

The whole situation can be compared to what happens with limited editions of the Nintendo Switch on a regular basis. However while those are highly limited and valuable collectors' pieces, new consoles suffering from shortages now are just mass-produced machines with no significant long-term value. Yet what about Nintendo and the next generation? While both Microsoft and Sony had a head start, Nintendo does not yet have a horse in this race. And they do not need to. Nintendo consoles have never been about graphical prowess or raw power. They were about fun, gimmicks and experiences. And if Nintendo Switch sales are something to go by, Nintendo can disregard the competition and do all the whacky stuff they can think of. But to be precise, Nintendo did release a brand-new console. *Game & Watch: Super Mario Bros*. So, anyone who wants one should go and get it; before the scalpers strike again.

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Among Us: The Example of Current Digital Influencers' Impact on the Digital Games' Popularity

Nikola Kaňuková

There is no doubt that influencers have enormous strength and power today. We can also increasingly see their importance in the game environment, as evidenced in recent weeks, for example, by the success of the game *Among Us*¹. This game shook the gaming industry perhaps even more than *Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout* did in August. *Among Us* is an online multiplayer space-themed deduction game. The game was published by the American game studio InnerSloth in August 2018. However, it became a hit game only this year thanks to video game streamers on Twitch, when they realized this game could be great to fill one's time during the COVID-19 quarantine and they started streaming their online competitions. Thanks to virtual gaming and the dependence on social interaction, *Among Us* was a great fit for virtual socialization, which temporarily replaced face-to face socialization. Streamers on Twitch (e.g. Sodapoppin, Pokimane, PewDiePie and others) have been promoting the game among their followers since the beginning of July. However,

1 INNERSLOTH: *Among Us*. [digital game]. Redmond, WA : Innersloth, 2018.

the game certainly gained enormous popularity thanks to its availability, the low price of the game and the low level of difficulty. Players complete the tasks, which can be easily handled by anyone who can use a mouse and keyboard or touch screen on their smartphone. Among us has not fallen out from the top five in the App Store since 1st September 2020, reaching over 40 million downloads on Steam in the first half of September, and more than 200 million installs across the App Store and Google Play by the end of October.

The influencer and congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made the game even more successful. As an American activist and member of the Democratic Party, she was elected to the House of Representatives in November 2018 and at the age of 29, she became the youngest congresswoman in US history. Her live stream of Among Us became one of the most-watched videos on Twitch, which appealed to many young American voters. More than 400,000 viewers made it the third highest peak in the history of this platform. She began the stream by encouraging people to vote for the Democratic Party. She appealed to gamers to join her online “to get out the vote” ahead of the US election on 3rd November. However, she successfully tackled the wave of criticism for ‘electioneering’. The whole stream lasted about three and a half hours. E-sports consultant Rod Breslau noted, that the congresswoman was watched by as many as 439,000 viewers, which is the third highest score. The record is held by singer Drake, who was watched by more than 600,000 people while playing *Fortnite*.²

With this wild idea, A. Ocasio-Cortez gained more than 550,000 followers, which is more than her political counterparts. Donald Trump, for example, has 143,000 followers, but uses Twitch for political broadcasts and speeches rather than gaming. Public reactions were mostly positive. Followers see this step as a very natural way to get closer to the young. “The impressiveness of AOC is not simply that she is a forceful and articulate proponent of the Democratic message, it is that she is able to speak credibly directly to millennials using platforms like Twitch”, said Mitchell Robertson, fellow at the Rothermere American Institute. However there were also reactions that criticized the behaviour of the congresswoman A. Ocasio-Cortez. “This is a very transparent move on her behalf. It’s not the first time that a politician has aligned themselves with trends in order to gain popularity, or new followers. Overall, this seems to be a well-orchestrated political move”, said Nicky Danino, principal lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). “It’s a good profile raiser so it’s worth a try. However, it’s connecting young people to a politician, not necessarily politics”, said Jon Tonge, professor of politics at the University of Liverpool. The Democrats have embraced gaming in this election, with presidential candidate Joe Biden’s campaign also creating a virtual field office in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*.³ The role of influencers or streamers has certainly been undeniable in case of the game Among Us. Good timing or benefiting from the current global situation also contributed to the whole success, which provides very good fertile ground for similar global activities. Yet it will certainly be interesting to see the development of this trend in the coming weeks, as well as take a closer look at other projects that have been successful in recent months.

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3 Ibidem.