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# Media Literacy in Digital Games

## **ABSTRACT**

The article focuses on aspects of media literacy in digital games and seeks to answer the question whether digital games can develop players' media competences and, if so, in which areas. The article points out the positive aspects of the player's immersion in digital games as a way to develop competencies without the player realizing it. Through a qualitative content analysis with a focus on media competences, it offers an extensive list of games and the competences found in them. The research included 32 digital games from 1997 to 2022. The decisive criterion was the presence of any media in the game (print, radio, television, internet, advertising, music, etc.) with which the player can interact – i.e. use them (read, listen, watch) or create other media products through them. At the same time it distinguishes between the use of media as a supplementary or entertainment element in games and media work as a direct determinant of the further development of the story or gameplay. The article concludes that digital games can indeed teach media competence without the player realizing it, but that this has its limits.

## **KEY WORDS**

Critical Thinking. Digital Games. Game Literacy. Media Literacy.

# 1 Introduction

The current situation in the entertainment industry favours innovation and forces the audience to consume more and more media content. Due to globalisation and interconnected markets, any media or entertainment industry product becomes instantly accessible to a wide range of audiences that seem to have no boundaries. The constant oversaturation of information and options is bringing us into an age where information is no longer powerful and is transformed into a need to be able to choose from a plethora of information, media products and entertainment products. Media education is one of the fundamental branches of education that addresses and teaches such selection to younger and older generations. Media competence has become an integral part of life in today's society.

The current state of media literacy and media education in Slovakia and abroad is not very positive<sup>1</sup>. Many studies show that, despite the implementation of media education in education in Slovakia and in other countries, media literacy is increasing only slowly and audiences are more susceptible to manipulation than ever before<sup>2</sup>, especially in times of pandemic and post-pandemic situations, which are characterised by uncertainty, psychological pressure on audiences, overload of misinformation, etc. The generation that we are able to teach media competences to may be immune to, or may ignore, classical methods of education.<sup>3</sup> The current state of education in Slovakia has also shown that distance learning during the pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the level of education of today's young people.<sup>4</sup> However, this is where the aforementioned media content, products of the entertainment industry, come in, which can in some ways take on the role of a mentor and guide their audience to a better understanding of the importance of certain competences.<sup>5</sup> The games industry and digital games are among the fastest growing entertainment industries.<sup>6</sup> They are no longer just for passionate individuals and small audiences, but are steadily growing in popularity. It is not groundbreaking news that digital games primarily designed for education exist and are constantly evolving. Whether they are games that teach players a foreign language and vocabulary (e.g. *Alphabear*<sup>7</sup>), expand their knowledge of a specific area (e.g. *Europa Universalis IV*.<sup>8</sup>), deal with social issues and human emotions (e.g. *GRIS*<sup>9</sup>, *Stillness of the wind*<sup>10</sup>), or use gamification as one of their mainstays.

However, alongside these, we may overlook the educational potential of those games that are primarily designed for entertainment. Yet it is these games for the general public that often combine elements of media education and can teach their audience media competences without the audience (or players) realising it. And it is this potential, and how digital games teach media literacy to players, that is the focus of this article.

<sup>1</sup> See: PETRANOVÁ, D., VRABEC, N.: *Mediálna gramotnosť dospelých populácie v SR – Výskumná správa*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnave, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Media Literacy Index 2021*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <[https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MediaLiteracyIndex2021\\_ENG.pdf](https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/MediaLiteracyIndex2021_ENG.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> See: JÁNOŠOVÁ, D., SÁDECKÁ, R.: Aspects of Communication in the Digital Literacy of Generation Y in the Region. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 205-218.

<sup>4</sup> *Správa z reprezentatívneho prieskumu o priebehu a dopade dištančnej výučby v školskom roku 2020/2021*. [online]. [2022-02-21]. Available at: <[https://www.vzdelavacieanalyzy.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Prieskum-distancne-vzdelavanie\\_final.pdf](https://www.vzdelavacieanalyzy.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Prieskum-distancne-vzdelavanie_final.pdf)>.

<sup>5</sup> See: GENNARO, S., MILLER, B.: Critical Media Literacy in the Googleburg Galaxy. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 6-22.

<sup>6</sup> *Gaming Market – Growth, Trends, Covid-19 Impact and Forecast 2022-2027*. [online]. [2022-02-23]. Available at: <<https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/global-gaming-market>>.

<sup>7</sup> SPRY FOX: *Alphabear*. [digital game]. 2015.

<sup>8</sup> PARADOX DEVELOPMENT STUDIO: *Europa Universalis IV*. [digital game]. Stockholm : Paradox Interactive, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> NOMADA STUDIO, BLITWORKS: *GRIS*. [digital game]. Austin : Devolver Digital, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> LAMBIC STUDIOS: *Stillness of the Wind*. [digital game]. Melbourne : Fellow Traveller, 2019.

The educational potential of digital games is enormous. Unlike other products of the entertainment industry, it draws the audience directly into the action through participation, and the decisions made by the individual, in this case the player, have a serious impact on the course of the overall gaming experience. The attention that an individual has to pay to the gameplay can be found in almost no other media product. This immersion<sup>11</sup> also ensures that the content on offer (in this case, the game content) will not be overlooked, as can happen with other media. The core competencies that gaming can teach can be called game literacy. "Game literacy is a multidimensional combination of varied practices (e.g., reading, writing, and calculating; textual, visual, and spatial cognition; interactive design, programming, and engineering; multitasking and systems understanding; meaning making, storytelling, role playing, perspective taking, and exercising judgment; etc.)."<sup>12</sup> Many of these are applied in different ways in different digital games<sup>13</sup> - mostly in dependence on the game genre. At the same time, some games are more or less open to participation - some directly invite the individual to modify the game and learn game design or creativity through it, others use participation and modification only as a way to have fun or enhance the enjoyment of the game. These could be found in a number of digital games, the most prevalent examples being *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*<sup>14</sup>, *Grand Theft Auto V*<sup>15</sup> and *Minecraft*<sup>16</sup>, which are characterised by an extreme amount of modification.

Against this background, however, media literacy and critical thinking competences, so-called media competences, are also formed and shaped, which may or may not necessarily be part of the original game design and are also transferable to an individual's everyday life. By media competences, following the example of M. Prostináková Hossová and M. Hekelj, we understand knowledge, skills and abilities that help an individual to critically receive, analyse, select and create media.<sup>17</sup> Their occurrence in digital games depends on the specific game genre and also on the motive of the game.<sup>18</sup> However, we can assess that media competences are found in almost every game and every genre. In strategy, simulation and logic games we can observe an increased need for analysis and evaluation of the player, and in RPGs, adventure and action games the need to receive information, analyse it and also create it (although this is of course not the rule). In addition, A. Delwiche says that a media literate player can:

1. "understand that video game messages are constructed and that these messages construct their own immersive realities;
2. realize that different players negotiate the meaning of game content in different ways;
3. understand the commercial dimensions of video games;
4. identify ideological and political implications of video game content;
5. recognize the ways that unique characteristics of the medium shape video game content."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See: HO, J. C. F.: Relevance and Immersion in Digital Games: Content and Personal Factors. In SARI, E., TEDJASAPUTRA, A. B. (eds.): *Proceedings of CHLuXiD 2017 - The 3rd International Conference in HCI and UX in Indonesia*. New York : Association for Computing Machinery, 2017, p. 24-27.

<sup>12</sup> CAPERTON, I. H.: Toward a Theory of Game-media Literacy: Playing and Building as Reading and Writing. In *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-mediated Simulations*, Vol. 2, No. 1. p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> See: DUPONT, B., MALLIET, S.: Contextualizing Dark Patterns with the Ludeme Theory: A New Path for Digital Game Literacy? In *Acta Ludologica*, 2021, Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 4-22.

<sup>14</sup> BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS: *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. [digital game]. Rockville : Bethesda Softworks, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> ROCKSTAR NORTH: *Grand Theft Auto V*. [digital game]. New York : Rockstar Games, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> MOJANG STUDIOS: *Minecraft*. [digital game]. Stockholm : Mojang Studios, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> HOSSOVÁ, M., HEKELJ, M.: *Mediálna výchova a mediálna gramotnosť v kontexte televíznej tvorby pre deti a mládež*. Trnava : UCM in Trnava, 2018, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> See: BUČKOVÁ, Z., RUSŇÁKOVÁ, L.: The Issue of Game Genre Typology in the Slovak Online Game-Magazine Sector. In PETRANOVÁ, D., MATÚŠ, J., MENDELOVÁ, D. (eds.): *Marketing Identity – Brands We Love, Part I*. Trnava : FMK UCM in Trnava, 2016, p. 280.

<sup>19</sup> DELWICHE, A.: Media Literacy 2.0: Unique Characteristics of Video Games. In: TYNER, K. (ed.): *Media Literacy: New Agendas in Communication*. New York London : Routledge, 2010, p. 179.

These could be described as additional levels of media competences that are inherent only in games and are not found in the mainstream media that have so far been the focus of media education. At the same time, they are not identical to the competences from game literacy, which are more concerned with the technical aspect, not with a more formal understanding of the context of games and their narrative. In this article we will focus only on the basic media competences as defined by the National institute for education in Slovak republic, i.e.: understanding how media work, active use of media, communication through media and effective use of media.<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Methods

As this article is an introduction to the topic, the research and research methods can be considered as a framework in nature. The objectives of the research study are to point out media competencies in digital games that are not primarily intended for education in this area. I.e. we do not take into account digital games whose primary purpose is to improve players' competences, but we will work with games that aim to bring players fun and relaxation. The premise of this research is that in some games, media learning dominates, and thus can improve the media competencies of players without the players themselves realizing it, while this was probably not the intention of the creators of the game themselves.

The selection of the research sample, i.e. specific digital games, is deliberate. The games were selected from the last 25 years (1997 - 2022) to cover several stages of development of the digital-gaming industry. The selection was not conditioned by the game genre, publisher or other factors. The decisive criterion was the presence of any media in the game (print, radio, television, internet, advertising, music, etc.) with which the player can interact - ie use them (read, listen, watch) or create other media products through them. In these media, we distinguish three functions, depending on their impact on the game, respectively what role they play in the game. It can be either an additional function (the media have a cosmetic character, they have no impact on the game), an additional function (they provide clues, help to create a story, but the absence of interaction with them may or may not have a radical impact on the gameplay itself) or an event-creating function (the player must interact with them in order to, for example, be able to move in the story or provide other possibilities for the development of the story, etc.).

Within the research strategy, qualitative content analysis was used, focusing on the occurrence and form of media, the functions of these media in the game and the media competencies that are found in selected games. By media competencies in this case we mean 10 competencies of media literacy, as described by the National Institute for Education in the Slovak Republic: *"understanding how the media are growing in society, understanding how the media are constructed, understanding how the media portray reality, controlling and using equipment, software and applications, controlling and using orientation in the media environment, communication as information retrieval and processing, communication as content creation, communication as participation in social networks, strategy with the intention of awareness / reflection on one's own use of the media and strategy with the intention of achieving one's goals through the media"*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> STATPEDU: *10 kompetencií mediálnej gramotnosti*. [online]. [2022-02-23]. Available at: <<https://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/ucebnice-metodiky-publikacie/10-kompetencii-mediálnej-gramotnosti.pdf>>.

<sup>21</sup> STATPEDU: *10 kompetencií mediálnej gramotnosti*. [online]. [2022-03-30]. Available at: <<https://www.statpedu.sk/files/articles/dokumenty/ucebnice-metodiky-publikacie/10-kompetencii-mediálnej-gramotnosti.pdf>>.

At the same time, we can distinguish two levels of digital gaming:

1. the gameplay itself, i.e. the one whose final form is decided by the game studio during the game development process,
2. social interaction between players, especially in digital games that have an online mode and allow for communication between players in any form - direct (players communicate with each other through verbal or written communication) or indirect (players communicate through an intermediary medium), real-time or non-real-time.

The fundamental research question is therefore: What media competencies can digital games, whose primary intention is not to teach, teach players? As secondary research question we can determine: What functions do the media play in digital games? We take into account that through different mechanics, genres and narratives, digital games can teach a myriad of different competences - from communication, social interaction, foreign language, moral role models, authority figures, to developing imagination, creative thinking, motor skills, drawing attention to climate and environmental issues, to specific knowledge of a defined domain and learning specific skills such as programming and coding languages. However, we will only focus on those that directly touch on or build on media competences.

### 3 Results

In the first level of digital gaming, i.e., the gameplay itself as it has been designed and created by the game studio without additional modifications and other adjustments by the players, we can observe a large amount of media competence. There are countless digital games in which the character/avatar that the player controls interacts with the media. From interacting with traditional forms of media such as newspapers, radio or the internet to interacting with virtual realities, meta-universes, etc. In some games, the interactions are more of a “cosmetic” nature - the player can choose what music, what songs or radio station to listen to from a predefined playlist, but they have no impact on the game’s progression and are only an enhancement to the gameplay experience. This form can be found in games from franchises such as *Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater*<sup>22</sup>, *Mafia*<sup>23</sup>, *Need for Speed*<sup>24</sup>, *Dirt*<sup>25</sup>, *Eurotruck Simulator* <sup>26</sup>, *Final Fantasy XV*.<sup>27</sup> or all the installments of the *Grand Theft Auto* series<sup>28</sup>. In games, media is also often found as a messenger of additional information that contributes, for example, to the game’s gameplay. These media, while contributing to the narrative, do not necessarily interact with the player, do not advance the plot, and do not offer any benefits other than a deeper understanding of the narrative, building tension or setting, or an entertainment function (except perhaps supplemental achievements to unlock any objectives or collectibles). To use a few examples to demonstrate - in *Mafia II*.<sup>29</sup>, one of the achievements is to find all the Playboy magazines and find all the posters. It doesn’t advance the gameplay or the story in any way, it is explicitly an achievement. In *Horizon Zero Dawn*<sup>30</sup>, on the other hand, the player can use the main character to interact

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<sup>22</sup> NEVERSOFT, VICARIOUS VISIONS, ACTIVISION: *Tony Hawk’s Pro Skater*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Activision, 1999.

<sup>23</sup> ILLUSION SOFTWARES: *Mafia*. [digital game]. New York : Gathering of developers, 2002-2020.

<sup>24</sup> ELECTRONIC ARTS: *Need for Speed*. [digital game]. Redwood City : Electronic Arts, 1994-2020.

<sup>25</sup> CODEMASTERS: *Dirt*. [digital game]. Southam : Codemasters, 1998-2020.

<sup>26</sup> SCS SOFTWARE: *Eurotruck Simulator 2*. [digital game]. Prague : SCS Software, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> SQUARE ENIX BUSINESS DIVISION 2: *Final Fantasy XV*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Square Enix, 2016

<sup>28</sup> ROCKSTAR NORTH, DIGITAL ECLIPSE, ROCKSTAR: *Grand Theft Auto*. [digital game]. New York : Rockstar Games, 1997-2021.

<sup>29</sup> 2K CZECH: *Mafia II*. [digital game]. London : Feral Interactive, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> GUERRILLA GAMES: *Horizon Zero Dawn*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2017.

with Datapoints, which are various forms of media (audio, textual information, holograms), but they only contribute to shaping the narrative and fleshing out the plot. In *Alan Wake*<sup>31</sup>, on the other hand, it is possible to interact with the television in various locations, which broadcasts a spooky series (interestingly, these are actual camera recordings, not graphics or animation). The series is intended to heighten the tension and spookiness of the environment in which the story takes place, but it is also an additional function or cosmetic feature of the medium.

### 3.1 Media Competences in Digital Games

However, we would primarily like to pay attention to those games in which interaction with the media has an impact on the game, and thus can signify media competence, as discussed in the previous section. We can find many examples. The first one is *Fallout 3*<sup>32</sup>, a digital action role-playing game set in a post-apocalyptic future, in which the player can tune into several radio stations through the main character. While some of these are cosmetic in nature as in the cases of previous games, others have an impact on the game itself - after randomly tuning in to a particular radio frequency, they trigger side quests, allow you to join joinable factions, reflect the player's choices in previous parts of the game, etc. Another radio (Enclave Radio) is propaganda-oriented, broadcasting debates, presidential speeches, inspirational quotes, and patriotic music. We can notice that the radio in this context no longer only has an entertainment function, as in previous games, but also contains spoken word, which can influence the player's decision making, and an informational function is added. The player themselves needs not only to work with the medium, but to take a stance towards it, to critically evaluate the situation and decide on how to proceed. The same or similar media competences can be found in *Dishonored*<sup>33</sup>, where the player can decide whether to turn off the propaganda broadcast on global radio or replace it with another broadcast, which will influence the further development of the game. Information-seeking competence is also found in this case in the use of a book, in which the player can find information that will help them to make better decisions and unlock further options in the game. At the same time, in this game the media reflects the player's behaviour - the player's decisions and actions are displayed on posters. A similar implementation of media can be found in the game *Hitman*<sup>34</sup>, in which newspapers can be found. These write about how the player completed the mission, i.e. how the player killed their target in the previous mission. Another example can be found in some games of the *Assassin's Creed* series<sup>35</sup>, in which, based on the player's choices and their media coverage in newspapers and posters, non-playable characters (soldiers) can attack or not attack the player's avatar because they recognize it. Conversely, if the player actively tears down posters or decides to bribe newspaper printers or town criers, the player's recognizability to hostile characters is diminished. In *Detroit: Become human*<sup>36</sup>, a game that straddles the line between action games and adventure games, and whose narrative and gameplay are based on player decisions (each decision influences the development of the plot), it is possible to interact with newspapers in electronic form on freely deployed tablets. The game has three storylines that run concurrently and do not even collide until a certain point, but each has a differently significant societal impact. In the most serious of these, the robot rebellion against humans, the player can use the newspapers to gather information about the development of the rebellion, how it was handled, and thus be able to

<sup>31</sup> REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT: *Alan Wake*. [digital game]. Espoo : Remedy Entertainment, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS: *Fallout 3*. [digital game]. Rockville : Bethesda Softworks, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> ARKANE STUDIOS: *Dishonored*. [digital game]. Rockville : Bethesda Softworks, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> IO INTERACTIVE: *Hitman*. [digital game]. Copenhagen : IO Interactive, 2000-2021.

<sup>35</sup> UBISOFT, GAMELOFT: *Assassin's Creed*. [digital game]. Montreuil : Ubisoft, 2007-2020.

<sup>36</sup> QUANTIC DREAM: *Detroit: Become Human*. [digital game]. Paris : Quantic Dream, Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2018.

analyze social opinion, which will allow him to better assess the situation and adjust his future decisions in this storyline accordingly. Of course, in this particular case, the media is more of a complementary function, as the player can get through the game without them, but they serve as a basis for better decision-making, i.e. they defacto develop the competence of information seeking. An interesting example that straddles the line between media literacy and game literacy is the game *Doki Doki Literature Club!*<sup>37</sup>, which, despite its childish design, is a horror game and visual novel. During gameplay, it refers the player to game files that they must navigate, which serve as a form of narrative construction outside of the gameplay itself, as the game rewrites or erases them according to the player's choices in the story. It thus forces the player to seek out information that they would not otherwise find their way to and to take a position on it, based on which they will make their next decisions in the game. The potential dangers of mindless media consumption can be found directly in the narrative of *Little Nightmares 2*<sup>38</sup>, in which the player witnesses a dystopian society fanaticalised by broadcasting. In some parts, they also becomes an observer of the suicides of characters who choose to do so because of the influence of broadcasting, and the player is unable to prevent them from doing so.

### 3.2 Social Interaction

At the second level of digital gaming, i.e. the social interaction between players in the game environment, communication skills and abilities are most often, logically, developed. These do not necessarily always have a direct link to media competences and are mostly directly dependent on the player's willingness to communicate on the scale of active - passive participant in communication. Suitable examples could be found in MOBA<sup>39</sup> games such as *League of Legends*<sup>40</sup> or *Dota 2*<sup>41</sup>, in FPS<sup>42</sup> games such as *CS:GO*<sup>43</sup>, *Apex Legends*<sup>44</sup> or *Valorant*<sup>45</sup>, in MMORPGs<sup>46</sup> such as *World of Warcraft*<sup>47</sup> or *Lost Ark*<sup>48</sup>, and in many other sub-genres. Although a player's willingness to communicate can have a direct impact on the success of cooperation and coordination between players in a team, influence the development of communication skills and foreign languages, and influence future social interactions outside the game world, they are not necessarily required of the player.

On the contrary, however, we can encounter digital games in which the player is able to enter at least partially into the creation of the environment in a certain vocabulary and to interact indirectly with other players by leaving, for example, messages. What is interesting about this way of communication, however, is the necessity of analysis, deduction and critical thinking of the player themself. The player may encounter messages that can help him to decipher a task, direct him to the right path, but also confuse them or even prevent them from successfully completing a particular part of the game. When interacting with such communication, the player

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<sup>37</sup> TEAM SALVATO: *Doki Doki Literature Club!*. [digital game]. Boulder : Team Salvato, Serenity Forge, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> TARSIER STUDIOS, SUPERMASSIVE GAMES: *Little Nightmares 2*. [digital game]. Tokyo : Bandai Namco, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Multiplayer online battle arena.

<sup>40</sup> RIOT GAMES: *League of Legends*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Riot Games, 2009-2022.

<sup>41</sup> VALVE CORPORATION: *Dota 2*. [digital game]. Bellevue : Valve Corporation, 2013-2022.

<sup>42</sup> First person shooter.

<sup>43</sup> VALVE CORPORATION, HIDDEN PATH ENTERTAINMENT: *Counter Strike: Global Offensive*. [digital game]. Bellevue : Valve corporation, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT, PANIC BUTTON GAMES: *Apex Legends*. [digital game]. Redwood City : Electronic Arts, 2019-2022.

<sup>45</sup> RIOT GAMES: *Valorant*. [digital game]. Santa Monica : Riot Games, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Massively multiplayer online role-playing game.

<sup>47</sup> BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT: *World of Warcraft*. [digital game]. Irvine : Blizzard Entertainment, 2004-2022.

<sup>48</sup> SMILEGATE, TRIPOD STUDIO: *Lost Ark*. [digital game]. Seoul : Smilegate, 2019-2022.

is forced to consider all options, analyse the situation and consciously decide whether to accept or reject the information provided, i.e. it is a direct form of media competence. This could be found in the games *Dark Souls*<sup>49</sup>, in which players in online versions leave messages for each other (outside of real time), or in *Death Stranding*<sup>50</sup>, where players communicate through Signs that they leave at specific locations. It is important to note that in these games, players do not encounter each other, nor do they have a direct impact on anyone else's gameplay (with the exception of Phantoms in *Dark Souls*).

## 4 Conclusions and Discussion

Digital games are a great tool for developing media competences. Among many other competences, they can develop critical thinking, teach players to work with media, to search for information in the game world and take a stance on it, as well as to adapt their further actions in the game based on newly acquired information. Games do so without the player being aware of this learning, through immersion in the game world that literally immerses the player. Another potential dimension for the development of media competences in digital games could be the search, selection and processing of information directly related to the game, i.e. player discussions, hints, tips, walkthroughs, etc., or the creation of media by-products by the players themselves, such as various images (fanart), videos, articles, etc., which could be used as a tool for the development of media competences in digital games. Here, however, we come to the border of fan studies and audience participation, which, although not entirely unknown in this context and can certainly provide many inputs for further research, were not the focus of this paper, which dealt with the games themselves.

Of course, it is unlikely that without otherwise developing media competencies at other levels, this gaming would be sufficient - it is just another level to media education in school or to actively developing media literacy oneself. Ultimately, digital gaming doesn't have as much time and space in an individual's life (for the most part). The time commitment to play through a game can be in the tens of hours, and in-game media or the direct development of media competence through gaming is only a fraction of that time. More space and player attention are devoted to the narrative, characters, or mechanics of the games. The choice of specific games is also important in this context. While some work with the media only as an embellishment of the space, others can directly develop media competences and teach the player to analyse media content, take a stance on it and develop critical thinking. The transferability to the real life of the individual is supported by working directly with the media. Of course, we could assume and argue that the necessity of analysing situations or evaluating danger in the game itself even without the presence of the media has its own meaning and can find application, but we have only focused on the media itself and such transferability would require further and deeper research. Therefore, this article serves more as a primer on the possibilities that digital games bring and the positive aspects they entail for the development of players' media competencies.

*Acknowledgement: This article was published thanks to the support of the project FPPV-27-2022 entitled New Trends in Media, of which the author of this article is the principal researcher.*

<sup>49</sup> FROM SOFTWARE: *Dark Souls*. [digital game]. Tokyo : FromSoftware, Bandai Namco, 2011-2018.

<sup>50</sup> KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS: *Death Stranding*. [digital game]. San Mateo : Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2019.

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