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## Gaming Zeitgeist Ver. II

Imagine, if you would, a scenario where you find out that your child has been depleting your bank account for some silly costumes in a game they like to play; let's say Fortnite because of how popular it is with kids. You approach them and question why they spent the money, and the response you get may fall amongst the lines of "I didn't know I was spending actual money" or "My friends would make fun of me if I didn't." This is just one example of how companies exploit gamers with harmful and addictive technologies in the games they play for more money. "What qualifies as a 'harmful or addictive technology' in a video game?" you may ask. In their [publication on immersive and addictive technologies](#), the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament defines it as "... technologies... deliberately engineered to capture users' attention or draw them back to the platform...". It has an affect on the gaming industry in a number of ways; companies releasing multiple "special editions, releasing games in a series on an annual basis, or simply having friends peer pressure other friends into buying stupid cosmetics because they'd be "basic" otherwise just to name a few. The point remains: companies exploiting harmful and addictive technologies in games captures an American zeitgeist of the video game industry because of how having

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multiple editions of games, annual releases of games, and excessive microtransactions harm the gaming industry.

To begin, one way harmful and addictive technologies affect the game industry through the annual release of games in a series. Series such as "[Call of Duty](#)" or "[Battlefield](#)" or "[Pokémon](#)" or any of those sports games typically release on a yearly schedule, upgrading the game so players can enjoy a new experience. Companies exploit gamers using harmful and addictive technologies with this practice because it forces the player(s) to succumb to temptation; rather than simply enjoying the game they already have, the player will buy the latest version of the game because it's shiny, new, (hopefully) improved from the previous entry, and this way they keep up to snuff with everything, as said in the [TweakTown article](#) "Call of Duty is still an annual franchise,...". Their friends probably have the new version too, which ties into a reason further down on the paper, so getting the new version will allow them to keep playing with their friends. Many of those who enjoy gaming typically succumb to the annual release of game series, myself included; and I can personally say that I do this genuinely because I don't want to miss out on any new experiences I may have in the new

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games I can explore. But this is just one of the ways harmful and addictive technologies has affected the gaming industry.

Harmful and addictive technologies also affect games through the release of multiple versions or editions of games being launched. To elaborate, sometimes games with enough money and/or effort behind them will come out with multiple editions of the same game just to pry more money out of you. The contents of these “special editions” vary by game, and can range from the type you’d find in the [Madden](#) series (scroll down to compare products), which typically consist of a pass for more paid content among other in-game special items, to the “collector’s editions”, such as this one for [Cyberpunk 2077](#) (scroll down to product details), that have physical novelty items like figurines and soundtracks. And that’s not even getting into pre-order bonuses and multiple special editions. Pre-order bonuses meaning you buy a game in advance and get exclusive bonuses for buying early, such as the one for [Dragon Ball Xenoverse 2](#) (scroll down to Pre-Order Bonus). Said bonuses may come out later, they might not; that’s up to the developer/publisher of the game. Multiple special editions are a different kind of beast; whereas I went over single special editions that were available pretty much everywhere you can buy the game in question, these

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special editions are exclusive to a specific retailer and usually have something exclusive about them, such as one retailer having a steel book case and another having a small collectable, as seen with the [Pokémon Sword and Shield special editions](#) in this Game rant article. All of this is a result of FOMO; whether it's a silly collector's edition or in-game items or the promise of playing early or simply securing a copy, players often pay for these special versions, myself included. Just another way harmful and addictive technologies has affected the gaming industry.

One final way I know harmful and addictive technologies affect the gaming market is through microtransactions. If you don't know, microtransactions is when you pay real money for x character/item/service in a game. Whatever your paying for varies by game, but that's the basics of it. The part which FOMO plays in this is how you have players who will drop hundreds of dollars on these microtransactions for such trivial stuff, such as a favorite player in the FIFA games, as shown in [this BBC article](#) which headlines children emptying their parents' bank account attempting to win their favorite player (which they never actually won) through loot boxes, a microtransaction that many call "harmful and addictive". This especially is a harmful and addictive technology because it's essentially

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gambling; the odds of getting a good payout buying one, as shown in this [Polygon article on Overwatch's loot box odds in China](#), are very rare, and can be programmed to be even rarer. Unless you want to spend hours upon hours of grinding for what you want, as shown in this Game rant article on the [grind for Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker](#) in the early Star Wars Battlefront 2 game, the only efficient way to get the good characters in those games is through spending money to try and get those good characters. You spend because you don't want to be left in the dust. Then you have articles like this one, again [from BCC](#), which illustrates how normalized microtransactions are to the children who play microtransaction-filled games. The implementation of these microtransactions are considered harmful and addictive, in this case to children, because of how adding them affects children; they feel pressured into spending because they will be put down by their friends otherwise. It is for these reasons that I consider microtransactions in video games a harmful and addictive technology.

Now I can understand that there are some who will brush off my claims as bubkis. Fair enough, everyone's entitled to an opinion as they say. However, I do implore you, whoever may doubt my words, search up some of those stories of children burning their parents' money for in-game goods. They're more common

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than you may think. As for those who are still with me, you may be thinking to yourself “Alright, what could we (America) do?” Well, we could follow the UK in their endeavor to regulate stuff like this. In summary, the UK has been trying to find and regulate trends in “addictive and harmful” technologies, with videogames being amongst these technologies, calling back to their [Parliament’s publication on immersive and addictive technologies](#). And if [this article from Polygon](#) is anything to go by, there are U.S. senators like Josh Hawley who are willing to push for legislation. The proposed legislation is also gaining bipartisan support, according [to this article here](#) (again from Polygon), with such support coming from fellow senators Richard Blumenthal and Ed Markey. I believe that, were the U.S. to keep up in this direction, stories of children emptying their parents’ bank accounts would be much sparser in the future. Otherwise, I don’t see the situation improving much. At least not without some retaliation. To conclude, it is for these reasons, multiple variants of games, annual releases, and microtransactions, why I believe that a good American zeitgeist of the gaming industry is harmful and addictive technologies in games.