

# Playing with a Brand: the Brazilian McDonald's Paper Tray Case

Vicente Martin Mastrocola

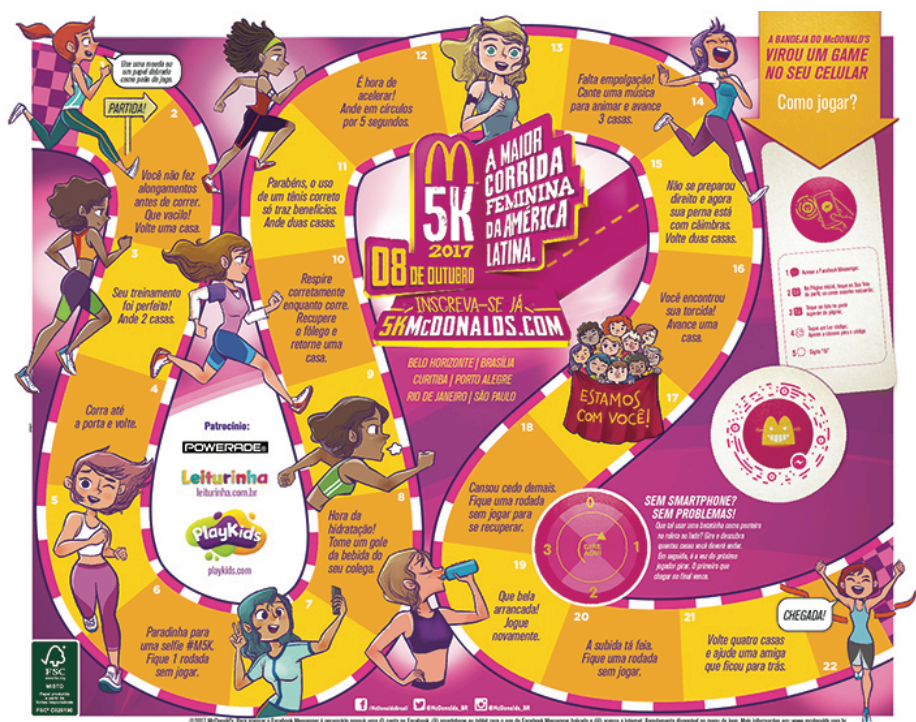
ESPM

Rua Álvaro Alvim, 123  
São Paulo, Brazil - 04011060  
+55-11-94094759  
vmastrocola@espm.br

## Keywords

McDonald's, board game, Facebook bot, paper tray, marketing

Taking communication, marketing and entertainment as leading and intertwining landmarks of contemporary culture, this paper discusses an advertising piece from Brazilian McDonald's restaurants, which uses a gaming interface to cast a branding message to its consumers. Acknowledging the prominence of digital networks in today's *mediapolis* (Silverstone 2006), where mass self communication (Castells 2009) poses new challenges to understanding current modes of sociability and consumption, our focus will be directed to one promotional board game presented in the paper used to protect the food tray in McDonald's Brazilian restaurants. Created by the Brazilian advertising agency DPZ&T and launched in October 2017, the game uses a "race to the end" mechanic and could be played from one to four players using a Facebook bot.



**Figure 1:** McDonald's promotional paper tray using a board game with a Facebook bot interaction.

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To play the game, one player must scan the special code using the app “Facebook Messenger” in their smartphone. The code starts a special bot that sends quizzes, enigmas, and trivia questions about McDonald’s to the players. Each correct answer allows players to advance their pawn in the trail. The player who wins the race receives one special chance to earn a prize (pack of French fries, ice cream etc.) from McDonald’s.

In the first part of the presentation, following the thoughts of Fullerton et al. (2008 15-16), we analyze the game design process for a promotional game. Based on information provided by the agency, we discuss the conceptual stage and the necessity to align gameplay with the marketing message; we also discuss how a prototype is created in this case, and how the beta test sessions occurred. In the end, we present technical information about how the final version is implemented with the interface between the board game (in the paper tray) and the Facebook bot (in the smartphone).

In the second part of the presentation, we highlight the strategic use of entertainment languages by companies in their marketing campaigns in the contemporary scenario, and how social media and mobile devices contribute to accelerate the process in this ecosystem. Following the idea that the quotidian is filled with playgrounds (Bogost 2016) where we can access entertainment anytime/anywhere, we discuss how companies like McDonald’s are managing these aspects to promote brand and sell products.

In conclusion, we present data and results from the McDonald’s paper tray board game. Since the game uses a digital interface, it is possible to collect data from the players, geo-locating information and inserting questions about the brand to test how players know about the company. We discuss how these data collected can be used in future campaigns or new promotional actions using games.

## BIO

Vicente Martin Mastrocola, PhD. works as a graduation level teacher at ESPM São Paulo (Brazil); Vicente also works as a game designer, developing games for mobile platforms and analogical board games/card games. In the first semester of 2016, he studied at Paneurópska vysoká škola (Pan-European University) in Bratislava (Slovakia) as part of his doctorate research. His work can be found in his portfolio <<http://vincevader.net/>> and in his blog <<http://gamingconceptz.blogspot.com>>.

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