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VIDEO GAMES AS COMMUNICATION REALITY

Abstract: *Video games, as a medium that massively captures the attention of the modern population, translate the audience from the real to the virtual space while establishing a ritual of community in which the boundaries between the real and the virtual are insufficiently clearly drawn. While playing, the players get to know other participants at the same time, they join discussion forums where they present their opinions, but at the same time they also exchange other people's experiences. These associations modify their attitudes and united identities. In this paper, the authors conduct a research with the intention of indicating how much video games are represented and what is the opinion of the interviewees about whether communication with teammates can replace communication and socializing from the real world, as well as whether they accept other people's views.*

Key words: *video games, players, communication, attitudes*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The game is a constant companion of man and has changed throughout history following the changes in society. A person plays games throughout his life, but those games differ depending on his maturation and changing interests. With the advent of the Internet, there are drastic changes in human society. A new, parallel space is being created that offers an alternative reality in which various opportunities for socializing, exchanging opinions, forming, but also modifying already formed attitudes are opening up. The game also follows this new direction of development of human society and changes by moving into the virtual space in the form of a video game. New groups are formed online that are accessed by virtual players, who meet there, make friends, and exchange their knowledge and interests. In this way, by adopting other people's experiences, they upgrade their own experiences from the real world and their identities. The game was an area that science did not particularly deal with. The game was considered to be just a game and nothing more. „Only with the book *Homo ludens* by Johan Huizinga does the phenomenon of play begin to be studied from a new, philosophical and sociological point of view“.¹ The game is tempting to fill free time precisely because of its fun character and freedom of choice. „Man plays in order to play,“ says Tadić (1985: 15) and points to the specificity of play, in relation to all other human activities, which leads to satisfaction due to play itself. However, the game is not only a leap from everyday life into the sphere of pleasure and a mode for fulfilling free time. Video gaming is an area that should never be overlooked, both for its positive and negative impact on players. Positive aspects relate to socializing, communication, education and identity development. Negative aspects can manifest themselves when gaming becomes addictive to players or when there are security risks online.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

„The advancement of technology has contributed to the creation of virtual communities that change people, the way they communicate with each other and their self-knowledge“.² There is theoretical and empirical evidence of the importance of play in the process of improving the presentation of an individual's personal identity and his adaptive abilities to changes in the social environment³, because play contributes to the cognitive and social emotional development of participants.⁴

The game is not „ordinary“ or „real“ life. It is, first of all, coming out of it into a temporary sphere of activity with some own aspiration.⁵ The game allows players to develop a

¹ Tadić, B. (1985). *Misterija igre (od magijskih rituala do političkih mitova)*. Titograd: Univerzitetska riječ, p. 10.

² Turkle, S. (1995). *Life On The Screen*. New York City: Simon & Schuster, p.232.

³ Mainemelis, C. and Ronson, S. (2006). „Ideas are born in fields of play: towards a theory of play and creativity in organizational settings“. *Research on Organizational Behavior* 27: 81-131.

⁴ Singer, D., Michnick, G. R. and Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2006). *Play=Learning: How Play Motivates and Enhances Children's Cognitive and Social-emotional Growth*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Huizinga, J. (1992). *Homo ludens- o podrijetlu kulture u igri*. Zagreb: Naprijed, p.15.

sense of belonging to a special kind of community that brings together those who play and who are different from everyone else, because „each individual has an awareness of himself and of his belonging to a certain group of people with whom he shares beliefs, values and attitudes that differ in relation to some other group“.⁶

The game is not only concerned with the imitation of the existing world and culture, nor the copying of the existing identities of the players, but very often offers compensation to the participants of the game. „Game makes up for what she doesn't have in life; it fills the gaps in reality with illusory contents, movements, values“.⁷

„A video game is a cultural object, related to history and materiality, consisting of an electronic computer device and a game simulated in software“⁸. The video game asks the player to follow the rules set by the game designer, solve puzzles and achieve certain goals. Most video games provide participants with the opportunity to become victorious, either by „incapacitating“ all enemies, or by solving set puzzles. The critical difference between previous media and digital media, in this case, is that the interactive narrative of playing a game does not exist without players, who, by joining video games, act as an active audience that brings social reality into the imaginary world, i.e. into the world of acting⁹. The video game, as a global digital medium, gathers players beyond precisely demarcated ethnic boundaries, due to which there is a meeting of different identities and cultural values of players who, within the gaming community, look for values that connect them and this leads to a sense of closeness among the members of the virtual gaming group.¹⁰

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This article reports on a survey conducted to determine whether the pleasure of playing video games influences video games dedication and affect players thinking that they will deal with video games in the future.

The objectives of this study are twofold:

- i. To test whether the pleasure of playing video games influences video games dedication of the respondents?
- ii. To test whether that Socializing and exchanging opinions online changes existing player identities.

By analyzing existing theoretical considerations on the activities of playing video games and the impact of playing on provoking a sense of satisfaction that drives to dedication to playing a video game and lead to the player's decision to see themselves as dedicated players in the future, the following hypotheses have been posed:

⁶ Baltezarević, V. and Baltezarević, R. (2010). Corporate submission. *Themida* 13(3): 83-96, p.86.

⁷ Tadić, B. (1985). *Misterija igre (od magijskih rituala do političkih mitova)*. Titograd: Univerzitetska riječ, p. 18.

⁸ Galloway, 2006). Galloway, A. R. (2006). *Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture* (1st ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press, p. 1.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Johnson, F. and Menichelli, K. (2007). *What's Going on in Community Media*. Washington: Benton Foundation.

H1: The pleasure of playing video games influences video games dedication

H2: Socializing and exchanging opinions online changes existing player identities

Sample and data collection

The questionnaire with closed-type questions was composed of two parts. In the first part, questions were posed regarding the demographic profile of the respondents (gender, age and level of education). The second part of the questionnaire requested the respondents to answer closed-ended questions related to their about the reasons for playing video games, where respondents were offered answers in reference to the Likert scale of attitudes, anchored: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neither agree nor disagree, 4 Agree 5. Strongly agree.

The research was carried out by the authors through a specially prepared questionnaire sent to 625 addresses from the lists of video game buyers of video games in Belgrade (Republic of Serbia). Data was collected in the period from June 2022 to November 2022. A total of 297 fully filled questionnaires were selected for further research. The IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS) was used to analyse the data collected from the survey.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N =297)

Demographic		n	%
Gender	Male	134	45.10
	Female	163	54.9
Age	18-25	138	46.5
	26-35	68	22.9
	36-45	46	15.5
	46-55	32	10.8
	56-65	13	4.4
Education	High school	61	20.5
	Bachelor	114	38.4
	Master	84	28.3
	Doctorate	38	12.8
Playing games	1-6 months	4	1.3
	6-12 months	24	8.1
	More than 12 months	11	3.7
	More than 3 years	258	86.9

Table 1 shows descriptive demographics of the respondents. The respondents were more female respondents (54.9%) than men (45.1%), mostly in 26-35 years of age group (46.51%). Most of respondents had a Bachelor degree (38.4%). Most respondents playing games more than 3 years (86.9%).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Finally, the reliability test was conducted using Cronbach alpha reliability to ensure consistency of the data collected.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics Results

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.942	.942	10

The values for all the dimensions were 0.942 indicating high internal consistency.

Given that it is a small number of variables in the obtained data, the mean value is observed,

Table 3. The mean value

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
RQ1	3.40	1.132	297
RQ2	3.42	.991	297
RQ3	3.24	1.007	297
RQ4	3.34	1.109	297
RQ5	3.36	1.004	297
RQ6	3.37	1.129	297
RQ7	2.82	1.169	297
RQ8	3.34	1.109	297
RQ9	3.43	1.031	297
RQ10	3.47	1.165	297

Case is in the range of mean value are .282 to .347 which is an acceptable value.¹¹

The result of the testing H1: The pleasure of playing video games influences video games dedication:

Table 4. The Chi-Square Tests Results for H1

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	263.327 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	187.451	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	100.086	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	297		

a. 10 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.56.

¹¹ Cohen, J. (2013). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

Table 5. Symmetric Measures Results for H1

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.581	.050	12.276	.000 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.590	.044	12.542	.000 ^c
N of Valid Cases		297			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
 b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
 c. Based on normal approximation.

The result of the Chi square test shows that $\chi^2(16, 1) = 263.327^a$, $p > 0.01$, which means that there is statistically significant correlation between the investigated variables. Pearsons R = .581 shows that there is a positive high correlation and H1 is confirmed.

The result of the testing H2: Socializing and exchanging opinions online changes existing player identities:

Table 6. The Chi-Square Tests Results for H2

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	351.623 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	317.247	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	84.927	1	.000
N of Valid Cases		297	

a. 8 cells (32.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.13.

Table 7. Symmetric Measures Results for H2

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.536	.058	10.895	.000 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.540	.060	11.027	.000 ^c
N of Valid Cases		297			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
 b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.
 c. Based on normal approximation.

The result of the Chi square test shows that $\chi^2(16, 1) = 351.623^a$, $p > 0.01$, which means that there is statistically significant correlation between the investigated variables. Pearson's $R = .536$ shows that there is a positive high correlation and H2 is confirmed.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper shows the role of play as an inseparable companion of human society. The modern environment and the emergence of new technologies have formed a parallel, virtual space in which virtual players compete. By exchanging experiences, attitudes and cultural identities, players accept other people's cultural values, which leads to the modification of their identities. The analysis of respondents' attitudes provided answers to the research questions, the validity of which we tested in this paper. The results of empirical research show that the pleasure of playing video games influences video games dedication of the respondents, as well as that Socializing and exchanging opinions online changes existing player identities.

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VIDEO IGRE KAO KOMUNIKACIJSKA STVARNOST

Apstrakt: *Video igre, kao medij koji masovno zaokuplja pažnju savremene populacije, prevode publiku iz realnog u virtuelni prostor uz uspostavljanje rituala zajedništva u kome su nedovoljno jasno iscrtane granice između realnog i virtuelnog. Dok igraju igrači se istovremeno upoznaju sa drugim učesnicima, priključuju se diskusionim formama na kojima plasiraju svoja mišljenja ali istovremeno razmenjuju i tuđa iskustva. Ova druženja modifikuju njihove stavove i unite identitete. U ovom radu autori vrše istraživanje s namerom da ukažu na to koliko je video igra zastupljena i kakvo je mišljenje ispitanika o tome da li komunikacija sa saigračima može da zameni komunikaciju i druženje iz realnog sveta, kao i da li prihvataju tuđe stavove.*

Ključne reči: *video igre, igrači, komunikacija, stavovi*