

Abstract

This Master's thesis aims to explore the impact of the game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* released in March 2020 for the Nintendo Switch console on players during the Covid-19 pandemic by analyzing forum posts and articles. The thesis further typifies the community of players of the game that post on the forums *Animal Crossing Community* and *The Bell Tree Forums*, their motivations for playing, and the ways in which the game provided them with an escape from the reality of the pandemic. Furthermore, the thesis partly focuses on media reflection of this phenomenon through the analysis of articles describing their own experience with the game. This thesis intends to achieve this through qualitative research methods, specifically through a case study using the method of analytical induction. The first chapters in the theoretical part of the thesis show that the existing knowledge about the impact of games and media in general on the mental health of people, and adolescents in particular, is contradictory. However, the research part of the thesis, which is divided into chapters based on the individual research questions, shows that in the case of this particular period, i.e. from the release of the game during the months of the most severe pandemic measures to their temporary easing in the summer of 2020, the game played a significant positive role in the coping of the studied group with these measures and the associated feelings of loneliness and stress, especially on a social level.