



Varsity College

Transportation Theory and gaming: semi-structured interviews to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion of Durban gamers in 2018

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I. DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for The IIE Honours in Communication Degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education for degree purposes.

Keli Pamela Bell

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II. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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III. ABSTRACT

Gaming has become increasingly popular, specifically online gaming. This has led to a dependency on gaming and serious issues such as immersion, social isolation, interpersonal conflicts, withdrawal, preoccupation, and overuse (Demetrovics, Farkas, Felvinczi, Griffiths, Kokonyei, Nagygyorgy, Olah, Papay and Urban, 2012).

With these issues hindering communication between individuals in society, it informs the rationale to research the narrative immersion of Durban gamers as communication at a crossroads. This is because the advancements in technology, in terms of graphics, have made hyper-realism possible. When specifically looking at characters in games, technology eliminates the gap between digital and real humans (Morris, 2018). This then makes transportation of an individual's self into narratives easier by making narratives and the characters within narratives more believable and realistic.

This research aimed to identify the qualitative reasoning of how and why individuals transport themselves into narratives in gaming within a developing country such as South Africa through semi-structured interviews.

This topic needed to be studied qualitatively to describe how and why individuals subjectively experience immersion when interacting with narratives in games. This will aid in understanding of the reasons behind narrative immersion in games, both the positive and negative side effects of immersion, and how to successfully transport oneself between game narratives and their reality of origin.

The key findings in this study found that narrative immersion occurs, however, how and why Durban gamers immerse into gaming narratives is dependent on the individual and their gaming preferences and experience, thus contributing a developing countries perspective.

Keywords: Narrative, Transportation, Gamers, Technology

IV. LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: <i>Explain Why You Game</i>	29
Table 2: Explain when you choose to game in a seven-day week, and why.....	31
Table 3: Explain how long you game for in an average session, and why?	32
Table 4: Describe your understanding of what makes a person a regular gamer, and why	33
Table 5: Explain why you prefer this platform / these platforms, and Describe the (specific feature) that makes you want to game on this platform / these platforms.	34
Table 6: Describe whether or not you experience / interact with gaming content on social media platforms and/or applications	36
Table 7: When choosing a game to play, describe what influences your preference to play a game, and why	37
Table 8: Please refer to a game you are currently playing, and then explain in-depth your experience of playing this game.	38
Table 9: Explain if you have an interruption while gaming, explain how you would react.	39
Table 10: Describe anything specific that makes you want to keep playing the game and Describe what about (the element) allowed you to get more involved in the game.	40

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. DECLARATION	i
II. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
III. ABSTRACT.....	iii
IV. LIST OF TABLES	iv
1. TITLE	1
2. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.1. Contextualisation.....	1
2.2. Rationale and Relevance	2
2.2.1. Rationale.....	2
2.2.2. Relevance	3
2.3. Problem Statement	3
2.4. Purpose Statement	5
2.4.1. Research Questions	5
2.4.2. Research Objectives	5
3. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	5
3.1. Theoretical Foundation	5
3.2. Literature Review	7
3.2.1. Theme One: The Beginning of Transportation Theory.....	7
3.2.2. Theme Two: The Positive Experience of Transportation and Gaming	15
3.2.3. Theme Three: The Negative Experience of Transportation and Gaming	16
3.3. Conceptualisation.....	17
3.3.1. Gaming Narratives	18
3.3.2. Narrative Transportation / Immersion.....	18

3.3.3. <i>Transmedia</i>	18
3.3.4. <i>Fantasy</i>	18
4. METHODOLOGY	19
4.1. Research Paradigm	19
4.2. Paradigm Positions	20
4.2.1. <i>Epistemological Position</i>	20
4.2.2. <i>Ontological Position</i>	20
4.2.3. <i>Metatheoretical Position</i>	20
4.2.4. <i>Methodological Position</i>	21
4.2.5. <i>Axiological Position</i>	21
4.3. Research Approach	22
4.3.1. <i>Timeframe</i>	22
4.3.2. <i>Deductive Reasoning</i>	22
4.3.3. <i>Design</i>	22
4.3.4. <i>Interdisciplinary Study</i>	23
4.4. Population	23
4.4.1. <i>Target Population</i>	23
4.4.2. <i>Accessible Population</i>	23
4.4.3. <i>Population Characteristics</i>	23
4.5. Sampling	24
4.6. Data Collection Method	24
4.7. Data Analysis Method	25
4.8. Trustworthiness	26
4.8.1. <i>Credibility</i>	26

4.8.2. <i>Transferability</i>	27
4.8.3. <i>Dependability</i>	27
4.8.4. <i>Confirmability</i>	27
5. FINDINGS (PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION)	29
5.1. Reasons for Gaming	29
5.2. Regular Gamers	30
5.3. Gaming Console Preference	34
5.4. Transmedia and Personal Gaming Experience	35
6. CONCLUSION	42
6.1. Ethical Considerations	42
6.2. Limitations	44
6.3. Heuristic Value	44
6.3.1. <i>Field</i>	44
6.3.2. <i>Profession</i>	45
7. CLOSING STATEMENT	46
REFERENCES	47
ANNEXURE A	50
ANNEXURE B	51
ANNEXURE C	52
ANNEXURE D	56
ANNEXURE E	59
ANNEXURE F	60
ANNEXURE G	61
ANNEXURE H	62

(WhatsApp).....	62
(Email)	62

1. TITLE

Transportation Theory and gaming: Semi-structured interviews to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion of Durban gamers in 2018.

2. INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion of Durban gamers through semi-structured interviews, using Transportation Theory. The aim of this study was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews whereby the participants were asked to subjectively describe their perceived narrative immersion and viewing the data collected from an interpretivist perspective when analysing the data. The purpose of this research report was to describe why this topic needed to be studied, the manner that the study was conducted, to discuss the literature review and how Transportation Theory and narrative immersion have been studied previously and identify how this study contributed to previous studies by researching Durban gamers experience of narrative immersion in a qualitative nature, and assess the trustworthiness, ethical considerations, limitations and anticipated contribution of the study. Therefore, this research report included the contextualisation, rationale, relevance and research problem, the literature review on Transportation Theory and Gaming, conceptualisation of the key concepts, identifying the research paradigm, design, population, sampling, data collection and analysis methods. Then, finally a description of the trustworthiness, ethical consideration, limitations and heuristic value of the study conducted.

In this section the contextualisation, rationale, relevance, research problem, purpose, questions and objectives will be discussed to provide background, reasoning and aim of the study.

2.1. Contextualisation

Transportation can be described as it is not merely a physically moving between destinations, but rather experiencing cognitive, imagery, and affective involvement in a narrative (Gretter, Gleason and Yadav, 2017). It is the disconnection with reality and divergence into a narrative such as a book, movie or game (Green and Brock, 2000). This idea of transportation then leads to the Transportation Theory, which has been studied since its emergence in 1993. The research on narrative transportation was limited by being predominantly studied quantitatively,

which can be seen later in the literature review section, where majority of the sources, including the seminal articles are conducted quantitatively. Therefore, more qualitative research was required to assist the Communication Field in understanding the subjective experience of narrative immersion through transportation in media such as gaming. This contributed to the understanding of a sub-culture [A culture within a dominant culture (Croteau and Hoynes, 2014; Oxford University Press, 1998; License, 2010) groups found in society such as gaming groups, and how they perceive immersion into gaming narratives (Pascoe, 2014).

This research aimed to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion experienced by Durban gamers and contributed to the knowledge on narrative transportation was and what perceived positive and negative experiences can subjectively experience during immersion (Anderson, Brown, Gentile, Prot and Swing, 2014).

Furthermore, this research required an understanding of key concepts such as gaming narratives, narrative transportation, immersion, transmedia and fantasy (these concepts will be elaborated on in the conceptualisation section).

2.2. Rationale and Relevance

Now that the contextualisation has been discussed to give the background to the research topic, the rationale and relevance, research problem, purpose, questions and objectives of this study need to be discussed to complete the reasoning for studying this topic.

2.2.1. Rationale

This study has significant importance to the researcher as she perceives that immersion into gaming narratives as beneficial in various ways such as recreation, learning or socialisation amongst others in society, if used effectively (Anderson, *et al.*, 2014). The understanding of how individuals subjectively experience their perceived narrative immersion may lead to advances in media such as gaming to enhance the multiple narratives found in all media forms found in everyday life by society (Rutledge, 2015). With narratives being found in everyday life across all these media platforms, one requires an understanding of how immersion occurs in narratives; such as gaming narratives, where gamers immerse themselves into gaming realms by transporting themselves between narrative worlds and their world of origin (the physical world around them). An understanding of this may then be found using Transportation Theory

(Green and Brock, 2000). The Transportation Theory is a conceptualised transportation into a narrative world through a distinct mental process that integrates feelings, attention, and imagery (Green and Brock, 2000). The researcher sees this as an important topic that should be studied to achieve an in-depth description of narrative immersion and how to distinguish between the gaming realm and reality

2.2.2. Relevance

This rationale also demonstrates how this study was relevant to the Communication Field and society. Green and Brocks' (2000) describe how a transporter's complete mental system becomes focused on events that occur in the narrative, therefore for even just a moment in time, this narrative becomes their reality. Therefore, through describing the narrative immersion the researcher's understanding can be enhanced and the knowledge on the social phenomenon of gaming. Specifically, transportation in gaming narratives and subjective experiences of narrative transportation. As gaming and narrative immersion makes use of communicating messages that the audience can interact with, understanding this may contribute to the understanding of using gaming as a communication media platform.

Therefore, in the Communication Field, this will enhance the understanding of how narrative immersion occurs and describe the perceived positive and negative experiences of narrative immersion in gaming to enhance the knowledge on this topic, particularly from within a South African, Durban perspective. Individuals may also be able to understand this description in a qualitative nature due to the nature of this study adding more qualitative research rather than quantitative to the field of communication. This will then increase the qualitative knowledge of communication theories such as Gerrig's quantitative Transportation Theory.

Furthermore, with gaming being a social or recreational phenomenon that requires more understanding and research about how people interact with games, this may prove beneficial to society and understanding the gaming sub-culture within society (Pascoe, 2014).

2.3. Problem Statement

With gaming becoming increasingly popular, there are both reported positive and negative effects on individuals, and these effects are dependent on how one immerses themselves in to gaming narratives. The positive and negative effects are not the focus of this study, but they

are included to form a basis of past experiences that explain how and why individuals immerse themselves in to narratives. As this research focused on the effects of gaming immersion, more research was required to gain a better understanding of how gamers perceive or experience narrative immersion in gaming, specifically Durban gamers. In New York, Some of the positive effects found when researching narrative immersion include prosocial games that assist individuals to interact with others and improve visual-spatial skills (Anderson, *et al*, 2014).

Additionally, as the use of games has increased steadily over time (Anderson *et al*, 2014), this can lead to dependency on gaming narratives, which can lead to serious issues such as immersion [the emotional reactions, mental imagery and loss of access to the real world information (Green and Brock, 2000)], social isolation, interpersonal conflicts, withdrawal, preoccupation, and overuse (Demetrovics, *et al.*, 2012). Dependency such as immersion can be seen as positive effect being used recreational enjoyment or a pass time, which was found in the participants responses.

This dependency is a problem as the complete immersion or dependency on narratives in gaming can lead to individuals disassociating from reality, from others in society and in an extreme case death. Like the 'Rustam' case, where a 17-year-old male died after playing continuously for twenty-two days (McCrum, 2015). Furthermore, the advantages of immersing in to gaming narratives can prove beneficial for education (The Conversation, 2014), or to improve hand-eye coordination and fine motor control in Multiple Sclerosis patients (Westen, 2017). Although these do not relate to the current study they reinforce the need for studying gaming narratives and the experience of narrative immersion into specific games.

Therefore, this needs to be studied to qualitatively describe gamers experience of narratives in games to gain a better understanding of how individuals immerse in to and experience narratives in games both positively (for recreational enjoyment) and/or negatively (for isolation of self).

Additionally, as the majority of the research found was conducted in developed country contexts, such as New York, the problem of this topic being understudied in developing countries arises. Therefore, this research aims to contribute a developing world context by studying narrative

immersion in Durban, South Africa and identifying similarities and/or differences to developed country research.

2.4. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion and perceived positive or negative subjective experience of Durban gamers in 2018, through semi-structured interviews using Transportation Theory. This contributed to the understanding of Transportation Theory and its key concepts such as narrative transportation and immersion, in a qualitative nature within a developing country, while possibly contributing to the understanding of narrative immersion and subjective experience of immersion. This study will ensure that in-depth meanings are formulated from participant responses by conducting a qualitative content analysis using a priori thematic codes to identify the key ideas to questions answered in the semi-structured interviews.

2.4.1. Research Questions

- i. How do Durban gamers perceive to immerse themselves in gaming narratives?
- ii. Why do Durban gamers immerse themselves in gaming narratives?

2.4.2. Research Objectives

- i. To understand how Durban gamers', perceive their experiences of immersion in gaming narratives.
- ii. To understand Durban gamers' reason for immersing themselves in gaming narratives

3. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The quote "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards" depicts the understanding of the past being linked to living the future (Kierkegaard, 2018). Therefore, in research, in order to understand current or future phenomenon, one needs to conceptualise and reflect on past research to understand topics such as narrative immersion. In this section, the theoretical foundation, literature review and conceptualisation will be discussed.

3.1. Theoretical Foundation

The Transportation Theory was originally developed in the United States by Richard Gerrig in 1993 and expanded by Melanie Green and Timothy Brock in 2000. Gerrig (1993) described this

phenomenon as an individual transporting themselves by performing certain actions which takes them away from their world of origin or physical world, making it inaccessible, and then returning to this world changed in some ways. Green and Brock (2000) further this by explaining that an individual experiences imagery, emotional and cognitive involvement in to narratives that transport them between a narrative world and their world of origin.

The Transportation Theory was the most suitable theoretical foundation that can be used for this study as it aims to describe the narrative immersion experienced by Durban gamers, and the theory involves transportation in to narratives. This theory assisted in answering the research question because it contributed an understanding of what narrative immersion is and how it occurs, which provided a basis for understanding narrative immersion before understanding how individuals perceive their experience of this phenomenon.

The metatheoretical position of theories such as the Transportation Theory guides how to explain or describe a phenomenon within a specific field of study, such as narrative transportation within the Communication Field. This theory originally falls within a positivist paradigm as it identifies the casual relationship between narrative immersion and predicts effect on individuals that transport themselves in to narratives. However, with this study aiming to describe the in-depth subjective experience of gamers narrative immersion in a qualitative nature, the interpretivist paradigm is more suitable. This theory will be examined from within an interpretivist paradigm and this contributed a different perspective of this already existing theory, specifically describing gamers unique perceptions of this phenomenon.

Therefore, this theory was relevant as it assists with describing an individual's experience of narrative immersion by identifying their transportation into game narratives, which both share the key concept of narrative immersion or narrative transportation (which will be elaborated in the conceptualisation section).

The Transportation Theory by Green and Brock (2000) believes that an individual experience's emotional, imagery and cognitive involvement in to narratives which transports them into that narrative world. This 'transportation' allows individuals to actively participate in the action of a narrative and feel as if they control or are a part of it. Furthermore, technological advancements have made interactive narratives more common through virtual reality simulators (Green, et al., 2004). For example, the use of virtual reality simulator headsets where users must actively

move or find markers in a narrative to progress through the simulation or interact with other users (Samsung, 2018). Therefore, using the Transportation Theory, a description of individuals immersion into narratives can be identified and backed up by academic research.

3.2. Literature Review

The literature review will review academic sources that include elements such as Transportation Theory, narrative immersion and gaming as a requirement for reviewing. Literature that is irrelevant, outdated, so that the study remains current and is relevant in a developing country such as South Africa (United Nations, 2014). As this is a historical literature review, the literature being reviewed from past to present dated literature, including seminal literature from 1993 to current literature in 2018, to show the progression of research that has been conducted on this topic. The findings from this will also be placed into three themes being, the beginning of transportation, the positive experience of transportation and gaming, and the negative experience of transportation and gaming. Thus, making this literature review both historical (a review conducted to review the history of literature found on a specific topic) and thematic (a review conducted to identify common themes within literature). The literature review will identify strengths and weaknesses of each source that can contribute to the current study. This literature review will therefore review how the topic of narrative immersion has been studied in order to overcome the possible weaknesses in this study using the strengths found in past studies.

3.2.1. Theme One: The Beginning of Transportation Theory

Literature from 1993 introduces the Transportation Theory as a phenomenon and shows how it was initially studied which makes it relevant in the historical reviewing of literature on narrative immersion despite it being outdated. Firstly, Mary Mottiff's research in *Articulating Meaning: Preconceptions of Meaning Process, Fantasy/Reality, and Identity in Leisure Activities* done in 1993, conducted research on narrative immersion in 1993, which is one of the first appearances of the topic being studied, and from a qualitative perspective. This research aimed to identify how individuals create meaning through narratives, specifically in texts such as romance novels. Moffitt's study also demonstrates why individuals immerse themselves into narratives prior to technological advancements that allow for an interactive immersion through gaming. Therefore, this is one of the first studies conducted before Transportation Theory emerged, proving that

the article is relevant as it shows the history of Transportation Theory before gaming and gives an understanding of why an individual immerses into narratives (Moffitt, 1993, pp. 231-251)

A strength found within this literature that contributes to the current study is its support that it is indeed the narrative that individuals immerse themselves into rather than the media used, as she studied this using romance novels and not new media such as gaming consoles. This strength can then add an element to the study that shows that it is the quality of the narrative and the characters within the narrative that are vital for transportation to occur. The main finding from Moffitt's research that is applicable to the research of immersion into narratives includes identifying that a crucial part of narrative structure includes honest interactions and active disagreements or conflict between characters within the narrative. This is due to the individual's pleasure and meaning that was articulated including the ability to be able to say exactly what they feel (Moffitt, 1993, pp. 241-242).

While this shows how Moffitt's research is relevant, for the purpose of this study more research will be required as Moffitt's research lacks the element of new media such as gaming consoles which pioneered in 1981, 1995 and 2001 using different platforms (transmedia narratives). This is due to technology adapting the way in which individuals immerse themselves in to narratives through visual stimulation of narratives (*Time*, 2014).

In the same year as Moffitt's research, the phenomenon of narrative immersion is formally documented in 1993 as Transportation Theory. The Transportation Theory is formally mentioned in the book called *Experiencing Narrative Worlds* written by Richard Gerrig, making Gerrig the seminal author. With this being the seminal source of Transportation Theory, it is then relevant to studies being conducted presently in 2018. Gerrig describes Transportation Theory as a phenomenon where an individual transporting themselves, by some means of transportation through performing certain actions. Continuing to state that this process takes that individual away from their world of origin, making it inaccessible and then returns changed in some ways by the journey taken (Gerrig, 1993).

The strength found in this literature is that it assists in improving the understanding of what happens to individuals that experiences narrative immersion. It is relevant as it can assist the researcher to identify and describe narrative immersion of Durban gamers using academic sources to support the findings and identify common themes such as the reason for immersion.

The weakness found in this literature however, is that Gerrig does not refer to effects of this transportation on the individual or what mental processes are required to immerse in to narratives. This study may assist in overcoming this by describing gamers' experiences of narrative immersion, which may be positive or negative. This weakness was also addressed by Melanie Green and Brock in 2000. As this literature assists in describing the narrative immersion experienced in gaming narrative, the development of technology needs to be reviewed to see new platforms and the influence this has on the narrative immersion in games.

Therefore, with the launching of the personal computer (PC) in 1981, the Play Station in 1995, and Microsoft's *Xbox* in 2001, the transition from two-dimensional gaming to three-dimensional gaming commenced and allowed for a more interactive experience and better immersion into narratives (Dormehl, 2017; Time, 2014; The Strong: National Museum of Play, 2018). Thus, Transportation Theory could then be studied in relation to gaming narratives and researchers began studying Transportation Theory using quantitative research. The research conducted by Melanie Green and Timothy Brock on '*The Role of Transportation in Persuasiveness of Public Narratives*' in 2000, is the first research found after the event of new gaming media.

This quantitative research conducted in 2000 by Melanie Green and Timothy Brock expanded Gerrig's explanation of Transportation Theory. This was done by describing transportation as a convergent process where mental capacities and systems become focused on events that occur in a narrative. They similarly describe the outcome of transportation as the world of origin becoming inaccessible. However, they expand this by explaining that the individual subjectively distances themselves from the real-world by losing facts in favour of accepting the narrative world, and rejecting these real-world facts that contradict assertions made in the narrative (Green and Brock, 2000, pp. 701-702).

As Melanie and Brock (2000) expand on the seminal article, this then makes this literature relevant as it contributes to the knowledge on Transportation Theory. This expansion is a strength that adds to the research of narrative immersion. This then allows for more in-depth understanding of Transportation Theory and can lead to a better understanding of how individuals immerse themselves in to narratives, which can be used in this study.

The strengths gained from this literature include that it adds to the interpretivist paradigm by expanding the original theory to include subjectivity. Therefore, when studying narrative

immersion of Durban Gamers in 2018, one needs to view their narrative immersion as being subjective to the individual. This research however, lacks to describe how individuals subjectively distance themselves from their real-world and into narratives. This weakness will be avoided in the current study by asking questions that allow an in-depth description of the gamers experience of narrative immersion. Green and Brock then went on to further their study with contribution from Geoff Kaufman in 2014, also showing how the study of narrative immersion is a continuous process.

This research conducted by Melanie Green, Timothy Brock and Geoff Kaufman on *'Understanding Media Enjoyment: The Role of Transportation into Narrative Worlds'* in 2014 furthers Green and Brocks' research that was conducted previously by describing Transportation into a narrative world as an experience of cognition, emotional and imagery involvement in a narrative through new media. They also identified positive experiences of narrative immersion which serves as a strength as it shows how narrative immersion can be beneficial for individuals and this experience can be enhanced by the descriptions given in the current study.

Although they include a positive effect of immersion, they lack explaining the negative aspects and their research is therefore biased to the positive aspects. This will be avoided in the current study by conducting questions that are general and not one sided such as "describe your experience of gaming?" and not "Describe a positive experience of gaming?".

Research conducted by William Brown on *'Examining Four Processes of Audience Involvement with Media Personae: Transportation, Parasocial Interaction and Worship'* in 2015 starts to look at the reason for the narrative immersion being possible without positive or negative experiences but by looking at the connection between the gamer and the narrative content. William Brown (2015) adds a new perspective to the Transportation Theory by including the description that transportation requires both an involvement with the narrative and the characters of a narrative. Brown explains that the attachment to characters plays a critical role. Brown motivates this further by stating that characters are the driving force. This is similar to the *Time* (2014) article that explains that the believability of the characters influences the ability of the individual to transport themselves into a narrative (Brown, 2015).

This would then lead to the researcher having to ask probing questions about the characters within the narratives of games that are being controlled by the Durban gamers being interviewed and can add a strength to the study being conducted. This would add a strength to the current study as it would therefore reinforce the responses given by participants, if they state that the believability of the characters influences their perceived narrative experience.

Research conducted by Emily Moyer-Gusé on *'Extending the Examination of Audience Involvement with Media Personae: Response to Brown'* in 2015 starts to look at type of attachment gamers have to the characters found within gaming narratives. Emily Moyer-Gusé furthers Brown's research by stating that becoming psychologically or emotionally attached to personalities, even fictional characters, is becoming a common occurrence. Moyer-Gusé explains the term involvement as the cognitive responses to a message (Moyer-Gusé, 2015). Therefore, narrative involvement again is explained to require cognition, like mentioned by Green and Brock (2000), in this case an individual responds to the messages in the narratives. When applied to the current study this would include gamers' responses to messages found within gaming narratives such as mission breakaways where they would have to make a choice that determines the direction of the storyline. This involvement can then be used to describe individuals' experience of immersion in gaming narratives, specifically how they interact during this experience.

This literature's strength is that it adds to the research on the same Brown's topic while aiming to further the research and simplify the understanding. However, it does not add to the concept of transportation but merely redefines Brown's research. The study avoids this same downfall by outlining the key concepts that will be included, as seen in the conceptualisation section in this report. This helps to ensure that the research conducted, and the findings are derived from the research are specific so that the research objective can be achieved.

Research conducted by Joseph Bayer, Scott Campbell and Rich Ling on *'Connection Cues: Activating the Norms and Habits of Social Connectedness'* in 2016. Bayer and colleagues (2016), take a new view on transportation by making use of cellular devices as the focus of media being studied, this is a strength as it adds to the transmedia of narratives. This study explains that staying connected is now both a personal habit and a societal norm. They explain how individuals have the need to continuously stay connected to their mobile device and how

this influences their behaviour. For example, the narratives on mobile devices such as messages can influence individual's behaviour by making them continuously feel the need to check their devices through nonconscious triggers. This then reinforces narratives ability to influence individual's behaviour by making them have frequent transportation into mobile narratives (Bayer, Campbell and Ling, 2016).

Research conducted by Coursaris, Van Osch and Sese on '*Exploring the Empirical Link Between Game Features, Player Motivation, and Game Behaviour*' in 2016 shows a continuation of the research on new media platforms such as cellular devices.

Coursaris and colleagues (2016) further the research using cellular devices as a medium for transportation, by examining playing online mobile games. They discover that these gratify an individual's needs through three features that include, connection, bonding and share-in features; which all allow individuals to immerse in their narratives. Coursaris and colleagues also explain that Transportation Theory suggests that immersion in to narrative allows people to adapt their intentions and attitudes to a story and this results in enjoyment. This is reinforced by the direct link found between character identification and game enjoyment. Character identification increases enjoyment, while avatar player similarities undermine enjoyment (Coursaris, Van Osch and Sese, 2016). This idea of enjoyment can be seen in theme two as the positive experiences of immersion in gaming as a thematic link between literature.

Thus, contributing another perspective to transportation being the enjoyment element being an aspect that allows narrative immersion. This perspective is furthered by research conducted by Daggubati and colleagues (2016) examining '*Cooperative Versus Non-Cooperative Game Play on Immersion and Enjoyment in Online Games*'. The findings suggested that cooperative game play enhances immersion and enjoyment, which reinforces Green, Brock and Kaufmans' expansion on transportation research for individual's narrative immersion motivates (Green, Brock, and Kaufman, 2014).

The strength of this research is that it contributes the inclusion of cooperative and non-cooperative game play and the use of mixed methods. Duggubati makes use of experiments in controlled environments which falls into the Positivist paradigm. Additionally, subjective responses from participants were assessed to understand their experience which falls into the Interpretivist paradigm. Thus, making this research mixed method. Although this research has

strengths it also contains a weakness, where the use of manipulated game mode in the experiments may have influenced the findings (Daggubati, 2016). This manipulation will be avoided in the current study as a way to avoid bias findings by asking questions in the semi-structured interviews that do not lead the participant to a desired response, but rather gaining their subjective description of their perceived narrative experience.

Research conducted by Pamela Rutledge called '*The Transmedia Trip: The Psychology of Creating Multi-Platform Narrative Engagement for Transmedia Migration*' in 2015, includes the element of transmedia, which is the delivery of a story across multiple media and explains how this creates a richer more immersive experience. Rutledge's research combines the platforms and the descriptions given by the majority research in the review of the above authors, despite being older than the last three in theme one. She explains that it is a psychological journey and how the flow or structure of the narrative influences its believability, the attention triggers for participating in narratives, such as visual imagery, skill building and emotional attachment and how this influences the immersion's successfulness. This research combines many factors which influence the narrative experience such as its flow and adds to the qualitative research on this topic. This kind of approach can be used in this study to give findings that look at various aspects which may be useful for future studies.

However, this literature reiterates a common downfall that is found when researching narrative immersion as it lacks the subjective personal experience of the elements given. This will be overcome as when the participants are asked what elements influence their gaming experience, probing questions will be asked to identify how elements such as skill building or emotional attachment is experienced subjectively by the individual, if it is mentioned by the participant.

Research conducted by Sara Gretter, Benjamin Gleason and Aman Yadav on '*Walking the Line Between Reality and Fiction in Online Spaces: Understanding the Effects of Narrative Transportation*' in 2017, explain the difficulty of distinguishing between reality and fantasy in online spaces, such as online gaming.

Gretter and colleagues explain the need for media literacy to distinguish between reality and fantasy. They mention how digital stories are one of the main forms of communication in the 21st century through social media. This contributes to Rutledge's study on transmedia narratives. Gretter explains how the use of transmedia platforms makes the narratives more believable

and therefore more likely to be immersed in to. The example of *Slenderman* is used to show this. As they mention how *Slenderman* was generated in 2009 in a photoshop context, then formed part of a meme, and then spread to *YouTube* videos, horror stories and games. It is discussed how using these various platforms makes the narrative more believable and how even though we know that *Slenderman* does not exist, in the fantasy world it is seen as real, and therefore if an individual plays the game and puts the lights off, they may be affected by this game. This element is a strength and can be integrated into this study to see how in the participants description, their beliefs and perception is influenced by the narrative immersion in gaming.

Although this research provides an example of *Slenderman* being available on multiple platforms, this example is vague and does not represent the individuals that may be playing gaming narratives. This downfall will be overcome by asking questions that specifically seek to describe the individuals perceived experience and what media platforms they find various gaming narrative content on.

The most recent study conducted on transportation includes the use of virtual reality. This research was conducted by Sara Elizabeth on '*Narrative Transportation and Virtual Reality: Exploring the Immersion Qualities of Social Justice Stories in The Digital World*' in 2018. Those participants in this research explained experiencing belief changes and transportation regardless of the narratives being real or fantasy narratives. Her research is built on previous research done by Brown, where her findings determined that the characters in games influenced the participants emotions more if they reminded them of people in real life.

The strength found in this literature is that it contributes reinforcement to other literature and includes the use of new technology of virtual reality simulators to simulate more realistic characters. This can assist the researcher in identifying why the narrative immersion is perceived to have any influence on the experience, as if they describe a character that reminds them of a person they know in reality, this can be shown in the findings as influencing the enjoyment of their experience or the narrative immersion process itself. A critique of this is the use of enjoyment as only being positive which shows bias. This will be overcome in this study by ensuring that all findings are interpreted and displayed to show both sides and not just the positive aspects.

3.2.2. Theme Two: The Positive Experience of Transportation and Gaming

Literature from 2014 - 2017 shows the experience of transportation into gaming which is perceived as positive by previous researchers. This theme will look into the positive experiences of immersion into gaming to identify how these can enhance the transportation process or immersive experience.

Research conducted by Melanie Green, Timothy Brock and Geoff Kaufman (2014) resulted in findings concluding that individuals enjoy transportation simply because it is enjoyable, showing a positive experience of narrative immersion. Therefore, this added element can lead the researcher to observe individual's emotions and behaviour displayed when discussing their immersion in to narratives.

Research conducted by Frederick De Grove, Verolien Cauberghe and Jan Van Looy on '*In Pursuit of Play: Toward A Social Cognitive Understanding of Determinants of Digital Play*' in 2014.

De Grove and colleagues (2014) look at specific elements such as the individual. For example, how an individual fits a game to fulfil their expectation or needs. These needs are classified into three categories being game-internal, game-external and moral outcomes. These outcomes prove that an individual's motivations can come from both the real-world and the narrative world. For example, an individual can ignore their game-external motivation such as having an assignment to complete and rather fulfil their game-internal outcome to achieve an in-game award. This then furthers the research of how individuals experience narrative immersion by showing a new aspect of motivation. This can then be taken into consideration when analysing gamers description of their experience and identifying any fulfilment of their needs from within their real-world and their narrative world. A critique of this study is that it looks at the quantitative relationship between a need and the fulfilment of that need instead of how each individual fulfils the same need differently. For example, the need for achieving could be to win trophies or to be top of the teams on a local or global level.

This research on the persuasive nature of narrative immersion like games is continued to see the effects of immersion on individuals in the below journal article.

Research conducted by Sara Prot, Craig Anderson, Douglas Gentile, Stephanie Brown, Edward Swing 'The Positive and Negative Effects of Video Game Play' in 2014, views video games as a popular and pervasive form of entertainment. They explain that the effects of video game play or video game immersion are not trivial. This is done by showcasing the positive and negative experiences of experiments on individuals. The positive experiences include prosocial games proving to enhance individual's behaviour to become more helpful. The negative aspects will be explained in theme three. This can be useful in the study as it can give a base for the experiences and the long term meaning of these experiences for individuals. such as the use of community gaming narratives assisting individuals to express themselves or help others in a group. This can be compared to the findings from the descriptions given in this research, such as assisting individuals to express themselves or help others progress in the game.

Gretter, *et al* (2017) explains another positive outcome of the experience of transportation and gaming, by explaining that it is used for enjoyment, allows gamers to self-transform, escape, and develop empathy and connection with characters. This reinforces Prot's research on gaming narratives' entertainment effect being positive. This reinforces these elements being used when coding the data collected from the participants subjective experience of narrative immersion in gaming. A critique of this study includes the how gamers immerse themselves, as the characters will be seen as either allowing or inhibiting individuals from transporting.

3.2.3. Theme Three: The Negative Experience of Transportation and Gaming

This theme will look into the negative experiences of immersion into gaming to identify how gaming experiences can possibly negatively influence the individual or the transportation process.

From the above-mentioned research conducted by Prot and colleagues (2014), the negative experiences can be explained to show both perspectives. The negative outcomes from gaming immersion include violent games leading to more aggressive behaviour, fast-paced games decreasing cognition control, and the phenomenon of gaming addiction. These elements are all influenced by the five dimensions of video game effects approach, outlined by Prot *et al*, as amount of play, content, context, structure and mechanics. All these elements can be related but are not always linked. For example, the number of hours spent immersed in games can influence an individual regardless of the content that they are interacting with. These elements

can be included in this study when asking questions in the interview, if they are mentioned by the participants descriptions, as they can be used to understand the experience of immersion and what influences this experience.

Gretter, *et al* (2017) explains a negative experience by negotiating expansion is also explained by *Gretter et al*, by stating that it was found that transportation involves low critical thinking and strong effective responses, such as transportation significantly influencing real-life beliefs, leading to some people not being able to recognise what influences their beliefs and attitudes from the real world or the fantasy world. A critique of this study assumes gamers are unaware. This study will be able to identify if they are aware through analysing the participants experience to see if they use gaming narratives and ability to fulfil needs but to use game content to actively reassure a change in their beliefs

A critique to Gretter *et al*'s (2017) findings is that it assumes that the individual is unaware. This study will overcome this by analyzing the participants experiences to see if they use any phrases that indicate that they are aware such as "I know it changes my belief" or "the storyline changed my viewpoint" of a certain topic.

In conclusion to this literature review, it was found that there are various elements that influence transportation into narratives such as the believability of the narrative and characters, the platform used for immersion in terms of books versus technology, the number of different platforms used. It is also found that there are various positive and negative experiences of narrative immersion in gaming such as the positive experience of recreational enjoyment and negative experience of overuse. These include both good and bad influences on a person behaviour such as aggression or empathy.

3.3. Conceptualisation

In order to understand the phenomenon correctly, one needs to understand the key concepts found within the study found within the theory and past literature. This was done by conceptualizing these concepts in terms of the study that was conducted. The key concepts that were conceptualized include gaming narratives, narrative transportation/immersion, transmedia and fantasy.

3.3.1. Gaming Narratives

A narrative is described as a communication process that includes a message being transmitted by an addresser to an addressee that represents a succession of events (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002). A narrative can also be described as a spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening (Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 543). The concept of narratives used in this study focuses on narratives found in gaming, where individuals require some form of interaction with the narrative and its characters to subjectively experience narrative transportation.

3.3.2. Narrative Transportation / Immersion

Narrative transportation and immersion are interchangeably used throughout research of Transportation Theory. However, the term narrative transportation is often confused with the physical moving between destinations. Transportation used in this study is not physically moving between destinations, but rather experiencing cognitive, imagery, and affective involvement in a narrative (Gretter, Gleason and Yadav, 2017). It is the disconnection with reality and divergence into a narrative such as a book, movie or game (Green and Brock, 2000). The concepts of narrative transportation include the immersion or transportation of one's consciousness mind or psychological self into narrative such as gaming in this study.

3.3.3. Transmedia

The concept transmedia literally means "across media" (Alper and Herr-Stephenson, 2013), but is also known as transmedia narrative. This expanded concept means the telling of a story or a story experienced across multiple platforms (The Audiopedia, 2017). Transmedia is a key concept found in the literature review section, that gives the study an aspect of narrative synchronisation that can influence the perceived experience of gamers in Durban.

3.3.4. Fantasy

Fantasy refers to literature that appears to be free from restraints and conventions of reality. It has been said that it transcends reality and vicariously escapes the human condition by constructing a superior alternate 'secondary' world (Jackson, 2003). These fantasy narratives include a fictional world that is created in media such as literature, songs or games (The Audiopedia, 2017). This study makes use of fantasy in games, where a narrative that differs from the real physical world can be experienced by participants. This includes the how the

fantasy influences the individual, what fantasy is used and why it is used. These various platforms were viewed to see how various platforms influence the transportation which leads to if the narrative is the reason for gaming.

4. METHODOLOGY

The method in which research is conducted constructs how the data is collected and interpreted. In this section the research paradigm, position and approach are included to discussed and identify which elements are focused on in this study. The sampling, population, data collection and analysis method of the study conducted is also included to set a foundation to how the data was interpreted.

4.1. Research Paradigm

In research there are three central paradigms in which research can be conducted which include Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical Realism. As Interpretivism posits that the world is constructed subjectively by individual's experiences and values emotions, feelings and subjectivity, this makes it the most relevant to this study as the aim is to establish how Durban gamers subjectively perceive their narrative experience. This includes them being able to describe how the narrative makes them feel and how or why they as an individual uses specific game narratives to experience narrative immersion.

Interpretivism is described as seeing people not as objects, but rather as participants that change constantly and that are influenced by the environment that they interact within Du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al* (2014). Therefore, this study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm, where participants have a subjective description of how they immerse themselves into games. Maree (2016) furthers this by mentioning that it involves how individuals experience and create meaning, thus for this study of interest to the researcher is how individuals create meaning from and experience narratives.

Therefore, for this study interpretivism is most suitable as this study aims to describe individual's subjective experience of narrative immersion into games. This is reinforced by describing that the interpretivist paradigm identifies individuals as being fundamentally different to objects, participants constantly change and are influenced by the environment that they interact within (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014, pp. 27). Therefore, in this study, the narrative

immersions influence on individuals and how individuals create an understanding of a narrative world is fundamental from an interpretivist approach.

4.2. Paradigm Positions

The research paradigm then leads to the research position which includes epistemology, ontology, meta-theory, methodology, and axiology. In order to justify the paradigm selected the positions must be addressed as central features.

4.2.1. Epistemological Position

Firstly, epistemology is the study of knowledge, or more specifically how we come to know what is known. In the interpretivist paradigm this creation of knowledge/meaning is done subjectively through individuals experiences. The epistemological position views knowledge as a phenomenon created through common-sense and the meaning of the individuals in their everyday life (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p. 23). The epistemological position of this study is that knowledge is a phenomenon that is created through individual gamer's common-sense and the meaning that they create and understand through their immersion in to narratives of games that they interact with.

4.2.2. Ontological Position

Secondly, ontology is the study of being or reality. In the interpretivist paradigm this nature of being or reality is created through individuals subjectively co-constructing meaning to their social experiences with others. The ontological position views reality as a social construction that is co-created or co-constructed by an individual's meaning which is ascribed to their experiences and interactions with others (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, pp. 23-24). In this study, the researcher views reality being the social co-construction of narratives that individuals derive meaning from by experiencing and interacting with narratives in gaming. This may also be influenced by an individual's interaction with other gamers and characters in the narrative (Moffitt, 1993).

4.2.3. Metatheoretical Position

Thirdly, metatheory is the study of theory in investigation or in research. In the interpretivist paradigm this includes interpreting a theory or theories to gain a better understanding of a phenomenon. The metatheoretical position views theories as the providers for direction when

research aims to explain and describe phenomenon in a specific field of study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p. 24). The metatheoretical position of this study would include the Transportation Theory which guides the research of how and why gamers immerse themselves in to narratives. The Transportation Theory is the most suitable theory to describe narrative immersion as it involves describing the transportation between narratives, which can guide how the perceived experiences of participants is studied. With Transportation Theory and immersion being predominantly studied quantitatively, this would normally guide the research to be conducted from within a Positivist Perspective. However, with this study being interpretivist the opportunity to make sense of Transportation Theory in a qualitative way is taken to contribute to research on this topic from a different perspective, that is relatively under-researched compared to studies that examine Transportation Theory quantitatively.

4.2.4. Methodological Position

Fourthly, methodology is the study of how a phenomenon is studied such as conducting data collection methods that gain an understanding of an individual's subjective experience of a phenomenon in the interpretivist paradigm. The methodological position depicts how the data collection and analysis of a phenomenon is completed to create knowledge about the phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p. 24). The methodological position of this study includes collecting data through a semi-structured interview to describe how each interviewed individual experience narratives in games and thematically analysing this to create qualitative themes from the information obtained. This then created knowledge on the phenomenon of narrative immersion and Transportation Theory by gaining an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and unique subjective experiences described by Durban Gamers.

4.2.5. Axiological Position

Fifthly, axiology involves the study of values or what is valued and how this then shapes the study of specific phenomenon. In the interpretivist paradigm a value can include an individual's complex and subjective experience a phenomenon and interpreting the data collected to describe the phenomenon. The axiological position mediates and shapes what is understood in a study by determining what is valued in the study (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p. 24). The axiological approach includes what the researcher values, in this case this includes the "complex understanding of unique realities" (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014, p. 31) Therefore, the

complex reality and the unique perception of each participant is important, and the aim is to ask questions that allow the participants to be able to offer their unique views to be shared with the research. For example, open-ended questions such as “describe your experience when gaming?”.

4.3. Research Approach

This study is of a qualitative nature (used to describe, understand or explore peoples’ behaviour), over a cross-sectional timeframe (“used to create an overall picture of a phenomenon at one point of time”) using deductive reasoning (“reasoning from general assumptions to more specific assumptions”) (Davis and Pascoe, in *Research Matters*, 2014). These elements are elaborated below.

4.3.1. Timeframe

The timeframe for this study is cross-sectional as it requires a once off use of personal semi-structured interviews to describe the perceived narrative immersion at one point in time (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The timeframe is limited by the academic reviewing deadlines of the researchers Honours qualification. However, the current description of how and why Durban gamers immerse themselves in to gaming narratives can prove to be a basis for future studies and only requires a once off collection of information from participants. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured to ensure the need of follow up interviews was eliminated by probing questions into responses for clarity.

4.3.2. Deductive Reasoning

The study is situated within deductive reasoning as it takes a general assumption from a theory such as narrative immersion occurring in written narratives (Transportation Theory and immersion in narratives) and apply this to a specific case (describing Durban gamers immersion in narratives) (Bezuidenhout, 2014). Therefore, the similarities that were found in the participants responses can be generalised to the larger population as a representation for Durban Gamers.

4.3.3. Design

This is because the focus of the study aims to generate in-depth understandings using open-ended questions to interpret Durban gamers subjective description of their perceived

experience of narrative immersion. Therefore, it is qualitative because it seeks the subjective perception and personal experiences of the participants (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

4.3.4. Interdisciplinary Study

Interdisciplinary research is defined as integrating data, concepts and techniques between different fields of knowledge (Porter, et al., 2006). So, in this study the interdisciplinary study would be the use of a quantitative theory that is used in Psychology such as Transportation Theory and using this theory in a media or communication field study qualitatively. This can also be extended to the ability to research this topic to aid in other fields outside of communication, such as being able to use the theory in the field of Information Technology (IT) to assess the elements of games which possible programmers could use to create content.

4.4. Population

The population is described as the total group of people, entities or social artefacts from whom a researcher requires information from. (Pascoe, 2014, p. 132) In this study the population includes Durban gamers that are able to describe their perceived narrative immersion in gaming narratives.

4.4.1. Target Population

The target population is all regular gamers in South Africa that immerse themselves in to narratives of games both online and offline.

4.4.2. Accessible Population

The assessable population includes regular gamers of mixed culture, race and gender (to represent South Africa's diversity as much as possible) that immerse themselves into narratives of online and offline games in Durban, South Africa.

4.4.3. Population Characteristics

- Individuals between the age of 20-25 that reside in Durban; as they are accessible to the researcher and to contribute findings from a local developing context.
- Individuals between the age of 20-25 that regularly [games at least once a week for two hours (Anderson, et al., 2014) immerse themselves into narratives of games; regular

gamers that immerse in narratives through experiencing narratives and their characters, as this is the focus of the study.

- Mixed generation of culture, race and gender; to represent the diversity of the South African population as this study aims to contribute a Durban, South African, perspective on this phenomenon of narrative immersion in gaming.

4.5. Sampling

The unit of analysis (main entity that is to be analysed in a study) used in this research includes the participants and their beliefs, perceptions or experiences of narrative immersion in gaming (Pascoe, 2014). This is because the aim is to describe the individuals perceived experience of gaming and how each of them subjectively experiences gaming narratives. The unit of analysis is taken from the sample group, which in this study includes five participants. Non-probability (each participant in the population has equal opportunity to be part of the sample) snowball sampling was used in this study, as each participant was be purposively selected by identifying one individual that fits the population characteristics and said participant refers another individual that resembles the population characteristics, and this process continues to create a group of individuals that can be used in the study. An example of this invitation to a referred participant participation can be seen in *Annexure H* where a WhatsApp is sent to invite the new participant and an email is then sent to schedule the interview and provide the participant with more information. As gaming forms part of a sub-culture of individuals with similar interests in terms of their gaming preferences, this allows for easier access and the population characteristics being met. In non-probability sampling such as this, the findings of the study do not need to be generalised to the larger population as the study is descriptive and specific to a portion of the general population. Therefore, the similarities found between each response given by the four participants will be able to be generalise to gamers in Durban as these traits would be part of what makes up the Gaming subculture in Durban.

4.6. Data Collection Method

Originally the data collection method was to conduct focus groups and observations. However, given the nature of those individuals found in the gaming sub-culture, it was found that one-on-one interviews would be more ideal for the participants as some were not social or comfortable around others. This is reinforced by Participant D's non-verbal cue, as Participant D was barely

able to maintain eye contact during the interview and seemed to avoid it completely (Participant-D, 2018). The change to semi-structured interviews was also due to focus groups and observations not allowing for an individual's personal experience to be elaborated on sufficiently enough; as observations only observe a specific event or interaction and focus groups could be overrun by extraverted individuals overpowering others or lack of control by an inexperienced researcher. These downfalls would be overcome by using semi-structured interviews, where probing questions can be used to further the understanding of participants perceived narrative immersion experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 93). This also contributed to research on individuals personal experience of perceived narrative immersion, which was identified as a missing element in the literature review.

Therefore, this study makes use of semi-structured interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews include a two-way conversation where the researcher asked questions to collect data and learnt about their ideas, beliefs, behaviour and opinions. Semi-structured interviews included asking open questions and then further probing questions to clarify the information given by participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 93). In this study, the chosen data collection method assisted in identifying the individuals in-depth understanding of their subjective perceived narrative immersion.

Before the data collection was conducted, the use of a semi-structured interviews questionnaire schedule on an individual (that was not included in the semi-structured interviews) was conducted to pre-test the suitability of the questions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 93). By conducting this pre-test, it was found that the second and third question need to be swapped to get participants to explain when they choose to game and then how long an average session was. As the initial question schedule seemed to make the participant think they were being asked the same question twice, this proved helpful in the clarity of the questions. The data collection will include five participants in semi-structured interviews that took place in August and September 2018.

4.7. Data Analysis Method

The data collected through the semi-structured interviews was then transcribed and analysed using qualitative content analysis using thematic codes (the process of carefully reading through transcribed data and dividing it into themes/units). Qualitative content analysis is a

replicable, systematic technique that compressed the participants verbatim transcriptions into content categories based on thematic codes (identifying specific themes within the transcriptions) (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 111). This helped the researcher to identify common themes, using the central concepts that were found in the Transportation Theory and amongst the gamer's descriptions of immersion in the narratives. The findings were then represented in a descriptive essay to thematically display the description and understanding of each participant in themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, p. 111).

The steps of the qualitative content analysis included preparing the data (systematically organising the information collected), describing the sample and participants (describing the participants and their relevant background data, and how they were selected), organising the data (cutting and sorting to simplify the data), transcribing (transcribing the semi-structured interviews recording verbatim - word for word) and getting to know the data (read over the transcription multiple times to understand it). Once this preparation was done, the data captured was made use of quotes from participants answers to formulate an essay that showcased the key findings and related this back to the literature review and research question (Nieuwenhuis, 2016, pp. 111-112)

4.8. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a study demonstrates the worth of the findings given as a result of it, therefore credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability need to be discussed.

4.8.1. Credibility

Credibility involves determining how consistent the results of the study are to the reality of the participants. For this study the use of well-established research methods such as semi-structured interviews where data was be collected and recorded to then be thematically coded according to the themes found in the participants responses. The researcher spent sufficient time (up to an hour depending on the participants response was) with the participants to become familiar with them to ensure a clear in-depth understanding of their perception and experience is captured accurately. The recording of the semi-structured interviews discussion reinforced the credibility of the results by being available for a credibility check (Nieuwenhuis, 2016 in Maree, 2016, p. 123).

4.8.2. Transferability

Transferability involves the extent of how typical the participants are to the context being studied and to the context to which the findings apply. This does not only mean that the diversity of participants used can be transferred to represent South African gamers in a developing country context, but also for other researchers to be able to use the same questionnaire to reproduce this study in a different context (Nieuwenhuis, 2016 in Maree, 2016, p. 124). This is ensured by making the question schedule available in Annexure C for any future studies to make use of.

4.8.3. Dependability

Dependability includes the analysis process that should be documented in order for another person to see the decisions made by the researcher, how they conducted the analysis, and how the interpretations were achieved. All data collection and analysis processes adaptations were documented to show the rationale behind these adaptations. This study also ensures dependability by the question schedule being used on a diverse population in terms of race, gender and culture, to represent the South African population. The data collected through these semi-structured interviews were thematically coded to specifically focus each participant's subjective description of their perceived narrative experience being included in the findings, so that interpretations can be linked to the participant responses (Nieuwenhuis, 2016 in Maree, 2016, p. 124).

4.8.4. Confirmability

The confirmability of a study involves the degree of neutrality or extent to which the findings of the study are formed by the participants and not by researcher bias. This can be shown in the questions discussed in and the findings derived from the semi-structured interviews. The questions used in the semi-structured interviews will simply guide the conversation to achieve participants subjective descriptions and not lead the answers to specific biased findings. This can be seen in question 6 (found on page 54 under Annexure C) where participants are asked to describe whether or not you experience / interact with gaming content on social media platforms and/or applications, and not simply whether they do or whether they do not which would imply that they do or don't. The findings-make use of direct quotes from participants to avoid researcher bias, and the researcher will gain partial familiarity with the participants to

ensure the correct understanding of their responses (Nieuwenhuis, 2016 in Maree, 2016, p. 125). This familiarity was achieved by having the interviews over coffee where the participants can be spoken to get to know them more and ensure that probing questions were asked for any clarity needed.

5. FINDINGS (PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION)

This section consists of the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with five participants during this study. This section consolidates the interview questions and responses into categories where the questions will be explained in more detail in terms of what the researcher was seeking to find, the responses to the questions asked are then presented in tables with participants verbatim quotes. These questions are then interpreted and linked to past literature and the theory.

5.1. Reasons for Gaming

The question asked that fits into this category is “Explain why you game”. This question aimed to describe why each participant immersed themselves in to gaming narratives. From this question the researcher interpreted the various reasons why Durban gamers actually game, establishing whether they experience transportation and an overall reason as to why they immerse themselves in gaming narratives.

TABLE 1: EXPLAIN WHY YOU GAME

Participant A	“it is literally my second lifestyle”, “it is my escape from the stresses of life”, “it is a part of my life as well because, it goes into my work”, “helps me see what they see in me”, “group strategist”, “helps me to build confidence”.
Participant B	“it is a hobby, it’s something I enjoy, I just love it I guess”
Participant C	“the reason I got into gaming is because my father games”, “I started gaming from very young”, “It’s always been something that’s a part of me, something that’s in my life”.
Participant D	“It is my escape from reality”, “to be able to enjoy yourself”, “to experience different scenarios and situations without having to go anywhere else”, “you can socialise without actually having to physically socialise”, “it has a competitive nature which goes very well with my personality”

Participant E	“Escape”, “A way to get away from everything”, “To escape from life, escape from problems”, “To turn my brain off”, “An escape to rest”.
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In *Table 1*, the majority of individuals described their reason for gaming as an “escape” or as part of a second life that is used for enjoyment or recreation. This can be seen by the direct quotes such as “escape from reality”, “escape from the stresses of life”, “It’s always been something that’s a part of me” and “it’s something I enjoy, I just love it I guess”. This expression of emotion such as “love” corroborates with the Transportation Theory, where it depicts that transportation process involves emotions (See Green, Brock and Kaufman, 2004). Another emotion description is how the individuals enjoy it, this idea of enjoyment corroborates with the literature depicting gaming being used for enjoyment (See Gretter, *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, the concept of gaming being used as an escape corroborates with the negative element found within the literature review where individuals immerse in gaming to avoid social interaction and escape stress found in their reality, which in some cases leads to withdrawal and overuse of gaming (See Anderson, Gentile and Prot, 2014).

The unique finding from this study included the use of gaming as a way to identify characteristics about a person. This is done by gamers using games to “see what they see” (‘they’ in this case meaning the gamers team members), meaning it allows gamers to identify characteristics such as being a “strategist” through communicating with team members in games. This aspect is a contribution to the study on gaming narratives and the reason for immersion

5.2. Regular Gamers

The questions asked that fit into this category are “explain when you choose to game in a seven-day week, and why”, “explain how long you game for in an average session, and why?” and “describe your understanding of what makes a person a regular gamer, and why”. These questions aimed to describe how each participant immersed themselves in to gaming narratives. Specifically, in terms of how long gamers immerse themselves for and to describe what they believe a regular gamer is from a gamer perspective.

TABLE 2: EXPLAIN WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO GAME IN A SEVEN-DAY WEEK, AND WHY

Participant A	“while studying I game during weekends”, “now while working, I game during weekdays”
Participant B	“usually straight after work from about 17h00 until about 23h30”, “I stop purely because I have to get up for work the next day, otherwise I would play right the night through”.
Participant C	“I basically play majority of the day all day”, “I don’t really go out, but if I could sit there and game all day over going out I would because it’s so much fun”.
Participant D	“just about every night”, “I have a schedule, so I go to have my set hours that I game for”, “cause if I don’t have a schedule I would keep gaming too much and it would become excessive”.
Participant E	“Usually from about 9 o’clock until 11 o’clock is about my gaming time”.

In *Table 2* and *Table 3* (As both questions seek a similar response), the majority of individuals described their choice as being influenced by their work or a schedule, but still being just about “everyday”. One individual even mentioned that if they “don’t have a schedule I would keep gaming too much and it would become excessive”. This point correlates to the past literature of negative impacts of gaming such as overuse (See Demetrovics *et al*, 2012). Another point which related to past literature, is the exclusion of oneself from others which can be seen from the participants response “I don’t really go out, but if I could sit there and game all day over going out I would because it’s so much fun”, this shows the choice of games over interacting with others or even using games as a platform to socialise “without having to physically socialise” as mentioned in *Table 1*. This also correlates to Prot’s (2014) study to say that it is played on

average for 2 hours a day. This frequent use of gaming assists in understanding what makes a regular gamer.

TABLE 3: EXPLAIN HOW LONG YOU GAME FOR IN AN AVERAGE SESSION, AND WHY?

Participant A	“I prioritize work”, “about half an hour to one hour a day”, “during holiday time the entire day unless someone wants to do something”, “Gaming is one of my three different hobbies, with wrestling and content creation being the other two”.
Participant B	“around 7 hours weekdays”, “then for weekends when it’s a quiet weekend I will game 10 plus hours a day of the weekend”, “an average of 48-50 hours of gaming time in a week”
Participant C	“usually from 09h00 until 02h00 the next day”, “on average I game from 08h00/09h00 until about midnight everyday”
Participant D	“an average of 3-4 hours per day”
Participant E	“During the week the average gaming session is an hour and a half”, “I do like sticking to a schedule “, “over the weekends the average gaming can be 3, 4 hours, let’s go 4 hours as the average”.

As the questions relating to *Table 2* and *Table 3* were seeking similar answers, they both received similar responses. However, the question asking participants about how long their average gaming session was expanded on their response from when they chose to game. All the participants responses in *Table 3* varied as their responses ranged from half an hour up to the entire day. The most common answer that majority answered ranged between “three to four hours a day”. This also goes against the previous research conducted by Prot (2014) as it is not simply 2 hours a day but can vary depending on the individual’s “schedules”.

This then shows Durban gamers immerse themselves in to narratives over short or long periods of time, depending on responsibilities such as work, family or friends. This long exposure of gaming for an “entire day” also reinforces the research problem of the withdrawal and overuse

of gaming as it is excessive to spend majority of the day in gaming narratives rather than socializing with others (See Demetrovics *et al*, 2012).

TABLE 4: DESCRIBE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MAKES A PERSON A REGULAR GAMER, AND WHY

Participant A	“If you play anything that is not a mobile game, mine craft, call of duty or FIFA” “a regular gamer can play those and other things but not just those”, “anyone who invests time”, “if games are a big part in your life then you’re a gamer”, “nobody has to be an expert or be good, just allocate a specific time”
Participant B	“Anyone that plays games every day”, “doesn’t matter how long just anyone that plays games every day”.
Participant C	“Basically, a person that plays a game”, “If they play a game, then they’re a gamer for me”
Participant D	“Anyone who plays 4 plus times a week”, “communicates with other gamers when they’re not gaming”, “if gaming is constantly on the mind”.
Participant E	“If the person enjoys imagining things, they enjoy the immersive nature of games”, “Addictive nature”, “people who don’t know how to face problems”, “the people who game just because games are there to be played”

In *Table 4*, the majority describe a regular gamer as a person that “plays a game” or “plays games every day”. The Majority did not mention that any specific game or game type makes a person a regular gamer, however one did describe that those who only play “mobile games”, “FIFA”, “Mine Craft” or “Call of Duty” are not considered regular gamers. This can also show the possibility subcultures within the gaming subculture itself where individuals are divided based on the game type that they play.

One participant described that it is a person with an “Addictive nature” or “people who don’t know how to face problems”, which give a unique perspective that a regular gamer is someone who enjoys escaping reality or gets addicted to playing games. While there is not much past literature on what makes a person a regular gamer, this point does relate back to past literature

that discusses addiction as an issue that is derived from gaming, and the addiction could be as a result of a superior alternative world (See Demetrovics *et al*, 2012 and Jackson, 2003).

5.3. Gaming Console Preference

The questions asked that fit into this category are “explain why you prefer this platform” and “describe the (specific feature) that makes you want to game on this platform”. These questions aimed to describe how each participant immersed themselves in to gaming narratives with regards to what console they use to play games on any they choose this console. From these questions the responses are interpreted to identify how individuals use specific platforms to immerse themselves into games and identify what about these platforms allows for transportation to occur.

TABLE 5: EXPLAIN WHY YOU PREFER THIS PLATFORM / THESE PLATFORMS, AND DESCRIBE THE (SPECIFIC FEATURE) THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO GAME ON THIS PLATFORM / THESE PLATFORMS.

Participant A	“Xbox when I’m at a friend’s house and they own an Xbox”, “I prefer Japanese games, they are made for PlayStation”, “Computer is more for a solo experience”, “Handheld, if I’m waiting somewhere”, “mostly Japanese games”, “I like to play with friends, so PlayStation’s my go to”.
Participant B	“I started gaming with Xbox, moved to PC because prices on a pc are not as bad as they are in an Xbox, as well as pc requires a lot more mechanical skills than an Xbox”, “Just because the controls are simpler, whereas with consoles it’s more delayed because it’s more of a swing than a flick”, “more challenging”, “Mechanical – more of a simpler control for Xbox”.
Participant C	“I’ve always played on PC and it’s always been my favourite”, “It’s more responsive”, “It’s more mechanically pleasing to play on a PC”
Participant D	“Console peasants”, “PC because it is highly customisable to what you want”, “performance”, “Performance”, “graphics, speed”, “more detail” “frames per second”.

Participant E	I'd have to rank them", "3 rd PlayStation, remotes are too small", "second Xbox", "first pc", "most expensive, most amount of freedom – diversity (you can do a lot more with it) "Able to upgrade and progress", "Potential at getting games at a lower cost", "Mouse and key board is easier to use than a controller".
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In *table 5*, majority of participants indicated that their preference for gaming leans towards PC. This was said to be the preferred platform as it is found to be more “customizable”, allow more “freedom” or “diversity” and because of the “performance” aspect. The unique finding was that PlayStation was a preference one individual because the games, specifically Japanese game genres, as they are only available on this platform. There was not much discussion regarding the console and the influence this had on the narrative immersion experience. Therefore, discussing this aspect gains a new perspective on narrative immersion and for the Transportation Theory, specifically in gaming transportation.

Through a probing question the specific features of PC being the preferred platform were expanded. PC was described as “customizable” in terms of the console's graphics or speed to make the gameplay more enjoyable. The controls were described as more “mechanically pleasing” or “simply easier to use”. The concept of the graphics being something that influences the console shows that the graphics influence the gamer, to relate to past research that indicates the graphic as influencing the narrative process (See Morris, 2018; Elizabeth, 2018).

5.4. Transmedia and Personal Gaming Experience

The questions asked that fit into this category are “Describe whether or not you experience / interact with gaming content on social media platforms and/or applications”, “describe what influences your preference to play a game, and why”, “explain in-depth your experience of playing this game”, “Describe anything specific that makes you want to keep playing the game” and “Describe what about (the element) allowed you to get more involved in the game”. These questions aimed to describe why and how each participant immersed themselves in to gaming narratives. Specifically, in terms of their personal experience of gaming and where they experience gaming content as these topics were not given much discussion in previous research.

TABLE 6: DESCRIBE WHETHER OR NOT YOU EXPERIENCE / INTERACT WITH GAMING CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND/OR APPLICATIONS

Participant A	"I subscribe to all the latest gaming news on <i>YouTube</i> , I love card games so like <i>Yugi-oh</i> and stuff like that releases a game I follow that", "looking for following the new game trailers, "I love exploring the different stories behind games"
Participant B	"Discord is a big one", "that I guess a social media that we use a lot, Facebook pages", " <i>YouTube</i> is another great resource", "follow specific people", "if I need to learn something then I'll watch whoever has the best video to learn how to do that"
Participant C	"Discord", "It's a good way to meet people who are gamers", "I normally watch <i>YouTube</i> as well, to learn, to figure out a game, see how it works" "Backstory", "to find out what's the characters story, if the game doesn't provide one for me I'll go looking for it"
Participant D	"Discord, Skype, Steam, Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups, twitch, <i>YouTube</i> ", " <i>for release updates</i> "
Participant E	"Gaming videos on <i>YouTube</i> ", "to see what other people are able to do that I cannot", "to better explore the game", "to become more immersed in that experience or to explore more of that experience", "Game releases", "to follow well known games", "I am an immersive gamer", "Enables a safe place for this conversation to happen", "in the same way that these deep seated a misguiding opinions that some people have are able, and are able to potentially changed to prevent harm in the future".

In *Table 6*, the majority of individuals mentioned experiencing gaming content on *YouTube*, as they used this platform as a way to either learn new things that they could do within the game or to learn more about the "backstory", "storyline" or to identify "game releases" that they could play. The use of Discord was also mentioned as a way of having a community with other gamers, thus creating a community for the gaming subculture. This related to the transmedia perspective

of games as mentioned in previous research where further exposure to narrative content on various platforms enhances narrative immersion (See Gretter *et al*, 2017).

A unique perspective derived from participant E is that these transmedia platforms allow a “safe place” for conversation about gamers experiences in the games, such as their viewpoint on war, killing and the like. This challenges previous research on players being unaware of gaming narratives changing their beliefs (See Gretter *et al*, 2017).

TABLE 7: WHEN CHOOSING A GAME TO PLAY, DESCRIBE WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR PREFERENCE TO PLAY A GAME, AND WHY

Participant A	“Story”, “try to find something that’s really fun”, “such detailed characters and introvert interactions, it’s like I still have somebody to talk to when there’s no one really there”, “I usually get influenced by whatever game I’m playing in terms of – okay that’s an action based maybe I should try an action story”, “I don’t really enjoy games with guns”, “I honestly feel like motion sick and want to throw up”, “one because of motion sickness and I hate guns and I hate killing”
Participant B	“It’s gotta be multiplayer, preferably online multiplayer because I don’t have real life friends to play with at home”, “It’s gotta be competitive and its gotta have a community”
Participant C	“Art style”, “graphically pleasing”, “how the game works”, “type doesn’t count – it’s the art style”
Participant D	“Genre of game – <i>YouTube</i> reviews, friends’ opinions”, “Genre – MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (van de Laar, <i>et al.</i> , 2013)) or First-person shooter”, “Long term progressive game”.
Participant E	“What game it is”, “length of the game” “Length versus cost”, “I absolutely enjoy stories and well created characters, but I also enjoy games that are bland hack and slash that have no characters”, “Game reviews and friends opinions”, “Older games as they knew that the graphics weren’t great which means that they focused on the storyline which obviously appeals to me as

	an immersive gamers in that I don't necessarily care about graphics , I care about game play", "Something like the <i>Witcher</i> , where its graphics were brilliant but at the same time its story and characters were so immersive that you felt as if you were the <i>Witcher</i> yourself"
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In *Table 7*, the majority described that it was the gaming content that influenced their choice of a game to play. This included the storyline and character, where individuals preferred games that allowed for them to have control over their characters story. This relates to the theory where the individuals transport themselves into a narrative to experience an alternative reality, and transport themselves into this reality. This also relates to previous research where the individual can feel "as if they were" the character, where they can "relate to a character". The relation to the theory can also show be seen as the one participant describes feeling an "motion sickness" which shows that the narrative or game has influence over the individual (See, Brown, 2015; Green and Brock 2004; Jackson, 2003).

TABLE 8: PLEASE REFER TO A GAME YOU ARE CURRENTLY PLAYING, AND THEN EXPLAIN IN-DEPTH YOUR EXPERIENCE OF PLAYING THIS GAME.

Participant A	"Da Nang Gu, a remake of an old PlayStation 2 Game", "I don't realise how much of time I'm putting into it because I'm having so much fun", "I don't need intricate detail in the character like hair", "got lost in a time lapse with my mom leaving and returning from work", "didn't you just leave for work".
Participant B	"Overwatch", "it's got the community, the competitive edge", "tons of hours playing"
Participant C	"The <i>Witcher 3</i> ", "So much content to play, so much backstory", "there's always something to do", "Continuous story line and even when its finished there's others so even after you finish a storyline you can just carry on"
Participant D	"World of Warcraft", "I took time off work", "team of 20 people where you progress racing other teams", "level the character to the required level and the required gear", "I will spend a lot of hours over the next few weeks playing that"

Participant E	“Fall out 4”, “Freedom”, “It’s not repetitive”, “there’s always something new that you’re going on and doing”, “you can develop one character, while developing an army while developing a nation”, “I’m building a character”, “diversity of the content - you don’t have to just play the main storyline”
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In *Table 8*, the majority described their experience as being time consuming, where they “took time off work” or experienced a “time lapse” because of the “tons of hours” spent playing their game of choice. They describe how they are able to “build or “level” “a character” and experience “continuous [storylines]” where “there’s always something new that you’re going on and doing”. So, it is as if they are determining the path which their character takes within this alternative reality. Though past literature does not discuss the individuals experience of gamers, it does give examples such as “*Slenderman*” where emotions are created by a character. This relates to the description of “having so much fun”, where the participants are enjoying the progression, characters and storyline of gaming narratives (See Gretter *et al*, 2017).

TABLE 9: EXPLAIN IF YOU HAVE AN INTERRUPTION WHILE GAMING, EXPLAIN HOW YOU WOULD REACT.

Participant A	“I have no problem being interrupted”, “I have no problem switching off and just chatting to them” “notice is given”, “online games can’t be interrupted - if the online game is interrupted it bugs me”
Participant B	“so, WhatsApp’s I basically ignore”, “phone calls I never answer, I never get phone calls” as for interruptions from family and stuff like that I neglect if it does not need to be done in that moment in time”, “I kind of try ignore everything and just keep focusing on the game”.
Participant C	“normally if I’ve got friends coming over or going out I will not game, but it its unexpected I don’t really mind I’ll just stop the game, even if it’s an online game”, “if it’s a phone call phone call” ... “I try and multitask”.
Participant D	“friends are generally gaming with me” “I screen who’s calling me – unless I get spam called I won’t answer it and even if I do answer it I’ll just keep playing while on the phone”

Participant E	“I will stop the game”, “I will sacrifice in even online games to deal with other things”, “weighing up what you’re doing to what is happening”, “if it involves my obligation to other people that postpones it”.
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In *Table 9*, the majority described how they would allow an interruption to occur during gaming, however they also described that they try “multitask”, where they will allow for the immersive experience to only be partially disrupted. There was no past literature found that discussed the interruption of narrative immersion. Therefore, this act of “weighing up” the gaming narrative versus returning to the world of origin contributes to the Transportation Theory rather than past literature. The unique description given by participant A that he gives “notice” that he will be joining a game, and that he experiences irritation if he is disturbed, this relates to the Transportation Theory concept of an emotional connection to the narrative experience (See Green and Brock, 2000; Green, Brock and Kaufman, 2000).

TABLE 10: DESCRIBE ANYTHING SPECIFIC THAT MAKES YOU WANT TO KEEP PLAYING THE GAME AND DESCRIBE WHAT ABOUT (THE ELEMENT) ALLOWED YOU TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN THE GAME.

Participant A	“Sense of accomplishment”, “If I don’t feel improvement I won’t go back to it”. “friends influence”, “so nostalgia, friends and story”
Participant B	“It’s the competitive aspect”, “if play just gets harder and harder, it’s that kind of climb and struggle to the top that keeps me going”
Participant C	“basically, if I play the game for a little while and it caught my interest, I’ll play it until I’m done”, “new characters, new content will keep me coming back”,
Participant D	“becomes part of your life, routine, provides enjoyment”, “it’s an escape from reality where you don’t actually have to worry about the real-life problems where you can just enjoy the time you’re spending on something else”, “you’re in a different scenario, different time setting – where all the problems and stuff in game don’t come out the game and out the game come into game – the two don’t have any effect on one another. Unless Telkom and lag – then that just causes rage”

Participant E	“New content”, “Overpowered in the game I will stop playing it”, “Storyline – I don’t play a game if I don’t like the storyline”, “Well rounded characters”, “Characters that I am able to relate to”, “the story is derived from the characters”, “the ability to create diversity through your own actions”, “I look for a character that has similar traits and similar views to me”, “Teaching a player, a moral from the story”, “games are able to create the situations that challenge our beliefs and our opinions in ways that we’d never find in real life, and in doing so we find out more things about ourselves”,
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In Table 10, the majority described the experience of new content, achievement, and enjoyment as being an aspect that made them want to game more, which relates to previous research on enjoyment in narrative immersion. The description of being able to “relate” to the characters corroborates with previous research that shows that it is the characters within these narratives that enhance narrative immersion (See Moffitt, 1993; Brown, 2015; Gretter *et al*, 2017). The description of elements such as “lag” causing “rage” again reinforces the emotional connection to the narrative and how an interruption can cause negative behaviour.

A unique perspective was described which included the ability for games being “able to create the situations that challenge our beliefs and our opinions in ways that we’d never find in real life, and in doing so we find out more things about ourselves” or “teaching the player a moral from the story” which goes against past literature about gamers being unaware of the influence narratives have on the individual and their beliefs; as this shows participants actively using narrative for self-discovery (See Prot *et at*, 2012; Gretter *et al*, 2017)

Therefore, in concluding this section, gamers describe that they use gaming narratives as an escape where they can relate to characters and feel an emotional connection to these characters and their storylines while actively discovering themselves.

6. CONCLUSION

In this section a summary along with the ethical considerations limitations, heuristic value and recommendations are be discussed to conclude this research report.

The rationale and relevance demonstrated that this study was required to contribute to the qualitative research on narrative immersion and the Transportation Theory to resolve the research problem. The key findings from the historical and thematic literature review identifies it was found that there are various elements that influence transportation into narratives such as the believability of the narrative and characters, the platform used for immersion, the number of different platforms used. It was also found that there are various positive and negative experiences of narrative immersion in gaming. These include both good and bad influences on a person behaviour such as aggression or empathy. By applying the findings of this literature review with the key concepts, research paradigm, design, population, sampling data collection, data analysis method, trustworthiness, anticipated contributions and ethical considerations one can say that all these elements assisted in achieving the qualitative description of the perceived narrative immersion of Durban gamers in 2018.

6.1. Ethical Considerations

Ethics must be considered to be aware of potential influence they may have on the findings to ensure that they can be countered while conducting the research. The ethical clearance letter from The Independent Institute of Education can be seen in *Annexure G*, this letter shows that this study achieved ethical clearance.

In terms of the participants, each participant will sign a form that gives their consent (using the consent forms and explanatory information found in Annexure C, D and E) for all information provided confidentially in the interviews were accurately used for this study, acknowledging awareness of being studied, no incentives (rewards for information given) were given to participants as a reward for participating in this study. Participants were allowed to exclude themselves from participating at any time during this study. Furthermore, participants will simply describe their experience of immersion into narratives therefore no harm will come to participants (no intrusive questions such as “describe a negative encounter you once had while gaming” that may bring back harmful emotions or memories will be asked), and no use of

persuasion will be conducted to sway the findings (such as offering a reward for a desired answer) and the researcher will simply ask questions to stimulate the discussion (Louw, 2014). In terms of the researcher, the researcher will not falsify or distort the information given by participants and the findings of this study, the findings will be reinforced by the recording and transcription of the semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant. The use of quoting participants responses verbatim will avoid any falsification or distortion of their information. The researcher will also not allow bias to influence the information provided and how this information is used in the findings. This will be done by asking questions that do not lead the participants to a desired response and using their subjected responses accurately. Therefore, a lack of bias, falsification and distortion can be confirmed by these recordings being used as evidence, and the use of quotation that are taken directly from the participants verbatim transcribed responses (Louw, 2014).

Ethical considerations for both participant and researcher used in this study such as those mentioned above are required to be in line with the IIE Research and Post Graduate Studies Policy. The ethical considerations found in this policy that will be used in this study include confidentiality and participation in the study (The Independent Institute of Education, 2016). Confidentiality refers to the protection of data, specifically the participants data and protecting their identity (Fein and Kulik, 2011). In this study this will be done by using Participant A, B, C, D and E in place of their names to ensure that no correlation can be made between the data and the participant. Participation in this policy is similar to Louw's (2014) ethical considerations as it refers to the ability for the participant to be able to decline part taking in the study and being able to retire from the study at any given time (The Independent Institute of Education, 2016). In this study participation is voluntary and participants are able to withdraw their information given or their participation in the study at any point while the study was conducted. Another element found in both Louw's and the IIE Research and Post Graduate Studies Policy regarding ethical considerations covers the trustworthiness of the findings. Trustworthiness refers to the balance between the participants meaning and the researcher's interpretation (Williams and Morrow, 2009). In this study the trustworthiness of the findings was assured by using probing questions to clarify any responses that were unclear or could be misinterpreted.

6.2. Limitations

With the ethical considerations being accounted for, this study had some limitations that were set out by elements such as the time-frame, data collection and budget which will be expanded on below.

Some of the limitations (constraints that hinder or impact the study) that can hinder this study include an inexperienced facilitator for the semi-structured interviews, as the researcher has not had much experience of semi-structured interviews, this can prove to be difficult to control the participants direction and length of answers. This was overcome with the use of a question schedule using specific questions that will make the responses more specific. There is also the limitation of budget as the researcher must conduct the semi-structured interviews and transcription herself due to no funding and therefore the researcher could not hire a scribe and had to use more time to write out all the responses verbatim, and time as the research must be completed one year which limits the number of participants and semi-structured interviews that can be conducted. This was overcome by using in-depth questions that reinforce the need of once off interviews. Lastly, the amount of research done on the topic of Transportation Theory and gaming is mostly outdated as it proves difficult to find current resources that reinforce what is known about this topic. This is reinforced by the majority of sources that appear when searching Transportation Theory or narrative transportation, the sources came up with vehicle transport. This was overcome by searching for specific wording to ensure that the correct concepts were used within the correct context (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

6.3. Heuristic Value

The overall heuristic value that this study contributed to the field of communication was an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in a developing country context and using a qualitative approach. This was divided in to contribution to the Communications Field and Communication Profession.

6.3.1. Field

Within the field of communication, the understanding of this phenomenon contributed to the qualitative description of narrative immersion, specifically within gaming narratives, which has not been fully studied before, and within a developing country context. It is suggested that future

research be conducted using mixed method to gain more information that can assess the quantitative casual relation between the interaction of narrative transportation and the qualitative experience of this immersion. It is also suggested to continue the study in a developing country such as South Africa as majority of the current research has been conducted in developed countries. It is suggested that future studies are specifically conducted in Johannesburg or Cape Town as these areas were found to have larger gaming subculture (based off of the discussions about discord and WhatsApp groups had after the interviews with the participants). Therefore, it is also recommended that research is conducted on the subculture of online gaming versus offline gaming or the use of social media (transmedia) in enhancing the transportation process in narratives.

6.3.2. Profession

Within practice, the findings from this study can contribute to the nature of game design and the communication between gaming companies and their stakeholders to better develop games that suit their target audience. This can include the findings that showcase what elements individuals look for in games such as the storyline having multiple side missions so that the full narrative can be fleshed out.

7. CLOSING STATEMENT

In conclusion, this study revealed that Durban gamers experience narrative immersion as a way to escape from stresses found in their reality and to experience an alternative reality where they can socialise with characters and other individuals found within or experiencing the same narratives. The recommendations for further study can assist in overcoming some of the limitations of this study such as the access to gamers in a specific location, or to study online gaming narratives where there is no location limitation.

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ANNEXURE A

Safe Assign Originality Screenshot

Assignment Details

GRADE

LAST GRADED ATTEMPT

/200

ATTEMPT 1

29/10/18 15:50

/200

SafeAssign

9% overall match

Submission

RESM 8411 Report - Final Submission.docx

OK

Start New

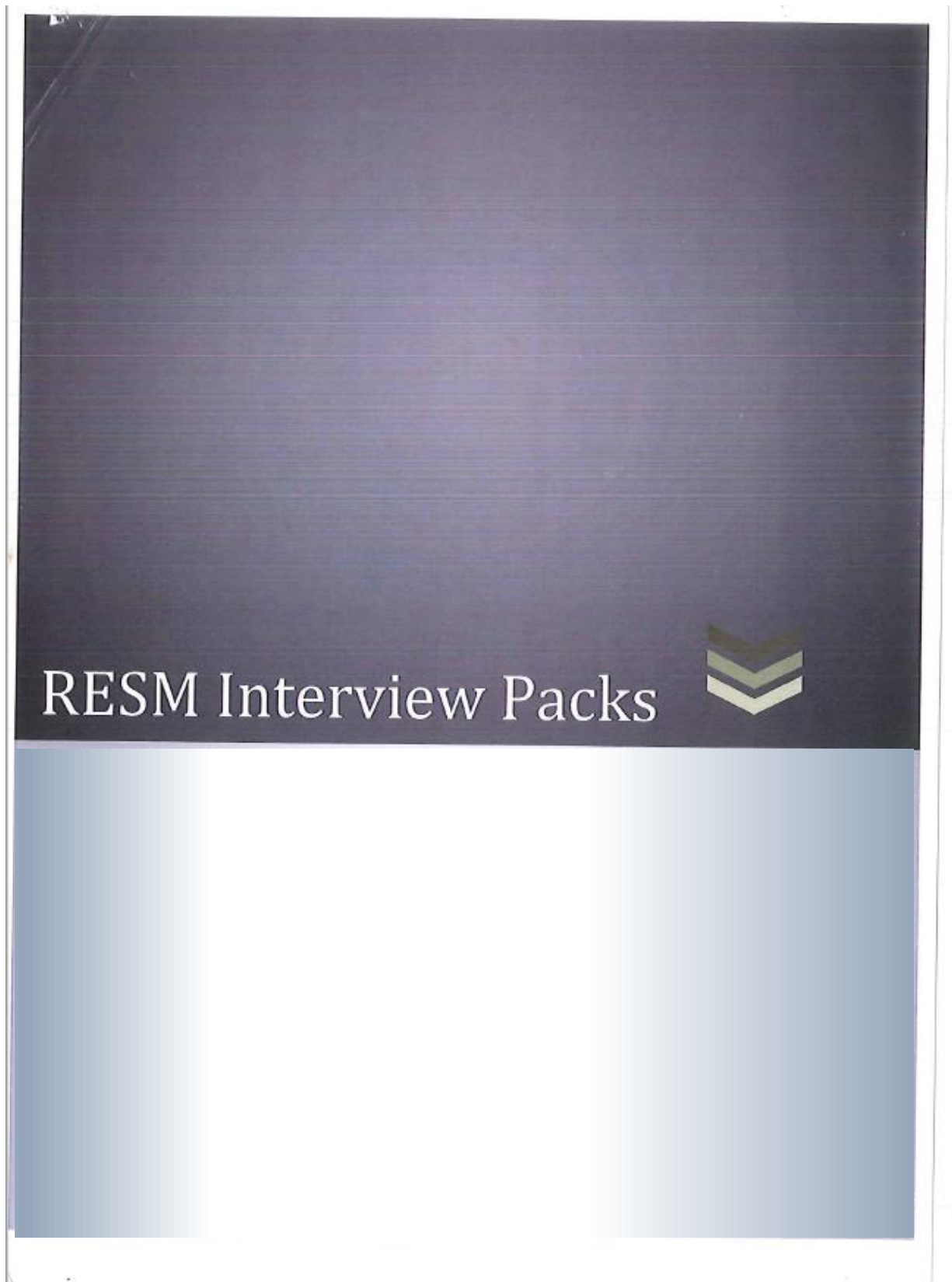
ANNEXURE B

Research Report Summary Table

Research Purpose / Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors / Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
To describe how Durban gamers immerse themselves into narratives through observation.	- How does an individual immerse themselves into a narrative? - Why does an individual need to understand to understand how to immerse themselves into a narrative?	This study has significant importance to the researcher as she believes that for individuals to communicate and conduct themselves effectively in society, they require an understanding of how they immerse themselves in gaming realms and how they disconnect from these narratives to return into their world of origin. The transportation theory is a conceptualised transportation into a narrative world through a distinct mental process that integrates feelings, attention, and imagery (Green & Brock, 2000). The researcher sees this as an important topic that should be studied to achieve a holistic description of narrative immersion and how to distinguish between the gaming realm and reality?	Richard Gerig's seminal literature of Transportation Theory (1983) Green and Brock's enhancement of Transportation Theory (2000)	Theme 1: Narratives in gaming Theme 2: Individuals immersion into gaming narratives	Paradigm: Interpretivist Epistemology: participants subjective description of their experience of immersion into gaming narratives will create an understanding of knowledge. Ontology: the meaning that the participants describe of their experiences and interactions with the narratives constructs and creates an understanding of what reality is. Aviology: every participant views reality differently and how they describe their different experience of narratives within a gaming reality is valued.	Qualitative: The focus of the study is on how an individual immerses into narratives, creates meaning out of interactions in said narratives, and understands phenomenon such as gaming narratives and transportation	Semi-structured interviews with Durban gamers to describe their immersive experience of gaming narratives. Gamers will be asked open ended questions such as What has their experience been of narrative immersion. All questions will be pretested a mock interview.	Participants: Informed Consent, acknowledgment of being studied, no incentives. Researcher: Falsifying, distorting and unbiased findings	The researcher expects to find that each individual will have a different experience of how they immerse themselves into narratives. The researcher anticipates that this research will contribute a qualitative nature to this study as it is predominantly studied quantitatively in past studies.	• Art, C., 2016. Interacting with Story: Examining Transportation into Video Game Narrative. <i>Master of Communication & Journalism</i>, August. • Brown, W., 2015. Examining Four Processes of Audience Involvement With Media: Personal Transportation, Parasocial Interaction, Identification, and Worldview Communication Theory. <i>Volume 25</i>, pp. 259-283. • Buzzelli, R. & Blamant, H., 2008. Plurality and Perceived Reason in Experience Stories: A Model of Narrative Comprehension and Engagement. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>Volume 18</i>, pp. 252-280. • Courant, C., Van Oost, W. & Stee, F., 2016. Exploring the Empirical Link Between Game Features, Player Motivation and Game Behavior: Central Mediterranean Conference on Information Systems. • De Groot, F., Gabeirgh, V. & Van Looy, J., 2014. In Pursuit of Play: Toward a Social Cognitive Understanding of Determinants of Digital Play. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>Volume 24</i>, pp. 209-223. • Green, M. & Brock, T., 2000. The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, <i>79</i>(5), pp. 701-721. • Green, M. C., Timothy, B. C. & Kaufman, G. F., 2004. Understanding Media Enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>14</i>(4), pp. 311-327. • Hendrickson, L., 2000. Having a Sense of Ourselves. <i>Communications Technology</i>, pp. 1-5. • Karmacharya, A., 2016. Does it Matter Where You Read? Sharing Narrative in Physical Environment. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>Volume 26</i>, pp. 290-308. • Latour, S., Foss, K. & Oates, J., 2017. <i>Theories of Human Communication</i>. 11th ed. Illinois: Waveland Press Inc. pp. 157-169. • Lyttle, M. A., 1993. Articulating Meaning: Reconstructions of the Meaning Process. <i>Parasociality, and Identity in Leisure Activities</i>. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>3</i>(3), pp. 217-231. • Poulos, C., 2008. Accidents: Dialogue. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>Volume 18</i>, pp. 117-138. • Stone, R., 2003. Space Matters: The Power and Practice of Space. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>13</i>(1), pp. 39-55. • Taylor, M. D. & Roemer, D., 2002. Entertainment-Education and Education: Understanding the processing of Narrative Persuasion. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>12</i>(2), pp. 173-191. • So, J., 2012. Uses, Gratifications, and Beyond: Toward a Model of Motivated Media Exposure and its Effect on Risk Perception. <i>Communication Theory</i>, <i>Volume 22</i>, pp. 116-137.
Research Problem	Secondary Questions / Hypothesis / Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Population	Target Population The target population is gamers that immerse themselves into narratives of video games. Accessible Population The assessable population includes gamers that immerse themselves into narratives of video games in Durban that can be accessed by the researcher. Characteristics of Population • Individuals that reside in Durban • Individuals that immerse themselves into narratives of games	Data Analysis Thematic analysis to identify themes from observations.	Limitations The truthfulness of participants Duration of study – as it limits the amount of information obtained.	Anticipated Contribution Contributing to the understanding of immersion into narratives and enhancing studies on Transportation Theory using qualitative study rather than quantitative.		

ANNEXURE C

Interview Question Schedule



Transportation Theory and Gaming: Semi-structured interviews to qualitatively describe the perceived narrative immersion of Durban Gamers in 2018.

Day of interview, Date of interview, Time of interview, location of interview, participant tag, participant age, participant gender, and interview topic.

No.	Survey Question:	Response Notes:
1.	Explain why you game?	
2.	Explain when you choose to game in a 7 day week, and why?	
3.	Explain how long you game for in an average session, and why?	
4.	Describe your understanding of what makes a person a regular gamer, and why?	

5.	Think about the specific gaming platforms you prefer to use. For example Xbox, Playstation, PC and so forth. Explain why you prefer this platform / these platforms	• Xbox • Playstation • PC • Other: _____
5.1	Describe the (specific Feature) that makes you want to game on this platform/Platforms?	
6.	Describe whether or not you experience / interact with gaming content on social media platforms and/or applications	• Discord • YouTube • Facebook • Twitch • WhatsApp
7.	When choosing a game to play, describe what influences your preference to play a game, and why?	Call of duty (Xbox) God of War (PS)
8.	Please refer to a game you are currently playing, and then explain in-depth your experience of playing this game.	How do you feel, think and see while playing this game.

9.	Explain if you have an interruption while gaming, explain how you would react. i.e a phone call, knock at the door, a friend comes over.	
10.	Describe anything specific that makes you want to keep playing the game	• Character • Pace • Graphics • Storyline • Relatability of characters / narrative • Flow of narrative • Believability of narrative
10.1	Describe what about (the element) allowed you to get more involved in the game?	

ANNEXURE D

Explanatory Information Sheet



EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Keli Bell and I am a student at IIE Varsity College Westville. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Natalie Emslie about qualitatively describing the subjective narrative transportation [Transportation meaning experiencing cognitive, imagery, and affective involvement in a narrative (Gretter, Gleason, Yadav, 2017), or a disconnection with reality and divergence into a narrative such as a book, movie or game (Green & Brock, 2000).] experience of Durban Gamers in 2018, using Transportation Theory. I hope that this research will enhance the understanding of personal narrative immersion experiences in gaming narratives within a South African context.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you can contribute to the understanding of gaming experiences in South Africa, specifically in Durban. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to conduct an interview to gain a better understanding of your subjective experience/interaction with gaming.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your experience of gaming. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.



Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.



Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the focus group interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE Varsity College Westville, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognizable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished the interview, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in Corporate Communication (HBA 8411 Qualification). You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Keli Bell



The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Dr. Natalie Emslie



ANNEXURE E

Unsigned Consent Form



Consent form for participants



I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Keli Bell about narrative transportation experiences of Durban Gamers in 2018.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

ANNEXURE F

Unsigned Consent Form for Audi/Video Recording



Consent form for audio-recording/ video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Keli Bell to audio record my interview as part of the research about narrative transportation experiences of Durban Gamers in 2018.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

Signature

Date

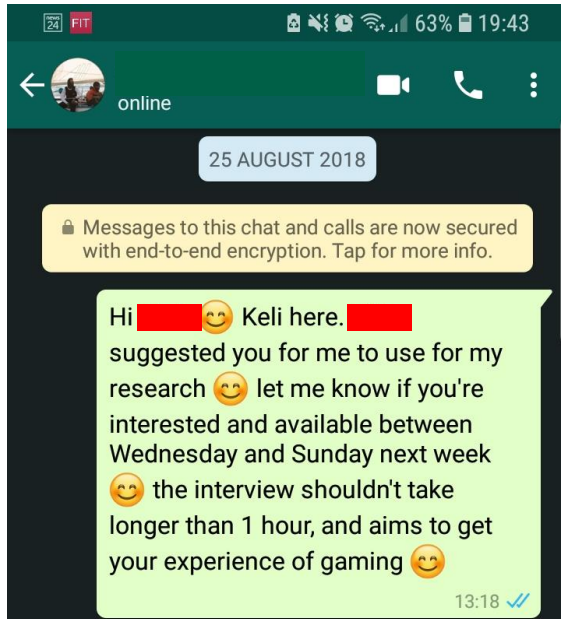
ANNEXURE G

Ethical Clearance Letter

ANNEXURE H

Example of Invitation to Participate in study

(WhatsApp)



(Email)

