

Political Marketing in Digital Games: 'Game Over' for Traditional Political Marketing Methods

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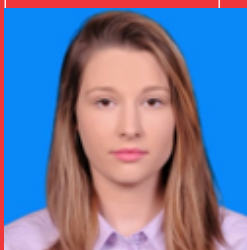
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ABSTRACT:

This study focuses on digital games that have become powerful persuasion tools which can be utilized for political marketing purposes. The authors believe that these media have to be thoroughly explored, because of the great potential of these platforms to become very useful tools for setting up political messages and the outreach capacity to the voting segment being difficult to achieve if only traditional media are used. The paper provides a set of theoretical views on political marketing in digital games. There are many examples analyzed in the paper, proving that the techniques of political marketing can create big benefits and that they can help politicians achieve their goals. So, we hypothesized a new phase of political marketing, underpinned by the utilization of digital games. As a methodology, we used content analysis of various digital games. The aim of this paper is to offer a better understanding of the benefits of political marketing campaigns in the digital gaming industry and to explore the role and impact of these techniques, as well as to provide potential future directions of this form of marketing.

KEY WORDS:

digital games, future directions, political marketing, political messages.

Introduction

Nowadays in many countries, political marketing is becoming an unavoidable strategy of political communication. Modern times require more advanced approaches. Political and marketing experts are aware that the traditional techniques of communication are not enough to win elections. Holding speeches in front of a television audience, organizing political rallies in city squares, or using posters and newspaper articles in order to promote political ideology does not have the sufficient leverage anymore to provide politicians any substantial advantage during the elections. For more effective media positioning, politicians are required to pay deeper attention to new kinds of digital media, that seem to appear and develop at an accelerated pace. In recent years, in many countries, political marketing has taken a greater role in the digital gaming industry. The creators of political campaigns have been starting to recognize that digital games are becoming a central part of our cultures and daily routines, which affects various aspects of our everyday lives, including consumption trends, communities, and the formation of identity.¹ Today, digital games, as the world's fastest-growing and newest mass medium, are part of everyday life for many people.² Digital games have the ability to be political products and to reflect, interpret, and sometimes even redefine the political dynamics with which we engage every day. The knowledge that it is the platform of the future, for shaping young brains and ultimately guiding young people to form 'desirable and acceptable' attitudes toward political issues, creates the need for this topic to be studied in greater detail. Modern political marketing has quickly noticed that digital games have the potential of becoming one of the main tools of political communication. In the middle of the 20th century, mass marketing

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- 1 For more information, see: HALL, S.: *The Origins of Cultural Studies: A Lecture*. Northampton, MA : Media Education Foundation, 2006.
 - 2 ROKOŠNÝ, I.: Digital Games as a Cultural Phenomenon: A Brief History and Current State. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 49-60.

was very popular, using mass media like television or the printed press. At the end of the 20th century, direct marketing has slowly started to assume the leading role by developing phoning, mass mailing, and use of surveys.³ For political marketing, digital games are still not a key medium in the political media landscape, but it is just a matter of time until these platforms will be recognized as a fruitful political medium which has the capacity to generate new voters.

In this study, we primarily reflect on the theoretical approach to the field of political marketing and we discuss the use of digital games as a new media tool not only for political campaigning, but also for placement views on different social issues and ethical dilemmas, which is supported by a range of examples. Finally, the paper provides possible future directions of political marketing development. The article aims to provide explanations of the new phase of political marketing, underpinned by the utilization of digital games.

Political Marketing

Political scientists have used the term political marketing in the context of political communications in immediate pre-election periods.⁴ Political Marketing is not just related to political advertising; it is a set of strategies and tools for studying public opinion before and during elections, in order to develop campaign communications and to evaluate their impact.⁵ Political Marketing is the mix between marketing and politics as “it represents the permeation of the political arena by marketing”.⁶ The use of marketing in politics may help “political parties to address diverse voter needs through marketing analyses, planning, implementation and control of political campaigns”,⁷ and “the main goal of political marketing is to enable voters and political parties to make the most satisfactory decisions”.⁸ However, Bannon, Johansen, as well as Henneberg and O’Shaughnessy argue that a relationship-building approach by political marketing could establish a solid foundation for more fruitful interactions between voters and political institutions.⁹ Political marketing is often associated with something negative and is assumed to be harmful to politics and democratic systems.¹⁰ Political marketing can utilize many techniques and tools used by the other forms of commercial marketing, in the case that they are used to market a political idea, rather than a specific product or

3 See also: LENDREVIE, J., LEVY, J.: *Mercator 2013 – Théories et nouvelles pratiques du marketing*. Paris : Dunod, 2012.

4 For more information, see: HIMMELWEIT, H., HUMPHREYS, P., JAEGER, M.: *How Voters Decide*. Milton Keynes : Open University Press, 1985.

5 See: KAVANAGH, D.: *Election campaigning: the new marketing of politics*. Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 1995.; KAVANAGH, D.: New campaign communications: consequences for political parties. In *Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics*, 1996, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 61-75.

6 LEES-MARSHMENT, J.: The marriage of politics and marketing. In *Political Studies*, 2001, Vol. 49, No. 4, p. 693.

7 O’CASS, A.: Political marketing and the marketing concept. In *European Journal of Marketing*, 1996, Vol. 30, No. 10-11, p. 48.

8 Ibidem, p. 59-60.

9 BANNON, D. P.: Relationship Marketing and the Political Process. In *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2005, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 86-100.; JOHANSEN, H. P. M.: Political Marketing: More than Persuasive Techniques, an Organizational Perspective. In *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2005, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 86-103.; HENNEBERG, S. C., O’SHAUGHNESSY, N.: Political Relationship Marketing: Some Micro/Macro Thoughts. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2009, Vol. 25, No. 1-2, p. 6-20.

10 MOLONEY, K., COLMER, R.: Does Political PR Enhance or Trivialise Democracy? The UK General Election 2001 as Contest between Presentation and Substance. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2001, Vol. 17, No. 9-10, p. 957.

a brand.¹¹ Politics is being largely influenced by marketing; the same methods used by companies are also being used by politicians to market their ideologies.¹² The concept of political marketing is usually discussed in the context of election campaigns. Nowadays it is clear that marketing is not only about the product, but also applies to politics. Theory tends to ignore the fact that marketing is about organizational and political-philosophical principles and communication.¹³ Pew Research Center in January 2016 found that 78% of US adults learn about the presidential election through TV, local news, cable news or late-night comedy shows. Though TV dominates as the leading channel for information on the presidential election, digital content is not far behind:

- 78% of US adults learn about the presidential election through TV.
- 65% of US adults turn to digital channels to gather information about the election.
- 41% of US internet users think they see too many political ads on TV.
- 43% of US registered voters searched for more information about a candidate after seeing a digital ad.¹⁴

A new survey conducted July 8-21, 2019, among 5,107 U.S. also by Pew Research Center collected data about Americans' perceptions of the social media. „As large majorities say that the tone of American political debate has become more negative in recent years, about a third of U.S. adults (35%) say that uncivil discussions about the news are a very big problem when it comes to news on social media. Additionally, about a quarter (27%) say that the harassment of journalists is a very big problem associated with news on social media“.¹⁵ The report Trust in Media 2019, showed that broadcast radio and TV are the most trusted media throughout Europe. According to the report the internet is trusted by only 32% of citizens and social media by 19%, which is down from 36% and 21% respectively from 2014.¹⁶

Political Marketing and Digital Games

There are more than 2.5 billion video gamers around the world. 72% of gamers are older than the age of 18. The average gamer is 34 years old.¹⁷ This number is expected to rise to over 2.7 billion gamers by 2021.¹⁸ According to Lerner, digital games are used for many political purposes in both analogue and digital formats. He proposes three main

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- 11 O'CASS, A.: Political advertising believability and information source value during elections. In *Journal of Advertising*, 2002, Vol. 31, No. 1, p. 63-74.
 - 12 SPEED, R., BUTLER, P., COLLINS, N.: Human branding in political marketing: Applying contemporary branding thought to political parties and their leaders. In *Journal of Political Marketing*, 2015, Vol. 14, No. 1-2, p. 130-149.
 - 13 For more information, see: WRING, D.: *The Politics of Marketing the Labour Party*. Hampshire : Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
 - 14 *Political Advertising Report*. [online]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://www.home.neustar/resources/whitepapers/digital-political-advertising-report>>.
 - 15 SHEARER, E., GRIECO, E.: *Americans Are Wary of the Role Social Media Sites Play in Delivering the News*. [online]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://www.journalism.org/2019/10/02/americans-are-wary-of-the-role-social-media-sites-play-in-delivering-the-news/>>.
 - 16 FOSTER, A.: *Broadcasters remain most trusted, says EBU report*. [online]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://www.ibc.org/consume/broadcasters-remain-most-trusted-says-ebu-report-/3805.article>>.
 - 17 YANEV, V.: *Video Game Demographics – Who Plays Games in 2019*. [online]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://techjury.net/stats-about/video-game-demographics/#gref>>.
 - 18 *Number of active video gamers worldwide from 2014 to 2021 (in millions)*. [online]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/748044/number-video-gamers-world/>>.

categories: games about politics; play as political action and games as political action.¹⁹ Games about politics are not so creative and they are not providing any contribution to political disclosure. These are very simple games, with a very short circulation period, about general political issues whose main goal is just to inform and motivate players without delivering any significant analysis.²⁰ Play as political action involves incorporating game design principles into political practice. Sicart argues that play creates a much stronger expression of political ideas and it can progress in situations of tyranny, and can also enable personal and collective expression.²¹ Games as political action, are not about politics, but are a way of doing politics. These types of games are developed around specific rules and should be considered as tools for making decisions in politics.²² Digital games, as a modus of cultural expression, can provide culturally dominant views on different social conflicts and ethical dilemmas.²³ According to Chris Crawford, the digital game *Balance of Power*²⁴ is considered the first political game. The game offers numerous options to the players: diplomacy, international espionage, and military force as the last option. The goal of the game is to avoid a nuclear war. In 1991, Larry Barbu created a digital game about the Cold War called *Crisis in the Kremlin*²⁵; players were challenged to stay in power and to avoid conflict with the Soviet Union. A few examples illustrate how players of digital games could be affected by the political context and settings. China's Ministry of Culture banned the game *Battlefield 4*²⁶ as 'an illegal digital game, with content that endangers national security'. It pointed out that the game's narrative was an aggressive attack on their culture.²⁷ In Russia, politicians decided to ban a game with negative images of Russia after *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*²⁸ (chapter called 'No Russian') featured Russian nationalists committing domestic terrorism. The mass murder that is found in this chapter serves a very clear narrative purpose: to explain Russia's invasion of the US. The narrative's authors wanted to create a game where Russia invades USA for a justified reason, and they found a way – by creating/repeating well known 'Russians are evil' stereotype patterns. This also added emotional connotation to the story.²⁹

Similarly, in Venezuela a game known as *Mercenaries 2*³⁰ was banned with the explanation that the game was enriched with U.S. propaganda.³¹ Another interesting example is the game *Counter-Strike*³² modification in Argentina, in which the British are represented

19 See also: LERNER, J.: *Making Democracy Fun: How Game Design Can Empower Citizens and Transform Politics*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2014.

20 For more information, see: SICART, M.: *Play Matters*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2014.

21 Ibidem.

22 See also: LERNER, J.: *Making Democracy Fun: How Game Design Can Empower Citizens and Transform Politics*. Cambridge : The MIT Press, 2014.

23 BOURGONJON, J., RUTTEN, K., SOETAERT, R., VALCKE, M.: From Counter-Strike to Counter-Statement: Using Burke's Pentad as a Tool for Analysing Video Games. In *Digital Creativity*, 2011, Vol. 22, No. 2, p. 92-100; RUANE, A., JAMES, P.: The International Relations of Middle-Earth: Learning from the Lord of the Rings. In *International Studies Perspectives*, 2008, Vol. 4, No. 9, p. 378-392.

24 CRAWFORD, C.: *Balance of power*. [digital game]. Novato, CA : Mindscape, 1985.

25 BARBU, L.: *Crisis in the Kremlin*. [digital game]. Alameda, CA : Spectrum Holobyte, 1991.

26 EA DICE: *Battlefield 4*. [digital game]. Redwood City : Electronic Arts, 2013.

27 LIEN, T.: *Report: China bans Battlefield 4 on grounds of national security endangerment*. Released on 27th December 2013. [online]. [2019-05-20]. Available at: <<https://www.polygon.com/2013/12/27/5249178/report-china-bans-battlefield-4-on-grounds-of-national-security>>.

28 INFINITY WARD: *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2009.

29 LIEN, T.: *Report: China bans Battlefield 4 on grounds of national security endangerment*. Released on 27th December 2013. [online]. [2019-05-20]. Available at: <<https://www.polygon.com/2013/12/27/5249178/report-china-bans-battlefield-4-on-grounds-of-national-security>>.

30 PANDEMIC STUDIOS: *Mercenaries 2*. [digital game]. Redwood City : Electronic Arts, 2008.

31 See: APPERLEY, T.: *Gaming Rhythms: Play and Counterplay from the Situated to the Global*. Amsterdam : Institute of Network Cultures, 2010.

32 VALVE L.L.C.: *Counter-Strike*. [digital game]. Los Angeles : Sierra Studios, 1999.

as terrorists invading Falkland Islands.³³ The reaction in the United Kingdom, after this modification, was instant and even hackers launched a cyber-attack against the servers in order to shut down the game.³⁴ The game *Antiwargame*³⁵ was released after the events of September 11, as a simulation of dynamically depicting the link between homeland politics and foreign war. The game was created by former Ars Electronica Golden Nika winner Josh On and his the Futurefarmers collective. The game *John Kerry: Tax Invaders*³⁶ was released in March 2004 at the height of the second Gulf War. At the beginning of the game, the opening text announces, 'Only you can stop the tax invader', and invites players to 'Save the United States from John Kerry's tax ideas'. When playing the game, players must step inside the skin of the taxation opponent, viewing taxes as a foreign enemy. The player actually does battle against taxes, in a literal sense, and we can say that this game offers an unusual view on the conservative frame for tax policy itself.³⁷ *Democracy 3*³⁸ is a game where players can configure the government of their own choice. In the game *Tropico*³⁹, the player is in the role of a president of Latin American government and can win the game if enough plunders are collected on a Swiss account.

Maybe the best example is the well-known game *Civilization*⁴⁰ launched in 1991. In the game, the player leads a nation from the Bronze Age to the colonization of the Universe. There are many tasks ahead of the player, from building cities, developing advanced technologies, and creating military forces to conquer new frontiers and fight against rivals. The popularity of *Civilization* lies in its captivating presentation of human progress (from the invention of the wheel to dispatching starships to Alpha Centauri) like in no other game. Games addictive capacity is further stimulated by the options provided to players to mix and match ideologies and economic systems to customize a nation according to their preferences. It is possible to create a pacifist monarchy, a fascist state with freedom of speech or a free-market theocracy. The chance to shape and control an entire society seems to have a fascinating appeal to people.⁴¹ Ten years ago, U.S. military bases banned sales of the game *Medal of Honor*⁴². The game, published by Electronic Arts, from California, stopped selling in the stores because this game allowed their users an opportunity to choose to play as Taliban characters and in that case, to attack American forces.⁴³ A few years ago, Google Play banned the game *Bomb Gaza*⁴⁴ from its online store. The game *Bomb Gaza*, developed by PlayFTW, simulated Israeli forces attacks on the Gaza Strip. This game caused outraged comments on the Facebook and the Google app store review page.⁴⁵ It is important to note that the digital game

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- 33 ALEXANDER, H.: *Argentine Company Creates Video Game for 'Police' to Retake Falklands from 'Terrorists'*. Released on 26th March 2013. [online]. [2019-06-28]. Available at: <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/falklandislands/9955588/Argentine-company-creates-video-game-for-police-to-retake-Falklands-from-terrorists.html>>.
- 34 *Falklands 'Counter Strike' online game has 'British terrorists' eliminated by 'Argentine patriots'*. [online]. [2019-06-28]. Available at: <<https://en.mercopress.com/2013/03/27/falklands-counter-strike-online-game-has-british-terrorists-eliminated-by-argentine-patriots>>.
- 35 ON, J.: *Antiwargame*. [digital game]. San Francisco : Futurefarmers, 2001.
- 36 GOP: *John Kerry: Tax Invaders*. [digital game]. Washington D.C. : Republican National Committee, 2004.
- 37 For more information, see: BOGOST, I.: *Unit operations: An approach to videogame criticism*. Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press, 2006.
- 38 POSITECH GAMES: *Democracy 3*. [digital game]. London : Positech Games, 2013.
- 39 POPTOP SOFTWARE: *Tropico*. [digital game]. New York : Gathering of Developers, 2001.
- 40 MICROPROSE: *Civilization*. [digital game]. Hunt Valley : MicroProse, 1991.
- 41 PECK, M.: *The Hidden Politics of Video Games. How your Xbox shapes the way you see the world*. Released on 26th April 2015. [online]. [2019-05-28]. Available at: <<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/04/xbox-video-games-politics-economic-theory-117289>>.
- 42 DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE: *Medal of Honor*. [digital game]. Redwood City : Electronic Arts, 1999.
- 43 *GTA 5 and 5 other video games banned from stores*. [online]. [2019-11-09]. Available at: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/gta-5-and-5-other-video-games-banned-from-stores-1.2860191>>.
- 44 PLAYFTW: *Bomb Gaza*. [digital game]. PlayFTW, 2014.
- 45 *GTA 5 and 5 other video games banned from stores*. [online]. [2019-11-09]. Available at: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/gta-5-and-5-other-video-games-banned-from-stores-1.2860191>>.

*Grand Theft Auto V*⁴⁶, also faced problems in Australia, where 'Target' stores rejected selling the game because of the encouragement of violence against women.⁴⁷ The theme of the game *Grand Theft Auto V* revolves around the society of pop culture and American politics. This game offers to their players the opportunity to use tanks and planes, and contains a gun shop known as 'Ammu-Nation'.⁴⁸ At the beginning of 21st century, political digital games became legitimate. Political candidates and party groups created officially endorsed games to support their political activities.⁴⁹

Many contemporary digital games are designed with politics in mind. Square examined the answers of African Americans ninth-graders asked after playing the game *Civilization III*⁵⁰, that the game is about advantageous geographical conditions that provide access to global trade networks, resources, technologies, and limited opportunities for population expansion.⁵¹ After playing the game, students asked "Why is it that the Europeans colonized Americas, and why didn't Africans and Asians colonize America or Europe? The majority of the students were given a historical narrative of the steady march of Western liberty, democracy, and rationality. It is clear that games are introducing players to powerful ideas. Students also said that this game demonstrated to them the ways in which materialist goods determine how history plays out".⁵² With the development of technology digital games as a medium are becoming more advanced, definitely they are used and will be used for learning but the question is: for whom and in what contexts? Like the military, private businesses and non-profit groups use games to spread their ideology, it is crucial to start examining the medium's potential to spread influence.⁵³ Steven Poole argues that when the digital game *Space Invaders*⁵⁴ offers the player a bonus life for reaching a specific score, the game directly conveyed the idea that survival is the most important virtue and at the same time that killing to achieve this goal is acceptable and justified.⁵⁵ In 2008, the Democratic presidential nominee Senator Barack Obama made political history by placing the first political ad in online digital games. The senator promoted his online voter registration by using Internet ads, featured in 18 games through Microsoft Corp's Xbox Live service, like *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*⁵⁶, *The Incredible Hulk*⁵⁷, *NASCAR 09*⁵⁸, *NBA Live 08*⁵⁹, *NFL Tour*⁶⁰ etc. The ads appeared as banners and billboards, with Obama's portrait and the slogan 'Early voting has begun'. The targeted audience in this digital game were young adult males, between 18 and 34-year-old. Usually, it is hard to reach this segment through traditional media because they do not read so much, and rarely watch TV.⁶¹

46 ROCKSTAR NORTH: *Grand Theft Auto V*. [digital game]. New York : Rockstar Games, 2013.

47 *GTA 5 and 5 other video games banned from stores*. [online]. [2019-11-09]. Available at: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/gta-5-and-5-other-video-games-banned-from-stores-1.2860191>>.

48 *The Political Settings Around Video Games*. [online]. [2019-11-08]. Available at: <<http://www.antiesscualidos.com/the-political-settings-around-video-game>>.

49 See also: BOGOST, I.: *Persuasive Games. The Expressive Power of Videogames*. Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press, 2007.

50 FIRAXIS GAMES: *Civilization III*. [digital game]. Paris : Infogrames, 2001.

51 For more information, see: SQUIRE, K. D.: *Replaying history*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Bloomington : Indiana University, 2004. [online]. [2019-06-20]. Available at: <<https://www.learntechlib.org/p/125618/>>.

52 DUNN, R. E.: Constructing world history in the classroom? In STEARNS, P. N., SEIXAS, P., WINEBURG S. (eds.): *Knowing teaching and learning history*. New York : New York University Press, 2000, p. 123-138.; See: MANNING, P.: *Navigating world history: Historians create a global past*. New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. SQUIRE, K. D.: Toward a theory of games literacy. In *Telemidium*, 2005, Vol. 52, No. 1-2, p. 10-14.

54 TAITO: *Space Invaders*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Taito, 1978.

55 See also: POOLE, S.: *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life of Videogames*. London : Fourth Estate, 2000.

56 NEVERSOFT: *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 2007.

57 EDGE OF REALITY, AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT: *The Incredible Hulk*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Sega, 2008.

58 EA TIBURON: *NASCAR 09*. [digital game]. Redwood City : EA Sports, 2008.

59 EA CANADA, HB STUDIOS: *NBA Live 08*. [digital game]. Redwood City : EA Sports, 2007.

60 EA TIBURON: *NFL Tour*. [digital game]. Redwood City : EA Sports BIG, 2008.

61 GORMAN, S.: *Obama buys first video game campaign ads*. Released on 18th October 2008. [online]. [2019-05-25]. Available at: <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-politics-videogames/obama-buys-first-video-game-campaign-ads-idUSTRE49EAGL20081017>>.

The team of Hilary Clinton in her 2016 election campaign launched an app, where users can accumulate points and stars by finishing different kind of tasks. Players who earn enough stars are rewarded with physical gifts such as souvenirs signed by Hilary Clinton.⁶² Current US President Donald Trump is the inspiration for dozens of indie games which can be found on the PC game store Steam. A former creative director at the website BuzzFeed, Chris Baker, launched a series of satirical mini games that oppose and mock conservative attitudes in the US. These web-based games have more than one million players to this day. Two titles stood out as the most popular: *Thoughts & Prayers: The Game*⁶³, a game that focuses on gun control and, increasingly, tragedies in the real world, and the second title *Bomb the Right Place*⁶⁴, the game, which according to Chris Baker, helps players better understand the geography of the Middle East.⁶⁵ On the website AddictingGames, one can find many games that have either government or famous politicians as the subject of the game, such as *Dress up Hillary*⁶⁶, *Presidential Candidate or EveryJoe?*⁶⁷, *Presidential Knockout*⁶⁸, *UN Weapons Inspector*⁶⁹, *Trump Run*⁷⁰, *Downing Street Fighter*⁷¹, *Escape from the Oval Office*⁷², and many more.⁷³ In-game advertising in digital games is quite different from advertising in traditional media. The biggest difference is the element of interactivity. Research has shown that the 'encounter' of product brands in virtual digital game space leads to a more favourable attitude towards the characteristics of the product brand.⁷⁴ In his study of the differences of product placement in digital games and direct advertising Dahl finds some interesting information: products advertised as part of a product placement method cause more positive association and greater credibility than those advertised in direct advertising.⁷⁵ When product placement is properly implemented, it is possible to improve the gameplay experience, making the virtual world of the game more realistic.⁷⁶ Product placement is generally accepted if we exclude the reserved attitudes towards ethically suspicious products, such as cigarettes or firearms.⁷⁷ Digital game

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- 62 JOY, T.: *Gamification in Elections (from Howard Dean to Hillary Clinton)*. [online]. [2019-11-08]. Available at: <<https://callhub.io/gamification-in-elections/>>.
- 63 EVERYDAY ARCADE: *Thoughts & Prayers: The Game*. [digital game]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://everydayarcade.com/games/thoughts-and-prayers-the-game>>.
- 64 EVERYDAY ARCADE: *Bomb the Right Place*. [digital game]. [2019-11-25]. Available at: <<https://everydayarcade.com/games/bomb-the-right-place>>.
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- 68 MINICLIP.COM: *Presidential Knockout*. [digital game]. [2019-11-08]. Available at: <<https://www.addictinggames.com/sports/presidential-knockout>>.
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players are more politically engaged than most Americans. It's estimated that 100 million of them will vote in the next presidential election, according to a survey commissioned by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). "100 million gamers will vote next year", said Michael D. Gallagher, president and CEO of ESA, the trade association that represents the U.S. digital game industry. "Gamers are engaged, informed and hold strong opinions on critical issues. From both sides of the aisle, and in every state across the country, they will influence the course of our nation's future".⁷⁸ The study conducted by The Diffusion Group showed that nearly 80% of digital game consoles are connected to the Internet. This enables the possibility to receive dynamic content updates on a regular basis. Now marketers can change and segment their advertisements easily, choosing the target and timings of the ads that show up.⁷⁹

The Emerging Trends of the Digital Gaming Development

The digital gaming industry is heading towards uncharted territory, always exploring and pushing the limit. The development of technology is moving the boundaries in the creation of digital games and as a consequence, the way this industry operates is increasingly changing. Digital game users will play a more important role in creating digital games. The possibilities are endless for interactive entertainment and we have only seen the tip of it.⁸⁰ Digital gaming consoles are no longer a platform for digital games only, now manufacturers are offering many other forms of entertainment such as music, movies, Internet browsing - that are offered through third-party services such as Netflix, HBO, YouTube, etc. Digital games will continue not only to provide new, unworldly experiences but also will become platforms to train, teach and help people across the world.⁸¹ Virtual reality until recently existed only in science fiction books and movies, but today it looks like it is already at our doorstep with plans to stay here for a long time. With this technology still in its developmental stage, it seems the future possibilities in the digital gaming industry are limitless.⁸² With the accelerated development in gaming technology, virtual reality headsets will be able to render 3D graphics that are almost not possible to distinguish from real-life. The hardware capabilities that are currently keeping gamers from hyper-immersive gameplay will soon be able to fully support this wonderful eventuality.⁸³

For the last few years, gamers are not only players who play digital games, but they also can watch them. Like on Twitch.tv which is a popular webpage (over 45 million viewers per month) where users can stream their sessions and also talk to other players. The eSports world even had an impact on US immigration protocol. Danni 'Shiphtur' Le was

78 *New Study Finds Video Game Players Are Highly Engaged Politically*. Released on 5th November 2015. [online]. [2019-05-26]. Available at: <<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-study-finds-video-game-players-are-highly-engaged-politically-300173374.html>>.

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81 *Ibidem*, p. 27.

82 *Ibidem*, p. 31.

83 WHITE, D.: *Future Gaming Technology Predictions for 2020*. Released on 12th October 2018. [online]. [2019-05-25]. Available at: <<https://www.techfunnel.com/information-technology/future-gaming-technology-predictions-for-2020/>>.

the first eSports player to receive the P-1A visa. P-Visas are routinely approved for athletes so they can live and earn in the United States without citizenship. International eSports athletes, for many years, have been trying to get visas unsuccessfully.⁸⁴ “Cloud gaming refers to a new way of delivering computer games to players, where computationally complex games are executed on powerful cloud servers, the rendered game scenes are streamed over the Internet to gamers with the clients on heterogeneous devices, and the control events from input devices are sent back to cloud servers for interactions”.⁸⁵ Deloitte Global predicts that in 2019, companies will accelerate the usage of cloud-based artificial intelligence (AI) software and services, and by 2020, penetration rates of enterprise software with integrated artificial intelligence and cloud-based platforms will reach 87%, among companies that use artificial intelligence software.⁸⁶ Handheld game consoles are returning, they have a huge potential to become an important part of gaming technology in the near future. They would appeal to nostalgic older gamers, who played those consoles, two decades ago, and to gamers who are looking to play without any distraction of apps on their smartphones or tablets.⁸⁷ Likewise, Google’s Stadia is proposing an idea of making games playable on any device. The liberating of digital games from expensive consoles is driving investment in game streaming. Streaming would open games up to billions of players who can’t afford or don’t want to buy equipment which can cost sometimes a huge amount of money.⁸⁸

A not so pleasant perspective for players is a set of competitive services, all with a few exclusive games that we might want to play, and all of them require a monthly subscription. Most probably the subscription services for gaming will replace gaming consoles and physical disks, but it is unlikely that this will happen for some time.⁸⁹ As regards procedural backgrounds and narratives, today computing power is greater in the average home computer or games console. Procedural backgrounds are becoming an option that means that locations, backgrounds, assets, characters and quests won’t be planned in advance, but will be generated in accordance with pre-set rules every time they are played. This will lead to much less predictable gameplay. In future, it might be that central and side-quest plotlines are also generated in this way, so playing will be much more dynamic and interesting because it will not be possible to play the same storyline twice. The same technology could also allow modifications, players will be able to supply the ideas, but their computer supplies the programming. To create a character’s face by uploading a photo is a possibility with today’s technology, but more advanced options, for example, to completely change the characters and game dialogues isn’t possible yet, but definitely, will be available soon.⁹⁰

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- 89 Ibidem.
- 90 *Seven Exciting Trends from the Future of Video Games*. [online]. [2019-05-22]. Available at: <<https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/7-exciting-trends-future-video-games.html>>.

The Future Directions of Political Marketing Development

Recently, several studies of political campaigns have shown that traditional methods used by politicians to promote themselves are producing very bad results, and don't lead to more votes. That means there might be no connection between TV ads and votes, as one study by Kalla and Broockman suggests.⁹¹ It is no secret that political marketing professionals are using data to understand voters, this is the same as in traditional marketing – many of the techniques used for the needs of political parties were first developed by commercial marketers. Artificial intelligence might one day prove that it can be much faster and more effective than humans in defining who should be targeted, when, and with what content, of course in order to maximize persuasive potential. It would be able to collect and sort together vast amounts of data from various sources, and, maybe, to recognize some new relationships that are currently hidden and invisible to human eyes. In the coming years, it is likely to move to automated marketing with automated content generation for specific users adapted toward their interests and needs. This could lead to personalized messages, regularly updated, and prepared for each voter based on previously conducted A/B testing.⁹² With recent technological innovations and industry advances, political campaigns have started using micro-targeting techniques, which utilize an array of personalized and other data sets and marketing applications to influence the actions of individuals.⁹³ Specialty organizations like *Nielsen*, *Adobe*, or *Oracle* are offering, nowadays, more extensive resources for data mining and targeting voters, like data marketing clouds. Marketing clouds collect data on detailed consumer information, like personal interests, credit card use, TV viewing or consumption patterns.⁹⁴ Social network websites, like *Google*, *YouTube* or *Facebook* now play a crucial part in political operations, offering different digital marketing tools and techniques, along with specialized ad 'products' designed especially for political use.⁹⁵ The digital marketing industry has developed these methods, taking advantage of techniques of neuroscience, cognitive computing, data analytics, behavioural tracking, etc.⁹⁶ The new tool, recently promoted by *Google*, 'Emotion Analytics' is able to offer new types of data and new tracking methods, which can help marketers to better understand, on an emotional level, the impact of their campaigns.⁹⁷ The company *Cambridge Analytica* from the United States, responsible for data analytics and

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behavioural communications is using a five-factor personality model, known as 'Ocean', in order to determine "the personality of every single adult in the United States of America".⁹⁸

The model 'Ocean' is able to rate individuals based on five key criteria: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. By using digital data, history of voters, and other marketing resources collected from specialized companies like *Nielsen*, *Aristotle*, *Facebook*, *Acxiom*, or *Experian*. After that, the *Cambridge Analytica* is developing an internal database with a very large number of data points, per person, which enables them to shape the advertising content launch through the multiple digital channels.⁹⁹ The Advertising Research Foundation recognized the company *Cambridge Analytica* as a leader in this field, providing 'Gold' award in 'Big Data' category in 2017.¹⁰⁰ Frasca pointed out that digital games "will become an increasingly popular platform in the future for political and social comments and activism, as they are becoming more and more present in the households",¹⁰¹ while Raessens argued that the use of games is in the forefront of social and political issues, a platform for pure fantasy would turn into a medium for social realism and criticism.¹⁰² Many websites and applications today cover politics. Digital media are becoming a leading force in politics in the near future. Apps like *Allvus* are providing a platform that allows users to vote anonymously on issues, putting together petitions. Benjamin Shahin, CEO and Founder of this App said that when a petition reaches a certain level, it may be sent to the right legislator. He also added that *Allvus* is supported by Block chain technology; therefore, as decentralized technology, it is able to provide the paradigm for the future political process.¹⁰³

It is important to mention that many Apps exist today, that offer politicians an opportunity for cheaper advertising, persuading voters, and fund-raising. One of the most popular tools for fund-raising is *CallTime.ai*. This tool allows politicians to quickly gain direct access to attention and fund-raising through the application of artificial intelligence to attracting donations.¹⁰⁴ *NGP VAN* is a web service provider and database with information on democratic voters in the United States. *NGP VAN* can be used to target messages to voters, within a specific region, on social media. *NGP VAN* enables members of a political campaign to virtually knock on doors in an area which is impossible to physically visit.¹⁰⁵ Among the software used for political campaign purposes worth mentioning are: *Ecanvasser* (An App that helps in mapping and connecting with a community), *CampaignSidekick* (software for contacting voters and data management), *Crowdskout* (a platform that powers campaigns and advocacy), *Filpac* (software which helps organize the party) etc.¹⁰⁶

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Conclusion

Rapid changes in technology and new media require scholars to update their knowledge and the direction of future approaches in the field of political marketing. Marketers should focus their research and development efforts on new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, cognitive computing, digital gaming, in order to better understand digital practices and their influence on the political process for advertising purposes. Modern political marketing has quickly learned that digital games could be one of the main tools of political communication. Today digital game players have a high degree of political engagement. Digital games "will become an increasingly popular platform in the future for political and social comments and activism, as they become more and more present in the households".¹⁰⁷ Political candidates, in the near future, may be able to interact with voters in virtual worlds and customize the political message to each voter separately. With recent technological innovations and industry advances, political campaigns have started using micro-targeting techniques, which use an array of personalized and other data sets and marketing applications to influence the actions of individuals.¹⁰⁸ Neuroscience represents another scientific field that might help political marketing professionals in the near future to recognize hidden thoughts and aspirations of their voters by using methods of neuromarketing, data analytics or behavioural tracking. "Neuromarketing provides important methodological advantages over the traditional methods of qualitative consumer research. However, like the other cases with the use of any developing technology, the excitement and optimism must be balanced".¹⁰⁹ It is hard to expect that people will abandon television and print newspapers, and completely replace traditional sources with new media, but it is of great importance to adapt to new contemporary challenges. Almost two decades ago, Joost Raessens argued that the use of games is at the forefront of social and political issues, a platform for pure fantasy would turn into a medium for social realism and criticism.¹¹⁰ With the technology still in its developmental stage, it seems future possibilities in the digital gaming industry are limitless.¹¹¹

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