brand spaces" in which the user not only observes but also inhabits and interacts. Examples include Gucci Town, Vans World, Tommy Play and Samsung Superstar Galaxy.

This model allows brands to establish a more lasting and symbolic connection with players, encouraging avatar customisation, digital collecting and the integration of *phygital* elements (as is the case with Fenty Beauty). The variety of formats—from static presence to hyperactive and interactive elements—adapts to the communication needs of each brand and reinforces its positioning in the youth universe. The possibility of establishing missions, unlocks or challenges turns the experience into an extended brand narrative, in which values are embodied in concrete actions.

In Fortnite, only two of the 15 brands represented have managed to establish their own universe (LEGO and Coachella). However, their strategy does not seek continuity, but immediate impact. Brands are inserted through mass events, concerts, *skins* and themed challenges. Examples such as the Travis Scott and Ariana Grande concerts or the collaborations with Marvel and Star Wars show a spectacular and episodic approach that generates virality, high symbolic value and short-term recall. This type of presence, although temporary, tends to activate dynamics of exclusivity (limited *drops*), urgency and FOMO, which are very effective with young audiences.

Both platforms agree on privileging hyperactive presence: the brand is incorporated into the avatar's body, the visual environment or the mechanics of the game. This type of insertion has high engagement potential, as it transforms symbolic consumption into personalised action. However, they differ in their relational model: while Roblox focuses on prolonged coexistence and familiarisation with brand values, Fortnite emphasises spectacle, scarcity and collective celebration.

As for brands, these strategies are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Some brands, such as Nike, have adopted multi-platform strategies, adapting to the language of each environment. Nike, for example, has created Nikeland on Roblox, while on Fortnite it has launched limited *skins* associated with its sports lines. The same is true of Gucci and Balenciaga, which combine immersive universes on Roblox with episodic collaborations on Fortnite. Samsung has leveraged its technological presence to launch interactive experiences on Roblox and promotional rewards linked to devices on Fortnite. Adidas, for its part, appears on Roblox through clothing and visual content, while its most direct association with Fortnite has been through FIFA, where branded kits can be purchased.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this research highlight the growing sophistication of video games as *branded entertainment* platforms, especially in the cases of Roblox and Fortnite, which stand out for their highly persuasive and immersive advertising insertion strategies. However, beyond confirming the effectiveness of these techniques, the study reveals tensions and ambivalence in the way Generation Z—although mostly receptive—positions itself towards them.

The quantitative data from the survey, later confirmed in focus groups, shows that in 2025 Roblox achieved a higher level of awareness, but its actual use was lower than that of Fortnite, which remained the preferred gaming platform. In the focus groups, students associated Roblox more with brand campaigns and collaborations—such as Gucci, Vans, Warner Bros., H&M, Givenchy, Tommy Hilfiger, Walmart, and Nike—than with personal gaming experiences, reinforcing the idea that its notoriety comes more from what circulates socially and, in the media, than from direct practice. In contrast, Fortnite was perceived as an immersive entertainment space, with great appeal due to its live events (Travis Scott, Ariana Grande) and cultural collaborations with Lego, Balenciaga, Marvel, Star Wars, and Coachella, consolidating it as the platform most closely linked to shared and intense experiences within youth culture.

This phenomenon reinforces one of the study's central conclusions: the most effective advertising is not necessarily the most explicit, but rather that which manages to integrate itself into the player's experience without breaking the immersion, especially when it adopts interactive or hyperactive formats, following the typology of Rodríguez García and Baños González (2009), which allow the user to experience the brand from within the playful environment, rather than just observing it. In Roblox, this translates into habitable and persistent brand universes that allow interaction, customisation and play within their own aesthetic narrative. In Fortnite, meanwhile, the key lies in ephemeral spectacle and the emotional connection with global entertainment figures, especially urban music and trap-pop, categories that are particularly influential among young people.

A relevant finding is that, although the participants are now adults, most began playing in childhood or adolescence. As a result, they normalise practices such as avatar customisation, *skin* purchases, or attending virtual events, without always being fully aware of the commercial dynamics that underpin them. This lack of awareness opens the door to uncritical consumption patterns.

The relationship with brands is generally positive if the advertising is well integrated, non-invasive, and emotionally engaging. However, criticism also emerges—especially among women in the group—towards dynamics that pressure spending or use limited rewards to induce purchases. These observations coincide with what was identified in the content analysis: both Roblox and Fortnite activate systems of artificial urgency, scarcity and emotional monetisation, which encourage *engagement* but also generate dependency.

Roblox, in this sense, stands out for its habit-oriented approach: daily rewards, digital collectibles, and branded universes that encourage repetition and free exploration. Its link to physical commerce, through Roblox and platforms such as Shopify, consolidates a hybrid model where the playful environment and real consumption overlap. Fortnite, for its part, focuses on high-impact, limited-duration actions: events that become viral phenomena, campaigns that activate the fear of missing out (FOMO) *and* objects that reinforce the player's symbolic capital.

This analysis highlights that video games are not closed products, but dynamic and relational environments where brands construct cultural meanings that are integrated into the user's experience. Both platforms currently represent the most advanced example of the *GaaS* model focused on advertising entertainment and emotional communication with young people.

However, the effectiveness of these strategies also requires a critical eye. The naturalisation of the gamification of consumption at an early age is reflected in practices linked to *skins* and aesthetic objects, which operate as signs of belonging and differentiation in digital environments. The social pressure associated with "wearing the same *skin* as everyone else" or participating in exclusive collaborations with brands such as Balenciaga or Nike shows how virtual aesthetics become a factor of integration and comparison, decisive in the construction of youth identity. Added to this is the lack of transparency in monetisation mechanisms, where seemingly innocuous rewards end up serving as a gateway to more recurrent and sophisticated spending practices. These dynamics, already identified in pioneering *phygital* experiences such as the collaboration between Balenciaga and Fortnite (Maguire, 2021), highlight the need for greater responsibility on the part of developers, regulators and educators to ensure safer and more consumption-critical gaming environments. In this context, media literacy—particularly with regard to the commercial use of digital identity—is emerging as a priority line of research for understanding how players negotiate these consumption logics and for fostering a more critical relationship with virtual environments.

For all these reasons, the results obtained allow us to affirm that the research objectives have been achieved. The comparative analysis of advertising content in Roblox and Fortnite has made it possible to identify their differentiated strategies of *branded entertainment* and monetisation, as well as their impact on Generation Z's immersion and acceptance of advertising, thus fulfilling the general objective and the first of the specific objectives. Similarly, the degree of critical awareness of players regarding these commercial dynamics has been evaluated, detecting tensions and opportunities for more ethical advertising design and for strengthening media literacy, which fully responds to the second specific objective.

Despite the results obtained, this study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. On the one hand, the sample focused on university students, which limits generalisation to other age groups or sociocultural contexts. On the other hand, the analysis focused on two specific video games—Roblox and Fortnite—so the conclusions cannot be directly extrapolated, although they do serve to contextualise this phenomenon.

In conclusion, Roblox and Fortnite embody two distinct but complementary models of *branded entertainment*: one more oriented towards aesthetic permanence and continuous personalisation; the other more focused on emotional impact and cultural virality. Both explore new forms of connection between brands and users, where the avatar becomes a commercial interface, the environment a narrative channel, and emotion a driver of consumption.

As future lines of research, we propose to deepen the critical analysis of perception through individual interviews and gender segmentation; to expand the quantitative sample and contrast it with younger audiences; and to include other emerging platforms such as Horizon Worlds, Zepeto, Spatial, and VR Chat, especially in relation to educational, artistic, or institutional experiences. Within this framework, it is particularly important to advance the study of media literacy applied to the commercial dimension of digital identity, in order to equip young people with critical tools to navigate increasingly commercialised virtual environments.

5. Acknowledgements

This work is part of the project Persuasive Communication in Video Games as a Service: Problematic Uses among Generation Z – PERVID GEN Z (PR17/24-31893), funded by the agreement between the Community of Madrid and the Complutense University of Madrid.

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