

## Chapter 59

# The Use of Digital Games to Stimulate Behaviors

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### ABSTRACT

*Videogames already have their own space on people's lives (as well as films, music, etc.). Serious games are able to provide players an interactive environment where they can have a new personal fulfillment, and try to achieve certain proposes as if they were real. The U.S. Department of Defense has, since the year 2002, a new tool for promotion and recruitment of civilians into the army. This is an online game in which the user is invited to experience the life of a soldier of the regular army: The America's Army game, considered the first combat serious game. Due to its popularity and purpose, this chapter analyzes the extent to which the use of the game influences the behavior of its users.*

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of an Avatar is based on the possibility of an alternative life, an extra body fulfillment where the real physical appearance does not matter. In virtual games users are respected for their skills.

Comparing digital games with cinema, this has as aim to recreate reality, telling more or less fanciful stories, first in black and white and without sound, then with sound, then with color.

Today is more than that, it promote other realities, reinforces the dream. When we speak about games, not only the player is the main character as well as he builds his own narrative.

If cinema is the manifestation of mass culture, emanated from the industrial society from the XIX and XX centuries, interactive narratives are a product of a postmodern culture, postulated by the new media and by the public segmentation. Negroponte in his book *Being Digital* (1996), Lev Manovich, in *The Language of New Media* (2001) and Anna Everette in *New Media: Theories and*

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*Practices of Digitextuality* (2004), discuss the relevance of the of the digital new media in the establishment of a cultural model based on the fragmentation of the hearings in what Manovich calls “the post-industrial logic of on demand production” (Manovich, 2001, p.36).

According to Landow (1997), interactive narratives allow to reconfigure the very idea of narrative, putting it definitely away from the binomial history and speech. The path taken and the choices made by the user will give shape to the narrative. Is the very user who creates the narrative.

Janet Murray, in *Hamlet on the Hollow Deck* (1997), suggests the concept of Cyberdrama, which would include both the hypertextual narratives and videogames. The main category that associates these new kinds of narratives is the agency, in other words, the user transformation in one agent that, although is not confused with an author, would have the power to interact, manipulate and choose the storylines to follow. The author shares with the user some important elements determinants of artistic creation and, through formal and material constraints would lose some of its power in favor of this.

At the movies, users are passive, in a game, players are active users. There can be no comparison between watching television or movies, in which the users are passive, and gaming where players become active users, where through their actions they write their story and may influence others. As many of the fantasies that exist are produced by cinema, books and theater, they potentiate the use of digital games, where the player is the main actor, and where he can often take actions several times contrary to his beliefs. Digital games, through their surroundings, promote certain lifestyles and values, the most common, perhaps because of the influence of cinema heroes, is the military lifestyle.

The digital media are an integral part of our contemporary society. They are part of several aspects on an individual's life. From work, to enjoyment and learning. In many cases, the digital

media intertwine those different aspects of our life. Computer games are a good example of that. In the specific case of the usage of these technologies in learning and teaching, games stand out from the other medias, by enabling a balance between challenge and gamer's surroundings, during the interaction (Papastergio, 2009).

Videogames already have their own space on people's lives (as well as films, music, etc). Serious games are able to provide to players an interactive environment where they can have a new body fulfillment, and try to achieve certain proposes as if they were real. Games are the instrument to keep the audience familiar with a new technical literacy, focused on computation, networks and the digital image's viral plasticity (Elias, 2009).

Elverdam and Aarseth (2007) have classified video games, according to several variables: screenplay, age group of the targeting audience, proposal, gender, interactivity and objective. We highlight here the rating according to the objective of the videogames. Derryberry (2007) rates videogames according to their objective, on the following categories: casual games, advergates and serious games. Casual games are only focused on player's fun; Advergates have an advertising objective, and serious games have the purpose of teaching or training operational or behavioral abilities.

Due to its popularity and purpose it is intended to analyze the extent to which the use of the game influences the behavior of its users. According to Manovich (2001) mediatic communication only occurs if it is in some way related with a receptor subsequence stimulation. Following this perspective, mediatic communication has always a purpose and intends to provoke some cause of effect, not only persuasive but also as entertainment.

The America's Army game, which is considered the first successful and well executed serious game with total public recognition, is presented by the US Army as being the most real war game ever made, where all details count in order to

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