



Meanings of Retrogaming Consumption for “Millennial” and “Generation X” Men

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The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Business
Oxford Brookes University

August 2022

Abstract:

Retro marketing is a recurring topic of academic research and a business strategy used by many businesses. The concept of retro revolves around consumption of products from a bygone era or reintroducing them often adapted to modern standards. Despite its academic popularity and market applications there are certain gaps in knowledge as to its origin in modern-day consumption and a need for developing conceptualisations, typologies and frameworks embracing the multifaced nature of the phenomenon. The purpose of this research is therefore to fill the theoretical gap concerning the conceptualisation of retro and implications for its practice in the future. A fascinating and popular form of retro consumption which can answer this call and further the understanding of retro is retro video gaming (more often called retrogaming).

Exploring this form of the retro phenomenon will focus on the “why?” of retrogaming consumption exploring its meanings amongst two generations of male retrogamers. Two in-depth interviews with each of the 16 UK-based male retrogamers were conducted following a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology. A key finding identified was the realisation of retro gaming consumption being an expression of resistance towards change with four contributing dimensions: temporal changes, social changes, technological changes and market changes. This led to a contribution in the form of a new conceptual framework of four change lenses (dimensions) of retro consumption providing a new and more organised way to perceive retro consumption and its sources. It can be also used as a foundation for gaining a more detailed understanding of other forms of retro consumption.

Additionally, unexpected contributions towards collecting consumer behaviour knowledge were identified involving: the dichotomy of the collecting process; a new in-vivo collector typology; the importance of physical transaction-scapes in collecting behaviour; the role of self-created online-transaction-scapes; and sharing different forms of nostalgia within the community.

Overall, contributions presented in this work will help to further the discourse on retro consumption and aspects of collecting behaviour.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has taken me on quite a journey, but one which I did not embark on alone. I have met many kind and supportive people who helped me along the way.

First of all, I would like to extend gratitude to my supervisors, Prof Janine Dermody and Dr Jackie Clarke. You guided and supported me through this process. Our numerous discussions and your valuable insights helped shape me as a researcher.

Secondly, I would like to thank the individuals who participated in my research. They invited me into their 'world' and shared very personal experiences and reflections. Their enthusiasm for retrogaming and willingness to discuss it at length made all this possible. I am forever in your debt.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my work colleagues at Oxford Brookes University for their moral and technical support on this journey, helping me manage work and research.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their unconditional love and support. They were always there to pick me up during difficult times and to celebrate my small victories. I am very fortunate to have you in my life.

It was a great privilege to embark on this journey.

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List of terms and abbreviations:

Arcades – a venue with coin-operated game machines

CCT – Consumer Culture Theory

Completionist - a gaming collector who focuses on collecting a whole series of games/items of a particular type of a console or a specific game set

CRT TV – Cathode-ray tube TV set; This TV type preceded the first flat-screen TVs

Emulator – software which allows playing old games on modern devices (PCs, laptops and other dedicated devices) using ROM images.

Game, CeX (Computer Exchange) – physical and online stores selling new and used gaming goods.

ROM image – a file containing a copy of the data used on the read-only memory chip, which was being used in video gaming.

SM – Social Media

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the research

Retro is a recurring and popular topic in marketing and consumption research (Veresiu et al. 2018) which revolves around the consumption of products from a bygone era and reintroducing products and services often adapted to modern standards (Brown et al. 2003). What surfaces in relation to retro is the question of its source in modern-day consumption (Brown et al. 2003).

Consumption of retro is closely tied with the feeling of nostalgia (Brown 1999; Franklin 2002) which is widely regarded as one of the main drivers of retro consumption (Goulding 2002). Nostalgia is defined as “*a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past*” (Lexico 2022). From a marketing perspective, it is accepted as a preference and a positive attitude towards objects which were more common in one’s past or before their birth (Holbrook and Schindler 2003).

Pursuing retro and turning towards nostalgia has been linked with the degree of alienation experienced in the present and the desire for social contact (Goulding 2001). Turning towards the past was identified to evoke times when social connectedness was stronger (Seehusen et al. 2013). Popularity of retro has also been explained by the postmodern environment characterised by a moral, social and identity crisis and creative sterility where the only solution to avoid the postmodern existential void is to look towards the past (Goulding 2000; Jameson 1985).

Since the postmodern ‘*retro boom*’ was first noted at the end of the 20th century (Naughton and Vlasic 1998), retro became a common subject in academia, still consuming academics today (Ahlberg et al. 2021; Brown 2018). As a result, the retro phenomenon has been researched from several perspectives, such as consumption of photography (Bartholeyns 2014); retro service-scapes (Hamilton et al. 2014; Blanchette 2014) and whole city areas (i.e. Titanic Belfast) (Brown 2013); retro sports marketing (Scola and Gordon 2018);

corporate heritage (Balmer and Burghausen 2018); Retro branding strategies (Cattaneo and Guerini 2012; Hartmann et al. 2018) and even specific brands (Simmons 2006).

Additionally it is ever increasingly considered in organisations' marketing strategies due to the increasing popularity of heritage brands, throwback brands and other forms of past-oriented branding (Balmer and Burghausen 2018). The variety of industries and products influenced by '*the past*' is impressive and includes, e.g. fashion goods (Carey et al. 2018 in Ryding et al. eds.; Chen 2018); toys (Today 2021); film (Loock 2016); gaming (USA Today Tech 2019); cars (Automotive news 2022); motorcycles (Visor Down 2021); cosmetics, restaurants and hotels, etc. (Brown 2013; 2018).

Despite the popularity of retro both as a marketing strategy and an area of academic enquiry, there are gaps in knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. As Brown (2018) emphasised, these relate to the need for new conceptualisations of this multifaceted phenomenon attempting to conceive original typologies and frameworks.

A fascinating and popular form of retro consumption which can answer this call and further the understanding of retro is retro video gaming (more often called retrogaming). The phenomenon of retrogaming is a practice of playing and collecting classic video games and is regarded as one of the main movements in video gaming (Newman 2004). UK market size data shows that retrogaming is significant in size and expanding. In 2015 the pre-owned games market was worth £126 million, increasing its size by 25% in one year. This growth was also reflected by a growing number of retrogaming events across the United Kingdom (Sky News 2015). More recently, the pre-owned gaming market has decreased in size, which is connected with progressing digitalisation and online revenue streams (UKIE 2021). Nevertheless, the UK retrogaming is active with more events and specialised venues being opened and retrogaming goods increasing in value (The Guardian 2021, MKFM 2021)

There remains the question of choosing retrogaming as a form of retro, which will best contribute to the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future.

This focus on understanding retrogaming is in direct response to the gaps in knowledge and understanding of this particular form of retro-behaviour. This gap occurs because of the more dominant foci within this area of research. First, compared to other retro products and services explored by academics, such as cars, live museums or aesthetic goods (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Goulding 2001, 2002;), much less is known or understood about retro video gaming because video games are relatively young retro products and thus there is less research on them. Literature states that the time span from which they come ranges from the 1970s to the early 1990s (Suominen 2012). However, a visit to websites devoted to this retro gaming shows that the boundary of retro in the minds of consumers has moved towards the 2000s (e.g., Retrogamer.net 2016). Consequently, digital retro products have largely been omitted from academic research exploring the meanings of retro product consumption and experiences. Accordingly, understanding the 'why' of retro video gaming is significantly underdeveloped compared with other forms of retro consumption.

Secondly, the meaning of retro is also often conceptualised alongside the postmodern consumer experience (Brown 2001a). Here, an identity crisis occurs as postmodernity pushes consumers towards the idealised retro products, designs and associated meanings, all coming from the 'golden modern era' (from the end of the 40s till the early 70s) (Franklin 2002; Goulding 2000; Guffey 2006). This explanation, however, is less applicable to retro video games, as they do not originate from this 'golden era'. Therefore, the explanatory conceptualisation of why (male) consumers play retro-video games requires research attention. This creates a temporal and theoretical gap in retro research concerning the 'why?' for the consumption of 'younger' retro products.

Thirdly, previous CCT endeavours related to retro and nostalgic consumption have not focused on digital retro consumption and items and instead looked at aesthetic goods coming from a more distant past. This again makes retrogaming an exciting choice.

Moreover, an intriguing aspect of retrogaming is that its temporal span seems to be fluid with the boundary of what is considered retro moving from the 1990s into the 2000s (Retrogamer.net 2016), which might represent an evolved and accelerating form of retro.

Finally, Academic work focusing on retrogaming seen from the consumption perspective is limited, often taking the form of essays and conceptual in nature. Here the topic has been examined from various perspectives such as digital heritage (Stuckley et al. 2015); nostalgia in retro game design (Garda 2013); suggesting the reasons for its popularity (Suominen 2008); use of gaming history by gaming device manufacturers (Suominen 2012); discussing the relations between game history, cultural heritage and digital technology (Suominen and Sivula 2013); a historical account of how the phenomenon emerged in Finland (Suominen et al. 2015); practices required and credibility types involved in gaming heritage projects (Suominen et al. 2018); or identifying communities and fan practices in online retrogaming forums (Mora-Cantalops et al. 2021)

There were also attempts to bring more empirical contributions, however with limited results. Heinonen and Reunanen's (2009) mixed method questionnaire study, due to limited responses, as they stated themselves, did not enable them to undertake a realistic analysis. Also, Suominen's (2011) preliminary research results of a study on traces of history, heritage and retrospection on online forums gave a netnographic glimpse into how retro gaming consumers reflect on their passion.

As it can be seen, the topic of retro consumption theory concerning more modern forms of retro remains an exciting 'uncharted territory' with huge potential for contribution.

When it comes to the consumption of retro products, a question of the meanings of the consumption of these products arises. Why do consumers choose old design and outdated functionality over more up-to-date and modern-looking goods? Inspired by this question, this study seeks to explore it within one particular context of retro-consumption, namely the retro video gaming behaviour of two contrasting generations of Generation X and Millennial male retro gamers. Focusing on these two generations of gamers is important because, as Goulding (2001) suggests, retro products can represent different meanings depending on the consumer's age.

It is vital then to explore the significance of retrogaming behaviour for those involved with the phenomenon. Moreover, it is necessary to examine potential implications of this behaviour for the conceptualisation of retro. One cannot forget

about the gaming industry, which size surprised video and music combined (BBC News 2019). The impact of this research on marketing practice will also be considered.

Therefore, this doctoral research will explore three research questions:

RQ1 Why do 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men play retro video games?

RQ2 What does this retrogaming behaviour signify about the meanings of retro consumption practices of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men?

RQ3 What are the implications of this retrogaming behaviour for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future?

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The introduction is followed by a critical literature review in chapter two. Key theories, debates and existing research within the realm of retro consumption are critically reviewed. The evaluation of relevant theories and concepts results in identifying a research gap and a justification for exploring meanings of retrogaming consumption.

Chapter three introduces the philosophical and methodological considerations of this research. The primary purpose of this chapter is to develop and outline the research design in the process contextualising the chosen methodological approach of hermeneutic phenomenology. It also includes the sequence of activities sampling considerations and the selected analytical framework for the given empirical context.

Chapter four outlines the findings of the study. As a result of conversations with participants and the analytical process of hermeneutic understanding (Diekelmann 1992), finding related to retrogaming, consumption are presented. The rich data of this exploration of retro consumption resulted in additional findings in the area of collecting behaviour. As a result, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first one focuses on collecting behaviour findings. The second part

presents findings related to retrogaming consumption together with a binding constitutive pattern representing relationships between themes.

Chapter five discusses findings stemming from this research. Mirroring the structure of the previous chapter, it is divided into two parts. Part one discusses findings related to collecting behaviours exhibited by participants. Part two focuses on retro consumption findings and discusses these in the context of existing retro and nostalgic consumption discourse. Here a conceptual framework is developed explaining the role of identified retro dimensions in the expression of retro consumption. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the contributions of this doctoral study and links them with the posed research questions.

Finally, chapter six concludes this research by revisiting and answering each research question. The broader implications for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing are addressed, and the contributions of this study highlighted. The chapter also addresses the potential for conceptual generalisability of findings together with the limitations of this research.

Chapter 2: Critical literature review

This chapter aims to establish the necessity of an empirical exploration of retrogaming consumption while providing a wider context for the topic of retro in consumption. A broader scholarship on consumption, retro consumption and retro marketing is valuable in informing this doctoral study. Accordingly, four areas of scholarship are identified and evaluated within this chapter.

Firstly, this review will focus on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) as the researcher recognises that meanings of consumption are located within the context of consumer experiences and their interpretations.

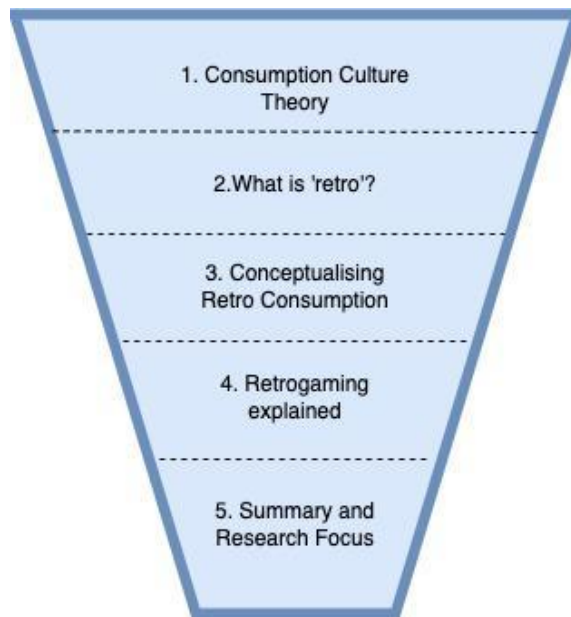
Once this is complete, this review will move on to critically explore 'retro'. This will include examining what this term means in the cultural sense, where it originated, and what temporal boundaries it encapsulates. It will also consider how 'retro' is seen from the market perspective, showing both its alternative and more mainstream facets.

Thirdly, beginning to narrow further, an exploration of the conceptualisation of retro consumption will be undertaken. This will include connecting existing CCT research with potential forms of retro consumption to suggest where different areas of retro consumption might be emerging from.

Finally, the fourth element of this literature review will consider the retrogaming phenomenon and present studies undertaken within that area.

This approach to the critical review of literature is presented in Figure 2.1. It might be helpful for the reader to imagine the upcoming literature review as a narrowing-down approach best compared with a funnel.

Figure 2.1 Structure of the critical literature review



2.1 Introduction to Consumer Culture Theory

Until the early 1980s, literature on marketplace behaviour was dominated by an economic and psychological debate, with a considerable area related to consumption activity remaining largely unexplored. The academic world needed to explore in more depth the lived experience of consumption seen from a cultural and historical context in an intellectually insightful and evocative manner which would understand and skilfully describe the individual's dynamic bond with the marketplace. With the emergence of Consumer Culture Theory, a new interdisciplinary field of research, this need began to be addressed (Sherry and Fisher 2009). The term Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) was coined by Arnould and Thompson and refers to the 25-yearlong stream of consumer research studies addressing sociocultural, experiential, symbolic and ideological facets of consumption (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Fisher and Sherry 2009).

Consumer culture theory is a multidisciplinary branch of consumer research that contributed to the knowledge of consumer culture, in all its plurality,

and produced rational findings and theoretical constructs which are significant in the generally perceived social sciences, public policy arenas, and the industry (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

CCT is also a set of viewpoints concentrating on dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings. The common denominator present in the variety of different consumer research projects is an emphasis on studying the cultural complexity of consumption. Rather than approaching culture as a uniform system of shared meanings and values common across the broadly understood society, CCT offers a perspective that perceives and explores it as a group of diverse and intersecting 'cultural groupings' existing in a globalised and capitalist environment (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Specifically:

“ [...] consumer culture denotes a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, are mediated through markets.”

(Arnould and Thompson 2005,p.869)

Consumer culture is, therefore a conceptualisation of specific interrelated systems of commercially manufactured images, texts and objects which are utilised by particular groups and by means of creating overlapping and sometimes clashing practices, identities and meanings. Consumers embody and negotiate these meanings in specific social roles and situations. The essence of these practices is to 'make collective sense' of the environment and to navigate their member's experiences and lives (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Kozinets 2001).

As Arnould and Thompson (2005) state, one of the most essential features of CCT is its conceptualisation of culture as the lifeblood of experience, meaning and action. This distributed interpretation of cultural meaning highlights the dynamics of multiplicity, fragmentation, flexibility and interactions of consumption conventions and lifestyles.

When the discussion concerning CCT takes a more methodological turn, Arnould and Thompson (2005) highlight a common misconception that consumer culture theory differs from other research approaches. Without a doubt, the dominant data collection technique applied in CCT research has been qualitative, with several specific methods falling under this category, such as naturalistic observation or phenomenological observation (Moisander, Penaloza and Valtonen 2009). However, the reason behind this lies not in the inseparability of CCT and qualitative methods and the passion of CCT researchers for them but rather in the interpretive aims that drive consumer culture research. Moreover, CCT does not categorically exclude quantitative methods from its research palette (Arnould 2006; Moisander, Penaloza and Valtonen 2009).

The initial attempt towards its classification divided the movement into four distinct research subgroups. Firstly, one can distinguish (1) *consumer identity projects*. This branch of CCT research focuses on how consumers utilize resources created by the marketplace to shape a coherent and often-fragmented 'self-identity' construct (Arnould and Thompson 2005). As active members of the marketplace, they partake in an exchange of goods possessing symbolic value that shapes narratives of identity. In other types of CCT research uncovering consumer identity projects is more implied. For example, Arnould and Price (1993) focused on an extended leisure service encounter in the context of water rafting and how it affected consumer satisfaction. To explore and understand the above-mentioned relationship, the researchers uncovered some of the consumer identity meanings which lie at the heart of this extreme service experience (Arnould and Thompson 2005). This subgroup of CCT studies later developed several other branches (Joi and Li 2012):

- consumer identity and marketing myths (e.g., Catulli et al. 2016; Luedicke et al. 2010; Schau et al. 2009)
- global consumption identity projects (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012; Sharifonnasabi et al. 2020)
- post-assimilationist research relating identity projects to ethnicity and migration (e.g., Askegaard and Ozcaglar-Toulouse 2011; Chytкова 2011; Veresiu and Giesler 2018)

- consumption environments and consumer experiences (e.g., Cotte and LaTour 2009; Cova 2020)
- identity, public policy and transformative consumer research (e.g., Davis and Ozanne 2019; Henry 2010; Peñaloza and Barnhart 2011)

(2) *Marketplace cultures* research agenda opposes the classical view of people being culture bearers and places them in the position of culture producers. This sub-group of CCT is interested in how consumers, through the consumption of common goods, create the notion of social solidarity, which leads them to create distinct, self-selected and often temporary cultural worlds. These 'worlds' have been branded differently by various research projects as subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), a consumption microculture (Thompson and Troester 2002), a consumption world (Holt 1995), a culture of consumption (Kozinets 2001), or a neo-tribe (Maffesoli 1996). In the years to follow, researchers also began emphasising brand communities (Schau et al. 2009) and consumer resistance (Marcoux 2009).

The next sub-group of research within CCT is (3) *socio-historic patterning of consumption*. This field of CCT research places emphasis on how institutional and social arrangements affect consumption. These can be class, community, ethnicity or gender. The main foci of this research enquiry concerns the questions of the nature, origin and preservation of consumer society. In an attempt to tackle this matter, CCT researchers look at consumption decisions and behaviours and seek answers to how social class hierarchies influence them (e.g., Allen 2002); gender (e.g., Dobscha and Ozanne 2001); ethnicity (e.g., Belk 1992) and other groups such as families or households (e.g., Moore-Shay, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). More recently, studies in this category explored the institutionalisation of consumption ideologies (Joi and Li 2012) in areas such as consumer status use in the marketplace (Üstüner and Thompson 2012) and normalisation of gambling (Humphreys 2010).

The final identified sub-group is (4) *mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies*. Here, emphasis is placed on consumer ideology. Therefore, this area represents sets of meanings that direct and recreate consumers' thoughts and decisions to defend the dominant societal interests. The prevailing questions of this research group include: "What

normative messages do commercial media transmit about consumption?; How do consumers make sense of these messages and formulate critical responses?" (Arnould and Thompson 2005, p.874). The consumer is seen as an interpreter of media messages who creates meaning based on this communication, ranging from fully accepting the representations of consumer identity and lifestyle shown in advertisements to their rejection and criticism (Joi and Li 2012). An example of research in this sub-group relates to the interpretation of technology by consumer groups representing various ideological stances towards it (Kozinets 2008).

Moisander, Penaloza and Valtonen (2009) propose a second approach to categorising CCT research. They stated that researchers can fall into three canons of study. To begin with, they distinguished the *(I) assimilationists'* approach, similar to positivists' research cannons. They operated in areas dominated by quantitative research, such as overlooked aspects of consumption meaning (Belk 1988) and object attachment (Belk et al. 2003). *(II) Reformists* focused on mainstream problems which before were the foci of qualitative methods and presented them from an interpretive, semiotic and rhetorical perspective.

As their work conventions and 'genuine' consumption content differ from the before mentioned groups, the last group of CCT academics is referred to as *(III) revolutionists*. The focus of these studies is on new consumption phenomena. Hence, researchers often resort to methodologies borrowed from other academic areas. As examples, Moisander, Penaloza and Valtonen (2009) include "*Belk et al.'s (1988) swap meet study, Thompson et al.'s (1989) study of women's consumption experience, Scott's (1994) reader response approach to advertising symbolism, and Ozanne and Murray's (1991) critical theoretical account of consumption politics* (2009, p.15)."

To summarise, CCT is essentially concerned with sociohistorical influences, social dynamics and cultural meanings that mould the identities and experiences of consumers seen through countless everyday contexts. Moreover, consumer culture theory highlights that the world in which the consumer is immersed is far from monolithic, systematised, or characterised by logic (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Many of them live in multiple consumption realities at the

same time, which are significantly different from their everyday life (e.g., Belk and Costa 1998; Kozinets, 2001, 2002; Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

As the following sections of this thesis will show, 'retro' received attention from CCT scholars in the past. This phenomenon has been approached from several perspectives that revolved around consumers' experiences and given meanings to 'retro' places and products. However, before CCT retro research can be introduced, the question 'what is retro?' needs to be answered.

2.2 What is retro?

The first step on the road to depicting existing retro and retro-related research is by explaining what the terms mean from different perspectives.

2.2.1 Retro origins

The term 'retro' was brought to life in 1970s France (Woodham 2004). There seems to be discourse as to its etymological origins. Some sources state that it is the abbreviation of the term '*rétrograde*' and was applied when talking about past styles and fashions with nostalgia in mind (Woodham 2004). Others state that 'retro' is derived from the term '*rétrospectif*', which came to prominence after the death of Charles de Gaulle. As a result, France experienced a wave of re-evaluation of de Gaulle's and France's role in the Second World War, which led to reminiscing and nostalgia for the culture, fashion and style of the pre-war period, with 'retro' being used to describe this (Walker 1992).

Retro thus evokes a variety of meanings and forms. Guffey states that retro can be seen as no more than a "synonym for 'old-fashioned' or simply 'old'" (2006, p.9). It helps the place, product or idea acquire historical meaning and signify its iconic status. As an example, Guffey (2006) examines the "Retro Day: A History and Tradition Tour", which is a standard museum tour related to Napoleonic memorabilia, recently given a retro slant by the Monaco Tourism office. Another use for the term can be descriptive, referring to the period style of the mid-twentieth century, especially accurate when discussing American

consumption culture from that era. Retro can also depict perspectives on life seen as, e.g., social conservatism or an approach towards gender roles rooted in past values (Guffey 2006). Finally, retro, which relates to the focus of this research, can also stand for technological obsolescence and outdatedness. As Guffey states:

“Manual typewriters and cash registers have become ‘retro’. Even more, gadgets that once defined the text and texture of modern consumer technology (bulky cord phones) carry a ‘retro’ cachet. Entire subcultures devoted to outmoded technological apparatuses have developed: the adherence of retrogaming, for instance, reconfigure obsolete video games to play on today’s computers, while others restore the old computers to enjoy the ‘original’ game experience.”

(Guffey 2006, p.10)

Retro is strongly influenced by technology and its popular materialisations: “its slogans are culled from syndicated TV episodes and the movies of yesterday; its anthems from pre-owned records and obsolete advertising jingles; its visual vocabulary from defunct cars and household appliances” (Guffey 2006, p.25). At the same time, one must be aware that retro does not take place in the technological dimension but rather in the sphere of popular culture, advertising and entertainment. Moreover, this recreation of the modern era does not flow out of historical research; it comes from identifying and acquiring styles and goods from the recent past and their replication for commercial and cultural purposes (Guffey 2006).

This replication is one of the focal points of retro in modern culture. One accusation against the postmodernist era, or perhaps post-postmodernist era as some literature refers to current times (Philosophy Now 2006), is that it can be characterised as the age of “no style”, which can be best described by pastiche, a collapse of symbolic hierarchies and recycling of past cultures (Featherstone 2007).

Finally, Guffey (2006) highlights a link between retro and nostalgia and recognises the caricature-like dimension of the notion in current culture:

“Retro offers an interpretation of history that taps nostalgia and an undercurrent of ironic understanding. Steeped in satire and humour, retro’s revivalist imagery has made its way into the mainstream, shaping how the recent past is presented in advertising, film, fashion and a host of forms of popular culture” (p.27).

In terms of the temporal span of retro, it ignores the very remote and distant times. It focuses on the ‘more recent past’, which usually encapsulates the era of modernity ranging from the 1950s to the 1980s, also named the ‘golden age’ (Franklin 2002; Guffey 2006).

2.2.2 Defining retro consumption

Although some suggest that retro started at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s (Goulding 2003), it is hard to unequivocally establish precisely when the craze for retro products, services, and their imitations, coming from the ‘golden era’ began. Still, it is a fact that it has become a recognised form of consumption. It was the sellers, buyers and collectors participating in and exchanging their used goods at car-boot sales and charity shops who introduced the prefix ‘retro’ to describe their offerings (Franklin 2002).

Retro is not a phenomenon present only in the western consumer culture. Japan has seen its influx of retro looking back at, e.g., the romanticised agrarian heritage (Creighton 1997). German consumers are reminded of the old days of the DDR (the communist Democratic Republic of Germany) by retro products; Russia is harking back at its imperial past with Fabergé eggs; and China with the rebirth of pre-communist cosmetic and household brands (Brown 2013).

Retro consumption opposes the manner in which these mass-produced items were consumed as new goods. To understand fully, one has to explore the places where retro consumption originated from, such as the aforementioned car-boot sales (Gregson and Crewe 1997a, 1997b) or retro retailers (Crewe, Gregson and Brookes 2003; Gregson and Crewe 2003, Goulding 2003). Uniqueness is a crucial element for these alternative retail spaces. Franklin (2002) believes this is being achieved by direct buyer-seller contact and a playful or even theatre-like

transaction atmosphere. However, this does not mean that the consumption of retro goods is limited only to these alternative practices. It is also becoming a phenomenon present in mainstream marketing. Initially existing in consumption crevices, retro consumption has been inching towards mainstream both in a physical sense in urban spaces and metaphorically by expanding its influence over mainstream consumption and culture (Appelgren and Bohlin 2015)

The retro environment reveals a quite overt division between alternative and mainstream retro consumption. The first one is occupied by smaller retailers who focus on pre-owned goods. (Crewe, Gregson and Brookes 2003). The latter involves a larger scale, more mainstream marketplace where products are no longer pre-owned goods but revived and very often technologically up-to-date or even sophisticated products (Brown 1999). In their ethnography of pre-owned items' retailers, Gregson and Crewe (2003) presented evidence and more details concerning this division (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 The oppositional imaginings of retro retailers

Retro Retailing (the alternative)	Conventional Retailing (the mainstream)
Products	
One-off; unique Real; authentic Aesthetic; symbolic goods	Mass produced; ubiquitous Manufactured; copies Value as economic
Retailers and consumers	
Creative; scene-setters Individual Knowing (elite)	Following 'fashion' Corporate Unknowing (the masses)
Work practices	
Drifting Intuitive Work as fun Work as creative	Planned (career) Trained Work as business Work as dull, boring, routine

Spatialities	
Self-styled 'alternative' Quarters In stylish cities and towns	High street/out-of-town malls Everywhere

(adapted from: Gregson and Crewe 2003, p. 34).

The authors convince that certain crucial aspects exist in this 'alternative' vs. 'mainstream' retro antagonism. First and foremost, it is the spatiality of retro transactions. The areas where these retail retrosapes are established should be defined by a sense of distinctiveness and being a focal point of fashion and design.

Second, it highlights the importance of the role of retro retailers, whose knowledge and expertise make them an active agent of what will and will not become retro. As Crewe, Gregson and Brookes state, "*What gets identified and sold as retro depends fundamentally on the complex intersection of who is doing the selecting and selling with where that someone is at the time, as well as their own biographies*" (2003, pp. 62-63). In other words, retro 'alternative' and 'authentic' retro require a sense of retailer's opacity.

What is recognised as a threat by retro retailers is the destabilisation of 'true' retro by the mainstream repro-retro both in the sense of retro product imitations and updating but also 'retro' town areas gentrification. However, retro retailing's antagonism towards the mainstream faces a paradox. Namely, 'authentic' retro so strongly opposes the mass-market it still very often rests on the foundation of previously created mass-made products which were a part of the mainstream (Gregson and Crewe 2003).

Shifting the attention towards the mass market, one can observe that the number of product and service categories influenced by retro is impressive, with radios, clothes, footwear, kitchen appliances, toys, cars, motorcycles, caravans, cosmetics, hotels, restaurants and hairdressers to mention only some (Brown 2013). Here, it is coined by the term "retro marketing" and considered a ubiquitous marketing approach (Brown 1999; Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003). It is a term

used to name marketing strategies focusing on the past to sell present products (Fort-Rioche and Ackerman 2013). Retro marketing is defined as:

“The revival or relaunch of a product or service from a prior historical period, usually an earlier decade or identifiable epoch, which may or may not be updated to contemporary standards of performance, functioning or taste.”

(Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003, p. 20)

Marketing professionals tend to emphasise the nostalgic elements of retro brands because of their importance and meaningfulness to consumers. This approach towards marketing saw a substantial increase in its use during the late 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century (Brown 2001b, Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003). Research also proves that retro marketing brings about substantial effects and may be a successful communication strategy appealing to various audiences (Marchegiani and Phau 2010b). Different tactics exist when it comes to retro marketing. According to Brown (2013), every marketing mix element has already been brought back from the past and reintroduced. There are numerous examples to back his statement. First, brands use old-styled packaging, evoking memories of the past such as Kellogg's or Doritos (WSJ 2011). Some companies decide to reintroduce their old slogans, such as Renault Clio with the reintroduction of 'va va vroom' (coolblue.co.uk 2011) or Heinz's 'Beanz' Meanz Heinz (adslogan.co.uk 2016). Others decide to resurrect old mascots like Captain Morgan or Tetley Tea Folk (Brown 2013).

In some cases, businesses aim at designing their advertisements so that they resemble ones of the past or even rebroadcast their old ones with the well known example of Hovis' 'bicycle delivery boy' and more recent Coca-Cola's complete HD remastering of their famous 'Hilltop' ad from 1971 (AdWeek 2016). Moreover, businesses decide to emphasize the antiquated manufacturing process and, by that, convince them of their offering. In other instances, companies go as far as to create fictional historical and nostalgic narratives, such as Jack Daniel's beer from 1866 (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Cova and Cova 2014; Stern 1992; Zhou et al. 2013). Retro consumption is not limited to products and is also present in places of consumption. These environments,

where the sense of place is revived by means of summoning old times, are referred to as retrosapes, which as a term is related to the concept of servicescapes (Booms and Bitner 1981; Brown and Sherry 2003).

Brown (1999) distinguished three types of the retro marketing phenomena: (1)repro, (2)retro and (3)repro-retro. (1) Repro is probably the most common type of retro marketing. Here companies reproduce the object in a way which is as close to the old original as possible such as a rerun of an old advertisement, use of retro packaging or recreating the old product. Schwinn's reintroduction of its 1968 bicycle models (Reisenwitz, Iyer, and Cutler 2004) or reruns of the 1998 Mars Indian advert serve as excellent examples (Coloribus.com 2016). (2) Another face of this strategy is combining the old with the new – retro. The goal is to create a retro-form product equipped with all the latest technology. One of this type's most prominent product reintroductions is the New Beetle, awarded the 1998 'Car of the Year' (Reisenwitz, Iyer and Cutler 2004). (3) The last quite rare type is repro-retro, and describes products which are 'revivals of revivals'. For example, the revival of the anniversary edition of the new Mazda Miata originally created as a retro car reviving the British two-seater sports cars popular in the 50s and 60s (Brown 1999).

As can be seen, retro consumption is not one-dimensional and is present in the marketplace in a broad context. Accordingly, this account now focuses on areas of retro CCT in an attempt to conceptualise the phenomenon.

2.3 Conceptualising retro consumption

This section will focus on introducing different perspectives on retro present in Consumer Culture literature to conceptualise where retro consumption is emerging from and the meanings and functions it represents for consumers.

2.3.1 Retro and nostalgia

Nostalgia is a recurring theme present in studies involving retrosapes (Holbrook 2003; Hetzel 2003; Maclaran 2003; Patterson and Brown 2003; Schau 2003; Troester 2003), communities and retro goods (Bartmanski and Woodward 2015; Goulding 2002, 2003; Kozinets 2001, 2002; Leigh et al. 2006). Nostalgia is widely regarded as one of the main drivers of retro, both for the older as well as younger consumers (Brown 1999; Franklin 2002; Goulding 2002). That is why any discourse concerning the sources, meanings and roles of retro in consumption should start with this phenomenon.

2.3.1.1 Defining nostalgia

Nostalgia's presence in consumer and marketing research is relatively recent. It began with Holbrook and Schindler's research stream concerning the formative age of preferences for various products (Holbrook and Schindler 1989, 1994, 1996; Schindler and Holbrook 1993; 2003), later joined by Rousseau and Venter (1999, 2000). Other research focused on the semiotics of nostalgia related to brands and products (Kessous and Roux 2008), charitable giving (Merchant and Ford 2008; Zhou et al. 2012) and packaging design (Chen 2014). A different extensively researched branch of research concerning nostalgia was its effects on advertising (Baumgartner, Sujaan and Bettman 1992; Braun, Ellis and Loftus 2002; Marchegiani and Phau, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012; Merchant and Rose 2013; Muehling and Pascal 2011; Muehling and Sprott 2004; Sujaan, Bettman and Baumgartner 1993; Zhao et al. 2014).

The notion of nostalgia has also been present in CCT research (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Kessous 2015), that intertwines nostalgia and retro (e.g. Belk and Costa 1998; Brown 2018; Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Carvellon and Brown 2018; Goulding 2001, 2002, 2003; Holt 1997; Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

Nostalgia has been classified as a mix of emotions (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 1989; Kemper 1987), representing both positive and negative feelings (Havlena and Holak 1991; Holak and Havlena 1998). It has been referred to as a 'bittersweet' emotion on multiple occasions (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Brown

2001; Cervellon, Carey and Harms 2012; Divard and Robert-Demontrond 1997; Goulding 1999; Havlena and Holak 1991; Holbrook and Schindler 1991; Kessous 2015; Merchant and Ford 2008; Wang et al. 2014; Vignolles and Pichon 2014), with recent research showing the prominence of positive emotions over negative ones (Baldwin, Biernat and Landau 2015; Hepper et al. 2012; Wildschut et al. 2006).

Numerous definitions exist of nostalgic emotion (Belk 1990; Davis 1979; Divard and Robert-Demontrond 1997; Holak and Havlena 1998). However, the one which captures the concept from the market perspective while being most often quoted (Goulding 2002; Gineikiene 2013; Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006; Marchegiani and Phau 2013; Merchant and Ford 2008; Muehling 2013; Muehling et al. 2014; Rutheford and Shaw 2011; Vignolles and Pichon 2014), is the one created by Holbrook and Schindler (1991) where nostalgia is defined as:

“... a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favourable effect) towards objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood or even before birth).”

(p.330)

Nostalgia is not a homogenous phenomenon. Similarly, there are different approaches to nostalgia classification, such as Davis' (1979) first, second and third-order nostalgia, based on the capabilities of the person to reflect on and be critical of his or her nostalgic feelings.

Other classifications focus on the personal experience dimension of nostalgia and include Baker and Kennedy's (1994) real, simulated and collective nostalgia; Havlena and Holak's (1996) personal, interpersonal, cultural and virtual nostalgia; or Stern's (1992) rudimentary division into personal and historical nostalgia (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 An outline of existing classifications of nostalgia

Author(s) of nostalgic classification	Types of nostalgia	Description
Davis (1979)	1 st order or simple nostalgia	A fundamental conviction that 'the past was a better place
	2 nd order or reflective nostalgia	Being analytical about the feeling; posing questions such as 'was it really better back then?
	3 rd order or interpreted nostalgia	More detailed exploration of the feeling and its sources; " <i>why am I feeling nostalgic?</i> "
Stern (1992)	Personal	Longing for personally remembered events from the past
	Historical	Longing for events which took place before a person was born.
Baker and Kennedy (1994)	Real	Yearning for the past one has experienced
	Simulated	Yearning towards an experience or object with which a person is not related directly, e.g., stories passed down by relatives
	Collective	Yearning for the past occurs in the context of a whole culture, generation or even a nation
Havlena and Holak (1996)	Personal nostalgia	Direct individual experience

	Interpersonal nostalgia	Experiencing nostalgia as a result of memories of other individuals.
	Cultural nostalgia	Common across a considerable group of people and simultaneously characterized by personal involvement.
	Virtual nostalgia	Focuses on all the historical and cultural events and experiences in which people have not participated directly.

(adapted from Davis 1979; Stern 1992; Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1996.

Retro and nostalgia are closely linked concepts. Thus, it is not surprising that nostalgia is considered one of the primary sources of retro marketing's strength seen from both a personal and historical side (Brown 1999; Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Naughton and Vlasic 1998).

2.3.1.2 Retro consumption research and nostalgia

As established, strong ties exist between retro and nostalgia. Nostalgia is an emotion often present when experiencing retrosapes and retro products, also seen as one of the factors fuelling retro consumption.

The one sub-section of themes revolving around nostalgia, which have been uncovered while researching retro consumption and retrosapes, relates to different types of yearning for the past times. For older consumers, this hankering for the 'long gone' takes the shape of longing for their personal experiences. These generational differences were clearly visible in Goulding's (2001) study focusing on heritage live museum experiences where nostalgia was one of the outcomes of experiencing a retroscape. Older consumers she referred to as 'existentials' sought confirmation of their own experiences' interpretation by

discovering and rediscovering objects and settings they were familiar with. The type of nostalgia these consumers were experiencing while visiting the live museum was personal in nature (Stern 1992). The statements and observations of these older consumers signified that they had experienced first order nostalgia derived from Davis' (1979) classification, which means they were yearning for the past era, wishing for its return while simultaneously recognising it is impossible.

Other themes also accompanied this type of nostalgia; commonly loss of life, role, or loved one; loss of community, tradition and shared meanings. These themes seem to resonate with Cushman's (1990) notion of the 'empty self'. Davis (1979) described this identified loss of places, pasts and people with the concept of discontinuity.

Younger consumers' experiences with retro and nostalgia are different in nature. They tend to feel vicarious nostalgia - an emotional or aesthetic reaction towards a time outside of a person's lifetime (Goulding 2001, 2002). Goulding's museum project also revealed that this group's reactions could also be characterized as second order or reflective nostalgia, where a person is more analytical about the present feeling. Although the study participants were critical about the present and idealized the past, they were able to pinpoint the negative sides of the past period they felt nostalgic about, which were re-enacted in the live museum.

Other sub-topics were also present. These focused on role overload, and the resulting pressure made people experience nostalgia for the romanticized view of the past, where the feeling of loss related to an ideal. It corresponds with Gergen's (2001) notion of the 'saturated self' where the multiplicity of roles and accumulation of 20th and 21st-century communication technologies makes some people experience anxieties and disrupts their quality of life. The present was seen as a fast and intimidating place where mass production has substituted craftsmanship, causing work satisfaction to disappear, resulting in an aesthetic empty space. This sense of disillusionment was also seen in other studies focusing on retro communities (Blanchette 2014; Goulding 2002;).

Younger consumers' affiliation with retro products was with a theme referred to as 'nostalgic socialization'. This phenomenon sees nostalgia as a learnt emotion which depends on the environment in which one was when

growing up. Here nostalgia for retro times and objects might have been triggered by other people's or family members' positive personal past experiences, their repetition over a period of time, being in the presence of nostalgic people and other stimuli (Goulding 2002).

What can be drawn from this section is not only the assumption that nostalgia is one of the factors involved in retro consumption. Moreover, retro products can represent different meanings conditioned by the consumer's age, the time period they grew up in and the influence of significant others. However, saying that retro can be explained solely by nostalgia would be an oversimplification. Other facets of retro are perceived through the lens of aesthetics, such as places, style, fashion, music or social gatherings, which should also be considered (Goulding 2003; Reynolds 2011).

2.3.2 Retroscapes

This term 'retroscape' derives from the term 'servicescape' introduced by Booms and Bitner (1981), referring to physical environments where services take place. Retroscapes are environments where the sense of place is revived through the evocations of past times. When studied carefully, it emerges that retroscapes are not a new occurrence. They have been a part of human culture for centuries, being present historically and geographically since chronicling began (Costa and Bamossy, 2003). Retroscapes vary and can be created and identified in different ways.

One example of a retroscape is a 'typical' Irish pub that tries to capture customers with the plethora of Irish history and symbolism (Patterson and Brown 2003). However, they do not have to connect to concepts related to heritage and history like Niketown - the athletic megastore referred to as "*one part nostalgia and two-part high tech*" (Hannigan 1998, p.86). Other examples might include retro restaurants such as Planet Hollywood (Brown 1999), heritage centres (e.g., De Montford University Heritage Centre), mega-brands museums (e.g., Volkswagen's Autostadt), and festival shopping malls. Accordingly, retroscapes

have grounded themselves as one of the approaches towards the marketing mix (Brown 2001a).

Specific characteristics can also ascribe to particular retrosapes. For example, their presence, instead of being lasting, can be recurring. This topic was touched upon by Kozinets (2002, 2003), who focused on the primitive-economy and anti-market “Burning Man” festival, where its community gathered once a year in the Nevada Desert. This illustrates that retrosapes can also be ephemeral in nature. Furthermore, this study shows that retrosapes can be the basis for shaping places for interaction and communities with specific rules and rituals.

Belk (2003) showcased a rare approach towards retrosapes related to digital products. In his work, he concentrated on one of the most successful video games of all time, “The SIMS”, arguing that certain features make it a retrosapes form of entertainment. Further, he stressed that retrosapes do not necessarily require physical presence nor be tangible.

In this ‘everyday life’ simulation, Belk (2003) recognized several retro elements that classify the game as a retroscape, with the most prominent being the regression into infancy. This can be understood as a situation where the players identify with game characters who cannot autonomously eat, bathe and perform other tasks, and are dependent on the player-god. Others included the retro furnishing and style of the ‘dollhouse-concept’ scape (dollhouse being retro in itself), followed by the old-fashion approach towards in-game relationships.

Numerous studies have focused on these servicescapes, and there are different reasons for which such areas are classified as retrosapes. The examples presented below give a better understanding of the abovementioned diversity.

Sherry (2003) looked at the retro-themed ‘ESPN Zone’ sports entertainment bar where ‘dwellers’, as he refers to customers, are lost in a trance of a primal retrograde fantasy. In these spaces, visitors are waitressed by attractive women, sitting in their reclining XXL seats, and focused on masculine images of violence and competition, giving a caesar-esque image. He also provided his account of the “Burning Man” phenomenon where together with Kozinets, they see it as a primitive retroscape. A place where for a short period,

no market exists, and the individual meets the utopian community (Kozinets 2002, 2003; Sherry 2003). One can also encounter retrosapes in unexpected places.

One study focused on building nostalgic service experiences in small business settings using afternoon tea rooms as an example (Hamilton et al. 2014). Maclaran (2003) focused on Dublin's Powerscourt retro shopping centre and the role a concert piano 'played' for visitors before the centre was refurbished and the instrument taken away. Morrison (2012) wrote of repurposing old commercial spaces such as London's Covent Gardens to offer retro experiences and products. Another study looked at the retroscape of Historyland, a theme park celebrating the indigenous culture of Native Americans, while linking it with the myth of the Lumber Jack (Troester 2003).

Venkatesh (2003) attempted to study retrosapes in the digital sphere. He argued that website catalogues are a postmodern representation of older paper catalogues. By being reproductions, these virtual showcases can be considered retrosapes. As Venkatesh (2003) argued, "*Web sites represent a postmodern return to the printed catalogues of the yore, the 'Big Books' of Sears, J.C. Penney, Montgomery Ward, and analogous universal providers*" p.13).

These brief descriptions naturally do not account for all of the retroscape studies, whose number is more sizeable (e.g., Aherne 2003; Blanchette 2014; Hetzel 2003; Holbrook 2003; Schau 2003; Troester 2003)

In terms of how retrosapes can be classified, there are different approaches. Brown and Sherry (2003) suggest dividing retrosapes following the standard micro, meso and macro geographical scale. Micro relates to small enclosed retrosapes such as rooms, buildings, individual retail stores and shopping centres. Meso encapsulates larger areas such as heritage parks, beach fronts, holiday resorts and leisure valleys. The largest, macro, includes nation-states, virtual worlds, and ancient cultures.

Costa and Bamossy (2003) suggest a more complex classification of retrosapes by dividing them into four categories:

- Spectacular constructed hyperrealities and themed spaces
- Performers, props and mobile stage sets
- Ritual re-enactments

- Retro landscapes

However, the authors stressed that not all types of retroscapes would be present in every society. The above categories will now be explained in more detail.

2.3.2.1 Spectacular constructed hyper realities and themed spaces

A growing number of retroscapes is related primarily to the ones introduced in advanced capitalist societies such as the US, Western Europe and specific areas in Asia and South America. What falls into this category might be the aforementioned Niketown, 'foreign country as theme parks', Disneyland/World and other similar types of parks, certain scapes in Las Vegas representing a time or a place, drinking or eating establishments, hotels and resorts.

With their neatly designed promotion, these retroscapes inform the consumer what she can expect and what she exactly 'should' experience (Costa and Bamossy 2003).

2.3.2.2 Performers, props and mobile stage sets

This type of retroscape is not as extensive in terms of the experiences and structural complexity as 'hyper realities and themed spaces'. Its power comes from the sets and costumes in use here, hence being not as developed as in the case of hyperreal scapes. Because of that factor and the mobility which is possible for these retro environments, they take up the form of 'travelling shows' such as circuses, theatre troupes, and musical acts, but also smaller artistic groups which represent, e.g., traditional dances and other cultural shows involving dancers, actors, costumes and stages. They evoke nostalgia for the times and events of the past. Not only in terms of art forms but also for social and political times, which are inseparably linked with the era in which this form of mobile entertainment has been developed and grew in prominence. Despite not being tied to one location, these retroscapes generate consumption spaces and experiences that involve past times (Costa and Bamossy 2003).

2.3.2.3 Ritual re-enactments

This family of retroscapes, on occasions, overlaps with the previous group of travelling shows. Here, however, consumers' motivations and the social and individual functions provided by these retroscapes differ from the previously mentioned ones. The difference lies in the spiritual aspect of these performances and the functions they serve, ranging from societal questioning, rebellion and reinforcement, and responsibility to renewal. As for the supernatural aspect, this type of retroscapes revolves mainly around rituals, symbols of the celestial, myths, gods or goddesses and other mystical events. A flagship example of this kind of retroscape is Orthodox Christians' Good Friday service, when a large wooden frame is covered with fabric and flowers and carried around the church and area. This act represents how Christ's body was taken from Mount Olive and placed in the tomb (Costa and Bamossy 2003).

2.3.2.4 Retro-Landscapes

What differentiates this type of retroscape from the previous three is that these retro-landscapes are not created or even co-created by marketers or producers. On the contrary, consumers contextualise them without the presence of the marketer. The process involved here is social and historical in nature without being communicated directly. These 'retro-landscape creations' do not require any marketing intervention to be created. However, they take a considerable amount of time to find a place in the minds of consumers. Examples here might include the way Hawaii is depicted as Borgerson and Schroeder (2003) claim an eden-like paradise, or the grit and character of the American 'Wild West'. They state, *"retrosapes are not limited to product designs, retail environments, or heritage parks. An entire geographical location can act as a huge retroscape via representation. As such, retrosapes are assemblages of memory, fantasy, and sensation - sights, sounds, scents, and perhaps dreams"* (Borgerson and Schroeder 2003, p.223).

Despite some retro-landscapes being present in the media and advertising, which should exclude them from this category, they are images and materials based on

retro-landscape interpretations already existing in consumers' minds (Costa and Bamossy 2003).

In summary, retrosapes are not spaces strictly tied to the past and should not be understood as such. They are places where the past meets the present to create a vision of the future and where people seek opportunities to interact and shape communities, avoiding solitude (Borgerson and Schroeder, 2003).

2.3.3 Retro consumption and authenticity

Authenticity is another concept which appears when reviewing retro-related publications (e.g., Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006). In everyday language, 'authenticity' is a set of characteristics such as genuineness, reality and truth (Grayson and Martinec 2004). Seen from the consumer perspective, the most common definitions of authenticity incorporate words such as original, unique, genuine, real and traditional (Munoz, Wood and Solomon 2006).

As a concept, Rose and Wood (2005) note that 'authenticity' is a result of perceived genuineness and positive valuation of what is being assessed. Other scholars link authenticity with the formation and development of the self-concept:

"[authenticity] reflects that individual's concerns about having his or real experiences, thoughts and true emotions, and 'the process captured by the injunction to know oneself. Authenticity, therefore, corresponds to how the behaviour of individuals is consistent with their thoughts and feelings, which express their true inner self, as opposed to the outward roles they play."

(Liao and Ma 2009, p. 92)

Authenticity is a crucial element in modern marketing, and retro goods and brands are no exception (Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Bartmanski and Woodward 2015). Just how important it may be was shown in a study performed by Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003), where they undertook a netnographic study of forums related to two relaunched retro brands - The New Beetle and Star

Wars: The Phantom Menace. The perceived balance between old-fashioned essence and new up-to-date spirit proved to be one of the significant issues for the revived brands, spurring fiery consumer online discussions concerning their authenticity, which only proved how delicate and critical this matter is.

On this level, we can speak about the authenticity of retro objects, goods and scapes. Here it is the genuineness of the object juxtaposed against the mainstream that aims to imitate their authenticity, as shown in the example of traditional Hawaiian music (Bergson and Schroeder 2003). It is evident concerning retro wear and retro fashion where real retro amongst dedicated retro consumers stands for more authenticity and purity than 'recycling'. Shops offering retro wear and other retro items also generate an aura of authenticity, with personal service, informality and sellers' knowledge being some of the key points (Crewe and Gregson 2003; Goulding 2003).

The notion of authenticity was also a focus of a study looking at British retro cars owners across North America. The study showed that authenticity for the owners of these classic vehicles is also a major issue which can take up multiple forms of objective, existential and community-related constructive authenticity (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006).

2.3.4 Retro consumption and postmodernity

Another way of conceptualising retro and "nostalgic heritage products" (Goulding 2000, p.837) is by placing them appose with the postmodern experience (Belk and Costa 1998; Brown 1999; Hetzel 2003; Kozinets 2002, 2003). Brown (2001a) recognizes that the term postmodern has become a somewhat ubiquitous and overused term. Nevertheless, he perceives both retro and postmodernism as "*cousins of the conceptual gene pool*" (Brown 1999, p.369).

The notion of postmodernism argues that in the current epoch, society has entered a period characterised by the blurring of time and space. Profound interest in heritage and the past is explained by a moral, social and identity crisis present over the past few decades (Laenen 1989, cited in Goulding 2000, p.837). Cova (1997) perceives postmodernity as an era of acute social dissolution and extreme individualism. However, because of the cult of materialism, the outcome

became uniformity and mass production rather than a foundation for self-fulfilment. Moreover, the postmodern society is constantly searching for stimulation and emphasises 'the real thing', which results in paradoxically presenting an artificially amplified version of reality. This crisis, lack of depth and discontinuity lead to alienation, deterioration of individualism, identity confusion and the fragmentation of 'the self'. It is then reasonable to believe why the appeal of the idealized past resonates with the postmodern consumer (Goulding 2000).

There are examples of CCT research indicating consumers are, in fact, looking towards the past in order to fill this existential postmodern void. For example, Kozinets' (2002, 2003) study of the Burning Man festival. Kozinets notes the narratives of many participants disclosed their willingness to create and participate in the archaic nonmarket exchange, the only existing during the event, emerged from their longing for the *"uncontaminated past of purer personal relations that has been associated with the so-called primitive economies by many theorists"* (2002, p.29). Also, in Goulding's (2001) study, the younger part of respondents experiencing nostalgia in a retroscape setting expressed a feeling that the present was impersonal, pressurizing, intimidating and volatile.

Another facet of postmodern consumerism is the belief that this era has no distinct style and represents an epoch based on the premise of recycling past styles and designs with no more space left for innovation or true creativity (Brown 1999). This approach is also known as creative sterility, whereby: *"[...] only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been created already"* (Jameson 1985 p.115). In Jameson's (1985) opinion, in the 1980s, one of the spheres where this was most clearly visible was the movie industry. The same could be said about the modern movie industry, with a mounting number of remakes released each year (Bohnenkamp et al. 2014). This is regarded as one of the explanations for why consumers are turning towards retro styles and retro products.

Some voices claim that postmodernism pushes retro to become a part of mainstream consumption, with major fashion labels benefiting from the nostalgia boom and incorporating pre-existing styles into their designs (McRobbie 1994).

Here, however, one has to be cautious with making assumptions as to the sources of retro, the reason being that retro is not a new fashion. Its presence in the past can take the shape of pre-Raphaelite painters retreating to Arthurian

themes (Goulding 2003) or, more recently, introducing Wild West's retro symbol, the Marlboro Man, in the 1950s (Brown 2001a). Although the impulse to go back might seem counterproductive, it might have its justifications. It can take a person through times of cultural stagnation or depression and preserve them until the next 'up phase' (Reynolds 2011).

2.3.5 Retro and neo-tribes

The postmodern emphasis on individualisation, progressing alienation, and decomposing social interaction gradually pushed the consumer towards gathering in small ephemeral groups (Cova and Cova 2002). Maffesoli (1996) was one of the first who observed this phenomenon and termed it "tribalism". Maffesoli states that the forces of globalization and postmodern social transformation eroded classic sociality and shifted people towards extreme individualism and the quest for personal distinctiveness.

As a result of an alienating environment, individuals formed groups representing collective identities built around common interests and lifestyles (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Also denoted as 'neo-tribes' (Hetherington 1992), these new social gatherings are characterised by far less stability than standard subcultures (Bennett 1999). They are neither fixed nor permanent and described as being in constant flux between the tribe and the masses (Goulding 2003). Perhaps a good metaphor for a consumer tribe has been made by Cova and Cova (2002). They draw on an example of quantum physics and suggest they are hard to measure because they pop in and out of existence; fuzzy, and "*more of a societal sparkle than a socio-economic certainty*" (p.11).

This introduction leads to an important realization. Namely, retro consumption behaviours should not be seen as solely individual acts but perceived in a group setting. They possess their own subcultural capital, which surfaces as buying, creating, owning and wearing appropriate clothes and accessories or possessing knowledge of the tribe and its rituals (Goulding 2003). Numerous examples prove that retro consumption forms tribal gatherings such as the mythical Mountain Men (Belk and Costa 1998), photography with retro L.O.M.O. cameras aka. Lomography (Cova and Cova 2002), retro style and

fashion enthusiasts (Goulding 2002, 2003), Burning Man Festival members (Kozinets 2002) or classic car collectors (Leigh, Peters and Shelton 2006).

As Goulding (2002, 2003) states, the shared consumption of retro and nostalgic goods not only bridges the gap between individuals, validates their sense of identity, but also helps create neo-tribes. Members exist in a sphere that provides an environment linking them to other people sharing the same values. A retro-focused neo-tribe should be based on something that would allow its members to create ties, shared experiences and alternative communities. For example, nostalgia can be a shared experience becoming the foundation of group solidarity and membership with a great and lasting appeal to its members (Goulding 2002).

However, this should not conclude that retro and nostalgia will always unconditionally lead to socialisation and tribalization. For some consumers, retro and the nostalgic reaction might cause an urge to escape the 'watchful eye' of other people and embrace solitude (Goulding 2001).

2.3.6 Retro and gender

Retro consumption might be used to question current gender roles. For some consumers, men were more 'masculine' in the past while women were more 'feminine'. Research observed that respondents did not see these gender roles as patriarchal, with both genders recalling the concept of a strong woman (Goulding 2002).

These ideas are put into motion by the use of retro styles and fashion types which become means of expressing sexuality. Women, for example, want to make themselves more masculine, and by, e.g., wearing Marlene Deitrich-like suits and trench coats are playing with the notion of masculinity and femininity.

Men also participate in this by paying attention to style, type of clothing, or their authenticity, whether it is the perfectly tailored suit from the 1940s or a "Mod" with their particular style and dress code. As for adopting a specific retro genre, a lot depends on that period's representation in the media. Popular culture is the road sign helping consumers construct new types of bodily and fashion representations (Goulding 2003).

Not all retro occurrences are images of men and women worshipped as glamorous. Instead of the usual idealisation and celebration of retro employed to tackle discontinuity issues when faced with a dissatisfying present (Davis 1979), a different approach can be taken to disrupt the usual nostalgic continuity. Here retro is a form of grotesque, which makes one more grounded and appreciative of the present (Blanchette 2014). Blanchette (2014) illustrated this case which focused on the neo-burlesque community. Its members, with identities and appearances far from broadly accepted norms, used neo-burlesque performances not to dwell and escape into the past but rather to oppose the idealisation process, enabling them to accept themselves the way they are and enjoy the present.

There is also a gendered dimension to retrogaming which needs to be addressed. Gaming design has been accused of reinforcing heteronormative masculinity (Chess et al. 2017) with the main criticism directed at the assumption that the video gaming audience includes only predominantly white, straight and cisgender males (Cassel and Jenkins 1998). Research shows that women have been systematically marginalized in video gaming culture (Paaßen et al. 2016) – during gameplay (Kaye & Pennington 2016), in media gamer identity debates (Ivory 2009), and in gaming product marketing (Chess et al. 2017).

Retrogaming is not different in this regard as it stems directly from and is a part of the broader gaming community. As a result, the researcher witnessed a predominantly male composition during attended retrogaming events and conventions, which is an echo of the described heteronormative approach towards gaming. Retrogaming represents a phenomenon where the criticised assumptions mentioned above still resonate to this day.

2.3.7 Focusing the research

So far, this chapter has provided an overview of retro consumption and presented areas from which retro can emerge. It was undoubtedly necessary to form a better understanding of retro consumption, its theoretical background and its significance. The process of gaining that understanding, involving looking at different studies, revealed differing themes informing the source of retro consumption. This might result from the fact that retro can be perceived and

consumed from a multitude of perspectives depending on the product type, consumption place, self-image concerns of the consumer or the pursuit of product authenticity. Moreover, as Goulding's (2001, 2002) studies show, there are also differences stemming from varying consumer ages. Additionally, research on nostalgia, a considerable source of retro consumption, suggests that such differences can indeed exist due to the directness of the nostalgic experience (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1996; Stern 1992).

For these reasons, a researcher conducting CCT research on retro marketing should approach the study with as few preconceptions coming from previous studies as possible and revert to methodological approaches, which will ensure that the gathered data will be as rich and unbiased as these presumptions. It should also consider the age differences between consumers and how age might diversify their responses.

There remains the question of choosing retro gaming as a retro product which will best contribute to the conceptualization and practice of retro marketing in the future.

As the review of retro-related literature demonstrated, existing retro studies on consumption temporally focused mainly on a more distant past, with retro products from the 1970s being the most recent (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 An outline of existing classifications of nostalgia

Author(s)	Focus of study	Product's/servicescape's /subculture's nature era of origin
Goulding (2001)	<u>Retroscape</u> - contemporary British "living" museum resembling a village; experiences and meanings of retro consumption	18 th century
Goulding (2002)	<u>Goods</u> - Objects of consumption: furniture, cars, ornaments, posters, pictures, scooters; experiences and meanings of retro consumption	Ranging from the 1930s to the 1960s

Goulding (2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – retro shops; retro fashion and questions of authenticity, experiences, gender and community; meanings of retro	The 1950s, 60s and 70s
Crewe, Gregson and Brookes (2003)	<u>Retro retailers</u> – clothing and memorabilia; alternative and mainstream facets of retro; importance of authenticity	Lack of exact timeframe – the 1950s, 60s and 70s assumed from interview abstracts
Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003)	<u>Brands</u> - Netnographic analysis – Volkswagen New Beetle and Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace; Conceptualization of retro marketing and managerial implications	New Beetle – 2000s – drawing from 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s original. Star Wars: Episode I – 1999 – drawing from 1970s original
Kozinets (2002; 2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – ‘Burning Man Festival’ relationship between consumer resistance and capitalist ideologies; primitive retroscape	Lack of exact timeframe – references to primitive times
Sherry (2003)	<u>Retroscapes</u> – (1) ‘ESPN Zone’ sports bar; consumers as ‘dwellers’; (2) ‘Burning Man Festival’ relationship between consumer resistance and capitalist ideologies; primitive retroscape	(1) 2000s (2) Lack of exact timeframe – references to primitive times
Patterson and Brown (2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – traditional Irish pub; questions of authenticity	Celtic revival of the late 19 th century
Belk (2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – ‘The SIMS’ video game seen as a dollhouse retroscape	The SIMS – 2000 Dollhouse – end of the 18 th century
Troester (2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – Historyland theme park; indigenous culture of Native Americans and the myth of the ‘Lumber Jack’	End of the 19 th and beginning of the 20 th century

Shau (2003)	<u>Retroscape</u> – Huntington Beach; retro marketing a resort	1960s
Hetzel (2003)	<u>Retroscape/service</u> – Contemporary Haute Cuisine in France; Retro consumer Experience	Renaissance
Venkatesh (2003)	<u>Retroscape/product</u> - The webpage catalogue seen as a postmodern equivalent of a printed catalogue	1940s-70s
Leigh, Peters and Shelton (2006)	<u>Product/Subculture</u> – retro car owners across North America; the question of authenticity and its multiplicity of meanings	1960s and 70s
Blanchette (2014)	<u>Subculture</u> - Ethnographic analysis of neo-burlesque shows; role in self-acceptance and gender representations	Victorian era and 1930s-50s
Hartman et al. (2019)	<u>Retro branding strategies</u> – retroversion and retrovention	Late XIX / Early XX century German brands

Firstly, looking at the eras of origin of studied retro goods and servicescapes creates a temporal and, at the same time, theoretical gap in retro research concerning the ‘why?’ for the consumption of ‘younger’ retro products. Retrogaming is a notable and current example of such consumption. Video games span from the late 1970s as far as the 2000s, which is unprecedented for goods considered retro (Retrogamer.net 2016; Suominen 2012). There were other products and services coming from the gap time period considered for this research, such as ‘youngtimer’ cars and the other 80s fashion goods. After an initial internet search, they were, however, rejected. That was due to their retro consumption still being in the process of forming, or the consumers’ understanding of the ‘retro-ness’ of these products was still vague. Moreover, the researcher realized that due to the scarce nature of the consumption of these

products, there could be potential difficulties in reaching and acquiring study participants.

Secondly, apart from the visible 'newness' of retrogaming as a part of the consumer world, there is an interesting facet concerning this product and the postmodern consumer. Namely, its consumption contradicts the assumption that postmodern consumers reacting to their identity crisis are drawn towards glorified retro goods coming from the 'golden modern era' (Franklin 2002; Goulding 2000; Guffey 2006). In terms of retrogaming, this posit seems not to hold ground, as video games and thus retro video games did not originate from the era mentioned above. Therefore, the explanatory conceptualisation of why consumers play retro-video games requires research attention.

Thirdly, previous CCT endeavours related to retro and nostalgic consumption have not focused on digital retro consumption and items and instead looked at aesthetic goods coming from a more distant past. This again makes retrogaming an interesting choice.

As a result of the identification of these gaps and the fact that retrogaming has the potential to address them, the researcher decided to focus his efforts on exploring retro consumption by focusing on that type of retro goods and their enthusiasts. The following section aims to explain what retrogaming is and to review existing literature on this phenomenon.

2.4 Retrogaming explained

As identified in the introduction, this study will focus on exploring the meanings of retrogaming consumption for its consumers and the products that are closely related to retrogaming.

By way of introduction, it is necessary to place retrogaming within its native gaming market. Gaming is the largest sector of entertainment in the UK. In 2018, with a worth of £3.86bn, it officially became more profitable than the video and music sectors combined (BBC 2019). Most recent figures show gaming maintained its commanding position in 2020 with a worth of £4.4bn (GamesIndustry 2021). It is also necessary to note that gaming sales in the UK are dominated mainly by digital sales worth £3.9bn compared to only £689m in physical sales accounting for 17% of the total worth of the market (UKIE 2021).

This represents a substantial shift from 2013, when tangible game sales dominated and represented 54% of overall gaming sales (UKIE 2013).

Retrogaming is a recent occurrence in the world of video gaming. How it is emerging relates to the fact that more consumers are turning towards past gaming experiences, which involve playing and collecting old video games. It might also materialise in modern gaming products utilising old-fashioned graphics, audio or game mechanics (Wulf et al. 2018). Retrogaming is recognised as one of the main movements in video gaming (Newman 2004). The researcher could not find information related to the size or value of not only the UK retrogaming market but any other vintage or retro market globally. This might be because retrogaming a considerable number of retrogaming items are being acquired online via auctions (eBay), classified ads (Gumtree, Shpock), social media (Facebook groups and FB marketplace), events (retrogaming conventions, markets and car boot sales) and charity shops.

The variety of pre-owned channels where retrogaming goods are present, e.g., private sellers, car-boot sales, specialised retrogaming shops, charity shops, makes collecting market and sales data on retrogaming difficult. Another issue contributing to this, identified by the researcher, which could pertain to all retro goods, is the subjectivity of what is considered retro and how fluid that classification is at the same time.

Nevertheless, retrogaming is part of the pre-owned games market. In 2017 the pre-owned games market, of which retrogaming is a part, was worth £101m, shrinking from £126m in 2015. This size reduction is, however, correlated with a reduction in sales of physical copies of games from £904m in 2015 to 790 in 2017 (UKIE 2017; UKIE 2018) and linked with progressing digitalisation and online revenue streams (UKIE 2021). Despite that size reduction, UK retrogaming is active with more events organised, new specialised venues opened and retrogaming items increasing in value (The Guardian 2021, MKFM 2021).

Outside of the UK, retrogaming also meets considerable consumer interest. Nearly 17% of US adults own a retro Nintendo console, with a comparable percentage owning outdated devices made by Sony or Microsoft.

Moreover, the report observes there is a considerable demand for retro games and devices, even amongst consumers who did not have the chance to experience them during their first release, stating that 6% of US 18-24-year-olds own a retro console (Mintel 2016)

The potential to monetise retrogaming has been recognised by developers and publishers, who have started re-releasing original games and updating them to modern devices' standards (Robbins 2015). Another means of bringing past titles back to life is creating modern plug-and-play versions of retro consoles with games preinstalled on the hardware. Nintendo's NES Classic, released in 2016, and SNES Classic in 2017 may serve as relevant and successful examples (Serrels 2018). Another prominent brand has noted the business opportunity lying in these products – SEGA – who launched their Mega Drive Mini in 2018 (Liptak 2018) and the Genesis Mini in 2019 (Forbes 2019). 2019 also saw Sony launching PlayStation Classic and ATARI introducing ATARI Flashback (USA Today Tech 2019).

Another issue is the temporal span concerning retrogaming. When can we talk about a product being retro, and when contemporary?

A commonly agreed starting point for retrogaming goods stretches back to the 1970s with the introduction of the first arcade machines and the era-defining launch of the ATARI 2600 home gaming system (Wong 2017). Regarding the distinction between retro and modern gaming goods, a fascinating aspect of retrogaming is that its temporal span is still fluid. A visit to websites devoted to retrogaming and related events shows that the boundary of retro in the minds of consumers moved from the 1990s towards the 2000s (e.g., Retrogamer.net 2016).

However, retrogaming as a phenomenon is not limited to the act of gaming itself. It can be perceived in a broader cultural context with various consumer products, textiles (e.g. branded t-shirts), accessories (e.g. lamps resembling retro controllers), game-related music videos, literature (e.g. books on retrogaming cover art), works of art (e.g. posters and retrogaming-inspired paintings) and museums (e.g. Centre for Computing History in Cambridge) all associated with it

(Suominen 2012). Retrogaming made it also to the 'silver screen'. 2015 saw the release of "Pixels", where iconic characters from retro games such as Pac-man, Donkey Kong or Space Invaders appeared in central roles. "Rampage", released in 2018, is yet another and more recent example of a Hollywood blockbuster based on a retro video game (Mendelson 2018).

Some newly developed games look like their pixelated forefathers, an example being "Minecraft" (Game-buzz 2015). This retro-looking game is one of the most successful and awarded games of the past few years, including a 2015 BAFTA Video Game Award in the 'Best Family Game' category, which Microsoft bought for \$2.5 billion (Bafta Awards 2015; Cnet 2015).

Other retrogaming enthusiasts go even further and develop new games that either mimic older titles or target the original hardware (Allington 2016), such as 'Tanglewood' released for the original SEGA Mega drive – a console discontinued over 20 years ago in 2018 (BBC 2018).

As for the spatial aspect of retrogaming, it was not until the popularisation of the world wide web in the 1990s that retrogaming changed its shape from a more convention and flea market community to a more fan-based retrogaming website online phenomenon (Heineman 2014).

Retrogamers are an organized group of consumers. They have created a web-based community held together by their appreciation of retro games. Heineman (2014) aptly describes this:

*"Retrogaming is very much a personal hobby that involves participation in a larger community and culture of like-minded aficionados of older games. There are websites with large user bases devoted to particular consoles (e.g. www.nesworld.com, www.sega-16.com), to specific companies (e.g. www.atar-iage.com), and to specific games and franchises (e.g. *Metroid* [www.metroiddatabase.com], *Rez* [www.autofish.net/shrines/rez/]). The activity and content on these sites is varied but includes reviews of older games, game walkthroughs, interviews with designers, downloads of user-created content, fan-made games based on popular characters, game music, desktop wallpapers, and more. Many of these sites also feature message boards where members can*

discuss older games, new releases of older games, emulation, collecting, and the other aspects of retrogaming outlined above.”

(Heineman 2014 p.12)

Although the retrogaming community exists in the virtual sphere, it is not limited to it. In the United Kingdom, for example, retro games enthusiasts gather during large conventions and markets such as London Anime and Gaming Con (London Anime and Gaming Con 2016), EGX Rezzed (EGX 2016), NERG (NERG 2016), Play Expo Manchester (Play Expo Manchester 2016) and Revival Retro Events (Revival 2018).

2.4.1 Retrogaming research

One of the main focuses of video game research was the psychological and developmental effects of this form of entertainment on topics ranging from its effects on violence levels (e.g. Ferguson and Olson 2014; Funk et al. 2004; Saleem, Anderson and Gentile 2012); learning and development (e.g. Gower and McDowall 2012; Hamlen 2011); and neurological benefits (e.g. Franceschini et al. 2013; LeBalnc et al. 2013;).

Video games were also studied from the consumer and cultural perspectives. The main topics here included brand placement and advertising in video games (e.g. Janssens and Herrewijn 2013; Molesworth 2006; van Poels and Szuz-Pop 2014; Reijmersdal et al. 2010;), Consumer gaming behaviour (e.g., Buchanan-Olivier and Seo 2012; Prugsamatz, Lowe and Alpert 2010) and the question of video game loyalty (e.g., Choi and Kim 2004; Lin 2010; Teng 2013).

Some qualitative studies focus on gamers of the older generation, the integration of gaming into their everyday life and some of the social interaction aspects of gaming in the real and virtual worlds (Pearce 2008; Quandt, Grueninger and Wimmer 2009). Results mentioned that ‘baby boomer’ gamers tend to choose titles they already knew or felt nostalgic about (Pearce 2008). These studies, nonetheless, do not straightforwardly relate to retrogaming.

Academic work focusing directly on retrogaming exists in limited numbers. It usually unfolds in the form of essays, with no or limited empirical contributions by the authors and little attempt to explore the retrogaming consumer. Table 2.4 presents a comparison of retrogaming studies.

Table 2.4 An outline of existing retrogaming-related research

Author (year of publication)	Title	Area of research	Type of research
Suominen (2008)	The Past as the Future? Nostalgia and Retrogaming in Digital Culture.	Suggesting reasons for the popularity of retrogaming, such as the ageing gamer and the role of nostalgia in game development.	Empirical – literature review
Heinonen and Reunanen (2009)	Preserving Our Digital Heritage: Experiences from the Pelikonepeijoonit Project	Focusing on the person of a retrogamer, their reflections and personal motivations. The results are, however, quite limited. Mixed method questionnaire study of digital heritage website's visitors. Fifteen responses. Undertook a realistic analysis, so they used gathered data to put together a profile of a typical Finnish collector.	Empirical
Suominen (2011)	Retrogaming Community Memory and	Initial findings from a study tracing history, heritage and	Empirical – netnography

	Discourses of Digital History (work in progress)	retrospection on online forums in order to inform understanding of how consumers reflect on their passion. Final results of the study have not been published yet.	
Suominen (2012)	Mario's legacy and Sonic's heritage: Replays and refunds of console gaming history	How video device manufacturers are using gaming history in the face of the current retro trend	Empirical – literature reviews, magazines, websites and other online sources
Garda (2013)	Nostalgia in Retro Game Design	Distinguishing between two types of nostalgia in retro game design – restorative and reflective.	Empirical – researchers' observations
Suominen and Sivula (2013)	Gaming Legacy? Four Approaches to the Relation between Cultural Heritage and Digital Technology	Relations between game history, cultural heritage and digital technology	Empirical – text analysis
Sloan (2015)	Videogames as Remediated Memories: Commodified Nostalgia and Hyperreality in Far Cry 3: Blood	An empirical exploration of the need for connection with the past achieved through the consumption of remediated memories represented in nostalgic video games on the	Empirical

	Dragon and Gone Home	example of 'Far Cry 3 Blood Dragon' and 'Gone Home'. Titles were selected based on extensive use of the 1980s and 1990s cultural referents analysed by Baudrillard's consumer objects and simulation theories.	
Stuckley et al. (2015)	What retrogamers can teach the museum	Retrogaming examined as a form of digital heritage and the importance of community contributions in creating digital museum collections	Theoretical
Suominen, et al. (2015)	Return in Play: The Emergence of Retrogaming in Finnish Computer Hobbyist and Game Magazines from the 1980s to the 2000s	A historical account of how, starting from the 1980s, the retrogaming phenomenon emerged in Finland	Empirical – text-based
Allington (2016)	Linguistic Capital and Development Capital in a Network of	A study of cultural value and its production within a social network of 'text adventure gamers' seen	Empirical - mixed-method approach

	Cultural Producers: Mutually Valuing Peer Groups in the 'Interactive Fiction' Retrogaming Scene	as a part of the retro video gaming scene.	
Höitnagl (2016)	"Why? Because It's Classic!" Negotiated knowledge and group identity in the retrogaming-community "Project 1999."	An exploration of the <i>preservation of the social architecture</i> as a building block of the retrogaming community on the example of the old MMORPG game – Everquest. Collective memory rooted in nostalgic longing seen as a source for shared identity and communitization in the present.	Empirical – netnography
Choi et al. (2018)	The effect of intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues of digital video games on sales: An empirical investigation	Retrogaming mentioned as one of the intrinsic factors in a study of product quality cues for digital video game sales.	Empirical – quantitative
Suominen et al. 2018	Incorporating curator, collector and player	Exploring the emergence of game cultures heritage and relating it to the	Empirical

	credibilities. Crowdfunding campaign for the Finnish Museum of Games and the creation of game heritage community	process of establishing a game museum. Identification of three credibilities and their connection to the project's success	
Wulf et al. (2018)	Video Games as a Time Machines: Video Game Nostalgia and the Success of Retro Gaming	Conceptual integration of research on nostalgia into video gaming. Emphasizing the importance of nostalgia in explaining contemporary retrogaming trends and highlighting the importance of research on retrogaming and nostalgia in video gaming.	Conceptual
Mora-Cantalops et al. (2021)	Identifying communities and fan practices in online retrogaming forums		Empirical

Some of the studies outlined above focused more on the person of a retrogamer, their reflections and personal motivations. The results are, however, quite limited. Heinonen and Reunanen (2009) presented results of their mixed method questionnaire study of digital heritage website visitors. The 15 responses,

as they stated themselves, did not enable them to undertake a realistic analysis, so they applied gathered data to put together a profile of a typical Finnish collector. As for the personal incentives for collecting uncovered in the study, the authors briefly summed them up:

“The personal motivation for collecting often relates to machines owned in childhood, for example, Commodore computers or Sega consoles. We can explain this nostalgia by the fact that the persons have been in their late childhood or early teens in the eighties, which coincides with the home computer and microprocessor revolution — one could say that they represent the first generation that grew up with electronic toys and computers.”

(Heinonen and Reunanen 2009, pp.59-60)

Suominen’s preliminary research results of a study on traces of history, heritage and retrospection on online forums gave a glimpse into how retro game consumers reflect on their passion. Some of the younger forum members reminisced about playing old games as talking about the “good old days”, even if they do not seem as old to older people (Suominen 2011).

Also, as a recent conceptual article by Wulf et al. (2018) suggests, nostalgia might be but one of the explanations for the success of retro gaming. As gaming, from being considered a children’s past time, developed into a significant part of today’s culture (Berger 2017), it becomes necessary and justifiable to investigate gaming from the perspective of retro consumption. This can broaden understanding of the areas the retro phenomenon emerges from.

In addition, their study also emphasises the unknown role of the actual physical retro gaming objects in nostalgic and retro consumption and the elicitation of nostalgia (Wulf et al. 2018).

Familiarising oneself with the previously outlined articles brings to mind the validity and importance of looking at retro gaming from a managerial perspective. In an attempt to explore which quality cues might affect video game sales, Choi et al. (2018) used the retro features of modern games. Their study has proven that a positive relationship exists between retro aspects of modern

games and their sales. Their findings suggest that introducing retro cues in gaming products could be a gainful proposition for businesses. Since an impact of retro on sales in the sizable gaming industry does exist, it becomes warranted to pursue retro gaming as an avenue of academic research in an attempt to better understand its underlying mechanisms.

2.5 Summary and Research Focus

The previous two sections unveil that there are considerable gaps in knowledge when it comes to understanding the consumption of more modern and electronic retro goods. There are questions related to the meanings of retro gaming consumption and the role the physical aspect of these objects plays in the elicitation of a preference for retro video gaming (Wulf et al. 2018).

This critical review shows that the scope of known retro gaming consumer research is relatively narrow and requires further academic inquiry. The application of a phenomenological approach in exploring these gaps is thus warranted.

The broad age spectrum of people playing video games (ESA 2015; UKIE 2014) introduces the opportunity to conduct a comparative generational study to explore these gaps in understanding the consumption meanings of retro gaming. This opportunity was confirmed when the researcher explored retro gaming and gaming events before data collection commenced.

Another observation stemming from event participation, visiting online forums and social media sites, was that men largely dominated retro video gaming. After much thought, the researcher decided to focus solely on male retro gamers as acquiring female retro gaming enthusiasts would be extremely difficult. It is worth clarifying that modern-day gaming is essentially equally split between male and female gamers when it comes to modern gaming (UKIE2020). This is, however, not the case for retro gamers who are predominantly male. The researcher's visits to retro gaming events prior to data collection and joining online forums could be proof of that.

Reflecting on the studies highlighting consumption meanings and consumer age, 'Millennials' nostalgia encapsulating distant and more recent timeframes and the influences of technology and digitalisation on 'Millennials'

nostalgic consumption, a generational comparison becomes academically valid and intriguing. Therefore, this research will focus on two main generations of consumers, 'Generation X' born between 1961 and 1980 and 'Millennials' from the 1980 – 2000 time interval (Gurau 2012; Young and Hinesly 2012). This comparison can potentially generate interesting insights into the differences in meanings of retrogaming between these two generations.

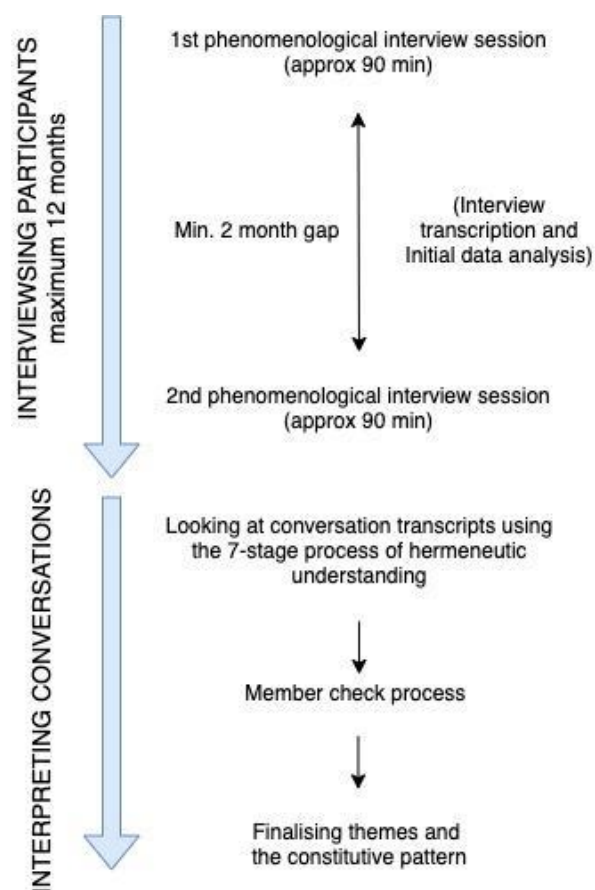
Chapter 3: Methodology

Selecting an appropriate methodological approach(es) is an important decision which should be informed by the nature of the research question(s) posed by the researcher. This chapter details the selected methodologies and methods applied to this doctoral research study.

The limited empirical research on retro consumption suggested that the researcher applies a qualitative research design to explore the meanings emerging from this form of consumption in the context of retrogaming.

The methodological approach taken in this study was qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology (HP). Figure 3.1 outlines the HP method of this doctoral study.

Figure 3.1 An outline of the research design



The study focused on male consumers' retrogaming experiences and the meanings this evokes for them. The approach the researcher decided to apply a qualitative methodological approach referred to as hermeneutical

phenomenology. This approach involves in-depth interviews, and for the purpose of this research, each participant was interviewed over the course of two sessions, followed by a member check process. Member checking is known in qualitative studies to test the originating themes' accuracy and validity (Brit et al. 2016; Lincoln and Guba 1985). It is also known for its fit with phenomenological hermeneutical studies (Doyle 2007).

3.1 Retrogamers and phenomenology

“[...] phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning. The reward phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or "in-seeing" into "the heart of things" [...]"

(van Manen 2007, p.12)

This stage of the doctoral study focuses on uncovering the experiences of retrogaming consumption of “Generation X” and “Millennial” men. As the literature review has shown, empirical knowledge concerning the meanings of retro consumption is limited. Phenomenology was considered the most suitable methodology for this research as its primary focus lies in uncovering the meaning of human experiences (Figal 2012), which goes hand in hand exploratory nature of the study and the posed research questions:

- 1) *Why do ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men play retro video games?*
- 2) *What does this retrogaming behaviour signify about the meanings of retro consumption practices of ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men?*
- 3) *What are the implications of this retrogaming behaviour for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future?*

There exist different approaches towards phenomenology. According to some, phenomenology should be descriptive where the phenomenon is examined from an objective stance (Moustakas 1994). Others favour a more interpretive approach where the experiences should be explored in a subjective

light (Smith et al. 2009). Because of the subjective nature of qualitative consumer research and this doctoral research's exploratory characteristics, the researcher decided to apply an approach focusing on exploring humans' subjective experiences. The selected methodological approach for this study was Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology.

3.2 Approaches towards phenomenology in consumer research.

Phenomenology, popularised by Husserl (2001) and Heidegger (1962), evolved past its philosophical roots to become a valid methodological approach in social sciences. It has been applied in fields such as education (Dall'Alba 2009), psychology (Gurwitsch and Fred 2009), nursing (De Chesnay and Bottorff 2015) and health care (Chan et al. 2010).

Phenomenology as a philosophy and a methodology has also been applied in consumer studies to aid understanding of complicated issues that could not be easily comprehended via 'surface' responses (Goulding 2005). This includes consumer and Consumer Culture Theory studies such as gendered consumption meanings and the 'juggling lifestyle' (Thompson 1996); uses, meanings and appropriations of consumer fashion discourses (Thompson and Haytko 1997); analysing consumer self-conceptions, body images, and self-care practices (Thompson and Hirschman 1995; Kuuru and Närvänen 2019); meanings of collaborative consumption (Barbosa and Fonesca 2019); the meaning of self-gift giving (Mick and Demoss 1990); meanings of vicarious nostalgia in aesthetic consumption (Goulding 2002); and an analysis of rave culture (Goulding et al. 2002).

First calls for the application of this methodology in marketing appeared in the mid-1980s (Kent 1986). However, the phenomenological movement in marketing did not gain momentum until Thompson's et al. (1989) paper urging researchers to "*put consumer experience back into consumer research*" (p.133) did.

The relevance of hermeneutic interpretation in marketing is substantial. Its exploratory-oriented research "*addressing the meaning-based dimensions of consumption behaviour*" (Thompson 1997, p.439) can generate important

insights into how consumers identify and relate products to themselves (Thompson 1997).

Phenomenology as a methodology and philosophy are inseparably linked (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013), and the research studies outlined above provide examples of phenomenology in research practice. However, it is essential to remember that phenomenology should not be treated simply as a set of tools for collecting, analysing and, depending on the phenomenological approach taken, interpreting. Phenomenology is correspondingly a philosophy with intellectual underpinnings that need to be well understood in order for the method to be carried out correctly (Goulding 1999a). These philosophical foundations will now be examined.

3.3 Contextualising phenomenology

The term phenomenology has its roots in the Greek word *phenomenon*, which means 'appearance' or 'that which shows itself' (Spinelli 2005). Although the birth of phenomenology as a philosophical tradition is linked with the work of Husserl, phenomenology as a philosophical concept builds on the thought of Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and appears in the works of other famous thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Franz Brentano (1838-1917) (van Manen 2014).

In the early twentieth century, phenomenology emerged as a new philosophical inquiry approach (Paley 2016). The two leading distinguishable schools of thought in phenomenology originate from the works of Husserl, with his transcendental phenomenology and his earlier student, Heidegger, representing hermeneutic phenomenology (Sloan and Bowe 2014).

With time phenomenology evolved into a variety of stands and traditions represented by names such as Jean-Paul Sartre (existential phenomenology), Maurice Merlau-Ponty (embodiment phenomenology), Paul Ricoeur (critical phenomenology), Alfred Schutz (sociological phenomenology) or Hubert Dreyfus (learning phenomenology) to name only a few (Miles et al. 2013; van Manen 2014).

In a broad sense, phenomenology can be understood as an exploration of human experience (Polinghorne 1989). Attempting to provide a complete definition of phenomenology might prove to be somewhat confusing and challenging, mainly due to different philosophical stances taken by the early 20th century influencers in phenomenology (Packer 2011). The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy defines phenomenology as:

“[...] initially as the study of structures of experience, or consciousness. Literally, phenomenology is the study of “phenomena”: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience.”

(Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2016)

Focusing on the first word of this definition – ‘initially’ – can rightly hint that the debate as to what constitutes phenomenology exists to this day to the extent that the presented citation would be arguable by supporters of Heidegger (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2016).

This definitional difficulty only supports the fact that phenomenology is far from achieving a unified front (la Vasseur 2003). For this reason, the researcher believes that it is necessary to present not only the chosen Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology for this research but also highlight the conceptual and historical significance of the Husserlian descriptive transcendental phenomenology.

3.4 Transcendental phenomenology – Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a trained mathematician who gradually became drawn towards philosophy. The question which led him throughout his life as a philosopher focused on the subjectivity of knowing and the objectivity of the known content (Packer 2011). Thus, Husserl was consumed by studying human experience and favoured looking for the objective ‘essence’ of human experiences (Taylor 2017). Inspired by the work of his friend, Brentano, Husserl

adopted his idea of descriptive psychology and introduced a series of innovations, amongst which the most essential is the concept of the pre-given lifeworld (*Liebenswelt*), natural attitude and the procedures of epoché, and transcendental phenomenological reduction (Moran 2012).

Husserl introduced the term lifeworld, which depicts the world of lived experiences of individuals. Lifeworld is experienced without reflection and involves the immediate and pre-reflective consciousness of day-to-day life (Dowling 2007). Husserl attempts to access that experiential sphere in order to understand the essence of a phenomenon before any explanations of it have been made (Moran 2000). However, the 'natural attitude' is the main obstacle to reaching the essences. It is the sphere where we hold judgements and presuppose, which conceals the dimensions where the pre-reflective or "*taken for granted*" meaning resides (Husserl 2001)

According to Husserl, it is possible to 'bracket' that obstacle out of the way. A state in which these lived experiences would be accessible to the investigator, Husserl referred to as the Epoché (Husserl 2001). The literal meaning of this Greek word is "to suspend judgement" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2017). In the Epoché, judgements and everyday understandings are set aside so that phenomena can be revisited with naivety and purity. In order to arrive at that state, one has to undergo a process of phenomenological reduction where all judgements about the phenomenon in question are being suspended (Moustakas 1994).

The ultimate goal of transcendental phenomenology is to observe the phenomenon in as pure form as possible. The process of phenomenological reduction aims to facilitate an objective description of the experience by 'bracketing' investigators subjective interpretations residing in the natural attitude (Crowell 2006). In other words:

"[...] it requires that descriptions of experience be sought as it occurred before reflection."

(Caelli 2000, p. 369)

According to Husserl, by following the technique that he has proposed, we can get closer to exploring 'the essence' of experience. However, subsequent philosophers, with Heidegger being the most prominent, did not receive phenomenological reduction warmly and found it superfluous and unachievable. Husserl's concept effectively split the phenomenological movement, with followers of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology being in the minority (Luft 2012). It is still debated whether it is possible to perceive a phenomenon from a suspended judgement perspective (Goulding 1999a).

Although his legacy popularised the philosophical movement of phenomenology, every development in that field rejected much of his thinking. Today, contemporary phenomenology perceives Husserlian phenomenology mainly through the prism of a historical and necessary to mention predecessor (Crowell 2006).

3.5 Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology

The story of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a student of Husserl, is that of one who parted ways with his tutor's manner of thinking to further his own perception of phenomenology (Dahlstrom 2012). His approach questioned the possibility of knowledge existing outside of an interpretive stance, that being a background of the living world encompassing all relationships, people, objects and language (Smith et al. 2009).

Contrary to what Husserl was advocating, Heidegger emphasised interpretation. The fundamental difference in his existential phenomenology, rooted in the hermeneutic tradition, is the realisation that description is impossible without interpretation and that it is unattainable for the researcher to fully 'bracket' her or his presuppositions from the essence identification process (Sloan and Bowe 2014). Therefore, the goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is not to provide an objective account of a phenomenon but a subjective union of the experiences of people with the experiences of the researcher informing his interpretations (Moran 2000).

It could be said that Heidegger's revolution in phenomenology began with publishing his seminal work "Being and Time" (Sein und Zeit) which he started by posing the ontological question "what does it mean to be?" (Heidegger 1962).

One of the outcomes of his analysis was that humans are not simply 'being' but being-in-the-world. By introducing this mode of being, he termed 'Dasein'. He wanted to signify that humans are not only always engaged with the world and the totality of its entities, but they are also able to be aware of 'being', including their own 'being'. For that purpose, Heidegger distinguished between 'being' regarding humans and other entities. Because of the awareness of being that humans possess, they 'exist'. Other entities not holding that awareness simply 'are' (Heidegger 1962).

The following section will explain how humans' being-in-the-world interact with the living world. Grasping this notion serves as the first stepping stone towards understanding hermeneutic phenomenology.

3.5.1 Being-in-the-world / Dasein

As mentioned before, human existence and the surrounding world are strongly interconnected with all its entities and relationships. What this signifies about being-in-the-world is that humans are constantly engaged with other entities, and a fundamental way they approach those entities is by understanding (Heidegger 1962). Drawing on the division outlined above, the researcher will first focus on the being-in-the-world towards animate and inanimate entities, which are not 'Dasein'.

According to Heidegger, we understand a particular entity in relation to other things. In other words, understanding is shaped based on a wider system of references with other entities, which should be referred to as systems of meaningfulness (Heidegger 1962; Sembera 2007). The example of board chalk illustrates this concept well:

"How do I understand what chalk is? For Heidegger, I understand the chalk with reference to the act of writing on a blackboard (for example). The chalk as a whole

and as such simply is the sum total of purposes for which it can be used. The blackboard, in turn, is understood with reference to the wider system of references involved in the classroom; The classroom is understood with reference to the educational institution in which it is found, be it school, college, or university. [...] In short: we understand particular entities such as the chalk and the blackboard with reference to the interlocking and nested systems of meaningfulness."

(Sembera 2007. p.37)

If a prehistoric man or woman were to be found in a block of ice and unfrozen today, they would have trouble understanding what a toilet seat is. For them, it could be used as a source of drinking water or a bizarrely designed place to sit. These two examples show that the understanding of animate and inanimate entities should be regarded in relation to their functionality ('in-order-to' or 'Umzu') and the work to be produced by them ('towards-which' or 'Wozu') (Heidegger 1962).

Other people, and by that one should understand other Dasein entities, are understood differently than entities that simply 'are'. In that scenario, people are seen as other Dasein, and a relationship between the two entities is formed, referred to as 'being-with' (Heidegger 1962).

'Being-with' does, however, have an impact on our being-in-the-world. Heidegger postulated that we are thrown into the world when we are born and faced with a world with a particular social environment governed by rigid rules. In his opinion, individuals are focused on obeying and comparing themselves against this social and cultural strata and, in effect, conforming with what others expect, which in this sense are referred to as 'das Man' ('the they'). Such a life is lived inauthentically (Uneigentlichkeit). However, Dasein can reach that state of authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) and grasp its full life potential when it is 'being-towards-death' – that is, recognising the fact of its mortality and the unavoidably approaching end of existence (Couzens Hoy 2006; Heidegger 1962).

What the researcher took out of learning about the concept of 'being-in-the-world' is not only a better understanding of how humans understand things. It made clear that an important element in understanding the phenomenon of retrogaming might be how retro gamers are 'being-with' others and with 'das Man'. It also made the researcher realise how these notions relate to and are reflected in Consumer Culture Theory studies, which similarly focused on uncovering how consumers understand their consumption and how it pertains to others.

3.5.2 Time and Temporality

According to Heidegger, time plays a crucial role in humans' being-in-the-world. He argued that the past, present and future are interconnected and that interpretation cannot occur unless grounded in time (Heidegger 1962). This joining of the three dimensions of time he called temporality. Experiencing temporality means that "[...] what is experienced in the present is coherent with what was experienced in the past and is expected to be experienced in the future, such that awareness of them is as one, in the present" (Mackey 2005, p.183). Therefore, time for Dasein forms a three-dimensional structure where past, present and future unite. Future is seen here as reaching out to possibilities of one's existence, informed by past experiences, in order for Dasein to cope with the present (Lewis 2017). Because of that, Heidegger claimed that temporality is key to all understanding (Heidegger 1962).

The researcher perceived the importance of the temporal dimension of phenomenology as paramount concerning the topic of retro consumption. This is because this study will look at past experiences' role in participants' lives and how they inform their present consumer experiences and projections for the future.

3.5.3 From 'ready-to-hand' to 'present-at-hand'

Humans are not a mind or a 'self'. They are entities that are 'being-in-the-world' (Dasein); that is, constantly engaged in relationships with the world and the totality of its entities (Packer 2011). Looking at these relationships, Heidegger presented an important analysis of how humans understand and interpret.

There are moments when individuals are so immersed or familiar with a task they are undertaking that some aspects of the entities they are dealing with become 'transparent':

"[...] in such dealings an entity of this kind is not grasped thematically as an occurring Thing, nor is the equipment-structure known as such even in the using."

(Heidegger 1962, p. 98)

Heidegger referred to this state as 'ready-to-hand' mode of engagement. An excellent example of this is when one uses a hammer to build a shed. Immersed in that activity, the hammer becomes 'transparent', and one is only aware of the necessity to keep the nail straight and the boards in line or perhaps even on finishing the task of building the shed. Lost in the activity, the tool is invisible and the world an invisible background. Here, understanding is tacit and unreflective.

There are, however, moments when the entity (object) humans are in a relationship with becomes evident. That can occur when something is broken, missing, or a mistake is made, arising certain aspects of the world-person-tool relationship (Packer 2011). Suddenly the 'invisible' tool leaves the ready-to-hand sphere and becomes "*conspicuous*" (Heidegger 1962 p.102), presenting the tool with a "*certain unreadiness-to-hand*" (Heidegger 1962 p.103) and effectively making it something which is merely "*present-at-hand*" (Heidegger 1962 p.103). The breakdown process described here lies at the heart of uncovering the taken-for-granted meaning of entities and can be understood as a hermeneutic circle. The way the entity has been used and understood is being gazed upon, articulated and interpreted (Packer 2011).

In the case of this doctoral research, these moments of breakdown will occur when the researcher, while revisiting the accounts of experiences related to retrogaming, encounters something that stands out, is exciting or not understood. The importance of highlighting the above concepts is essential for comprehending Heidegger's approach towards understanding.

3.5.4 The hermeneutic circle of understanding

Human beings are placed in the world temporally. It should not be surprising that understanding and interpretation are always a historically charged process (Lavery 2003), based on a set of 'fore-structures' of that human being's assumptions and interests (Packer 2011). What this signifies is that interpretation is never supposition-less.

The fore-structure of interpretation consists of 3 elements of understanding:

"Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon 'fore-having', 'fore-sight, and 'fore-conception'. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us".

(Heidegger 1962, pp.191-192)

'Fore-having' is something 'we have in advance' (Heidegger 1962). This should be seen as a prior understanding of a situation resulting from one's experiences. 'Fore-sight', 'what we see in advance', refers to the perspective from which one initially grasps whatever one is dealing with (Heidegger 1962; Packer 2011). Lastly, 'fore-conception' or 'something we grasp in advance' is how interpretation will conceive whatever we are dealing with (Heidegger 1962).

Applying such structure to this research would mean that the researcher has to be aware of his familiarity with the topic of retro consumption, experiences

with games and as a marketing researcher. Therefore findings will be anticipated from the point of view of the stances mentioned above.

However, if related to the 'breakdown' scenario presented in the previous section, one arrives at a starting point of the 'hermeneutic circle of understanding'. Suppose one expects someone to cringe after tasting a lemon, and he or she does not. In that case, it creates a discrepancy between the expectation and the seen outcome (the 'breakdown'), and one enters the 'hermeneutic circle of understanding', which makes him or her reconsider the former (Wilson 2012).

The hermeneutic circle of understanding focuses on a constant interpretation, where understanding the whole requires relating to the parts and respectively, understanding the parts requires referencing them to the whole of what one is investigating. (Kafle 2011)

This 'lemon' illustration of the hermeneutic circle of understanding gives an initial and simplified glimpse of the process. However, as indicated in Table 3.1, this hermeneutic circle also involves more complex relationships (Smith et al. 2009):

Table 3.1 Examples of types of possible hermeneutic relationships

The part	The whole
The single word	The sentence in which this word is embedded
The single extract	The complete text
The interview	The research project
The single episode	The complete life

(adapted from Smith et al. 2009, p.28)

This concept provides the foundation for the later analytical approach to undertaking phenomenological research. It is also present in the analytical process selected for this doctoral study - Diekelmann's 7-stage analytical process of hermeneutic understanding (see Table 3.7 in section 3.10).

3.6 Selecting participants

Sampling strategies chosen here were almost identical to the ones selected for interviewing retrogaming experts and were a part of the purposive approach.

Purposeful sampling is not homogenous (see Table 3.2), and as Patton (2002) outlined, there exist various strategies of “*purposefully selecting information rich cases*” (p.230).

Table 3.2 Purposeful sampling strategies. Selected approaches are highlighted in bold and underlined.

Type of purposeful sampling	Purpose
1. Extreme or deviant case	Gaining knowledge from unusual cases in which the studied phenomenon is present
2. Intensity sampling	Information-rich cases – intense examples of the phenomenon. Not extreme.
<u>3. Maximum variation</u>	<u>Selecting a wider range of cases and identifying common patterns, key experiences and shared aspects</u>
4. Homogenous	Focused, reduced variation of cases
5. Typical case	Emphasize the ‘average’ and ‘normal’
6. Critical case	Choosing a critical case which offers most significant impact on the knowledge of the studied phenomenon
<u>7. Snowball</u>	<u>Reaching participants thanks to existing participants who know other information-rich cases</u>
<u>8. Criterion</u>	<u>Selecting an inclusion criterion by which participants are recruited</u>
9. Theory-based/operational construct/ theoretical	Devising a theoretical construct and looking for its real-world manifestations

10. Confirming and disconfirming	Refining and expanding the analysis. Looking for irregularities
<u>11. Stratified purposeful</u>	<u>Focusing on subgroups and comparisons</u>
12. Opportunistic/emergent	Pursuing new 'avenues of thought' during fieldwork based on opportunity and data leads
13. Purposeful random	Randomly selecting cases from a too large in size sample of information-rich cases
14. Sampling politically important cases	Designing the study to make it as attractive to the potential public as possible.
15. Convenience	Least effort. Approaching participants who are the easiest to reach.
<u>16. Combination or mixed purposeful sampling</u>	<u>Using several purposeful sampling strategies to achieve flexibility and recruit information-rich cases</u>

(adapted from Patton 2002, pp. 243-244)

The researcher applied several strategies from the above summary (16). As suggested by Patton, "*the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth*" (2002, p. 230). That is why the imperative when considering sampling for this research was to ensure that the participants have experiences relevant to the nature of the explored phenomenon – retrogaming consumption. Here, the researcher employed a criterion strategy (8). As the researcher recruited from two generations (Generation X and Millennials), a stratified approach (11) was also employed. Another strategy applied to sampling was the snowball (7) approach. Existing study participants were asked whether they would be interested in informing other retrogamers they knew about the study.

As highlighted in the literature review, the gaming community was characterised by a gendered dimension, which can be best described as promoting heteronormative masculinity (Chess et al 2017). Females are marginalised in gaming – although currently the gender ratio amongst video

gamers is getting close to 50/50 (ISFE 2021), women are very scarcely active retrogaming community members.

The researcher's participation in retrogaming events and spending time on retrogaming social media and forum pages confirmed that retro video gaming is a form of predominantly male consumption. It was recognised that attempting to recruit women retrogamers might be extremely difficult.

For that reason, after a discussion with the supervisory team, the researcher decided to focus his efforts solely on exploring the meanings of retro video gaming for males.

Because of the possible differences in responses to retro consumption by consumers of different ages, as suggested in Goulding's research on nostalgic consumption (2001; 2002), it was decided to distinguish within the sample retrogamers based on the generation they are coming from – 'Generation X' or 'Millennials'. Based on that division, the researcher strived to recruit an even number of retrogamers from both groups. Ideally, the total number of participants would be 20, with half being Generation X and the other half Millennial retro gamers.

The assumed number of participants to take part in the study was 20, which for a phenomenological study is an adequate number (Guetterman 2015), especially when considering that it is allowed and customary for the researcher to work with a number of participants as small as three or four (Creswell 2013).

However, for core reasons, the researcher decided to set the sampling goal at 20 participants. First of all, because the study focused on two different generations of consumers, the researcher wanted to ensure the richness of generated HP data and following insights. Second, the researcher had to be aware of the problem of attrition (Sumner 2006) which could lead to some participants not proceeding with the second interview.

3.7 Recruitment

At this stage of the doctoral study, there were several approaches to recruiting participants. They comprised the following:

- (1) Personal contact during retrogaming events.
- (2) Online forums and social media groups
- (3) Posters in retrogaming shops
- (4) Snowball sampling

(1) Participants were approached during events focusing on retrogaming. Personal contact during events (see Table 3.3 for a list of events attended) proved to be the most successful means of recruiting participants. With event organisers' consent, the researcher was allowed to set up a small stand that exhibited retro consoles acquired by the researcher and posters informing about the PhD doctoral study (appendix 1). People visiting the stand were free to play the provided consoles. Subsequently, they were engaged by the researcher in a casual conversation informing about the research) and invited to participate.

Table 3.3 List of retrogaming events attended for recruitment purposes

Retrogaming event name	Place	Date(s) attended
Euro Gamer Expo	Birmingham	22-25 September 2016
Play Expo Manchester	Manchester	8-9 October 2016
Video Game Market	Doncaster	25 February 2017
London Gaming Market	London	2 April 2017
Revival 2017: The Revivals	Walsall	20-21 May 2017
London Gaming Market	London	23 July 2017

(2) Prior to posting on an online forum or social media group related to retro video gaming, the researcher asked administrators and moderators for permission (appendix 2). Once granted permission, the researcher published an earlier approved advert (appendix 3).

(3) The researcher sought approval from retrogaming shop owners to place posters advertising the research in their establishments. Each approached

shop owner received a letter (appendix 4) explaining the purpose of the research. Once a shop owner expressed his approval to advertise in the shop, several posters (appendix 1) were delivered and put up in the stores.

(4) Concerning snowball sampling, existing recruited participants were asked whether they could recommend other people they know that would be suitable as participants. If participants agreed to take up the gatekeeper role, they received a letter (appendix 5) they could pass on to potential participants with an enclosed participant information sheet.š

Before commencing interviewing, it was essential to provide participants with enough information about the purpose of the study and gain consent (Sanjari et al., 2014). Each potential participant received written information in the form of a participant information sheet (appendix 6) and a consent form (appendix 7). Before the interview, they were asked whether there were any questions he would like to ask concerning the nature of the research. Participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any point in the process without giving a reason.

3.8 Who were the participants? – retrogaming interviews

A total of 16 retrogamers took part in this doctoral study. Seven were representatives of 'Generation X', and 9 were representatives of 'Millennials' (see Table 3.4). All 16 participants proceeded with the second interview.

Table 3.4 List of participants interviewed for this doctoral research

Alias	Age	Generation
T	44	Generation X
BR	46	Generation X
SX	42	Generation X
S	41	Generation X
DV	45	Generation X
BE	41	Generation X
DR	40	Generation X

M	35	Millennial
PU	34	Millennial
DK	Mid-20s	Millennial
N	Mid-20s	Millennial
PT	Early 30s	Millennial
DY	Early 30s	Millennial
G	Early 20s	Millennial
K	33	Millennial
BO	Mid 20s	Millennial

Most participants came from the South of England and Midlands, except for one participant based in Scotland. Interviews took place in participants' homes and public areas such as cafes or hotel lobbies. A detailed profile of participants, interview dates and lengths and their setting has been listed in table 3.5 for context to portray a more individual 'image' of conversations and improve overall understanding.

Table 3.5 Participant profiles and interview settings

Name	Profile and notes on the interview	Interview dates and lengths	Interview settings
PU	Data analyst. Quite reserved at first, PU quickly shared information about himself and his family in much detail before talking about retrogaming. As a retrogamer, he was curious about the past and felt a need to connect with it.	09/04/2017 – 121min 28/05/2017 – 128min	PU's house. Very clean living room with no signs of his retrogaming items. He had a dedicated room where he kept them. They were all partially packed up in boxes as the room was being prepared for his soon-to-be-born daughter.
T	Unemployed. Living in a studio flat, T did not have much space. As a result, his apartment was filled with games. He complained about the lack of space. He did not have a problem playing retro games adapted to modern devices. He would have preferred to play them more on the original ones, given additional space.	22/04/2017 – 149min 01/06/2017 – 112min	T's flat. A studio with many gaming items on shelves and the floor. Many items were laid out on the floor or tucked away inside pouffes. The overall impression was that retrogaming had taken over his living space, with the apartment needing to be arranged.
K	K was a father of three, working night shifts as a warehouse shift supervisor. Given these circumstances, he did not have much time to devote to gaming. These were usually late mornings or early afternoons before picking up kids from school/kinder garden.	02/05/2017 – 119min 01/05/2018 – 88min	K's house. Quite a spacious living room with two walls filled with retrogaming items from floor to ceiling. Some of the most valuable items were displayed on the top shelves.

DK	A postgraduate research student. Between the interviews, DK's approach towards retrogaming has changed. Initially, he collected retro games in digital format and stored them in the cloud. Between interviews, he discovered that his console would be losing official manufacturer's support deeming this digital collecting difficult. That resulted in him switching towards collecting tangible retro games.	04/05/2017 – 100min 17/04/2018 – 117min	The flat he shares with his girlfriend. As his initial stance towards retrogaming was more digital during the first interview, there were few visible signs of his interests. A change took place between interviews. As DK became interested in the tangible format, he displayed his games on a shelf in the living room.
BO	Struggling financially and between jobs. BO wanted to devote more money towards retrogaming but was unable to. A university dropout in game design. Very much interested in the mechanics and quirks of retro games. He admitted having difficulties socialising with others. Retrogaming and retrogaming events helped him to 'break the ice' and deal with his anxieties.	30/05/2017 – 176min 12/05/2018 – 176min	The first interview took place in a flat he shared with his friends. There was a small space in the living room where BO kept his items and enjoyed gaming. Due to financial circumstances, he had to move back with his mother, which was the setting for the second interview. The conversation took place in the living room, where he kept most of his retrogaming items.
BR	An owner of an IT consultancy company. BR built a shed beside his house where he stored and enjoyed his retrogaming items. He has amassed quite a collection as space limitations	31/05/2017 – 88min 13/04/2018 – 77min	Interviews took place in BR's "retro shed". Items were well organised with custom-made shelves, cabinets and LED lighting. He made much effort to create this unique space where he engaged in retrogaming. The shed was

	were not an issue anymore. He created a successful YouTube channel with his son, where they discussed related retrogaming topics together.		also used as a recording studio for the YouTube channel.
S	A professional with a PhD in computer studies working as a consultant for a consumer experience company in the IT industry. He had a son and a second child 'on the way'. Although knowledgeable in the topics related to retrogaming, he only occasionally played them. From time to time, he would bring a part of his retro collection from the attic and enjoy it with his son.	29/07/2017 – 107min 19/03/2018 – 114min	Interviews took place at his house. His living room showed little signs of retrogaming interests and did not have a dedicated space for them. He stored his collection in the attic.
PT	Working at a wine import company as a manager, PT created a retrogaming YT channel as he wanted to share his experiences and lacked people to talk with about his passion. Owner of an extensive collection displayed in a dedicated room. He admitted being a heavy user of cannabis in the past and shifting his focus to retrogaming, and ' <i>obsessing</i> ' about it helped him to tackle the addiction.	22/07/2017 – 99min 08/04/2018 – 106min	PT's house in his retrogaming room. Well organised items with some of them displayed in glass cabinets.

SX	Single professional working for a law firm. He amassed a vast collection spread over many retro systems. Very knowledgeable in retrogaming topics. He enjoyed talking about the social aspects of retrogaming events. He had a firm stance on the characteristics of a retrogamer. Antagonistic towards those joining the community for the 'wrong reasons'.	09/07/2017 – 93min 03/03/2018 – 101min	A pub in a town on the outskirts of northwest London where SX lives.
DY	Social advisor. DY became a dad between interviews. He created regular podcasts on retrogaming with two of his childhood friends. DY found his day-to-day job unfulfilling. With limited free time, retrogaming perfectly fit his lifestyle and was a way of escaping the mundane.	16/08/2017 – 92min 18/04/2018 – 113min	The first interview took place in a café being a part of a retro arcade in Croydon - a place DY frequented during his lunch breaks. The second interview took place in a pub in London.
DR	Gym manager. DR managed to amass quite a collection of exotic retrogaming items (primarily Japanese). An admirer of gaming design and artwork. After moving to London from the Midlands, he lacked space, so he could not keep all of them at home. As it was important for him to maintain his retro collection,	20/08/2017 – 92min 31/03/2018 – 76min	The first interview occurred in a cafe in the Canada Water area of London. The second conversation took place in a pub in central London.

	he rented space at a local storage facility.		
BE	He amassed quite an impressive collection of retrogaming items which filled almost every room of his house. He lived a comfortable life as an IT consultant with his family in Scotland. Apart from retrogaming, he also collected other retro electronic items (LaserDisk) and vinyl.	19/08/2017 – 113min 30/03/2018 – 105min	The first conversation took place in a hotel restaurant in central Birmingham. The second interview took place in BE's house near Dundee. His collection took up ample space in his house and, with a portion of it, placed disorderly around the house.
G	G was a gaming design student. His interest in retrogaming stemmed from finding his father's retro console and games hidden away in a drawer. He appreciated the retrogaming community and how one can receive help and advice.	21/08/2017 – 94min 26/03/2018 – 87min	Both conversations took place in a café in Ipswich.
M	An IT professional. Active on multiple FB groups, creating events and content. As a result, he has been given the role of an administrator on several of these sites. Friends with DV	29/08/2017 – 130min 19/03/2018 – 138min	Both conversations took place in a hotel cafe on the outskirts of Cardiff
DV	CEO of a construction company. He started collecting to complete a set of all the games for a particular system. He barely played them and was focused on	29/08/2017 – 60min 16/03/2018 – 76min	Both conversations took place in a hotel cafe on the outskirts of Cardiff

	completing the collection as soon as possible. He completed his collection between interviews by spending nearly £30,000 on retro games. He then moved on to repeat that for another retro gaming system.		
N	A sociology student working part-time. Not very expressive. The researcher had difficulties forming a rapport with him.	22/01/2018 – 70min 03/06/2018 – 53min	Both conversations took place in cafes in central-west London.

A total of 32 interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis. Interview lengths ranged from 53 minutes to 176 minutes. The average interview lengths were:

- 106 minutes for the 1st set of interviews;
- 104 minutes for the 2nd set of interviews;
- 105 minutes across both sets.

Whenever the researcher interviewed at participants' homes, he abided by university safety measures and informed a next of kin of the time and place of the interview.

3.9 The interview process

A qualitative interview is best described as a conversation with a purpose, with its intent led by the research question(s) (Smith et al. 2009).

In-depth interviewing, in phenomenology, referred to as 'the phenomenological interview' (van Manen 2014), is applied in many phenomenological studies. What is worth mentioning is that this form of interviewing generating participant narratives is apt for being analysed hermeneutically also in the context of consumer studies (Thompson 1997).

Phenomenological interviewing facilitates a conversation where the participant becomes comfortable sharing his or her experiences and life stories concerning the topic (Creswell 2013).

What differentiates this form of interviewing from semi-structured or structured is that the course of the interview is largely participant-led (Bryman 2012). Rather than asking prescribed questions, the interviewer should strive to pose questions which result from the comments made by the participants (Thompson et al. 1989). Depending on the interviewer's judgement, some statements arising during the conversation might be prompted and explored in more depth.

The second approach in phenomenological interviewing is focus groups (Flowers et al. 2001; MacLeod et al. 2002). Here, participants share their experiences in a group setting. The researcher decided against applying this method for several reasons. First, this research was focused on uncovering the retrogaming experiences of individuals. There was reason enough to believe that organising the interviews in a focus group might disrupt the individual aspect of participants' accounts. As Heidegger suggests, experiences are co-constructed based on prior experiences with the world and others (Heidegger 1962; Koch 1995). In that sense, a focus group setting would provide a platform for a co-constructed shared understanding of the phenomenon rather than an individual account. Another issue is that the resulting statements might represent more evaluations and positionings rather than individual narrative accounts (Smith et al. 2009).

Alternatively, the researcher can ask participants for a written or recorded account of an experience. However, compared with a face-to-face interview, the data might not be rich and deep enough for analysis (Englander 2012).

After evaluating the possible approaches towards data collection, the researcher decided that a one-on-one phenomenological interview would be the most suitable technique for this study. An essential element of the selected story-collecting approach is avoiding asking 'why?'. Such questions come in the way of generating descriptions and stories related to experiences and shift the focus of answers more towards rationalizations. Posing such questions might also make the participant feel prejudged and wary of future responses (Thompson et al. 1989).

The beginning of the interview is when participants should grow accustomed to the conversation and feel comfortable discussing their experiences (Thompson and Haykto 1997). In order to achieve this, as suggested by McCracken (1988), the researcher started the interview with general informational questions. These 'grand-tour' (Ruth et al. 1999) questions referred to their hometowns, occupations and childhood.

Subsequently, the researcher asked the participant to take a moment to focus on the experience of retro video gaming and asked them to describe these experiences.

Due to the nature of an in-depth interview, the researcher primarily relied on following participants' leads in directing the course of the interviews and forming further questions. Such probing questions are a means for gathering more complete stories from participants (Berg 2017).

This research applied different types of probes. Their purpose was to elicit answers to gain clarification (Keats 2000) and help participants to elaborate on their stories (Morris 2015), including providing more detail and examples (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Some of the examples of applied probes included:

- Could you tell me something more about...
- Can you tell me more about that?
- How did that/you feel like?

Also, follow-up questions were formulated whenever possible using the participants' own terminology (Thompson et al. 1994). Other types of probes used in the study included body language (nodding, leaning forward, maintaining eye contact), confirmatory sounds ('mhm', 'ah-ha') and the 'silent probe' (Hennink et al. 2010).

3.9.1 The interview guide

An interview guide or schedule lists possible topics and questions that the researcher deems important to cover during the conversation. Despite the participant-led character of phenomenological interviewing, using a guide can be justified and beneficial (Smith et al. 2009) and is also applicable in a consumer setting (Chen and Haley 2014; Thompson and Hirschman 1995).

Preparing a schedule can help the researcher in moments when the conversation reaches a topical 'dead end'. A guide can also help to put the

conversation 'back on track' when a researcher feels it is drifting too far away from the investigated phenomenon.

Moustakas (1994) argues that having a general interview guide might be beneficial when an informant has not tapped into the experience qualitatively and with sufficient meaning and depth. It also prepares the interviewer for the eventuality of encountering a person who prefers a more structured approach towards the interview.

An interview guide created for a phenomenological interview should be seen as a virtual map of the conversation that can but does not have to be used throughout the interview when the conversation becomes difficult. What results from this type of preparation is an interviewer who is more responsive, adaptable and observant (Smith et al. 2009).

In the case of this study, the ideas and topical areas the researcher included in the interview guide (Appendix 8) were formed based on his knowledge of retro consumption gained from the literature review and reading on the phenomenological interview process.

Despite the benefits of an interview guide, the researcher was mindful of using it with caution and flexibility (Bevan 2014).

3.9.2 Building rapport

Building rapport with the participant and establishing a communicative atmosphere is deemed essential for effective interviewing (Gorden 1998; Holstein and Gubrium 2003; Welch and Piekkari 2006). Locations that offer a comfortable atmosphere for participants are inherent to this (Elwood and Martin 2000). Further, interview sites can produce 'socio-spatial relationships' and power context that influence the rapport between the researcher and the participant (Edwards and Holland 2013). Taking this into account and the fact that participants would keep their retro gaming items at home, the researcher, decided to include participant homes as possible interview sites and provide participants with freedom of choice regarding the setting. An additional possible benefit of a home setting was the opportunity to engage the participant with his retro gaming items and possible interesting avenues for conversation. To build a climate of

trust and rapport with the participants, the researcher followed a list of techniques that Arksey and Knight (1999) suggested to develop and maintain good relationships (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Ways of fostering a climate of trust in interviews

Opening the interview
Friendly and polite approach towards participants.
Highlighting the purpose of the study and the possible benefits. Highlighting the importance of participant's comments.
Referring positively to interviews conducted beforehand
Informing about the manner in which the interview will be conducted; its length
Opportunity for the participant to ask additional questions
Confirming confidentiality and anonymity
When conducting a follow-up interview, beginning with an appreciation of what was said in the previous one
During the interview
Listening, making eye contact and encouraging phrases (yes, mhm) and body language (nodding).
Eliminating the sense of urgency and impatience
Closing the interview
Indicating how insightful and valuable the interview was
Informing what will happen next: transcription and predicted date for the second interview
After the interview
A thank you message to the interviewee

(adapted from Arksey and Knight 1999, p.102)

Immediately before commencing each interview, the researcher stated to the participant that:

“There are no right or wrong answers in this interview. I would like you to know that. You can take your time thinking about your answers and answering.

It will be a very much one-sided conversation, meaning you will be doing most of the talking.

Some of the questions I will ask you might seem quite self-evident to you, but the reason why I am asking them is to really get into grips with how you perceive things.”

The above statement provided more details concerning the interview and the researcher’s role in the process.

3.10 Analytical approach and the hermeneutic circle

Once participant stories were gathered and transcribed, it was necessary to analyse them to search for embedded meanings. In order to reveal the shared meanings amongst participants, the researcher applied an adapted process outlined by Diekelmann (1992) (see Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 7-stage analytical process of hermeneutic understanding

Stage 1	Reading and listening to interviews in order to gain an understanding of each participant’s experiences related to retro video gaming. Summarising interviews was a useful technique in achieving this goal.
Stage 2	Identification of themes emerging from each interview which displayed the meanings present in the text.
Stage 3	Supervisory meetings used to accept, modify or reject uncovered themes and interpretations. Re-visiting transcripts if the need for further clarification was necessary.
Stage 4	Re-reading transcripts in order to locate shared themes. Investigating them through writing, fragments of interviews and paradigm cases.

Stage 5	Comparing and contrasting texts and identified themes leading to common meanings being described.
Stage 6	Recognising constitutive patterns, which represent relationships between the themes within all transcripts. Further discussion and questioning by the supervisory team.
Stage 7	Verification of themes with participants over the course of the second interview. Presentation of finalised patterns and themes to the supervisory team. Incorporation of responses and suggestions into the final draft.

(adapted from Diekelmann 1992 p.74)

Diekelmann's process of interpretation is a team-oriented analytical approach (Diekelmann 1992). Thus, the researcher had to adapt it to a single researcher setting. Although the degree of involvement of the doctoral supervisory team could not fully mirror the suggested 'research group' effort, supervisors contributed to the process by challenging and questioning the emerging themes.

The reason behind selecting Diekelmann's 7-stage method is its strong relation with Heideggerian hermeneutic philosophy, visible in continuously emphasizing the iterative process of challenging and re-visiting researcher's interpretations.

Diekelmann's 7-stage analytical process has been applied mostly in nursing (deRose 2017; Ratta 2016), psychology (Boydell and Volpe 2004) and physical and occupational therapy (Young et al. 2009). Moreover, it was the first and successful application of Diekelmann's process to marketing-oriented research, presenting this study's additional methodological contribution.

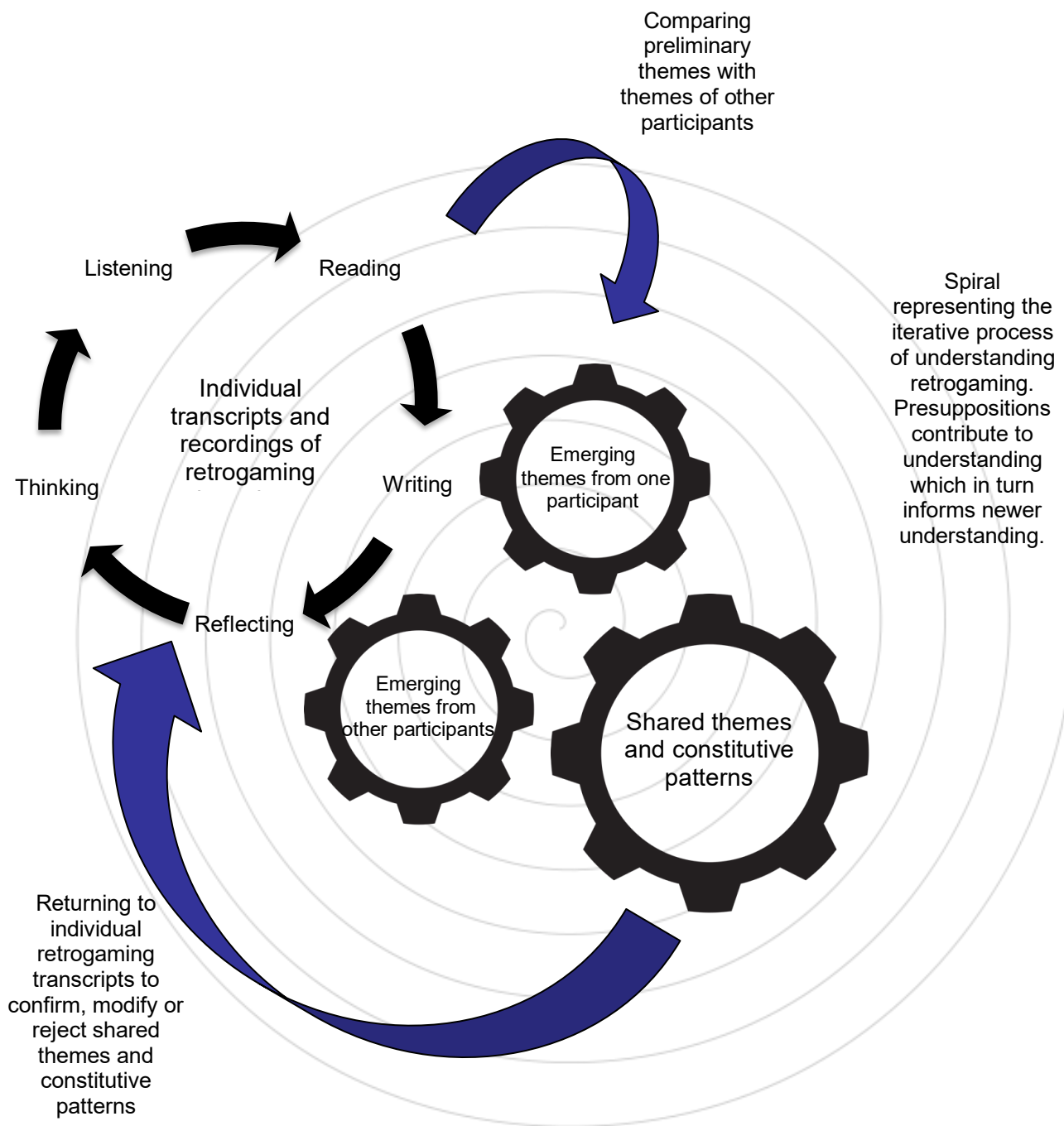
The first step in hermeneutic phenomenological analysis centres on a thematic description of each interview. The researcher listened to and read each

account in order to discover notable elements, also known as meaning units (Thomas and Pollio 2004).

What characterises this approach is the constant going back and forth between parts and the whole of the data (Thompson et al. 1990). It represents the hermeneutic phenomenological notion that looking at particular text elements helps derive the entire text's meanings. At the same time, the understanding of a distinct fragment is granted by referring to the whole it constitutes (Thompson 1989). This shifting between the whole and the parts of the text enabled new interpretations to emerge and challenged existing ones (Benner 1994). The approach to analysing data used in this research reflected the concept of hermeneutic understanding, also referred to as the hermeneutic circle or iterative spiral of understanding (Arnold and Fisher 1994) (see Figure 3.2).

Subsequently, interview transcripts were re-visited in search of shared themes, evaluated, challenged and questioned for their accuracy, a process also undertaken during supervisory meetings (Benner 1994; Diekelmann 1992). Consecutively it was possible to move on to the highest level of hermeneutical analysis – creating constitutive patterns (Polit and Tatano Beck 2010). These are patterns depicting relationships among shared (relational) themes and across the interviews (McDonald and Dickerson 2013)

Figure 3.2 Hermeneutic understanding seen as an iterative process



(Adapted from Taylor 2017 p.16)

3.11 Validating trustworthiness of understanding

Upon completing the analysis, it became essential to ensure that the researcher's interpretations were accurate and resonated with participants' experiences. Within the domain of qualitative studies, there is also the possibility that the researcher's personal beliefs and attitudes might overshadow the 'voice of participants' (Birt et al., 2016). Accordingly, member checking was undertaken.

Member checking, also known as the validation interview (Brit et al. 2016), is a technique used to assess and verify the trustworthiness of a researcher's understanding (Sandelowski 2008). There are various approaches towards validating qualitative data interpretations. These can range from returning raw verbatim transcripts to participants, member check interviews utilising interview transcripts or synthesized data, or quite rare member check focus groups (Carlson 2010; Doyle 2007 and Klinger 2005). Birt et al. (2016) have developed a clear comparison of types of member checking, see table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Examples of various approaches towards member checking (Adapted from Birt et al. 2016)

Method of Member Checking	Epistemological Stance	Theoretical Issues	Method	Ethical issues
Returning transcribed verbatim transcripts	Positivist – truth in the written word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Checking factual information •Enables addition of new data •Enables participants to delete data affecting the data set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need to return the transcripts relatively quickly while the interview still fresh in memory •Could return transcript using paper or electronic methods, or audio tapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participant distress when see the spoken word in typed format •Can retrigger memories of disturbing events
Member check interview – using the transcript	Constructionist / Interpretive – able to co-construct new meaning and validate prior interpretations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Enables shared discussion of the interview transcripts •Enables addition of new data •Need to undertake analysis of member check interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Transcript could be returned prior to the interview •Need to re-consent participants •Additional costs for further transcribing and analysis •Losing participants to follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Concerns for participant safety reduced as the researcher present •Coercion as it might be hard to disagree with the researcher's interpretation in their presence
Member check interview – using single participant's data	Interpretive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Each participant receives researcher's interpretation of their interview •Interview focuses on confirmation, modification and verification of interpretation •Enables addition of new data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need to have undertaken sufficient analysis to prepare data for sharing •Need to re-consent participants •Additional costs for further transcribing and analysis •Losing participants to follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Concerns for participant safety reduced as the researcher present •Coercion as it might be hard to disagree

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need to undertake analysis of member check interview •Participants might agree on potential illustrative quotations •Does not enhance the trustworthiness of the whole data set as the data set still needs to be combined 		<p>with the researcher's interpretation in their presence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participants can veto illustrative quotes which might expose their identity in small research environments
Member check focus group	Interpretive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Focus group might include participants or others with similar experiences •Participants might feel their experiences are validated and others have the same experience •Group might move from a discussion group to one of support •Can confirm or disaffirm results •Group might create new data which have been constructed in different social setting (e.g., group rather than individual) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Need to have undertaken sufficient analysis to prepare data for sharing •Need to re-consent people for confidentiality of original data and understanding how new data will be used •Cost of venue and further transcribing of the focus group •Not as convenient for participant if they have to travel to venue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Data need to be non-identifiable •Group coercion can make it difficult for single disconfirming voice •Coercion as it might be hard to disagree with the researcher if they are leading the focus group
Member check using synthesized analysed data	Positivist – confirming results; Constructionist – opportunity to comment and add data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Themes are returned; researcher can make claims on the trustworthiness of findings •The participant should be able to recognise their experiences within the synthesized themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to analyse data increasing time before data can be returned • Length and language of the document returned has to be considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less risk of participant distress as themes are synthesized and conceptualised

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If seeking additive data need to provide explanation and space for participants to engage with this ● If several participants do not return to researcher it might limit claims on trustworthiness of final data set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to verify contact details of participants ● Losing participants to follow-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to confirm participants willing to receive the document if several months have elapsed
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In the process, participants are presented with the researcher's analysis and express their opinion concerning the presented findings (Creswell 2013). Diekelmann and Ironside (2006) highlight the usefulness of member checking:

"[...] participants in the study may be asked to read interpretations of their interviews as well as the interviews of other participants to confirm, extend, or challenge the analysis. Others not included in the analysis but likely to be readers of this study, may review the written interpretation. This review process exposes unsubstantiated and unwarranted interpretations that are not supported by the texts."

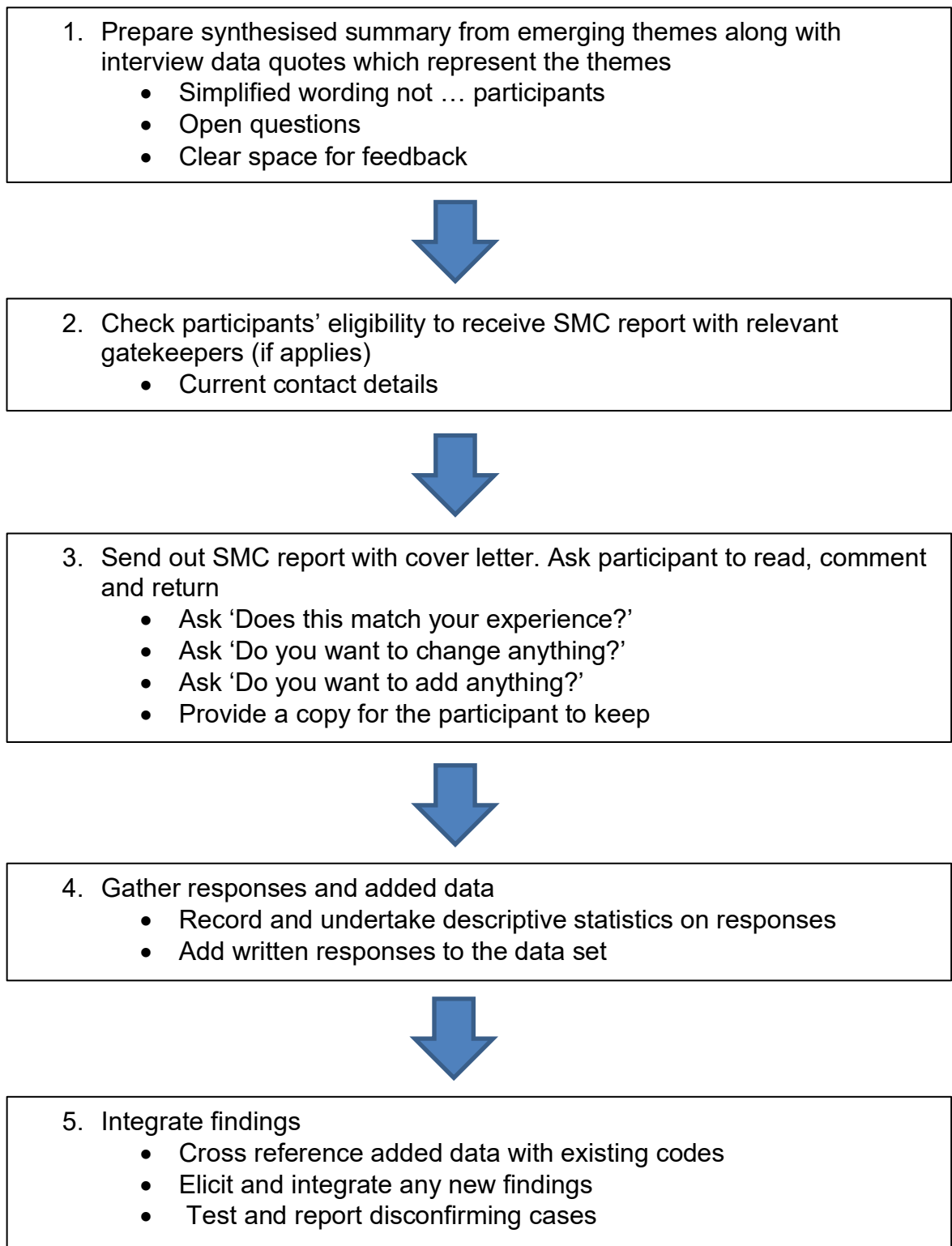
(Diekelmann and Ironside 2006 p. 262)

Member checking is particularly applicable in a phenomenological setting where capturing the inter-subjectivity of the phenomenon is essential (Buchbinder 2010), including phenomenological consumer studies (Belk et al. 1988; Hirschman 1986; Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson et al. 1996). Member checking is highly suitable for hermeneutic phenomenology. In hermeneutics, meaning is not formed but negotiated. Hence, it closely aligns with the co-constructivist epistemology of member-checking approaches (Birt et al., 2016; Doyle 2007).

One cannot forget about the ethical considerations when it comes to the process of member checking. There are justifiable instances where distributing interview transcripts or synthesized data might impact participants' well-being and cause distress (Birt et al., 2016). Moreover, researchers should accommodate how participants can easily express their opinions and comment on the data returned to them. Another good practice is reporting on participant's level of engagement, which handles the issues related to blindly accepting researcher's interpretations and only '*tokenistic involvement*' (Birt et al. 2016, p. 1806). Out of a selection of different types of member checking, after evaluating this body of work, the researcher decided to apply the one using synthesized analysed data. This approach reduces the risk of participant distress due to data being synthesized and conceptualised. At the same time, it allows the participant

to express their opinion on the data and potentially add data (Harvey 2015). A slightly modified version of this approach, referred to as Synthesized Member Checking (SMC) (Walter et al. 2014), was selected due to several factors. First, it is an approach that uses both interpreted and interview data. Second, it *“enables participants to add comments which are then searched for confirmation or disconfirming resonance with the analysed study data, enhancing the credibility of results”* (Birt et al. 2016). The five-step SMC chart of the process the authors intended to use as a tool was helpful in giving structure to the process of member checking (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Flow chart of the processes undertaken in SMC (Adapted from: Birt et al. 2016)



Following the procedure outlined by Birt et al. (2016) and commonly accepted good practice in member checking (Doyle 2007; Lincoln and Guba 1985), the researcher reached out to every participant, asking them to comment on the created SMC report. Where necessary, adjustments to themes were made, allowing finalised themes to take shape.

Elements of the member check process also took place during the second interview. Here participants had the opportunity to reflect on the content of the first interview session and clarify if needed.

3.12 Ethical responsibilities

Before commencing the interviewing process, researchers must be wary of the ethical dimensions of qualitative research (Guest et al., 2013).

The first step in maintaining ethical rigour is ensuring participants' anonymity, privacy and confidentiality (King 2010; Shaw 2003). Participant data were de-identified in this study, and any quotes from their interviews masked with a pseudonym.

It is also necessary to warrant that participants are well informed regarding the purpose of the study so that they can make an informed decision concerning their involvement in the research (Byrne 2001). Each participant received an information sheet describing the study and time to decide whether to opt into the doctoral study (Appendix 6).

When undertaking in-depth interviewing, the researcher has to be aware of the ethical aspects of this research, which might pose some potential risk and harm to both the interviewee and the interviewer (Morris 2015). One of the risks might be the intense emotional charge of the interviews, potentially causing participants emotional distress during and after the conversation (Clarke 2006; Peled and Leichtentritt 2002). The researcher predicted that this danger was low, however, he could not rule it out. At face value, the topic of retrogaming does not seem to pose any emotional threat to the participants. However, it does involve reminiscing, and all that it could involve:

- A better, more carefree life now lost to adulthood;
- A more sociable and less alienated lifestyle of the past;
- Loved ones (possibly passed away) and friends (not in touch with anymore) playing important roles in their early gaming consumption experiences.

The initial stage of the interview process, where the interviewer asked participants 'grand tour' questions, proved quite sensitive in a small number of cases and could potentially cause some distress to a researcher. These topics included:

- Childhood with moderate Asperger's syndrome;
- Complicated relationships between siblings;
- Alcohol overuse;
- Depression and Anxiety;
- Personal loss;
- Soft drug use;

Reflecting on the reason why participants were so open and willing to share such personal stories, the researcher believes it was because a large number of interviews took place in their homes. Being on 'their territory' could make participants more at ease with sharing such narratives. It could also indicate the established rapport between the interviewer and participants.

3.13 Role as a researcher

Considering one of the principles of Heideggerian phenomenology, the researcher had to be aware of his position as a story gatherer. As argued by Heidegger (1962), because being-in-the-world (Dasein) is always related to being-with-others (Mitsein), it was necessary to consider the influence the researcher might have on the participants and their stories. This process of being aware and reflective concerning how the researcher's questions, methods and positions might affect study results is known as reflexivity (Langdridge 2007).

The researcher was aware that in the participants' eyes, his position was that of an expert in retrogaming. As power balance might condition the responses,

it was necessary to establish who is the 'knowing' and who is the 'knowledge seeker' (Edwards and Holland 2013). In order to make that division clear, the researcher casually informed that he is interested in retro as a phenomenon. However, retrogaming is an interesting area he has not explored before.

As a characteristic of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, suspending researcher's presuppositions is, in practice, an impossible task (Heidegger 1962). Moreover, as suggested by Koch (1996), the interviewer's own thoughts are something that cannot be bracketed out. Thus, they play a role in 'creating data'. Because of this, it was integral to this study for the researcher to record his thoughts and feelings as they occurred throughout the study. Besides "monitoring what is going on" (Koch and Harrington 1998), keeping a research journal creates other benefits for the study. It aids the researcher in self-auditing the study, helps maintain rigour (Smith 1999), and as a record of thought and interactions, becomes a basis for the researcher's reflections (Koch 1994).

5.2.13 Researcher's context brought to the study

It is also essential to consider the context the researcher brought to this study as an interpreter of participants' experiences. The researcher is a Caucasian male in his 30s from a middle-class background born and brought up outside of the United Kingdom. Important to this study, he also had moderate prior experiences with gaming - the area of retro consumption this study has focused on. Games and gaming were primarily present in his childhood and adolescence, after which his participation in this form of entertainment ended. This lends a genuine curiosity about the subject matter and a genuine layperson approach towards the world of gaming and retrogaming. Not being a gamer nor a retrogamer decreased the likelihood of any existing preconceptions impacting the process of hermeneutic phenomenological understanding, thus decreasing the likelihood of subjective influence of the researcher on interpretations (Heyner 1985).

At the same time, following the principles of Heideggerian phenomenology, the researcher does not lay claim that his interpretations offer the only possible 'true meaning' (Smythe 2011). Instead, Heideggerian

phenomenology is an invitation to embark on one's own 'journey' by stimulating the reader with authors' work and seeking their understanding (Smythe et al. 2008).

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter detailed how this study was prepared and carried out. It presented its approach to data collection and corresponding theoretical and philosophical foundations. Phenomenological in-depth interviewing, underpinned by Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology, was explored as an approach towards gathering narratives from retro video gamers. Presenting the philosophical roots was necessary to provide the reader with a clear understanding of this methodology and its approach to interviewing and analysing consumer stories.

Subsequent chapters will focus on presenting the findings resulting from phenomenological retrogamer interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings from the Hermeneutic Phenomenological Interviews

This chapter aims to present the researcher's interpretations of phenomenological interviews with retrogamers between April 2017 and June 2018. Findings have been uncovered using the iterative process of hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (Taylor 2017) as a principle, resulting in being organised and listed in the form of themes following Diekelmann's (1992) analytical process of hermeneutic understanding.

When embarking on this 'research journey', its aim focused on uncovering the meanings of retrogaming experiences for participants. However, given the exploratory dimension of phenomenology (Groenewald 2004), the researcher gained understanding reaching beyond the initially outlined paradigm of meanings of retrogaming experiences. Encountered stories, once interpreted, enriched the area of consumer studies related to collecting behaviours. That formed a realisation that retro consumption, as experienced by participants, took place in a collecting environment (the outer layer in figure 6.1). As a result, findings will focus not only on exploring the meanings of retrogaming consumption but also include findings relating the examined retro phenomenon to collecting behaviour.

In line with Diekelmann's analytical process, the researcher identified a constitutive pattern amongst emerging themes relating to the retrogaming phenomenon. By nature, a constitutive pattern is entwined in themes, present across interviews and represents "*the highest level of hermeneutical analysis*" (Diekelmann and Ironside 2006, p.262). Relationships between the subthemes, themes and the identified pattern are present in the inner layer of Figure 4.1.

As the title of this research highlights, the focus was to look at potential generational differences between Generation X and Millennial men in the context of the meanings of their retrogaming experiences. It is important to note that the analysis of conversations with retrogamers did not reveal any intergenerational differences in their perspectives on the retrogaming phenomenon. Both Generation X and Millennial men represented a similar outlook on retrogaming without noticeable differences between the two generations. The researcher

believes that the lack of noticeable generational differences might lie in the age proximity between Gen X and Millennial gamers.

Each first interview began with a 'grand tour' question set to build rapport, after which participants were asked about their first encounters with video gaming. Every account was different, but with time, common threads emerged. Stories were related to significant people from their past and present, such as family members, loved ones and friends. In some cases, their gaming beginnings were linked with gift-giving and other special occasions such as birthdays, family holidays or Christmas celebrations, as recounted vividly by BR:

"And I said, 'I want one of those [consoles] for Christmas'. And I remember Christmas Eve. I think I got out of bed must've been a good ten times because I knew what they had it. My mom and dad got the box and hid it under some towels in the airing cupboard. And I remember going to the airing cupboard to get a towel, and I thought 'that's a hard pile of towels. What's under their?' And I found it. I kept getting up in the middle night just ripping the paper to have a look. So I ripped the wrapping paper a little bit 'oh God yes I've got it'." (BR)

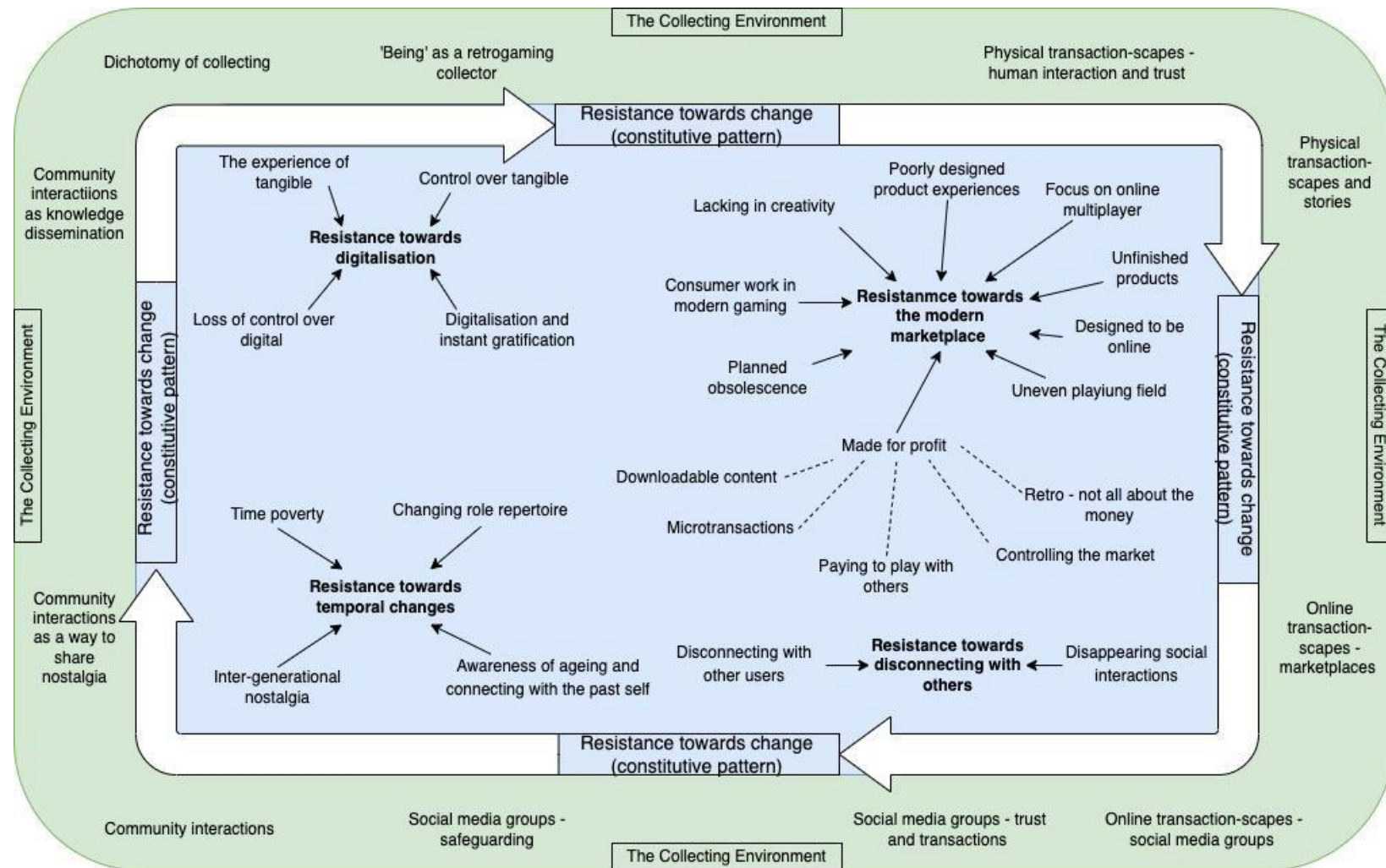
Alongside people and occasions, places such as childhood homes, schools or arcades were also described as spaces where these 'initiations' took place.

An interesting observation was that none of the participants was 'new' to video gaming and amassed experiences with gaming ranging from 15 to 40 years. In all cases, stories were lengthy, detailed and vivid, giving an impression that these memories were often revisited and readily available for participants to recount. The emotions involved in these recollections and an 'otherworldly state' they created suggested the significance of these early gaming experiences.

Moving on to presenting researcher's insights, sections 4.1 through to 4.3.2 will focus on findings relating to retrogaming in the context of collecting, while sections 4.4 till 4.7.9.5 will present the themes concentrating on the

meanings of retrogaming consumption and addressing the areas from which this phenomenon emerges

Figure 4.1 Conceptual representation of the themes and constitutive pattern



4.1 Retrogaming and collecting

An interesting and somewhat surprising finding is retrogaming's strong link with collecting, whereby this act is an important element of the experience. Retrogamers operate in a collecting environment, which is why it is essential to define collecting to provide the necessary context. Collecting itself is defined as *"the process of actively, selectively and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set on non-identical objects or experiences."* (Belk 1995, p.67)

During conversations, participants perceived their retrogaming consumption through the prism of collecting and often referred to themselves as collectors:

"I haven't bought anything really for a while because I think I have everything I need the movement... But you always want more as a collector <laughing>." (BR)

"R: Okay, and how do you see yourself as a member of the community? Where would you place yourself?"

P: Purely as a collector. I don't sell things." (BE)

The researcher realised that some aspects of 'being' as a retrogamer connect strongly with collecting and that retrogaming as a phenomenon operates in a collecting setting with its specific characteristics. The findings related to the facets of collecting within the retrogaming 'domain' will begin with the 'dichotomy of collecting' presented below.

4.1.1 Dichotomy of collecting

An understanding of collecting emerging from conversations with participants related to their perception of its enjoyment. In their opinion, a large part of its allure hides in the process itself.

Despite the limited number of retro items available, given adequate funds, it is possible to complete a collection relatively quickly and effortlessly. However, this approach is joyless to retrogamers and brings little value to the overall experience. This is adeptly articulated by PT:

“And they're just buy, buy, buy and then they completed the series, and it's done. Like, where's the fun in that? You just buy everything, and it's done. There's no fun in having it. The fun is in the journey of buying it and collecting it. And how you get there. And you know, the fun of the chase. That's good.” (PT)

An enjoyable element of collecting is ‘the journey’. As much as owning items made the participants content, a lot of satisfaction comes from taking time to seek them out. Buying all the items simultaneously would not bring the same sense of satisfaction as extending the process in time.

For G, the process of collecting and the work put into building a collection was of significance in forming a connection with the items and having an impact on how they were perceived:

“I suppose when you've had a collection, then you kind of worked your way building it. You kind of become attached to it. It becomes something that you have worked for. Something you worked towards. I'm not particularly sporty. I was never on any football teams or whatever, but I imagine it will be like having a trophy or treasure chest or something.”

(G)

It became apparent that the enjoyment lies not only in ownership but also in stretching out the process of collecting – the so-called ‘journey’. The importance of ‘the journey’ amongst retrogamers surfaces as one of the driving factors in their collecting behaviour:

“So, I'd like... when you're getting looking for new stuff coming in. That's exciting. And it's enjoyable. So, I think that's why a lot of people do that thing where like I was saying earlier, they collect for like six months in one

thing, and then they just sell it on the focus on something else because to them it's the fun of the journey, not the having them you know?" (PT)

The described journey resembles some reported techniques used to prolong the collecting process when nearing collecting goal completion (Belk 1994 in Pearce 1994).

Interestingly, at the same time, there was a different side to the collecting process, which nature opposed the extended in time 'journey'. Participants described it as a more aggressive endeavour and referred to it as the 'hunt' as in this account by M:

The only problem with the car boot sale to get a lot of the collectors or people who know the value turning up of these places when they have just set up. So, if a boot sale opens up at 7 o'clock in the morning to get the collectors turning up at 7 o'clock in the morning, being the first people to be there. The first people to look in the stall. The first people to ask somebody if they have got retro games. The first person to buy it and take it away. And obviously, once they have taken it away, it's gone. That is all to say about a boot sale. I tend to stay away from boot sales because I know that I just can't justify it. It is like a wild goose hunt essentially some of the times. (M)

'Hunting' for retro items also relates to an emotional state of excitement. Many participants describe the experience of looking for retro gaming goods as the 'the hunt' or 'the treasure hunt' and ascribe feelings such as 'excitement', 'shoppers high' and 'buzz' and to express them. '*Hunting*' has been previously related to collecting behaviour in academic literature with some individuals even referring to themselves as hunters (Long and Schiffman 1997; Pearce 1995).

This represents an interesting dichotomy of the collecting process. On one end there is the described 'journey' where the pleasure is derived from taking one's time and extending the process. On the other side of the spectrum lies collecting as 'the hunt' - a more instantaneous, aggressive, and thrilling facet of collecting.

4.1.2 'Being' as a retrogaming collector

Conversations revealed that there are certain conditions which have to be met for one to be considered a retrogaming collector and thus a part of the community. This involves collecting in the 'tangible' form:

"But again, it's that disconnect between digital and physical. It's no different than Spotify or Netflix. You don't own anything. You don't feel you are a part of the community. You are not collecting anything. You tend to find people who emulate a lot like the people I said who dabble in it. Pseudo, pretend geeks. It isn't the same experience categorically and that is important to me because you're fooling yourself really." (S)*

Favouring digital ROMs* of retro games emulated on modern devices over physical retro games is frowned upon. Despite the core gaming product being the same in both cases, collecting in this form is seen as inauthentic, and such collectors branded as '*pretend geeks*'.

Looking at the tangible and thus, more 'authentic' form of collecting, interestingly, there are several types of collectors within the retrogaming community.

First, there are differences related to various retrogaming items being collected. These could exist on a brand level (e.g., Nintendo; SEGA), system level (e.g., DV and SEGA Dreamcast games) or specific product lines (e.g., BO and all Wario games). There is antipathy directed at collectors only interested in acquiring, storing and displaying items:

"And you get people who are purely buying to sell and resell and they've got no intention of ever playing the game. Shelf collectors they are called and they just literally collect for these things to sit on the shelf and they will sit there forever and never ever fulfil their purpose in life of being played and enjoyed." (SX)

The community sees no point in such behaviour and brands individuals who would never open and use a collected item as '*shelf collectors*'. Participants

find importance in using the item as it was intended and fully experienced. In many cases ‘*shelf collectors*’ would seek out items which are still factory sealed and keep them that way, which was met with negativity from participants:

“And I think it defies the object by spending more money on something that is sealed. Just open it. [...] I see myself kind of as in the middle. I like to collect but I also like to play the game. I think people who are collecting just to put it on the shelf and never play... I suppose I don’t really see the point of doing that for a large amount of time.” (M)

Not using acquired retrogaming items is not fully understood by other members of the community as it defeats the purpose of the object. This way of collecting is deemed pointless, with an interesting remark made by SX where he compared it to buying the greatest 30 books ever written and never reading them. Putting even more emphasis on the issue of engaging with the items DY believed that these titles are not only supposed to be used, but furthermore ‘*deserve to be played*’.

Another collector type, mentioned in conversations, is the ‘*blitz collectors*’. These individuals’ goal was to complete a collection of a given type regardless of the cost and in the quickest possible time:

“But then you have people who are like Blitz-attack collecting. So they’ll come onto the scene, right? And they’ll go ‘Oh, hi. I’m new. I’m going to collect every Dreamcast game’, right? And then they’ll just pay whatever anybody says.” (PT)

Such an approach lies in contrast with a sense of satisfaction found in purchasing items and reaching one’s collecting goal without putting much of a strain on the budget:

“I completed the Dreamcast collection very, very cheap. And I spent a lot of time finding deals and buying and selling and doing it cheap but they’ll

just come and go, 'okay, buy, buy, buy'. And they'll finish it in like three months but they would have paid top dollar for everything."

(PT)

An accusation directed at *'blitz collectors'* is that they are affecting items' prices for the rest of the community. Since they are willing to pay 'any price' for an item their average price tended to increase, pushing them out of other retrogamers' budget range. As mentioned in the previous theme, there is pleasure in the *'journey of collecting'* and taking time to cherish the experience. Considering this a factor, it shouldn't be surprising that participants disapprove of *'blitz collectors'* approach and their lack of understanding for the significance of the collecting process.

Another type of collector mentioned are ones who *"[...] are trying to get into the scene of retrogaming geek culture even if they are not really viable."* (SX) These individuals do not really embrace the culture and attempt to join the collecting community because they see it as fun and trendy. Such retrogaming collectors are usually described as young people or 'hipsters' who engage with retrogaming as they consider it 'cooler' than modern gaming. They are also lacking in knowledge about the past times and retro items. When interacting with other community members, they attempt to project a knowledgeable image, often disseminating inaccurate information. As explained by SX, there is a reason behind calling them *'plastic'*.

"That's why they have got the nickname plastic. Just because they have a few odd games, they think they know everything about retrogaming, and they don't. So they can be a little bit annoying. The other downside is probably driving up the prices. It's more of a slight annoyance." (SX)

Similar to *'blitz collectors'*, *'plastic geeks'* also impact prices, making acquiring retro items more difficult.

Participants also identified two types of individuals existing on retrogaming's 'supply side'. These are referred to as *'traders'* (BE) or, more

pejoratively - 'scalpers' (DR). They specialise in scouring places such as charity shops and car boot sales in search of retrogaming bargains.

"R: I also heard about charity shops and car boot sales in the UK.

P: When that first started, that was big. It was a big thing because you could find bargains but now people who own shops... Some people are just traders, and they have no passion for the video games whatsoever. They just know there is money to be made. So effectively, you've got people who just go to car boot sales to find people we don't know what the value of something is and make money off it. They're effectively known as scalpers. Because they just buy loads. They will find something like a bargain for £5 that is worth maybe 30, and then they will be selling it on eBay for 40. So there's no real bargains to be made in charity shops..."
(DR)

Scalpers are lacking in passion, regarded as driven mainly by profit and often treating retrogaming as a source of income, with some opening dedicated shops. Participants' approach towards these 'opportunistic sellers' (BE) is not positive, either tolerated, ignored or frowned upon. Although ignored by some, such as BE, others are more negative:

"R: You mentioned that if someone is a trader, right, that they will not get that much help.

P: They will get help. But I think you probably find... certainly my thoughts on the attire of... If somebody is acting as a trader, I'm certainly not about to negotiate my way to help them. You know they're doing it for profit - they can do the work for it.

Whereas if somebody is a genuine collector... Somebody that loves video games to collect and for themselves, that's when you start to see a lot more community spirit." (BE)

Hence, those revolving around the community seeking an opportunity to make a profit are not held in high regard by retrogaming collectors. Considering

that they are operating within the boundaries of the community, a question arises on whether '*scalpers*' and '*traders*' are considered community members. Marginalised by retrogamers and having a purely financial motivation for engaging with them, it is difficult to perceive them as full-fledged retro-collectors. Although not considered part of the community, they engage with it in a parasitic or commensal way – living 'off it' rather than 'in it'.

Participants list certain 'taboos' which are associated with community members. When it comes to '*shelf collectors*', there is a lack of understanding of not using the items as intended and enjoying the experience.

'*Blitz collectors*', on the other hand, are not fully respected because of the haste in which they collect and fail to savour the 'journey'. Another allegation is not acquiring items in a 'thrifty' manner as many retrogamers do, resulting in rising item prices.

Essentially, any membership activity impeding the community's ability to collect is negatively received. This explains participants' negativity towards '*scalpers*' who, by buying out retro items from low-price sources (car-boot sales; charity shops) for profit, are limiting acquisition opportunities for others.

'*Pretend geeks*' are not seen as authentic as they do not collect authentic retrogaming items but instead rely on free digital equivalents. Lastly, '*plastic geeks*' are seen as joining the community because of the increasing popularity of the phenomenon. Due to gaps in knowledge, they lack community-member authenticity.

The above profiles of retrogaming collectors mainly emphasize criticism of those who do not collect in 'the right manner'. Based on participants' accounts, the researcher can deduce yet another type of retrogaming collector – the 'authentic' one. Several conditions can be listed that need to be met for a collector to be granted full recognition by the community (Table 4.1)

Table 4.1 'Authentic' collectors – conditions for gaining full community approval recognition

1.	Experiencing retrogaming items as they were originally intended (e.g., playing collected games; opening boxes; looking through inserts)
2.	Taking time to collect – savouring 'the journey'
3.	Avoiding activities which might negatively affect the collecting experiences and opportunities for other community members
4.	Possessing knowledge related to collected items
5.	Not being motivated by profit/profitting from other community members

Individuals collecting retrogaming items and engaging with the community should fulfil the above requirements to be considered 'authentic' retrogaming collectors.

Several other typologies of collectors exist. According to Danet and Katriel (1986), collectors can be seen through the prism of their involvement in collecting. Saari (1997 in Case 2009) identified four types: passionate, acquisitive, hobbyist and expressive collectors. Lee and Trace (2009) categorized collectors based on the level of interaction with other collectors. Finally, Belk (1991) suggested a typology with either taxonomic or aesthetic collectors. The proposed collector typology is particularly valuable because the introduced classification applies 'in vivo' terminology and application of characteristics collectors use to distinguish and categorise community members.

To summarise this section, it is possible to distinguish between member types based on their approach towards collecting and other significant characteristics. The researcher sees added value in the fact that all these, apart from one, were 'in-vivo' terms used within the retrogaming communitys (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Retrogaming community member typology

Collector type	Status	Characteristics
User collectors	Community members with full community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items Using items as originally intended Balancing between collecting as 'the journey' and 'the hunt' of collecting
'Shelf collectors'	Community members with partial community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items Displaying and storing collected items Balancing between collecting as 'the journey' and 'the hunt' of collecting
'Blitz collectors'	Community members with partial community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items in a quick fashion. Overemphasising 'the hunt' and neglecting 'the journey' of collecting Perceived as not indulging in the process of collecting
'Pretend' collectors	Marginalised by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting items which are not genuine
'Plastic' collectors	Marginalised by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items Joining the community because of its increasing popularity Lack of retrogaming knowledge and thus authenticity as retrogamers
'Traders'/'scalpers'	Engaging with but existing outside the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefiting from selling items to collectors

4.2 Acquiring retro items

An inseparable part of collecting is the process of acquiring items. That is why it should not be surprising that participants emphasise that aspect of their collecting behaviour. Seeking retro items should not be seen as a superficial act and involves deeper meanings.

Participants use several channels to obtain new items. In the broadest sense, these could be divided into physical and virtual transaction-scapes (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Types of transaction-scapes

Physical transaction-scapes	Virtual transaction-scapes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• flea markets;• charity shops;• car-boot sales;• gaming events;• game store chains;• independent game stores;• auctions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• online marketplaces (eBay, Gumtree, Shpock);• social media sites (Facebook groups).

Physical transaction-scapes have been previously addressed in literature in the context of acquiring pre-owned and retro goods (Gregson et al., 2007; Gregson and Crewe, 2003; Sherry 1990). This research offers interesting novel themes which emerged in relation to acquiring goods via these channels related to trust, the importance of human interaction and the formation of stories.

Online marketplaces (e.g., eBay) were also discussed previously as sources of formerly owned goods (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2009). Conversations with participants identified certain negative aspects of transactions occurring via such channels leading retrogaming communities towards forming their own online trading environments.

Ensuing sections will provide insights into retro item acquisition for both offline and online channels.

4.2.1 Physical transaction-scapes – human interaction and trust

An essential factor for transactions involving retro items occurring in physical spaces relates to the notions of human interaction and questions of trust. For some retrogamers such, there is great enjoyment in the opportunity for human interaction and negotiating with sellers during gaming events. Human contact being a factor is also voiced concerning game stores:

“So eBay does have its uses, but I prefer to just go to shops because again, with someone like Play Nation Games you can chat to Dan or Stuart, and they will tell you about stuff that is coming in, or they will put stuff on Facebook about stuff that has just got in and you can try to get them to put it aside for you and give you prices and things like that. Sometimes they don’t respond, but it’s just nice having that human interaction. I think with video games, it can be quite distant. It’s just you and the games, but it’s nice having that kind of... Talking to people who know about games as well, and you can have a bit of a chat about old games. Then spend a bit of money and play something.”(DY)

Physical spaces allow for a ‘human interaction’ between the buyer and the seller, especially in dedicated shops, where the two can converse about retro products.

The physical presence of both the retrogamer and the seller during the exchange and the ‘face-to-face’ nature of the transaction resolves issues of potential ‘scamming’. BR offers some insight into his relationship with the owner of the local retrogaming shop:

“There’s a shop not far from here called Vintage Gamer. In [town]. I have a very good relationship with him [owner]. And he’s kind of like my ‘go to guy’ for things. If I’m looking for a console I will let him know. He’s got like a ‘wanted’ list.

So I’ll say to him, ‘I’m on the lookout for a ColecoVision. If you find a nice one, give me a shout’. And he’ll let me know. And he doesn’t... he’s not in it to make a huge profit. You know, sometimes he’ll buy something for £20

and resell it for £25. He's quite an enthusiast. And as long as he makes a few quid, he's not in it to make 100% profit. He'll buy something for a tanner and sell it for £15. He's not going... I trust him, and he's a good person to buy from." (BR)

Trust is also important in relation to product quality, as in some cases (e.g. gaming store chains), one could have purchased items which were not verified:

[...] buying it from a chain they do not normally run rigorous checks so they sell them as they do because they don't have the time and so you might not always get the right quality if you purchased from them." (G)

What became clear from these accounts is the importance of human interaction in acquiring retro goods in physical spaces allowing for relationship formation. This has the potential for forming trust between the two parties with less worry about overpaying for an item or acquiring one of unsatisfactory quality.

4.2.2 Physical transaction-scapes and stories

Conversations with participants revealed the involvement of physical spaces in creating acquisition stories. In many instances, participants' physical store purchases involve a story related to the acquisition. They can recall the place, time and the circumstances of that event and share it with a clear sense of satisfaction:

"I like to be able to say, to point out a game on my shelf... Someone asks me, and I will be able to tell them where I got it. Or the story of how I found whereas the digital marketplace is just the case of 'oh yeah, I press the button, and that is that'.

So yeah, I can say that these PlayStation 1 games I have traded some binoculars for. Or these terrible PlayStation 2 games I found in the bargain bin in the corner shop, which is wild. For this Mega Drive I have won the raffle because some guy was selling some stuff for his dad's funeral and wanted to pay towards the cost.

You don't get those experiences... You don't get those stories by just downloading something right away, and I think for me it's not necessarily about having the game, but it's about the journey of obtaining it as well.
(G)

The above mentions the '*journey of obtaining*', which is relatable to the earlier identified '*collecting journey*' in the '*dichotomy of collecting*' theme (Section 4.1.1). It appears that '*the journey*' does not pertain only to a broader process of building one's collection but also to more episodic shopping experiences.

'Owning' stories is of importance as they play a role in memories related to items. Visits to and purchases in brick-and-mortar stores are also a part of the memories related to the product and purchase.

Seeking items in physical spaces is also an essential element in the process of creating memories for participants:

"And you could take off to the shop and have a look at it, and you had memories attached to that." (DR)

This underlines the importance of stories and memories for participants. Moreover, it cannot be mimicked in an online environment, as seen in G's above recount of '*just downloading something*'. His comment pertains to purchasing modern games, mostly done through digital downloads or online platforms. Such purchases cannot generate the same depth and excitement as a real-world physical experience. As summarised here:

"Obviously, I'm going to say I like to have stories about everything I have purchased. So if I can help it, I try not to purchase too much online, and I would like to go and try and get stuff myself. So for me, there is personal value there." (G)

Self-defining aspects of physical possessions are a known topic in academia (e.g., Belk 2014; Jyrinki and Leipamaa-Leskinen 2006). What participants reported could suggest that acquisition stories are also of importance in navigating one's sense of past self (both individual and collective). Therefore,

the researcher believes that physical transaction-scape acquisition stories could play a similar role for collectors considering how vividly they recall acquisition stories (Belk 1995).

The importance of creating memories involving items acquired in physical spaces can also be interpreted as a way of lending more credibility and significance to the process of collecting. Such purchases can become more meaningful by being embedded as recounted, shared and cherished memories.

4.2.3 Online transaction-scapes – marketplaces

The previous theme identified that the online setting does serve a purpose for the hobby. Platforms which use such an environment are online marketplaces. Availability of goods on virtual marketplaces tends to be higher, with eBay reported as the main one:

“The biggest pros with eBay are that you have a huge potential market there with all the various sellers. It's very rare not to find something that you're looking for on eBay. The price might not be right, but the chances are you'll be able to find the item that you're looking for.” (BE)

As much as it is possible to ‘get lucky’ on this channel, it involves higher costs for retrogamers. Prices on online marketplaces, especially eBay, tend to be considerably higher than what participants’ understanding of the market price suggests. As stated by BR:

“eBay is a good source for these things although prices on eBay are generally going up and up and up.” (BR)

This premium price is partially caused by transaction fees charged by some of these marketplaces. However, retrogamers sought an explanation for sellers’ lack of item expertise:

“If you buy from places like eBay, you can get good deals, and you can also get not good deals. The thing is that people don't always know what they're selling. It's a kind of double-edged sword. If they do have a particularly common game and they do know it, they can sell it really cheap. You can pick it up for a reasonable price. Otherwise, they find games that are really, really common, and they think it's real because they have not seen a Mega Drive in years, and then they want to sell it for £100, and they are wasting their time and your time. If I can help it, I try not to buy games off eBay.” (G)

Another factor causing the situation is the reported sellers' exaggerated profit orientation.

“So effectively, you've got people who just go to car boot sales to find people we don't know what the value of something is and make money off it. They're effectively known as scalpers. Because they just buy loads. They will find something like a bargain for £5 that is worth maybe 30, and then they will be selling it on eBay for 40.” (DR)

Their experiences with previously identified 'scalpers' makes participants see these practices as unethical and harmful to the community.

Moreover, problems often arise as eBay items are not tested and poorly described by sellers (negligence or lack of specialist knowledge), leading to misunderstandings between parties and increasing transactional risk. Despite transactional backstops introduced by some online marketplaces and a sense of protection that came with it, participants purchasing online faced an increased risk of being deceived by the seller. As one of the participants narrated:

“I've been scammed on Gumtree once. And I have had a couple of people attempt to scam me on eBay. So the... Gumtree is a little bit easier to scam with, I guess, because, again, there's no legal comeback. You have no remedies if somebody does scam you.” (BE)

Additionally, they are increasingly disillusioned with online marketplaces from the perspective of sellers, which were becoming something PT referred to as ‘scammers heaven’:

“It’s horrible. I mean, for the past two years, every time I sold on eBay, I sent it recorded because if you don’t, there’s 90% chance the person will receive the item and just say I haven’t received it.” (PT)

Considering such cases, retrogamers are clear that in these online transaction-scapes they enter the ‘buyers beware’ caveat and expose themselves to more risks. Hence, despite simplifying access and increasing the availability of retro items, there are considerable drawbacks to purchasing such goods via these online platforms. In response, retrogamers move to social media groups of their creation, forming a transaction environment that addresses the above issues.

4.2.4 Online transaction-scapes – social media groups

With increasing popularity of social media, a share of online transactions moved to social media groups dedicated to retrogaming, with Facebook sites being a primary example. This move creates a new and up-and-coming channel for acquiring retrogaming goods online.

As much as social aspects are a factor in joining these groups, participants become members also for the trading opportunities they create. As narrated by BE:

“I’m probably relatively new because I never used Facebook that much. But I’ve joined quite a few groups now. Partly for the social aspect of it. Mostly for the marketplace that it opens up. A lot of retro games consoles, games themselves get sold and traded on these Facebook groups.” (BE)

In connection with the increasing negativity towards traditional online trading platforms, social media is gaining momentum as a medium for advertising and selling retrogaming items:

*“So everybody hates eBay. Everybody just starts selling on Facebook.”
(PT)*

Participants admit that items sold via this channel are more reasonably priced, which might be partially related to sellers bypassing fees usually present on trading platforms. As a result, the asking price for goods is lower, having an impact on channel attractiveness for buyers. Because of the shared passion for retrogaming and being members of the community, sellers are more willing to reduce their prices and offer ‘*deals*’. What is also essential is the seller's awareness that the item is sold into ‘*good hands*’ - not to someone who will be looking to make a profit on the purchase later on:

“And he almost got a Jaguar CD which retails at about... it was at one of the gaming markets... it retailed at £500, but I think on this group I think it was a lot less something like 200 or 300. The guy was willing to sell it for that but to someone else who loves Jaguar. Not someone looking to make a buck on it. Trying to find someone who will look after. It's what he would do if he ever got it.”(DY)

Following the above, there is the reflection on supporting other retrogamers:

“If I'm going to buy the game online, I prefer to buy it from a retro selling page that I am part of. So Galaxy SEGA. If I'm after Sega games, they will probably be my first port of call because I know that these are people that are collecting, and they are like-minded, and they will have a similar eye for quality. It's good to buy from them, and you're a kind of supporting other members of the community, so I don't mind buying from there. [...] If I can help it I will buy from other sellers... all the people who are thinning out

their collections, that kind of thing. I will try to keep it within the community.”

(G)

Here, aiding other group members ensures that transactions occur within the online community. Because of the shared understanding of quality, buyers could increase the likelihood of obtaining a top-quality item while ensuring that other dedicated retrogamers benefited financially from these exchanges.

Another factor contributing to the more preferential prices is social media group sellers' superior understanding of items and their pricing. Should the price be seen as '*unfair*', other members post comments on the offer in an attempt to adjust it. What is crucial to highlight was that profit was not the only focus of these transactions, and sellers tended to care about the 'wellbeing' of the community and offered fair prices for items:

“The groups were set as being a community. People are trying mostly to help each other out. Completing their collections and giving people a decent price for an item other than trying to buy and sell things for profit because that is not what all of this is about.” (M)

It was also reported that buyers do take the initiative and actively seek out items on Social Media sites asking for specific items.

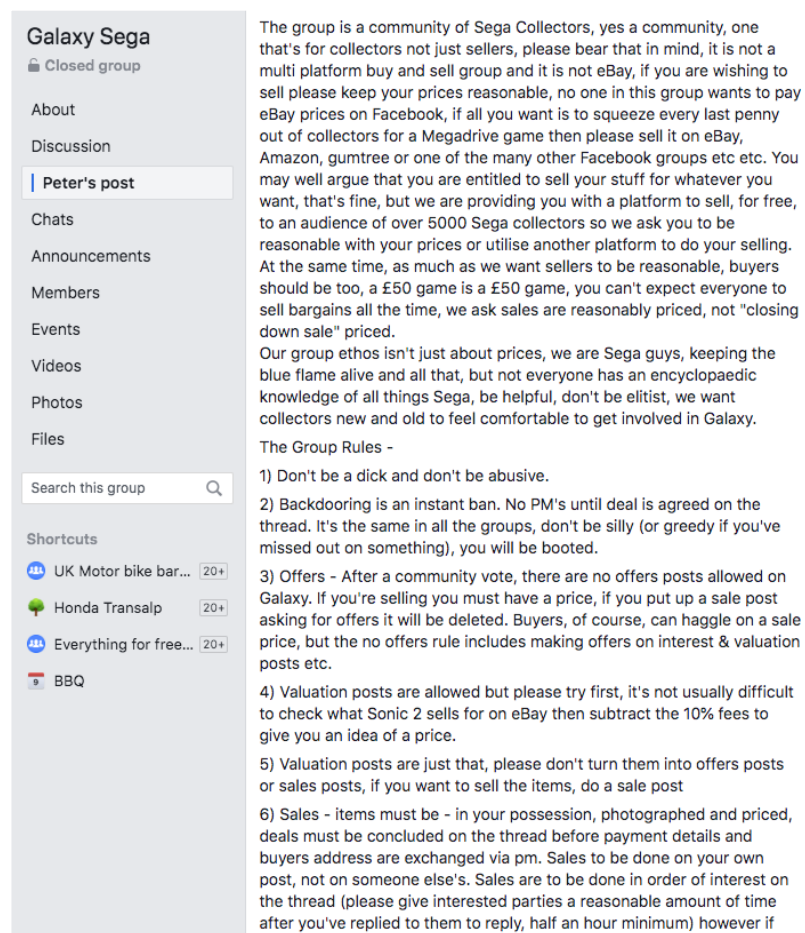
One can interpret these online groups in the context of transactions as environments that adapt better to their members' needs and understanding of 'fairness'. Lower prices result from no transaction fees and providing other retrogamers with fairer prices as a result of community care. This supportive culture of trading is a significant factor contributing to better offers appearing on social media platforms. An important factor is aiding each other's collecting and preventing group members from being financially exploited.

Social media groups manage to address some of the trading issues retrogamers face on online marketplaces such as eBay. An accomplishment of these groups is the counter-measuring potential fraud achieved by nurturing an environment based on trust and transparency. Ensuing sections will present these mechanisms.

4.2.4.1 Social media groups – trust and transactions

Online communities and social media groups craft their own sets of rules which form a general '*group etiquette*' and govern transactions. They are well-organised regarding transactions, with many having dedicated sections explaining rules on trading retrogaming items (See Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Galaxy Sega social media group's rules (Galaxy Sega 2019)



The screenshot shows the Facebook page for the 'Galaxy Sega' group, which is a 'Closed group'. The left sidebar contains navigation links: About, Discussion, Peter's post (highlighted), Chats, Announcements, Members, Events, Videos, Photos, and Files. Below these is a search bar and a 'Shortcuts' section with links to 'UK Motor bike bar...', 'Honda Transalp', 'Everything for free...', and 'BBQ'. The main content area displays the group's rules, starting with a paragraph explaining the group's ethos and followed by a numbered list of rules.

Galaxy Sega
Closed group

About
Discussion
Peter's post
Chats
Announcements
Members
Events
Videos
Photos
Files

Search this group

Shortcuts

- UK Motor bike bar... 20+
- Honda Transalp 20+
- Everything for free... 20+
- BBQ

The group is a community of Sega Collectors, yes a community, one that's for collectors not just sellers, please bear that in mind, it is not a multi platform buy and sell group and it is not eBay, if you are wishing to sell please keep your prices reasonable, no one in this group wants to pay eBay prices on Facebook, if all you want is to squeeze every last penny out of collectors for a Megadrive game then please sell it on eBay, Amazon, gumtree or one of the many other Facebook groups etc etc. You may well argue that you are entitled to sell your stuff for whatever you want, that's fine, but we are providing you with a platform to sell, for free, to an audience of over 5000 Sega collectors so we ask you to be reasonable with your prices or utilise another platform to do your selling. At the same time, as much as we want sellers to be reasonable, buyers should be too, a £50 game is a £50 game, you can't expect everyone to sell bargains all the time, we ask sales are reasonably priced, not "closing down sale" priced.

Our group ethos isn't just about prices, we are Sega guys, keeping the blue flame alive and all that, but not everyone has an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things Sega, be helpful, don't be elitist, we want collectors new and old to feel comfortable to get involved in Galaxy.

The Group Rules -

- 1) Don't be a dick and don't be abusive.
- 2) Backdooring is an instant ban. No PM's until deal is agreed on the thread. It's the same in all the groups, don't be silly (or greedy if you've missed out on something), you will be booted.
- 3) Offers - After a community vote, there are no offers posts allowed on Galaxy. If you're selling you must have a price, if you put up a sale post asking for offers it will be deleted. Buyers, of course, can haggle on a sale price, but the no offers rule includes making offers on interest & valuation posts etc.
- 4) Valuation posts are allowed but please try first, it's not usually difficult to check what Sonic 2 sells for on eBay then subtract the 10% fees to give you an idea of a price.
- 5) Valuation posts are just that, please don't turn them into offers posts or sales posts, if you want to sell the items, do a sale post
- 6) Sales - items must be - in your possession, photographed and priced, deals must be concluded on the thread before payment details and buyers address are exchanged via pm. Sales to be done on your own post, not on someone else's. Sales are to be done in order of interest on the thread (please give interested parties a reasonable amount of time after you've replied to them to reply, half an hour minimum) however if

When talking about transactions on social media groups, retrogamers revealed that several benefits are making these virtual spaces attractive and trustworthy sources of items. An advantage over online trading platforms is that membership in social media groups involves personal social media profiles. Participants see this as putting one's reputation on the line in case of a potential breach of group '*etiquette*'. Similarly, buyers and sellers can better understand who is on the other end of the transaction.

In addition, trust is also affected by improved identification of returning buyers and sellers. Relating to trust, participants state that one of the critical factors is a more personal transaction approach achievable via social media groups. As narrated by DR:

“It’s person-to-person. You know the person, and when they find the games, they explain if the front cover is in good shape or not. There is a trust element in there.” (DR)

To the researcher, this resembles the importance of ‘*human interaction*’ in physical transaction-scapes. In these conditions, individuals are more than just impersonal parties using a username or nickname in a transaction. They are two ‘*people*’ represented by their social media profiles detailing their personal life.

As mentioned earlier, transactions via social media groups also benefit from avoiding fees present on other trading platforms. However, ant-fraud protection is poor compared to platforms such as eBay, and transactions require a certain level of trust, as reported:

“You also get better deals in the Facebook groups just because people don’t have mark-ups from eBay, so you don’t have to pay all those fees. So you end up recognising the same people. There’s trust in there. So there are a lot of deals done in this way.” (DR)

Additionally, on the topic of trust, transactions within online social media groups are frequently uninsured. Using PayPal, members decide to use the ‘*family and friends*’ money transfer option reducing transaction costs to zero but providing no cover in case of fraud, with nothing stopping the seller from keeping the money. However:

“But everybody knows that everyone, you know, we all trust each other. So people pay ‘friends and families’ to each other to maybe people you’ve never met. But you know, they’re trusted in the community, and everybody knows them. You know, people doing trades, like, ‘I’ll send you this you send me that.’”(PT)

It is a clear example of the importance of trust in the retro community and its application to transactions. In these self-formed online spaces, retrogamers aim to create a safe trading environment based on trust and transparency. It emerges as a response to the ‘external’ marketplace environment where participants face opportunism, focus on profit and a higher risk of fraud.

4.2.4.2 Social media groups – safeguarding

Despite the previously mentioned supportive community, group etiquette and more trusting nature of transactions, social media sites are not entirely free of fraud attempts. Some individuals, referred to as ‘scammers’, being aware of the trust involved in transactions, attempt to abuse it for their gain. Group administrators play a crucial role in policing and preventing these cases.

Their role focuses on overlooking retrogaming social media sites. In cases of transaction fraud, they act as arbitrators solving community member disputes. One of the participants being an administrator of a large group provides rich and detailed account of his intervention to settle a potential fraud case:

“Somebody on our group had posted asking whether anyone had dealt with this particular person before he named. Somebody in the group has paid for the items. It’s been over three weeks, and he hasn’t received them. I’ve tried to contact the person by Facebook messenger. He didn’t reply to my messages and what I’m asking him for is proof of postage which we always suggest that people get from the post office. Just send somebody a copy of the receipt or tracking number for the item so they can track it. This particular person wasn’t providing any kind of information so I said I’ll intervene. So I messaged them, ‘you know you just had a post put up about you.’ Obviously, there are always two sides of the story. Rather than just banning someone without any evidence, you’ve got to give them a chance. So I message this person, and I didn’t initially get a reply. I’ve put a post up, tagging that person with a Facebook tag saying, please contact me or message me. Still didn’t get any reply.

Then I had a message from the initial person that was complaining about it, saying that he's come back to him coming up with some excuses about why he hasn't posted yet, blaming it on his wife, saying that she hasn't posted it. Coming up with all sorts of excuses. And when people come up with the sort of excuses, you think, 'you are kind of dodgy, to be honest. Why did you get your wife to post it? Why did she lose the receipt? It was your responsibility and things like that.

He then said that he had posted the items, but every time when he was asked about the postage, he wasn't... He was avoiding the question. He was not answering the question about why he didn't have the receipt. And it turned out, in the end, we removed him from the group.” (M)

In this case, the dispute has not been resolved, and the seller has been banned from the group. However, the consequences of such actions can be more severe and involve exclusion from other retrogaming sites. Once a group member is identified as a ‘scammer’, their identity is shared among the admins and, in effect, blocked on all the affiliated groups:

“So if someone rips somebody else off, they're just banned from the community instantly. Like, we just kick them off the group. And they can never buy or sell there again. And then all the other groups talk to each other. So it's like, you know, there's like 50 Gaming groups. We all talk to each other. So if one person gets banned for scamming on one... we all talk to each other... and then they're banned from every page, like instantly. So people generally are really honest. And I think that appeals to people.” (PT)

Administrators form their own ‘scammer groups’ which connect admins from numerous sites. There, they share information about unwanted activities and blacklisted individuals to prevent incidents from spreading from group to group. Hence, sellers who are not fully transparent and abide by the rules of a community face potentially irreversible consequences even if an issue becomes resolved and an apology is made.

Also group members attempt to safeguard the community and warn about suspicious offers and trading.

“But the other community members will be like ‘don’t do that!. Like this one person before. They haven’t sent me anything, and basically, they’ve scammed me.’ Every now and then, you get something like that where people will be trying to make a quick buck.

If something happens to someone and it doesn’t get resolved, typically people remember, and people will warn other members of that.”(G)

Another important safeguarding role administrators play in these groups is overlooking raffles. Admins want to ensure that group ‘newcomers’ do not raffle items for a price higher than their actual market value.

At the same time, admins perform random social media ‘*background checks*’ on those who join groups. Those looking to participate in group trading or raffles have their profiles scanned to verify their authenticity.

Should that background check be inconclusive, just as a precaution, one of the administrators can hold the seller’s payments until the winner’s reception of the item is confirmed.

The role of an administrator in both managing the content of such a site and the transactions taking place there is a demanding task, which has been referred to as “[...] *another job role really outside of work.*”(M). At the same time, administrators see safeguarding the community as gratifying and “[...] *a very nice privilege*”(M).

Safeguarding is a way to ensure that transactions within the community would not become affected by the exact mechanism seen in outside markets and platforms. The emphasis is on making sure that groups remain markets that exist ‘for the community’ first and foremost, as opposed to profit-oriented ones where parties in a transaction are more prone to risk.

Guaranteeing that typical profit-driven prerogatives did not lead these spaces and potential fraud benefits the community as a whole, making it a more attractive, safer, and reasonably priced trading platform.

Relating to findings identified in 4.2.4.1 and 4.2.4.2, transactional trust has been brought to attention in the context of s-commerce and the forming of purchase intentions between buyer and vendor (Chen and Shen 2015; Leung et al. 2020). The presented findings have the potential to expand understanding of s-commerce trust by considering closed social media groups where s-commerce is taking place directly between group members with self-formed safeguarding measures.

4.3 Community interactions

Retrogaming has been discussed in the community context in both offline and online settings. The presence of a community plays a prominent role in participants' experience of retrogaming. The awareness that they are not alone in their passion is of importance:

"It's good to know that there are people out there who share your opinion about those things. That is the whole aspect of social media, isn't it? Finding people who think similar things and have similar opinions that you can chat with. And then also argue with other people whose opinions are wrong. There you go." (DY)

The importance of the community and sharing interests is visible even more in cases where participants feel they do not have anyone to engage with about retrogaming. Having someone who understands their passion factors into their decision to join dedicated community groups:

*"Um, yeah, well, I mean, the whole reason I started doing YouTube in the first place was because my friends aren't particularly interested in stuff I've bought. Like, if I say to my friends, 'I bought that Vectrex there', they're like, 'what the f*** are you talking about?'*

Whereas if I say to my friends now, like YouTube friends or friends whom I've met through collecting, 'I bought that Vectrex', like, 'that's awesome', you know. And it's just people to talk to about it. So that's why I started doing YouTube because I thought, hopefully, I could meet a few people or

talk to people about this hobby. But then I never realized this, this whole massive community across the world.” (PT)

To G, the sense of a community is more than just the act of playing games. Community membership allows him to share his experiences and stories with others:

“[...] for me, retrogaming is about the community. It’s about sharing your experiences with people. It’s bigger than just playing the games themselves, and I think that is what I value the most about them.” (G)

This fragment suggests that the importance of social interactions between retrogamers extended beyond gaming itself. As important as it is for community members during events to experience retrogaming and acquire items, these are not the sole objectives of these gatherings. PT further supports this:

“Like when we go to these events, they have arcades, and they have sellers. No one really cares. It’s all about the Friday night before the event when everyone meets up, and everyone is talking. And it’s just talking and sharing the hobby. It’s like the most important thing to everybody. Because I think not a lot of people, have friends that they can do it with. It’s awesome. It’s really good. The fact that actually you’ve got a hobby and you have a lot of people you can actually talk to about it.” (PT)

At these events, conversations with other retrogamers who understand the hobby become somewhat more important than gaming itself. PT later stated that people met there become ‘*more proper friends*’, inviting each other to their own smaller gatherings. These could go even further, and as an example, he recounted his trip with a few retrogamers to Sweden, where they stayed with a ‘community friend’ who regularly travels to UK events.

Retrogaming events become a chance to form meaningful relationships with like-minded people and engage in conversations about their passion. This creates a true sense of community which is something that some participants miss on an everyday basis:

“There’s so much in the world now that distracts you... Look at people now. Nobody talks anymore. Everyone’s on the phone. Just reminds you of a time when none of that technology existed. There was no technology. There were no mobile phones. You could vanish for hours, and nobody could find you where you were or get in touch with you. There is no escape in the modern world from anything really unless you choose to lock yourself in a room with no Internet, no phone for a few days. I think that has harmed society. That has harmed people’s social relationships, and gaming conventions and retrogaming conventions are a great way of reconnecting with people in a physical sense rather than a virtual sense. [...] And I have been to conventions for other things as well rather than retro games, and it is very much a similar feeling. A similar sense of community. A sense of place. A sense of purpose. And you don’t get that in your day-to-day life. Even work is not that gratifying for most people. You don’t meet as many people at work. Everything is being done virtually via videoconferencing these days or web meetings. So a sense of community. It’s very important to me and important to the retrogaming community as a whole.” (SX)

This uncovers that the community also provides for a broader need for social interactions, which might be difficult to experience in contemporary, everyday life. Seeking meaningful connections with other community members is interpreted as an attempt to fill this gap.

4.3.1 Community interactions and sharing nostalgia

Experiencing retro games and acquiring new items during events is not the sole purpose of engaging with the community. Also of importance is the opportunity to share and exchange collective nostalgic memories (Baker and Kennedy 1994) with other members of the community, as narrated by SX:

“We weren't just chatting about the games industry. We were chatting about growing up in Sheffield at that time because that's where we were from. Talking about the good old days, if you like you tend to get very nostalgic for the time, not only for the games. (SX)”

Some of the conversations focused on reminiscing and childhood. The instances when retrogamers meet allow for exchanging significant nostalgic memories not related only to gaming but revolving around life in the past and the bygone ‘zeitgeist’. As mentioned by S, “everyone puts on their rose-tinted glasses” and glorifies how life used to be. Of particular significance is community members relating to other members’ stories and experiences:

“I've met some lovely people who are similar ages to myself. We're brought up in the same year as myself, like the same music, like the same clothes and the same movies and books. And it's wonderful to talk to those people, you know. I can sit with the guys from Press Start to Join... We can talk about Alien, we can talk about anything, and we share that love of old computers like a Commodore 64 the Amiga, and it's like... it's great to talk about when we were growing up.” (BR)

Sharing nostalgia amongst community members can also occur online. Social media groups often post nostalgic content related to retrogaming and more general posts concerning the era into which they were socialised:

So, I follow a few retrogaming accounts on there. So they mostly post like box art and things. And I just like seeing those kinds of things on my feed, and, you know, it reminds me of stuff. (S)

Nostalgia, in this case, is an emotion not only experienced individually but which participants seek to share with other community members facilitated by community interactions on social media and live gaming events.

Sharing has been already identified in the context of collecting communities and related item knowledge and expertise (Hughes and Hogg 2006; Spaid 2018). Sharing nostalgic recollection adds one more dimension. Sharing

nostalgia potentially lends benefits to community members. One could relate to tackling experienced self-discontinuity (Davis 1979) in a collective-self context. It could also shape positive ingroup evaluations (Wildschut et al. 2014) and be an element of forming relationships within the retro community and strengthening its bonds.

4.3.2 Community interactions and knowledge dissemination

Another way retrogamers benefit from interacting with the community is by acquiring knowledge related to their passion from other members.

“There are plenty of people there who were brought there who have brought their consoles, and they're educating people about them. Like, you know, one of the main key members of Retro Revival...” (BO)

This learning takes place not only during events and gatherings but also on social media platforms where sharing information out in the public forum builds community members' knowledge and is of importance to them. For some retrogamers, spreading the knowledge is also significant in their interactions with the community:

“But there isn't a day goes by that I'm not in contact with somebody in the community through social media. Either buying or selling. Giving advice. What I do as well I found that's very important in the community... If you are knowledgeable about a certain system or a certain genre. You know, people very often get stuff that they don't know what it's worth, or they don't know how much to charge for, or they are buying a new system for the first time or want to know what are the must-have titles or things like that. It's good to be able to pass that knowledge on. It's probably of interest to a very small amount of people in the community, but you feel like you're doing something good. It gives you an enormous sense of well-being.” (SX)

Sharing and acquiring knowledge is one of the key aspects of community interactions. This theme resonates well with what was said earlier about knowledge in relation to community member types and '*plastic geeks*' in particular. As knowledge of the subject matter is one of the requirements of being an 'authentic retrogamer', acquiring it becomes significant.

Constitutive pattern emerging from the study – resistance towards change

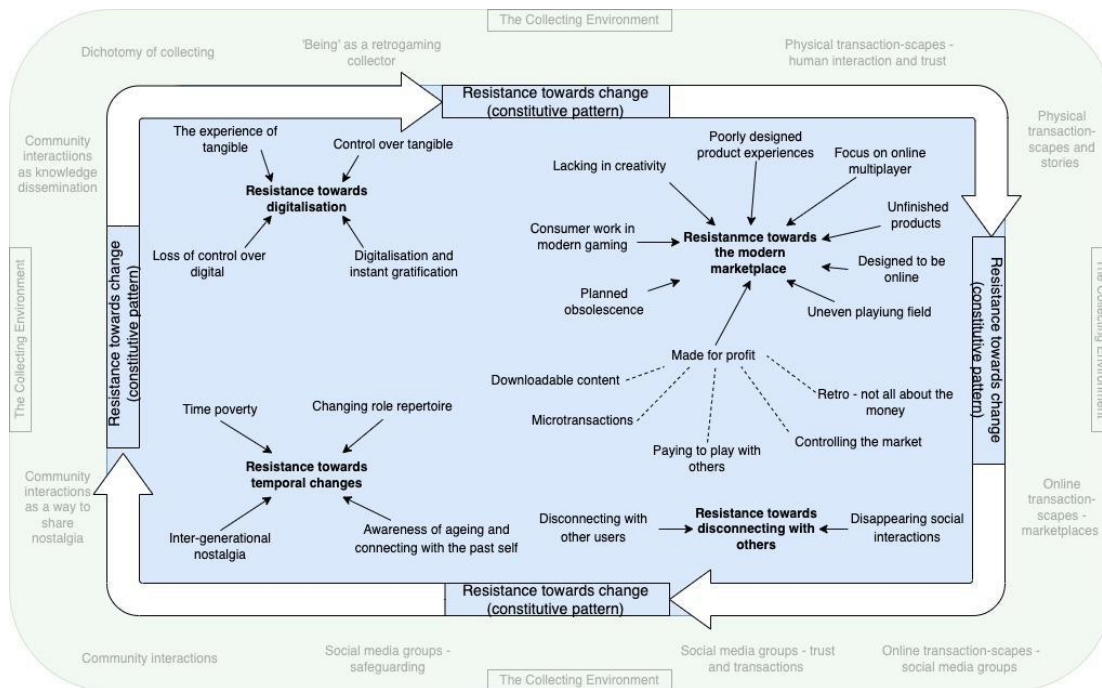
Previous sections focused on exploring the collecting environment concerning retrogaming and presenting related findings.

Starting this research, the author sought to explore the meaning of retrogaming for those who participate in this form of retro consumption with the expectation of the exploration being strongly 'past oriented'. Surprisingly participants' stories and experiences focus very strongly on juxtaposing the 'retro past' with the 'modern present'.

While undertaking the iterative process of hermeneutical understanding, the researcher has come to see that this juxtaposition should be understood broadly as opposing changes which took place in relation to their gaming activities and, more broadly, their lives.

As seen earlier in Figure 4.1, the constitutive pattern which has arisen from this study has been titled '*resistance towards change*' and related to the inner ring of the figure 'weaving through' and connecting themes as shown in Figure 4.2. The identified themes and subthemes will be presented in detail in the following part of this chapter to provide a better understanding of the meanings of retrogaming consumption while maintaining a connection with the constitutive pattern.

Figure 4.3 The location of the constitutive pattern of ‘resistance towards change’ within the conceptual representation of all identified themes



4.4 Resistance towards temporal changes

This major theme emerged as a result of attempting to understand participants' relationship with the notion of 'time' (see figure 4.2). The first resulting subtheme relates to the phenomenon of nostalgia and nostalgic recollections and the role it plays for participants. Secondly, the focus shifts towards participants' inter-generational sharing of nostalgia with others. Finally, the last subsection addresses the time-related changes which took place in their lives, impacting the time they can devote to their gaming passion.

The following subthemes will further explore participants' experiences with temporality.

4.4.1 Awareness of ageing and connecting with the past self

Over the course of interviewing, participants were explicit as to the role memories of past experiences and nostalgia play in their retrogaming. When enquired about how these retrogaming interests emerged, some participants

highlighted the need to immerse oneself in the past. Retrogaming is an activity allowing them to “*go back and relive the things that they felt back then*” (BR). As recounted below:

“So that’s how my interest in retro sort of came about. Trying to rekindle sort of my early childhood.” (M)

‘Rekindling the past’ evokes many different memories and affects participants in various ways. A part of these are personal experiences with gaming and using retrogaming items in the present, conjuring memories of the same activities from their youth:

“Good memories. Good childhood. Memories of playing that way past the time of my bedtime. Really nice to get it again.” (T)

“And it’s just hearing the music of games like that. It’s just, you know, so many memories of the game and being back as a kid and everything and love it.” (PT)

Retrogaming is an effective means by which participants can ‘*travel back in time*’ and reconnect with their past. Retrogaming allows not only for recollecting personal memories but also enables reconnecting with the past in a more general sense. Participants use nostalgic memories to ‘relive’ and immerse themselves in their past. In their recollections, they moved beyond gaming and called up seminal moments from their life that they believed were of significance in re-experiencing the past:

“I wanted to rekindle the collection because I remembered playing on the machines when I was young, thinking ‘I wish I could re-create that now. It will be so much fun just to relive the youth and get lost in the moment. Think about the memories of the time.’ Britpop was kicking off. There were so many changes. The year 2000 and the millennium bug and all that was so far away and futuristic and scary. Just looking back and even laughing at some of the memories like ‘Back to the Future’.” (PU)

With nostalgic recollections, retrogamers can once again glimpse the ‘zeitgeist’ of the time period when they formed their first experiences with gaming and reconnect with the spirit of the times in which they grew up. That is visible in often recounting memories not related to the act of playing video games:

“That’s taking me back to the early 2000s and giving me good memories of listening to Good Charlotte, going to college and some of the trips I have done in Europe. Discovering places. Not just discovering the game but also playing the game brought back these memories as well.” (PU)

A question remained as to the underlying reason behind seeking out these nostalgic evoking retrogaming experiences. It seemed that coming of age contributed to participants’ retro consumption. Becoming aware of getting older was expressed in negative terms, and nostalgic experiences induced by retro consumption were a way to recapture one’s youth.

“It takes you back to those fun days, and I suppose it is very nostalgic. Nostalgia is a huge part of it. I wouldn’t believe anyone who tells you it isn’t. I think everyone wants to just recapture the youth a little bit. Nobody likes to get older. It just makes you feel like you’re a teenager again in many respects.” (SX)

When further enquired about the need to re-experience gaming, BR elaborated and encapsulated the underlying reason:

“R: could you tell me something more about that ‘craving’ you had? [for retrogaming]

P: I don’t know what started it. I couldn’t tell you whether it was the dissatisfaction with what was life back when I was 30. Was I bored? I think I was bored. I was having a good time in my 30s. I had a good job. Nice car. Nice house. I don’t know what it was. Was the fear of getting old? I don’t know. It could’ve been. It could have been on my 30th birthday, I

thought, 'wow. I'm 30 now. I'm getting old.' Is it like trying to cling on to the past. Might be. Might be wanting to relive... You know, if something came up to me now and said, 'you could go back to 1987. Would you do it? You know I can send you back to 1987 now.' One of my favourite years for some reason. I don't know why. It just is. 'Would you like to go back to 1987 right now?' If I was single and didn't have a wife and my kid and my dog and my house. Yeah... In the blink of an eye. Take me back to 1987. But right now, I would say no, obviously. But I would relive it again... Yeah. I probably wouldn't do anything different. I probably would do a couple of things different. Got into some trouble. No <laughing>. Those experiences made me who I am. But yeah, I think it is wanting to go back and relive something... Yeah, it might be. Retrogaming and collecting might be the closest thing... And here's a theory... By the closest thing we've got to going back in time and reliving the things, we felt back then. That could be it, actually. The more I think about it, the more that could be it." (BR)

As we can see in BR's example, participants are experiencing immersion in personal nostalgia relating to various aspects of their young lives. Nostalgia plays an important role in the act of collecting and enjoying retrogaming goods. It forms a temporal link with personal experiences focusing on gaming and those related to other, more general memories emerging from the past. These are either participants' memories related to other aspects of their life or broader pertaining to how the past times '*felt like*'.

One of the underlying reasons behind participants' interest in retrogaming is the realisation of getting older. The researcher interprets various facets of nostalgic recollections present in this subtheme as having their source in that realisation. Greenberg et al. (1986) suggested that faced with mortality individuals seek certain types of behaviours (e.g., self-esteem building, forming close relationships) which reinforce their sense of meaning and help them cope with mortality. It has been also suggested in an experimental setting that nostalgia can help cope with ageing and mortality (Routledge et al. 2010). This research empirically supports this nostalgic effect (for both material and immaterial expressions of nostalgia) in a qualitative and consumer-oriented setting.

Retrogaming serves as a ‘gateway’ linking their present self, through nostalgic recollections, with their past self, allowing individuals to mitigate the uncertainty and anxiety arising from awareness of ageing and resulting discontinuity in one’s life. With the advancing age and the realisation of one’s ageing, participants use nostalgia evoked by retrogaming as a vehicle for attempting to rekindle memories and facilitate continuity between past and present selves.

4.4.2 Changing role repertoire

Some of the accounts brought forward by participants hinted at another temporal factor towards which they expressed resistance focusing on changes in their life-role repertoire. Participants often relate to having multiple new roles and more responsibilities due to transitioning into adulthood, including domestic duties, having started or planning to start families and work commitments, as the below examples suggest.

“Then I got the remastered Skyrim because it was one of my favourite games of my 360. This is when I was pre-family... I had more time.” (S)

“And again, it’s about nostalgia. It’s about relieving those kinds of feelings. Again, like I told you last time, it’s about the feel of the consoles and being around them. Kind of getting that feeling of freedom that you have when you are a kid. When you are an adult, things are so constricted. When you are playing games, you can forget for those couple of hours about the bills and about the responsibilities. It can kind of take you all back. Just all of those things together.” (DY)

Consuming retrogaming goods is a way for participants to return to their childhood and relive nostalgic experiences from a period when their role repertoire was ‘*much simpler*’. As well grasped by PU:

“It’s keeping the connection alive with the past, I guess. It’s trying to rekindle all the good memories of yesteryear thinking back, way back when times were maybe simpler.” (PU)

Having multiple roles can result in a deterioration of the sense of self and anxiety (Chase and Shaw 1989) – a concept referred to as the ‘saturated self’ (Gergen 1991). Moreover, not only role acquisition but also transitioning between roles can bring about similar effects (Erikson 1963).

In this research, participants’ accounts often hint at such life role overload. In their stories, retrogamers opened up about how their life had changed compared to when they first started playing video gaming in their childhood. Retrogaming and the accompanying nostalgic memories are a way to forget about their busy life or significant role-transitioning moments and think back to times when their role repertoire seemed less constraining.

4.4.3 Inter-generational nostalgia

Another area of importance to participants is the need to share retrogaming experiences with others. This topic was partially addressed in the ‘*Community interactions and sharing nostalgia*’ (section 6.3.1), emphasising sharing nostalgic experiences with other retrogamers. Sharing nostalgia also emerges in an inter-generational form with a specific focus on participants’ children and, more generally, the younger generation by introducing them to their game-related nostalgic experiences.

Interestingly, the notion in question was brought up in conversations regardless of whether participants had children or were only expecting to have them in the future.

The arrival of children creates an opportunity for some participants to raise a family member in the ‘*spirit of retrogaming*’ and have someone with whom this retrogaming knowledge and experiences could be shared. One of the participants expecting a child is excited about such a prospect:

"I will have to introduce retrogaming to my child. [...] It's going to be so great. I cannot wait to teach my kid about retro games." (DY)

A conversation with a different participant reveals he is anticipating the moment when his child will be able to comprehend and enjoy video games for the sharing process to begin:

"As soon as he was born, I used to joke and say, 'I can't wait till he's old enough to hold a controller'. And my wife used to say, 'there is plenty of time for that'. Because I wanted him to be able to play the games with me. My wife doesn't play games, so he'll get interested in them. I had him playing... The first games I ever got him... You see that little Namco joystick there? That is a 4-in-1 game, so you just plug it straight away into the TV and go to Pac-Man. It is good for very, very simple old retro games. And that is probably what I've got him into first. Because it's simple, the four-year-old cannot sit and play much on the Xbox. So I got him interested in those simple little games." (BR)

There are two perspectives on the significance of sharing retro games with offspring. First of all, there is a need to show the child what gaming used to be and highlight retrogaming's significance for the parent:

"I guess I want to share experience in the sense that you know my child comes of age, and these are the games daddy used to play with. Have a go on it. See what you think. This is how it was in the old days. Try not to be too harsh. You know, understand it, the game and things like that." (PU)

Another reason why retrogamers are looking forward to sharing these experiences is the hope that their legacy will survive and hopefully continue with their children in the future:

"I suppose even if you're passing on your experience and your knowledge to your children, I could see there's a lot of people in the groups to post pictures of their kids playing on the Mega Drive. If they hadn't introduced

them to retrogaming, they probably would have never touched it because, you know, why would a child go out and buy a Mega Drive or a Nintendo when they can buy an Xbox or PlayStation like all their school friends. So that's introducing them to a different aspect of gaming of how we gamed when we were younger in the hope that maybe our legacy of retrogaming will be carried on them, and maybe they will get more of an interest in that as well. And maybe they will continue that, and they will be collectors in years to come.” (M)

For many retrogamers, an important matter is what will happen to their collections in the distant future or should they pass away. For those having children or expecting to have them in the future, the first option is to pass on their collections to their children to decide what to do with their legacy:

“Yeah, but not for many years. Perhaps when the kids are older, maybe. Or I put it in a loft and give it to them so they can give it to their kids and pass it on. That is a possibility that crossed my mind as well.” (K)

Sharing retrogaming experiences and knowledge could also occur by making these experiences available to others. The following fragment illustrates how such sharing could happen and how it can be a gratifying experience:

“I already donated games in the past. We actually had a Gaming Lounge open up in Ipswich not so long ago. And they had a retro section but their retro section was tiny. They didn't really have a lot. [...] I was more than happy to just donate them to that particular business because I know that they will get use out of it, and I know that for other people, It might be an opportunity for them... See if they have got kids, and they are like, 'let's go to this Gaming Lounge place. I will show you the games that I used to play when I was younger'. It gives people this kind of opportunity as well. It's like a bonding experience.” (G)

Even though G is the youngest of the participants (early 20s), he also sees the importance of sharing retrogaming with the younger generation. He facilitates that by donating games to a local business.

Sharing nostalgia was first hinted by Davis (1979) who suggested that nostalgia is capable of generational transfer. This was later proven in an experimental setting where nostalgic personal accounts were capable of inducing nostalgia among younger participants (Wildschut et al. 2018).

The way this research expands on existing knowledge is by hinting that nostalgia can be shared not only by sharing stories but also by sharing and co-sharing experiences related to personal nostalgic revivals. Moreover, what is interesting is the age of participants willing to share nostalgia (30s - early 40s) in this research is much lower compared to much more advanced ages implied by Davis (1979) and present in Wildschut et al.'s (2018) second experiment.

In summary, participants can use inter-generational nostalgia to exhibit their retrogaming passion to those coming from a younger generation and wanting to be understood by others. The researcher interprets inter-generational nostalgia as a way for retrogamers to attempt to keep their retro passion alive, hoping their 'retro legacy' will live on with their children. It is an opportunity for them and their passion to be '*immortalised*' by maintaining continuity and a resistance towards the inexorable passage of time and becoming forgotten. These motivations are one of the reasons for which they wanted to pass on collections to their loved ones or make them available to others.

4.4.4 Time poverty

A factor contributing to participants' preference for retrogaming experiences is their available gaming time and how it relates to the time investment necessary in modern gaming.

All participants, except T, are either professionals, students or both. A majority of them are also in relationships or have children. This has an impact on the time they could devote to video gaming. They are no longer at the luxury of

being able to spend multiple hours playing games as before because of these new commitments:

“And those games are fun. I think there was a lot more fun than today's games, with a lot of emphasis on grinding through again, getting weapons. We're getting power-ups. You know, evolving your character from here to here...which is great if you've got the time to spend. If you've got four hours a night, and you want to play through a game. That's great. That's wonderful. Many of us haven't got that time any more [laughs].” (BR)

As video gaming products evolved, they have become multi-hour ‘journeys’ with the focus shifting from short to longer experiences:

They focus more on the plot, and that's why I don't play very often on PlayStation 4. It just takes too long. I haven't got the time. [...] Now, these games require hours and hours of sitting and playing in order to get somewhere in the game. There [retro], you didn't get the end of the game. You just played it for fun. You knew it's going to be till about seven or eight o'clock in the night, and you would have to turn it off. (DR)

In comparison, retro games offer a more instant and uninterrupted experience without the necessity of sitting through parts of the game which are not connected to the act of playing itself.

Lack of time stemming from everyday adult life and a different lifestyle affects the time available, making long modern experiences challenging to engage with.

One of the participants revealed that since he is a father, he cannot play a purchased modern game as the child is taking up a lot of his time throughout the day and night. However, because of the nature of retro games being shorter and more instant experiences, he is still able to enjoy gaming:

“In the beginning, she technically kept me awake since 2 a.m. in the morning. Then I spend a bit of time playing sensible soccer. I spend a bit of time playing Mega Drive games. So I am spending time, but it's weird

pockets of time at weird hours of the day. So when you are fast asleep, it's likely that I have just fed a baby, and I am playing Road Rush or something. (DY)

DR's following quote puts into perspective the difference in time required between retro and modern gaming. He talks about playing a remake of a retro game which remained true to its original retro characteristic. He was able to complete that title in a little over 10 hours. When contrasted with modern gaming requirements, his 10 hours amounts to very little:

"For something like Breath of the Wild [modern title] it's nothing. There are people out there who sit down and do 11 hours in one day. And that is a huge difference in gaming these days. It's like the amount of time it takes to become good at a game or get somewhere into the game... Personally, it doesn't entertain me... That amount of time for a game." (DY)

Unlike modern titles, retro games are "a quick pick up, and a quick put down" (BR). The loading times and overall design allows for the majority of participants' free time to be devoted to the actual use of the product:

"There is a lot of people now who don't have the time for modern gaming. A lot of the games of today have so much depth and content that you need to take a week off work just to give them the justice they deserve. Whereas retro games are very much pick up and play. 15 or 20 minutes. Play it, forget about, pull away, so for many people, it fits into their lifestyle." (SX)

Participants' accounts link with the notion of 'time poverty' (Vickery 1977) – having too many activities to complete and not enough time – which is currently increasing in the society (Whillans 2019).

As this theme shows, participants see time as both a commodity and a limitation. Having more responsibilities and less free discretionary time impedes their gaming opportunities and makes every moment available for gaming valuable. As a shorter and less time-involving experience, retro gaming caters to their needs in the limited free time available. Concurrently, it provides a sense of

achievement without the need to devote many hours to accomplish the same with modern gaming. Retrogaming, in this sense, is a way in which they can resist the changes in time requirements introduced by modern gaming.

4.5 Resistance towards disconnecting with others

Participants would often talk about gaming and experiencing it with others. These conversations tended to relate to retro and modern gaming products, granting more context and a better understanding of the topic. Here there are voices raised concerning modern-day social connectedness and human interaction resulting in the significant theme of resistance towards disconnecting with others (see figure 4.2)

The focus of this theme is two-fold. First, it centres on how participants attempt to resist changes in experiencing gaming products with others. In this case, sharing experiences should be understood as engaging in gaming with other users, referred to as 'multiplayer'. Second, while relating to disappearing physical transaction-scapes, it covers participants' concern over the decreasing levels of human interaction they see in contemporary society.

4.5.1 Disconnecting with other users

Participants reported a fundamental difference between retro and modern gaming multiplayer experiences. Because of technological limitations, retro multiplayer experiences can occur only with others present in the same physical space, also referred to as '*couch co-op*'.

Modern gaming, on the other hand, due to technological advancements and online connectivity, has largely moved away from '*couch co-op*', opting for online multiplayer solutions where players do not need to be in each other's physical presence.

Despite many of the participants owning retro and modern gaming consoles, which allowed them to experience gaming with others in both forms,

there is agreement amongst them that the preferred type of multiplayer is the retro one:

“For me playing multiplayer is local multiplayer. Your sat with your mates, and you're on the sofa in the lounge whatever, and you all got a controller, and you're all on the same screen. That's multiplier to me.” (PT)

To retrogamers, for a real multiplayer experience to take place, the requirement is another person or people being present in the same space, which is not the case for modern gaming:

“I guess a two-player game is meant to be played with a person sitting next to you on the couch, and you will be always able to play that forever. You cannot say that about modern gaming.” (SX)

One of the explanations for this preference is the enjoyment found in spending time with others while sharing game experiences, which is central to gaming:

“Multiplayer gaming for us was going to a friend's house after school to try out Streetfighter or the new Streets of Rage or whatever was coming out. Now it's like, ‘okay I've got this game. I'm going to go on Steam. I'm going to see who is in these rooms and just play with them.’ Not your friends. Just random people. I just don't get it. So people want to hang out with each other. I think it's one thing at the heart of gaming.” (DY)

The importance of this preference lies in the social interactions it grants. Being with others in the same space allows for better communication and interpersonal connection to be developed, which positively influences the overall experience. Being present in the same space adds a physical dimension to these interactions:

“Because yes, you compete online, but there’s something about sitting down with your friends and communicating and laughing. You can nudge each other trying to throw each other off.” (G)

These interactions offer an opportunity for socialising, developing relationships and shaping stronger bonds, which cannot be found when engaging with others in online environments. In a later comment G sees that as one of the main reason for the importance of gaming in the retro gaming community.

Relating to the above, the following example of experiencing retro gaming with others mentioned by K shows well that it is also a pleasant social event:

“Because gaming is a good social thing. Yeah, it was Sunday. We had me, my brother, Ricky, Steve, Luke and Rob. There were six of us there, and we had some consoles out. We do it on quite a regular basis. We played until about 1 o’clock. We played Mega Drive, the original Xbox. Yeah, they are all good social fun games.” (K)

In contrast, because of other players’ absence in the same space, modern gaming multiplayer lacks this social element. Participants felt that engaging in gaming with others online is aloof and lacks the closeness which characterises retro experiences:

“To me, it’s just a distant thing. There is no like... I just cannot take enjoyment from someone I don’t know in that sense. If it’s face-to-face and you got them in the same room and stuff, and you can see the reactions and whatnot. You can basically relate to each other because otherwise it’s quite cold and it’s also... [...] Without that human interaction... Without being able to see someone’s reaction, it’s a bit different for me. Because all you have got is the voice. And sometimes it is fun, but then for me, it’s guesswork because every time you play, it’s different people.” (DR)

Voiced here is the sense of ‘intimacy’ necessary to better relate to others and create more enjoyment from the multiplayer experience. DR (above) makes an important distinction when gaming online, namely, one does not play with the

same people when gaming online. Other participants have made similar statements:

“But again, a lot of the time, it's just a case of let's try and get this done [group online effort]. And then that's it. You never speak to them again.”
(BE)

It appears that in online multiplayer other players (and relationships) are seen as ‘disposable’, which does not create a solid foundation for forming meaningful relationships. It is a contributing element to the feeling of detachment which relates to modern gaming and impacts how retrogamers perceive it. They believe that modern multiplayer gaming lacks the “*first-hand experience*” which retro multiplayer does have. The fact that one is not talking to someone sitting next to them, but to a stranger in an unknown location makes them feel unhappy about these changes. As a result, gaming online is perceived as an activity which does not bring people together anymore in a way playing retro games with others did and still does.

“I think it's less of a social activity now. The technology has changed that and Internet and things.” (S)

Other participants do not go as far as S but claim that it is “*not the kind of social-ness I like.*” (PU). PU related to this in his second interview with an interesting remark:

“Because technology can bring people together but that it can also make us feel a part as well.” (PU)

As mentioned above, it is possible to interact with other players online via microphones and headsets. However, here another issue appears. Participants who had some experiences with online multiplayer depict it as an hostile and unfriendly environment where verbal abuse is becoming a norm. There were some cases of homophobic, racist language reported by some participants (SX).

Another issue participants have with modern multiplayer experiences is their large time requirements. As a result, when attempting multiplayer online, often the skills gap is too significant to enjoy it truly:

“You are paying £40 a month for Xbox live arcade, and is like five seconds of playing the game, and you get killed. Even if you go to beginner rooms or supposedly to ‘beginner rooms’, there is always someone in there who will sabotage you. So I found online gaming frustrating. Even in the team stuff, I don’t last very long in it. I prefer to play on my own.” (DY)

The quotes from conversations below illustrate retrogamers’ stance towards experiencing gaming with others. These factors affect their gaming behaviour, either limiting or refusing to participate in modern multiplayer online on the whole:

“Yeah well, I mean... That’s like a big thing for me because I don’t play online. Like honestly, I haven’t. I have not played an online game for two years, if not longer. I’ve got no interest in it.” (PT)

“I tend not to play online games. I don’t enjoy them for whatever reason. I don’t know. I think it’s all the little kids from different countries swearing and having a go.” (T)

Participants’ preferences for retro multiplayer experiences relate to negative opinions of their modern online counterparts. The researcher interprets this inclination towards retro and retro multiplayer as resistance towards changes in how games are experienced with others and their impact on socialisation. S’s words support this interpretation:

“So very much a part of it is the social aspects, and that is what retrogaming delivers and has delivered ever since I was five years old playing video games with my parents or friends coming round from school. That was the only way you could play. There was no online gaming. Xbox Live brought that to the world, but there was no such thing. And I miss that.

I missed that aspect of it. It can be quite a lonely hobby, video gaming. You don't get that with retro gaming so much because you need other people there. You can play a lot of retro games on your own, but... Yeah. That is what's missing from modern video gaming, in my opinion.” (SX)

Despite online capabilities and the connectivity it offers, modern multiplayer experiences cannot ‘connect’ participants with others as well as it is possible while doing the same in physical spaces. The ‘retro approach’ offers participants an opportunity to interact, form relationships, and deepen friendships with others and is the primary way they perceive multiplayer gaming experiences.

Expanding this notion further, in contrast to modern gaming, retro gaming allows one to attempt to leave ‘online life’ behind and reconnect with others in the physical world, as summarised very well by SX:

“It was more social to be a gamer back on the old systems because the only way you could play a two-player game was to invite a friend around that he would have to sit next to where joystick and you have to play with somebody physically being there. I mean, yes, you got multiplayer games now, and online gaming, but you're still usually doing it on your own play against somebody thousands of miles away. It's very social (events). You find that at a lot of these events, you have all the arcades cabinets and pinball machines and people are having a beer and playing pinball and having a chat. It's really, really social, and that's why I think a lot of people go to board game cafés. They want to move away from this massively connected online world where social media is everything. And how many likes do I have and how many friends do I have. People are more concerned with their online life than their real-life, and retro gaming is a great way to connect with people and have a bit of fun. At the end of the day, it's all about enjoyment and enjoying yourself. Retro games do that in a very accessible, easy, ‘pickup and play’ way that modern games simply do not deliver.” (SX)

4.5.2 Disappearing social interactions

Disconnecting with others and issues with interaction are not only seen in user interactions in gaming. Resistance towards disconnecting with others and social change also more generally relate to disappearing human interactions participants observe in the society as connected to changes in consumption behaviour.

The shifts in consumption referred to by retrogamers focused on shopping in the modern world and its effect on individual consumers and society. Participants feel that physical stores are disappearing in favour of a more digital environment. They sympathise with today's children, as the experiences and memories involved with physical stores and being able to see, touch and feel the products are cherished ones are disappearing. As narrated by DR:

"I feel sorry for a kid. As a kid it was the best thing to go to Toys R Us or going to Toy Master or whatever it would be. And being able to see the toys in front of you even if they were behind a glass shelf. The fact that you can see them.

Now it's going to be a picture on Amazon or a picture which of a website people are going to. So kids are going to grow up with this, and, as I said, I think there's going to be a select few shops that will have physical versions of all this. Again they will be the kind of like boutique shops if you like or the kind of quaint antique shops. It's strange how you can see this happening.

Digital is basically taking over the world, pushing a lot of physical places out and then we are going to be left with select physical shops." (DR)

What adds to this discussion is how people become tied to their homes where the conviction was that being humans, 'we should seek the opposite'. Many everyday tasks are completed from the comfort of one's home:

"We are all around the same places. The only thing you're going to go out for is a pub night out or a nightclub. People are less likely to be shopping, so the high street is slowly shrinking really". (DR)

In participants' opinion, this shift is having an impact on physical stores which cannot compete. They believe high-street stores are disappearing and only chains and franchises can maintain their presence. Online shopping, as much as being more convenient, is making people miss out on such real-world experiences, seen as something abnormal. As expressed by DR:

"We moved so far away from our ancestry where we would actually go out to hunt. And now we've obviously got supermarkets, so we don't go out to hunt. We just go to the supermarket. But now we are slowly removing the fact that we even walk or drive to the supermarket. It actually comes to us. You've got all the home deliveries.

We're moving further, further away from human contact, really. We've got less and less human interaction with each other." (DR)

The ability to purchase items online reduces the need to interact with others. As much as adults might not feel the need to interact with products, it is important for children. For a child, a store is a *"magical place"* to visit and experience.

Taking these considerations further, not interacting with others can harm one's wellbeing. This rich quote by DR explains the negative consequences of being isolated from others and the adverse effect that may have on mental health:

"If you walk to work and someone smiles at you for no reason, sometimes it is a nice thing. It sets a memory. Whereas if you're not leaving the house and you're not having an interaction, I do think it will change things. I do think that moods and stuff like that and depression and mental health will become an even bigger issue as we go through. Because if you're not having this interactions that are going to trigger our senses... If you're just in a box with four walls on it it's going to be very, very strange. [...] We are supposed to be in little tribes and little groups. We have always done everything as groups. You don't get many Nomads. Everything that we have done and all the advancements we have done as a race, has all been done in groups. It's groups of people coming together for the better and, I

think less interaction... I don't think it's going to be a good thing. So, I think there has to be some way of trying to find a balance with that.

So, I think there will be more mental health issues as time goes on with depression especially. It's already one of the biggest killers. There are people taking their own life, something I do quite a lot of research on. I think it's down to a lot of things going in the same direction.

If you don't have anyone, you can see the difference one person can make. That's why we have the Samaritans. That's the point of contact. What if we take away these points of contact? The interaction with someone passing you by. That one thing that stranger said could have made a difference in that person's day, and you're taking it away. I do think it's a bad thing that we have less interaction. Sometimes it is a good thing because we are busy. We can see each other as a busy species. We've got less and less time for each other, especially in a capital city. I think it's time to take a step back as well and just take more time for each other and realise what is important. But we will see.” (DR)

In participants' opinion, functioning in groups and 'tribes' is an essential part of being-as-humans, and the disappearance of these interactions might have a detrimental effect on one's mental wellbeing. What also stands out in this quote and is strongly relatable to participants' interest in retro items is the expressed need 'to take a step back', take more care and devote more time to relationships with others. The way this conversation evolved suggested that engaging with retro items could convey deeper meaning for participants.

M expressed similar thoughts believing that nowadays we are secluding ourselves more, as reflected in online gaming. To him, that has an impact on the social sphere:

“Social life is turning into like a virtual social life rather than physical, social life.” (M)

Such changes are, in turn, having an obstructive effect on people's communication skills:

"I'm not a huge fan of the world and the way it is going. I think you've got these pros and cons of everything, I suppose, but you do miss the way things were." (M)

SX seconds this outlook on the shift towards 'being' online. People do not talk less with each other with technology seen as a distraction:

"People just don't talk to anybody anymore. Whether it would be in a pub or... You can sit in a pub on your own these days for ages before anyone will strike the conversation with you because everyone is just sitting there on their phone." (SX)

In DR's opinion, this is also rooted in the fact that we have less discretionary time. We are a '*busy species*' and, as a result, have less time for each other. He believes we need to take a step back and realise what is important. Social media is also blamed. People are spending a large part of their time looking at screens, which makes their conversation and interaction skills '*appalling*'.

Still, social media allows retrogamers to 'find each other' and serves other purposes of their hobby, despite the negativity directed towards it.

In this theme, there is a connection between the disappearing physical transaction-scapes and consumer behaviour shift towards the online sphere, with more all-embracing changes occurring in the social fabric.

In this context, physical spaces, where retro items are bought, are a means of attempting to reconnect with people in a real-world sense. Acquiring tangible items in this manner is a way to resist the disappearing opportunities for 'real world' human interaction and progressing disconnection between people. Acquiring in the 'real world' is a way to oppose the 'virtual life' and cultivate social interactions, which, to a degree, can be nurtured in physical transaction-scapes.

Aspects of social connectedness and alienation are a recognised antecedent considering nostalgia. Psychology research proves nostalgia's positive effect on notions of connectedness and belonging (Baumeister and Leary

1995; Seehusen et al. 2013; Wildschut et al., 2006; Zhou et al., 2008). This is also the case in consumption research. In Goulding's (2001) research she highlighted alienation and poor quality of life as of the reasons why some visitors sought to experience nostalgia in a live museum setting while emphasising the positive effect such visits had on them.

This major theme touches upon the identified areas. It addresses resistance towards disconnecting from others from two angles, the first being the experienced disconnect from other users. Modern-day gaming products favour online interaction between users over physical space ones, with the latter alienating and not allowing for valuable user relationships. The change in how individuals consume is seen not only in gaming products but also through a broader prism. In their opinion, the shift towards online consumption participants experienced is responsible for the deteriorating state of social interactions and individuals' communication skills. Retrogaming is a way to express their resistance towards these changes. As the only way to experience retrogaming with others is for users to gather in one physical space, participants can connect with other users and attempt to form more meaningful relationships than in an online environment.

The other angle is the use of physical transaction-scapes to acquire retro items is a way for participants to attempt to reconnect with the physical world and resist the experienced digital shift in consumption. In this theme, participants' retrogaming is interpreted as a representation of times when social interactions were stronger, and consumption had a less detrimental effect on society.

4.6 Resistance towards digitalization

In this theme, '*resistance towards change*' emerges from participants' interaction and use of tangible retro and intangible modern gaming products (see Figure 4.2). Before venturing into this theme, what needs to be underlined is that the '*retro – modern*' divide is aligned exceptionally closely with the '*tangible – digital*' classification of products.

Despite the convention of what is considered 'retro' progressing with time, all retrogaming items the researcher encountered were tangible in nature due to technological limitations. In contrast, modern gaming products are available and

sold mostly as digital downloads, with 80% of modern games (Eurogamer 2019) sold as digital downloads in the UK.

Conversations with participants revealed that one of the inseparable components of retrogaming is the experiences related to interacting with retro items. What stood out is their approach towards the tangible aspect of owned items:

“So I am the kind of person who likes to have something tangible in my collection. Something that you can pick up, and you can say, ‘Oh, I have got this game’.

A lot of games nowadays are downloadable games which you pay a fee for, and download the game, and install it. So obviously, if you have lost your console, you can re-download it. I just find paying that sort of money for something you do not physically have in your hand... I find it hard to do. I always preferred to buy a physical disk with physical media as opposed to buying something online. So I don’t tend to buy many games online, to be honest. That is why I find myself going back to older games because it’s different.” (M)

M’s preference for physical items over their digital versions becomes quite clear. Having a tangible copy allows for a different experience of owning a product. Resistance towards digital gaming products made participants return to older games to avoid paying for intangible gaming goods. To M, spending a considerable amount of money on something one cannot own physically is something he disagrees with.

A preference for tangible goods also has an impact on the way in which participants purchase modern goods. Despite downloadable alternatives, for some, the physical nature of products is so desirable that they refrain from purchasing them in digital form and acquire a physical copy:

“I am very particular in the sense that I only really collect physical stuff for consoles. If I can get a physical game for a console, I will hold out, and I will get the physical copy rather than having it digitally if I can help it.”(G)

In some cases, already owning an item in a digital format is not enough, making them purchase the same product but in tangible form. Only then can participants experience ‘true ownership’:

“That might seem stupid to some people - ‘why buy it? [tangible copy] You got it already [digital copy]’. But for me, I’ve got it. I own it forever. Like digital stuff you don’t feel like you own it.” (PT)

This approach remains unchanged even in the light of the benefits of intangible product versions, as mentioned by T:

“But I also see it can be a good thing for space. If you’ve got no space, it’s one way of owning loads of games without filling out a flat or house. I do see the point of them, but it’s just I’d rather have the physical copy. Yeah, just preference... personal preference.” (T)

Living in a small studio flat, retro games fill T’s apartment and impact his housing conditions. Sacrificing his living space highlights this strong preference for physical copies. It is interesting to observe that despite participants’ awareness of some of the benefits of digital items, such as ease of access or space-saving, they still opt for tangible options.

The importance of tangibility is also visible when participants talk about manuals, inserts and other forms of add-ons (referred to by participants as ‘feelies’) disappearing from modern gaming items.

“[...] you don’t get manuals anymore. If you buy a PS4 game, it doesn’t even have a manual, you know that? It’s just like a little sheet of paper that says, like, you know, maybe an advertisement or something. I know, everybody misses that. People who collect video games are like ‘Oh, I miss manuals’, because it was fun.” (PT)

There is discontent concerning modern gaming products either not including ‘feelies’ or adding them in a minimal form. Some publishers create alternatives with printed URLs, directing consumers to online digital manuals. That is, however not the same as having ‘add-ons’ (mentioned above materials added to the product) in physical form.

The aspect of product tangibility is of significance for participants and more valued than digital forms of ownership. What can also be seen is that participants attempted to resist the transformation of gaming products into purely digital goods, which is co-responsible for them turning towards retrogaming goods. This also extends to ‘add-ons’, which are no longer included with gaming items.

Despite perceiving the benefits of digital ownership, when possible, retrogamers still prefer physical items even if, in some cases, it means sacrificing living space or additional storage expenses. Being aware of physical items’ significance, the following subthemes will further explore participants’ experiences with the tangible retro and modern digital products.

4.6.1 The experience of tangible

An important element of conversations with retrogamers were their experiences related to the tangible and sensory nature of retrogaming items. What has been noticed first is the joy owning them in physical form brings to participants and how that compares with digital formats:

“You don’t get the same sense of collection. I’ve been talking about collections for the last half an hour. You don’t get that same sense of joy. I mean, who looks at their Steam list, and it goes, ‘uuu look at all the lovely games that I have’? You look at it, and you think, ‘which game haven’t I played yet that I have downloaded and paid for? I have played it. It’s okay. Let’s delete it.’ You can always re-download it later. There’s nothing, I suppose, that’s good about it.” (DY)*

For DY, there is the enjoyment of physically interacting with (*'taking in'*) his purchases, unachievable by intangible, downloadable gaming products. Owning tangible retro items is also described as being able to experience them in various forms. For some the pleasure is in simple interactions with the object:

"And the other aspect to that I suppose, is... There is something nice about just taking the game, looking at the packaging. Whatever... And putting it in the machine. And there's a physical action to that. [...] So, yeah, there is something nice about having a physical object that you can clog into your machine, or whatever it is." (BE)

Not only does this fragment emphasize the importance of interplay with tangible items, but it also highlights relatable physical activities as part of usage preparation. What became apparent throughout conversations with participants was that retro items offer physical experiences unmatched by modern digital alternatives:

"People often say, 'are you stuck in the 80s or the early 90s or whatever?' No, not really. It comes back to that tactile feel of something, I think. I do subscribe to Netflix, and I've got every single tune I own in the world on my phone like most people for convenience, but to me, there's nothing quite like owning an original vinyl album or an original game. Take it out of its box. Playing it on an original hardware." (SX)

Despite digital alternatives being available and participants aware of their benefits, owning a tangible gaming item is experientially richer. Digital items cannot deliver the same sensory cues and experiences as ownership of a *'real world'* tangible item. For some, interacting with retro gaming objects is a multisensory experience:

"There's no need to have all this. [shows the items and hardware in the room] Having all this is part of that. Looking at it and touching it and smelling it and having the whole experience of the whole thing and doing it as you were [in the past]" (PT)

To touch, feel and even smell objects is something desirable that physical retrogaming items can only provide. In another example, not only are digital downloads perceived as cold, but an interesting link forms between tangibility and its role in forming memories. First, DR used gift-giving to highlight the issue:

“I think there’s something about being able to touch something that is missed with the digital downloads. It feels very cold. Try giving a gift. If you are going to buy a video game for someone, it is just a piece of paper with a code on it. Not quite the same. And again, if that person has a game on the shelf that has been bought for them, it has got a memory attached to them. You are not going to remember that memory if it’s just a download on your PC or a download on your PlayStation. It’s a completely different thing.” (DR).

Later, speaking more generally about the contrasts between tangible and digital, he provides additional detail:

“Because of physical copies, there’s always memories attached. With a digital copy, I don’t know how memories are going to attach the same way. You might be somewhere when you listen to that song, but I don’t think it’s quite the same.” (DR)

The connection between the items and memories is a significant and powerful link with one’s past self, which is hinted at by PU talking about losing or getting rid of important objects:

“If you throw that out, it’s kind of like you lose an object, but you lose a part of you because it connects you to those memories that you had growing up. So yeah, I kind of feel stupid for that. (PU)

Relayed here is uncertainty regarding whether digital goods will be able to carry memories for people in the same way tangible goods can. There is also concern about whether attachment with digital products can form, making them

as treasured as their tangible items. The researcher sees a link here with the previously identified theme of *'physical transaction-scapes and stories'*. According to participants, a more 'physical world' interaction with the item – owning it or the process of its acquisition – allows for memories to be formed. Contrary to this, digital products seem to lack that ability.

For retrogamers, consuming retro items, tangible by default, is a wholly different experience from consuming modern digital products. There is a unique aspect to them which allows for a more profound and more personal experience:

"There is something in the physical experience that is different to the digital. When I listen to the vinyl on the record player at home... And you select that record. When it's on, you don't sort of get bored halfway through and decides to double-click on the next track. You just kind of do it. You might occasionally lifted the needle and move it to next grove, but again there's something physical in there. It's nice to have that alongside the digital version. Digital is convenient. Physical is nice to have if he [hypothetical person] wants to immerse again. Immerse yourself into the experience." (DR)

In summary, the tangible aspect of retrogaming experiences, in contrast to increasingly digitalised modern gaming, is a significant factor for participants joining the retrogaming phenomenon. Retrogaming items, due to their tangible nature, allow for interaction involving almost all participants' senses.

An intriguing finding relatable to tangibility is retrogamers' perception of how digital products cannot convey memories. Possessions are important in the process of forming memories and maintaining a sense of past as hinted by Belk (1990) and serve as memory markers. Looking at digital possessions (e.g., modern gaming goods) and consumers approach towards them as carriers of memory highlights the paucity of research evidence. A study by Siddiqui and Turley (2006) only briefly mention a qualitative difference reported by participants, whereas Petrelli and Whittaker (2010) report participants saw digital mementoes as valuable and worth keeping. In contrast, this doctoral research

presents a clear statement of the inability of digitally dematerialised goods' ability to carry memories and a sense of past.

The researcher interprets these findings as contributing to retrogamers' preference for tangible goods and involvement with retrogaming.

4.6.2 Control over tangible

Remaining in the sphere of tangibility, an interesting issue has come to light in the context of the nature of ownership and control over one's possessions. It is human nature to own tangible goods, and the move towards digitalisation of products is affecting this intrinsic state. Despite intangible products' capability to provide experiences and other benefits such as convenience, the feeling of ownership does not appear complete. As retrogaming items predate the digitalisation era and come in physical format, they cater for the need for full ownership.

Some participants reminisce on the way ownership used to be before digitalisation:

"In the good old days, you went down to the shop, you bought the game, you took it home, and that was it. It was yours. You know you had ownership of that game. Now you don't. And again, I think that's... it's a step backwards." (BE)

Digitalisation, in this sense, is seen as a move in the wrong direction. What possessing an item in physical form allows for is making more decisions regarding the purchased good, revolving around various aspects of ownership:

"I understand that some people might think I am a bit crazy for still pursuing these physical things but for me... I just prefer to have a physical game. To me, the pros and cons are that I get to share it with my friends or other people. I can lend these games out, or if I need to sell them, I can sell them. So those are the pros that outweigh the cons, and that's why I will always prefer to get a physical copy over a digital copy." (G)

For participants, the ability to determine what they do with the item is an important factor in their purchase decisions, impacting their preference for physical copies. To begin with, tangible goods allow for sharing products with others:

“But in general, I’m trying to purchase more physical copies than digital. If you’ve got the option to go to a friend’s house, you can take a movie, and you can all play it. When it’s just digital, like a gaming system, then you could bring your PS4 or PS3 or 360 round, but it’s a lot harder than just getting it off the shelf and then just go.” (K)

Trying to share digital gaming products with friends is problematic. The ease of picking up a tangible item from the shelf is replaced with the need to take one’s whole gaming device. In this case, as much as sharing and co-experiencing gaming are highly troublesome, lending a digital item is practically impossible.

Another type of decision that tangible products allow for is to resell them and, in this way, ‘claw back’ some of the money initially invested:

“Whereas, if you buy a hard copy, you’ve done exactly the same, but you still have the copy of the game. There’s also a resale value there. You decide that in a few years’ time, as you want to sell the copy, and you get some money back from that experience. Whereas with a digital copy... You can’t sell digital copies of games. It’s not permitted. It’s not doable. So these are the main reasons.” (M)

Because of their intangible nature, digital goods, once purchased, cannot be resold. Regardless, some are still trying to re-sell digital gaming products by offering their modern consoles with dozens of games on the device’s hard drive. As games are tied to an electronic account, selling them in that manner is not feasible.

Participants also talked of control over items in the context of one passing away and leaving possessions behind. Here the question of transferability of goods is mentioned:

“If I were to drop dead tomorrow, I couldn’t say to somebody ‘have my music collection. It’s all iTunes’. It’s not transferable whereas with this stuff you could pass it on to somebody.” (SX)

Tangible goods are capable of being preserved for others and in a way to be remembered by. M summarises this subtheme:

“You just don’t get the same feel of something that you have just downloaded on the PlayStore on a PlayStation or something like that. Although you obviously own the game, but you don’t have a physical copy of it. You don’t have control over it. It’s also the element of having control over it. Knowing that you have that game, and you control it. [...] If you have got a physical copy of the game, it’s yours to keep. If you decide to keep it for 40 or 50 years in your collection, you’ve still got it in 40 or 50 years. You know if it is a digital copy, you’re kind of leaving it in the hands of the provider.” (M)

In summary, participants feel they have more control over their tangible purchases and can make decisions related to sharing, lending and reselling more freely. A worry exists about the continuity of ownership regarding digital goods. The decision to keep physical items is *‘in one’s hands’*, whereas the same cannot be said about the other without raising the issue of losing control over digital products.

4.6.3 Loss of control over digital

Building on the previous section, another subtheme emerged regarding businesses’ control over digital products (see figure 4.2). On multiple occasions, participants expressed their concern that in present times organisations decide whether a product will continue to be available to customers on their online platforms:

“If say Sony decided to pull down the digital copy of the game, they made it obsolete. They don’t want to distribute it anymore. They pulled down that copy. It’s pretty much gone forever unless they decide to reintroduce the digital copy of that game.” (M)

A question arises as to how a purchased product can be removed from a platform and made unavailable to consumers. An answer comes from the essential difference between physical and digital ownership of a product:

“R: What do you mean take it away?

P: Just gets removed or... I don’t know the technical term. Because you’re not buying an actual game, you’re just buying a license to play the game. So again, you don’t really own the game. You own the right to play it, I believe. I’ve not played and used it that much. I’ve got it all right here. [showing the room].

Whereas if it’s physical, you got it for years. I mean a survivor from the 1980s, so yeah [laughing and showing an item].” (K)

The aspect of not having ‘full ownership experience’ mentioned in the previous subtheme now becomes more apparent. When purchasing a digital platform, one is acquiring a licence to use the product. This forms a clear contrast with tangible retrogaming goods, where the continuity of the product depends only on its physical condition.

Another issue pointed out is the uncertainty related to the fact that access to digital products also depends on whether or not the company decides to sustain the existing gaming platform:

“So, you’re hiring an app [video game] for as long as the company’s willing to allow it to run. You’re hiring a video game for as long as Microsoft keep their Xbox Live. Once Xbox dies, that’s it. You’ve lost access to a video game.” (BE)

At any point in time, when an owner of a gaming platform decides to stop maintaining support for a gaming platform, users could face a situation where

they are unable to access previously purchased products or use all its features. There is a sense of uncertainty concerning the possibility of digitally accessing old games once companies decide to retire console systems:

“But there's still more returns on finding those games than if the digital servers get turned off, and you just can't download it again. So, things like that really worry me about the modern games as opposed to the old physical copies that you could get.” (BE)

The fear of servers being discontinued or companies going bankrupt is real to participants and shifts their consumer focus towards tangible products represented by retrogaming items:

“If they were to go under as a company, you haven't got the digital versions of these games. You haven't got the online servers. You have still got the console with your hardcopy games to play on. And that is just one of the directions I decided to go in, really. Have a hard copy of the game... Even if it is a game to download or buy off the shelf, I prefer to get it off the shelf.” (M)

In these scenarios, consumers would be left with an ‘empty shell’ with the hardware to use the product but no digitally available gaming software.

This subtheme shows that the preference for tangible is also affected by the aspect of control companies have over digital products and the uncertainty related to the continuing existence of online platforms where these products are available. The issue identified here is a lack of trust towards corporations managing these systems and fear that many of the purchases made on these platforms might one day be lost, with the decision being out of consumers' hands.

4.6.4 Digitalization and instant gratification

Participants compare the way they used to consume both tangible and digital types of products. To them, modern digital goods allow for a more 'instant' and immediately gratifying consumption experience:

"You don't get any of that with modern stuff. Get things released straight to digital, whether it would be a film or an album, and you don't get the sleeve notes. You don't get the sense of occasion. I'm going to make time out to listen to this record. And you make a little bit of an event out of it. You clear some time in your diary, you put the record on, and you have to listen to it from start to finish. You're not skipping it. You're listening to it in the way the original artists intended it to be listened to. You get some artwork and sleeve notes that you could read while you have it on. You can put that on, get a book out and just take yourself out of place for an hour, whereas if you try to do that on your phone, you will be like, 'I'm not a massive fan of that track.' Skip. Everything is too instant. Everything is too... It's too easy to get the gratification from it these days. You could go on Spotify and get every single record ever made, but there is no sense of 'I care about it'. It's very throwaway. Whereas if you're a fan of Pink Floyd. To have their album and make time for it shows a bit more love, care and attention, I think... compared to just going on iTunes and buying it for 99p..." (SX)

To SX, owning something in tangible form and consuming it in its destined, often ritualistic form, signifies more devotion and dedication towards the product and relatable interests. On the other hand, the 'instantaneous' digital approach shows less commitment and desire for the purchased item. That level of care is unattainable with digital goods as these are just files. The sense of gratification is related not only to the aspect of using the product but also to its acquisition process:

Now I could have just saved myself a whole lot of time and effort by just downloading it on the PlayStation Store, but for me, it's not necessarily about that. Like I said it's like a treasure hunt. You have to go looking for

the stuff. I feel it gives a better sense of gratification. I think waiting for the gratification makes it all the more better. And only that.

I like to be able to say, to point out a game on my shelf, someone asks me, and I will be able to tell them where I got it. Or the story of how I found whereas the digital marketplace is just the case of 'oh yeah, I press the button and that's that'. (G)

The activity of acquiring tangible products allows for a sense of fulfilment and indulgence that their digital counterparts cannot achieve. In broader terms, the contemporary emphasis on immediate gratification and on-the-spot consumption of products is seen by participants in a negative light:

"It's the curse of the modern world, isn't it? You have things like on-demand TV. We have an app for that, we have instant coffee, and we have ready meals. We expect things done at the press of a button or snap of a finger, that kind of thing. We are always on. We never switch off. It's just good to look back and think, 'how did we go by before and what has changed?'. (PU)

The fact that modern products provide instant gratification when it comes to their acquisition and consumption is seen as negative by participants. To them, taking the time to use the product as intended and making an effort to acquire it in physical form provides a greater sense of satisfaction. The researcher interprets this as another contributing factor towards their resistance towards digitalisation (see Figure 4.2).

The above accounts focus on participants' relationship with tangibility relatable to retrogaming and digitalisation seen as contemporary. As intangible formats become increasingly prevalent, the researcher sees retrogamers as trying to resist this digital shift by turning towards tangible retro formats. This theme and subthemes illustrate in detail the notion that '*resistance*' towards change emerges from specific notions associated with fundamental shifts in products' embodiment:

- the experiential aspects of owning tangible items;

- role and significance of product tangibility in memory formation;
- diminishing control over products resulting from digitalisation;
- digitalisation negatively affecting gratification from product use and its acquisition process.

4.7 Resistance towards the modern marketplace

Over the course of the interview, process participants devoted a considerable amount of time talking about how the industry made games in the past and compared it with gaming companies' current approach. These topics reveal clear negativity towards modern gaming market practices. The researcher gained an understanding that participants' interest in retrogaming goods is an attempt to resist the modern marketplace, which is the centrepiece of this major theme (see Figure 4.2). The following subthemes will focus on outlining its constituent elements:

- Poorly designed product experiences
- Unfinished products
- Consumer work in modern gaming
- Designed to be online
- Focus on the online multiplayer
- Lacking in creativity
- Planned obsolescence
- Uneven playing field
- Made for profit:
 - Downloadable content
 - Microtransactions
 - Paying to play with others
 - Controlling the market
 - Retro – not all about the money

4.7.1 Poorly designed product experiences

One of the areas highlighted by participants is the simplicity of retrogaming experiences. The most apparent aspect of simplicity, stemming from being based on older types of technology, was the uncomplicated looks and graphics of retro games:

“Yes, the graphics are not as good. The sound isn’t as good. It doesn’t maybe have the depth of modern games, but the ultimate aim is to enjoy yourself, and I thought this is great.” (SX)

Despite these sensory drawbacks, participants still enjoy retro games. They do not see limitations in visuals as a factor impeding product experience. When contrasted with modern games, retrogamers state that more advanced looks do not correlate with how enjoying these products are to play:

“You’re getting games that look stunning. Absolutely beautiful visuals. Beautiful graphics. But a beautiful game doesn’t make an enjoyable game to play. It can look stunning but can play like a bag of crap.” (BR)

Simplistic graphics were, in fact, one of the factors contributing to the enjoyment of retro games. It appears that, in retrogamers’ opinion, modern gaming places too much emphasis on the aesthetic side of products and neglects other elements of the gaming experience. As stated by PU:

“I guess modern games, I don’t mind so much, but I think they’ve lost their way a bit, if I’m honest. It’s all more about eye candy these days. It’s like, ‘oh, there is an app for that. This looks so realistic’ and things like that.” (PU)

One of these missing elements having an impact on gaming experiences voiced in the interviews is gameplay:

“I don't think much has changed there. Gameplay makes the games. The games that were good back then had to have the gameplay because the graphics weren't amazing, so the gameplay was the most important thing of it.” (DR)

Gameplay seems an essential aspect of gaming. It is necessary at this point to explain what stands behind the term ‘gameplay’. Collins Dictionary (2019) defines gameplay as the approach towards game design, its plot and the skill one needs to play it. Other definitions suggest ‘gameplay’ is separate from graphics and sound effects (Lexico 2020).

What characterises retro gameplay is that it is simpler and often distilled down to one simple idea. In many cases, it is about completing uncomplicated and quite repetitive tasks. Many of these games do not have an ending, with their main goal being beating a high score. As presented in this example:

“Get Pac-Man which is probably one of the most repetitive games in the world, but it was enjoyable. It was fun to play, wasn't it? People love Pac-Man. People still play Pac-Man today. But it's a very simplistic game. There is nothing really complex that you have to do. You just know with Pac-Man around the maze, and people love it. It's great. It's fun.” (BR)

In contrast, modern games are more advanced and tended to incorporate multiple concepts simultaneously.

“But when you play something like Grand Theft Auto, it's like, it's literally like a whole arcade because you can drive in it, you can fight people in it, you can play tennis in it.” (S)

Despite modern games offering multiple gameplay concepts in one product, there is an allure connected to retro gameplay's simplicity, which makes them a more welcoming and carefree environment:

“Mostly more simplistic, I think older games. That side of it is appealing. This early gameplay like an easy game plan and such. Like difficulty... I mean just an overall easy-going comforting environment.” (DK)

In participants' minds, advanced graphics is not the most critical component in gaming. Since such visuals were not attainable in the past, there is *“more emphasis on the experience” (BR)*, making them more enjoyable to play. As stated by T, people of his generation can put up with these lacks as long as the gameplay is engaging enough:

“[...] I think the older players, like people of the sort of my generation, we can put up with awful graphics if there's good gameplay. If the gameplay is there, you can put up with shoddy or not crisp graphics. But the gameplay. I think in the older games, the gameplay is a lot more... I don't know, it sort of drags you back in. More addictive... The gameplay is more addictive. More rewarding as well.” (T)

Retro does not need sophisticated looks because its simple yet appealing gameplay makes up for it, turning it into an *‘addictive’* product. In contrast, the modern gaming approach is more complex, with an emphasis on visuals rather than gameplay:

“I think modern games are... They look at the graphics ‘yeah oh, graphics are mind blowing’, and they are, but the gameplay might be a bit shit. A bit the same.” (T)

In the eyes of retrogamers, there are significant differences between retro and modern gaming regarding user experience designed into the product. According to participants, modern games focus strongly on visuals and neglect gameplay's importance. Multiple times participants emphasised that modern games' advanced graphics and complex gameplay do not guarantee a good gaming experience. In contrast, in participants' opinion, retro games circle around simple concepts that are more focused on the gameplay experience, forming a more welcoming environment. Conversations revealed that retro games are more geared towards the overall user experience and creating captivating gameplay.

The researcher interprets this subtheme as one of the underlying reasons for participants' preference for retro games and resistance towards the modern marketplace and its products.

4.7.2 Unfinished products

This subtheme relates to retrogaming production standards and how that quality compares with modern-day gaming goods.

Focusing first on retrogaming products, participants felt that in the past, they received a product that was sure to work and the manufacturer tested so that it did not contain any errors which might have affected its use:

“Back then, back when I was a kid, you would buy a game, one of these tapes. You get it home. One - it was guaranteed to work. Two - you wouldn't have to spend any more money on it. You were buying a finished product. Very, very rarely were there any bugs and games because they were properly tested. Properly manufactured. And it wouldn't leave the door until it was right.” (BR)

In the past, gaming products could not be tested and updated once the product was released. For that reason, they could not have been offered to customers until ready:

“So back in the day, if you bought Super Mario World, you got Super Mario World on a cartridge. You plug it in. Every level of the game was on the cartridge. The game was finished. He could not alter the game in any way. You couldn't change the game, so they had to make sure it worked perfectly. You got a good value of entertainment out of it, and they packed it full of content.” (SX)

Games were fully prepared with all the content on the cartridge, and the consumer received the expected value for the money. That is of importance to

retrogamers. Deciding on titles coming from that era, there is no uncertainty regarding the level of completion of the received product:

“I think with a retro game, you know what you’re going to get. You know that you’re going to get a full game as well.” (T)

Participants are in agreement that gaming developers’ approach in the past was better regarding quality than currently:

“And people would do this shit much better in the 80s and 90s. Because once it’s on the cartridges. On the cartridge has to work. It just puts you off investing any more time and money into modern games.” (SX)

This fragment highlights that participants’ opinion of the modern gaming industry is far from ideal and affects their purchase decisions. When it comes to the quality of modern gaming products, it appears that very often, what they receive is of substandard value:

“Now that seems to have really gone down. It’s more a question of ‘let’s get it out on the street quickly, and let’s let the gamers tell us what’s wrong with it’. I think there’s a lot of older gamers today that literally have stopped buying games because of this very reason.” (BR)

Later on, BR gave an account of a situation when he bought a modern game. It was littered with glitches and frustrating to play. After initially putting it down, he tried again after a few weeks, but it was ‘unplayable’. More participants are voicing similar opinions:

“Yeah, the amount of games I bought recently on modern systems that are unplayable, buggy, messy is... Technically it should be even illegal to release stuff in that state. You wouldn’t release a car like that, but in the gaming industry, it seems to be more and more the norm, and you don’t get that with retrogaming.” (SX)

Participants have flagged the practice of releasing an unfinished product as common nowadays, and, as SX remarks, such practices should be illegal. The fact that it is possible to update remotely and ‘patch’ a modern gaming product leads to a situation when in some cases, released games are unplayable, to begin with as reported by PT amongst others.

Because of the ease with which games can be corrected after their release, retrogamers feel they are being rushed out onto the market. Developers are aware that even if the product is unfinished, it can still be made available and tested by the consumer instead of the company:

“Let’s just get it out there. That lot will test it. They’ll tell us what’s wrong with it. And we’ll keep fixing. And we’ll keep fixing. And we’ll keep fixing”.
(BR)

Participants find this frustrating and cannot accept a situation where the burden of testing the product is on the consumer. What appears to be a part of the problem is how consumers pre-order gaming products before they are released. As PT explains, as soon as companies generate income from pre-orders, they feel ‘less obliged’ since, regardless of the product quality, they have already made a sale:

“Like ‘whatever happens, I’m going to pay for this game’, so if they release some rubbish game doesn’t matter because I’ve already got your money. You know, if like 10 million people pre-order again for £50, that’s like half a billion quid that developer’s got. ‘It doesn’t really matter it’s a shit game. We’ve got half a billion quid.’” (PT)

Disheartened by such gaming industry treatment, participants state it is one of the reasons why people are turning their interest towards retro games:

“Put the shit out of the door, and we will fix it later’. And I think that’s what the biggest problem is. It’s not fun anymore. And that’s why a lot of people, I think, are so interested in looking back at retro things. Some more fun

times, I think. It was a simpler age when you could just pick something up, and you could know that you're going to have fun playing it.” (BR)

All the presented issues with modern gaming do not exist when it comes to retrogaming which forms a part of the appeal for gaming products from the past. They offer certainty that one will receive a fully working and complete product:

“And you don’t get any of that with retrogaming. It doesn’t exist. There is no such thing, and that is another reason why I like it. You’re getting the full experience when you buy the full game, which is what you should always get.” (SX)

Facing such industry practices resulting in sub-quality products, retrogamers attempt to resist the modern-day marketplace and choose retro products as they offer them a fuller, more rewarding and high-standard experience.

4.7.3 Consumer work in modern gaming

Another subtheme identified as constituting the central motif of resisting the marketplace relates to the value participants place on their time and the fact that modern gaming products require them to undertake specific tasks as a prerequisite to using the product.

These very often tie in with the time-consuming delivery of modern gaming products to customers:

“You buy a game, now you install it, you update it. That can take 24h depending on how fast your internet connection is, and then you start playing.” (BR)

One might think that this is only a problem for those who stay in areas where the internet connection and download speeds are generally low. However, participants' accounts suggest the contrary:

“Some games are really big, and not many countries have great internet speeds and such that will take them so much time. Take them so long to download. Or they would have limited capacity internet. Maybe a certain amount of gigabytes a month or such. Even in States, I remember reading some parts wouldn't have like really good access. They don't want to leave their console running for like seven days to download a game. Okay, maybe not that long, but people don't like it anyway, so I read. So it's not only a problem in the you know 3rd world countries. It happens in the quite civilised first world countries as well.” (DK)

Modern games becoming 'larger' increases download times, becoming a burden for customers. As recounted by DK, even with 'first world' connection speeds the download process, so the act of delivering the product extends heavily in time.

This dependency on technology and the 'work' customers have to put into the gaming experience also takes place when the digital product has been already delivered and installed on the device. This aspect of consumer work relates to the previously identified 'unfinished products' subtheme and transactions involving unfinished products. It is customary in modern gaming for products to have regular updates, which are downloadable packets of data fixing problems identified with the product after its release:

“I picked up Drive Club for the PS4 months ago. I wanted to play it, and it wanted to download an update that was 7 GB. I had to wait a week to play it. It's just... it's kind of ludicrousness.” (DY)

As updates require the console to be turned on for the download to take place in DY's case, it took a few days before it was complete.

Updates are not restricted only to downloadable gaming products. Consumers need to download huge updates also when buying games on physical mediums:

*“You buy the game, you put it in the console, and it says if you want to play the game, you’ve got to download a 30 GB update. Depending on what broadband you have that can take a long time to download 30 GB. So people are there for four hours waiting. I cannot play my game because it’s downloading this f***ing patch, and that patch is making the game work because the game they have given you on the disk, and you paid £40 for doesn’t work. It’s disgusting really. It shouldn’t be allowed. This is ridiculous, and they are getting away with. Like I said, people pre-order games. It’s their own fault.” (PT)*

This is also a problem when it comes to modern gaming items bought in physical format. In contrast to retrogaming, modern games require for the game to be installed on the device drive, which can also take up a considerable amount of time. It can take up so much time that some simply gave up on the idea of playing. Participants perceive these practices as harmful, not only taking away their time but also impacting the experience and enjoyment:

“This isn’t fun. How can this be a game? And no, I have to sit here for like hours waiting for this to update before I can even think about doing anything. This isn’t fun at all.” (PU)

Retro games do not require time for the above-described tasks and the use of resources such as a broadband connection. As pre-digital era products, they are offered to consumers only in physical form and without the need to be updated.

In contrast to modern products, retrogaming does not require users to devote their resources and is readily available:

I wanted to have a quick game on a modern game the other day. Ghost Recon Wildlands. I switched my console on. There was a 15GB download before I could play the game. I went to bed. I think it would have taken

6,7,8 hours before that game was ready to play. I don't want that. I've got 30 minutes spare. And I think people want the, you know, quick instant switch it on, play a game, switch it off again. And I think that contributes to why retrogaming is becoming more and more popular. It's just it's easier, quicker. I think it fits more people's modern lifestyle. You know you are short on time nowadays for an evening or weekend. It's only the younger generation I think that has got that time. People in their mid-20s, plus I don't have time anymore to sit there and, you know, play these games.(BR)

Given participants' limited free time, retrogaming provides a sought-after alternative to extensive consumer work in product delivery or preparation for use.

The significance of this subtheme is that retrogamers felt that after the purchase, they had to undertake additional '*work*' as consumers. The expense of that work was '*time*' which they have in limited quantity and treated as a valuable commodity.

In the first instance, the work occurs during the acquisition process when participants have to participate in delivering the gaming products, which makes them spend considerable amounts of precious '*temporal currency*'. This '*wait*' also occurs when they own a modern game in physical format and need to install it on their devices.

On other occasions, they are forced to hold back their gaming because modern products need to be regularly updated, which puts them off the gaming experience in some situations. Participants do not want to undertake any additional '*work*' towards the purchased product and have limited time to spend on gaming. The researcher sees this approach as closely linked with the earlier identified subtheme of '*time-related lifestyle changes*'.

As a result, participants' move towards retrogaming is partially dictated by resisting gaming publisher practices with respect to the burden of additional work they frequently have to complete to use modern gaming products.

4.7.4 Designed to be online

A noticeable thread of conversations relates to participants' concerns regarding modern gaming products' dependence on internet connectivity. Currently, released titles have to remain connected to external servers in order to play not only multiplayer but increasingly single-player games:

"But that's another thing I don't like about modern games. There's too much emphasis on being permanently connected to the Internet. I think a lot of games today are created with multiplayer, but it's very hard." (BR)

In cases when servers are temporarily unavailable, or the internet connection is failing, consumers cannot use gaming products. This is the case for BR, who could not play a newly acquired modern game due to a server issue, deeming his new purchase unusable. Such a gaming environment, he believes, is very restricting and claims that the internet spoiled gaming in that sense:

"The internet connection today is required just to play the game. If you have an internet connection, you can't play the game. And that's crazy. I mean, that's just mad." (BR)

The thought of having a game which is solely playable online does not resonate well with retrogamers, as DY narrated:

"I heard that the new Streetfighter 5 doesn't have a tournament option. You can play it in a versus mode, but it's all online. I don't like the thought of that. I want a sandbox game that I can just load, complete and then put down. That's what I would like to do. New generation gaming, I don't think I'm going to persist with it, but if I can borrow a few more games from my mates, I will do so." (DY)

Participants are reliant on servers, and potential connectivity issues are not the only of their worries. What seems to be a more pressing issue is that servers on which these games depend will not be running indefinitely. As

identified earlier in the *'loss of control over digital'* subtheme, with a game's loss of popularity, servers are often shut down by the company. This presents another reason why participants are not keen on modern gaming products. Retrogamers state numerous examples of online games that have been *'turned off'*, deeming the product *"a £40 brick"* (SX). They believe that once a transaction is made, the consumer should be able to use the product *'forever'*, but some contemporary business approaches prove otherwise. There are some similarities with more rare situations where whole consoles lose their manufacturer's online support:

"So what if you didn't have Internet on day one and the game doesn't work. So what happens when they stop supporting PS3 and you can't download patches. The game is just useless coaster stuff for your cup of coffee. That is mental for me." (PT)

In other cases losing platform support limits online capabilities of games. This happened to DK with one of his favourite consoles when the manufacturer switched off servers for the entire system:

"Even though Vita we actually have some online games but not purely based online. Their online functionality has been stripped down. Like, shut down the servers. Like a golf game that I like, for instance. That went down like three months ago. I can't play it online anymore. Not that it was really active. It was nice to have, I suppose." (DK)

As a result, he cannot play with others online, which he did occasionally engage with. Despite not being a massive online gamer, he believes that as a product owner, he deserves to have it with full capabilities. It also makes him wonder about the future of gaming and creates uncertainty about the possibility of using current gaming products in the near future.

These factors add to the feeling of lack of true ownership over the product identified in the *'loss of control over digital'* theme. Participants have an impression that product publishers and gaming platform owners are entirely in control of whether the games should become obsolete or not:

"I hate it. I absolutely hate it. You don't really own that game anymore. As I said, if you buy a multiplayer-only game today digitally and in two years' time, that game is not very popular, but you happen to love it, and the publisher turns off the server that powers the multiplayer for the game, you can't play it anymore. It's worthless. It has no reason to be. It has no value. And you have paid money for that. You should be able to play that game, but you can't. It's like somebody would have taken the car off you. That is happening more and more as well. A lot of the games in my Xbox collection you physically cannot play because they have turned off the online servers." (SX)

This leads to a situation where gaming products need to be consumed in 'a rush' as there is a likelihood that depending on its popularity, with time, some of its functions or the game itself might become unusable. Upon a loss of support for the entire platform, if the game has been purchased as an online download, the 'ticking time bomb' is the time before the console stops working correctly:

"But if they stop supporting the online, I cannot download it. So those games only mind until such time as that console last, which isn't going to be long." (PT)

A sign that the gaming environment was changing towards a more substantial reliance on online connectivity to consume the product could be seen in some developers moving away from referring to themselves as gaming companies creating products but as service providers instead:

"The latest thing that has come out in the last few months is we don't make video games anymore... We make services. Online services that you can pay to enjoy. So the video games industry doesn't even see itself as making video games anymore. The likes of Ubisoft, in their last shareholder's announcement, said that they are not a maker of video games. They are a maker of interactive online experiences" (SX)

Seeing these new technological solutions and how the video gaming environment is evolving, participants are looking towards the past when they did not have to worry about such issues. Back then, a purchased product was not designed with online connectivity in mind and was theirs to own in total capacity:

“And the biggest difference obviously is this constant need to be connected to the internet. All the time, you know. You buy a game. Now, if you haven’t got an internet connection, you can’t play it. You’ve got this constant need to talk back to servers and a wider community. Back then, you know, we didn’t have that. You just loaded the game. You played it. That was it.” (BR)

Retro games do not rely on an internet connection. Once the product is acquired, its use and capabilities as products are not externally affected by developers and platform operators. That is one of the reasons for trying to resist the contemporary corporate shift towards controlling these ‘gaming services’. Participants aim to focus more on retrogaming experiences they can fully own and rely on to work in the future.

4.7.5 Focus on online multiplayer

As commonly known, gaming can be both a single and multiplayer experience. When discussing multiplayer experiences with participants, what emerges from conversations is a shift in modern gaming in that area. Regarding the single-multiplayer dichotomy, participants notice a much stronger emphasis on creating gaming products as multiplayer experiences:

“I’m happy to play a game on my own. A one-player game. So that’s another reason why I don’t have much time for modern gaming. The emphasis is far too much on multiplayer. The single-player campaign for the game is usually an afterthought. It’s like, ‘oh, we need to put a single-player game in there as well.’ There’s too much emphasis, I think, on multiplayer, which I’m not interested in.” (BR)

According to retrogamers, single-player experiences are not the main aspects of modern games. Instead, products are being prepared with online gameplay in mind, shifting single-player use into the background.

In some instances, participants believe that removing multiplayer capabilities from some modern products would leave little of the product experience for the consumer:

“Because you see the others, and then there's like a team play and such. You can go against each other. If you strip that down to just a single player right now, in a way, you wouldn't have so much left... You could... You'd have still a good, good amount, but you will take away so much from the game it wouldn't be the same because you would be stripping down a lot of gameplay features. I feel like a lot of different modes that you can play is against a competitor.” (DK)

Sometimes, online gaming is the only possible way to use the product when considering multiplayer. That becomes especially visible and off-putting to participants when such changes occur with gaming products that previously allowed for experiencing it locally. This leads to another issue of modern multiplayer games: the increase in products oriented at online multiplayer only. What results are a few new titles allowing for multiplayer gaming with others locally:

“So obviously, it's fun, but it's not an individual [local] multiplayer if you know what I mean. Taking control of the individual character. Whereas current-gen consoles they have taken away that aspect by making it online only for multiplayer. There is only a small library of current generation games where they allow couch co-ops... It's the term we use - couch co-op.” (M)

Participants find the online multiplayer aspect of modern gaming unappealing and in some cases even upsetting:

“And it just pisses me off. So much that you buy games now like... they announced some new game came out a couple of weeks ago driving game... like a rally game. Looks awesome like wicked. I love arcade races. I'm going to buy that. So I look up online. It's like no local multiplayer. It's only online multiplayer. I'm like, for god's sake... Why?” (PT)

This situation is present and progressing despite participants' opposition to these changes and demanding more emphasis on local multiplayer in new products. Retrogamers feel neglected by the industry for numerous reasons. First, they believe single-player experiences have been dominated by online multiplayer in contemporary gaming products. Another issue is multiplayer experiences themselves. When discussing modern-day playing with others, the market shifts towards online capabilities and focuses on the younger generation of gamers. Modern gaming rarely offers local multiplayer experiences that these ‘older/retro’ consumers were interested in.

The industry's focus on mainly developing online multiplayer gaming experiences becomes an antecedent towards participants' interest in older gaming items and a way in which they try to resist the changes taking place in the gaming market. In retro, they can find products from an industry era that resonates with the way they understand gaming and satisfy their consumer needs.

4.7.6 Lacking in creativity

Creativity in modern-day industry and that of the past was a topic brought up during conversations. Participants' experiences with modern gaming lead them to believe creativity and imagination in gaming design ‘*went missing*’. To them, current-generation gaming is characterized by repetitiveness and a lack of willingness to explore new ideas:

“It's like Call of Duty. How many Call of Duty games have we got? How many FIFA games have we got? Can you tell me how many FIFA games have we got? We probably got over 30 FIFA games. 30 Call of Duty's

because it makes money. They're going to keep doing it and churning out. So I think there's no innovation anymore.” (BR)

Modern-day companies seem to be running out of ideas and prefer to follow tested formulas and launch the same games every year, turning them into franchises. As remarked by PU:

“These days it’s all sequels, prequels and everything in between.” (PU)

These repetitive products are made by making slight alterations and maintaining tested core concepts behind them. In retrogamers' opinion, this leads to a situation where business results become a prerogative forcing creativity to ‘take the back seat’.

*“Nowadays, it’s just the business. They are turning out these games year after year like FIFA every year. Assassins Creed every year. Call of Duty every year. It’s always the same f***ing game with just a different subtitle. It’s the same each game every year, and people keep buying them. That’s the problem. People keep buying them. Why are you buying the same game every year? It’s just crazy.” (PT)*

Other participants echo similar voices suggesting that the modern industry agenda focuses on profit:

“It’s the same game is the end of the day because people buy it. That’s what it’s all about. It’s driven by greed and money and big publishers like Activision and Electronic Arts.” (BR)

According to retrogamers, developers at some point decided to focus on the volume of releases instead of experimenting with concepts and devoting more effort to making products different and exciting. Participants are willing to give publishers time to experiment with new approaches if it lends more value to products:

“I’m happy to wait three or four years for a release of the game if I know this is going to be much better than the original rather than something which I think as ‘nobody sees the difference in this game. They have just changed the name and made a couple of different levels and features. If you think about it in that sense, you’re not getting value for money. So, I always prefer that, to be honest.” (M)

Unfortunately, nowadays, gaming companies are less likely to take these risks, affected by their size and increasing financial pressures from shareholders. It creates an expectation for products to achieve good financial results and avoid endangering profits by experimenting with more creative solutions. SX reflects on this in this portrayal of the modern industry:

“To make a video game these days takes \$100 million on a team of 2000 people. It’s something that one or two men can’t do anymore, and as a result, they are not taking risks anymore in the games they are producing.” (SX)

The size of companies could very well be one of the reasons behind this situation, and some support for that is visible in what participants say about a few small, independent modern developers known as indie developers:

“Don’t get me wrong, there are some really good developers, and it’s a really good time for these indie developers.” (PT)

According to participants, these small companies are willing to take more risks when designing gaming products than large gaming corporations. Indie developers emulate the early gaming industry environment that created today’s retro games. Similarly, in the past small companies and, in some cases, ‘*bedroom coders*’ were willing to experiment and quite often had to resort to creativity to overcome technological limitations. Participants see the past as being more oriented on innovation and ‘*toying*’ with gaming – a characteristic lost in today’s industry:

“Back in the 80s, you saw games... They were new concepts, new, innovate, you know... innovation. But now I think we're just seeing repetitive, repetitive games all the time.” (BR)

Considering how today's gaming products are lacking in creativity and it being the 'missing factor' found in retro games makes retrogamers turn towards the past in search of creative gaming approaches:

“I really started to hanker for getting back into retrogaming because I was finding a lot of the modern games were getting repetitive. Very uninteresting. [...] I know exactly what the game is going to be like. I know exactly what is going to deliver for me, and I'd rather spend my money elsewhere. And for me these days is very often on retrogaming.” (SX)

BR made an interesting observation that missing creativity in entertainment goes well beyond the boundaries of gaming and is a sign of modern times. In his views, modern entertainment is centred around profit:

“So innovation, I think, is gone. There's not much in the way of innovation anymore. It's just the old tried and tested. We know this makes money so let's keep doing this. It's Call of Duty again, isn't it? We know it makes money. Let's just keep doing it. [...] So if you wanted to do a very good independent film, you have to get independent money and funding to go ahead and make that film because innovation has been lost. And I think you can say that for movies, games and music. Not much innovation anymore. I think it's the same old you know. Manufactories. [...] I think it's all about mass consumption. And it's a tried and tested formula. If you know something is going to make money, you will go out there, and you will keep flogging that horse long after it's dead.” (BR)

The researcher interprets this lack of creativity in modern gaming products as one of the reasons behind participants' resistance towards the modern marketplace and their interest in retrogaming goods.

4.7.7 Planned obsolescence

Moving away from the quality and design of software, this theme focuses on products essential to its use – gaming hardware. These products, referred to as consoles, primarily focus on processing information stored on various mediums such as tapes, cartridges, CDs and hard drives, turning it into gaming experiences. In conversations, participants sometimes refer to the quality and reliability of modern consoles and how they compare with their retro equivalents. Their experiences with modern hardware's build quality are somewhat disappointing, with new gaming systems described as more fragile and prone to breaking down:

“That is the thing with these new consoles. They need to have good ventilation because the components they are using, like these graphics chips they, get really hot. There’s a lot more hot air that has to be dispelled from the console, so the ventilation is not as good. Like when you’ve got it stuck in the cupboard with the wires coming out back, it is building up heat that it is just not good for the console. [...] So yes, my PS3 console had that issue. It would just turn around and then turn itself back off again after beeping. I tried to repair it. I think I paid about £70 or £80 to get it repaired and that only lasted 12 months. So even after a year, it has broken again. So do you want to keep spending money on it or just try to buy a brand-new one with a warranty?” (M)

Modern hardware comes across as fragile and needs to be kept in certain conditions. Fixing it requires a financial expense high enough to question the idea of repair and consider getting a new product instead.

There comes the issue of modern hardware problem frequency. PT's experiences question its reliability:

*“But in a few years, Sony goes here’s PS5 and then a few years after that, like okay, we’re stopping the online support for the PS4. Then your digital game, you only own until that console survives. I mean, I’ve got a stack of like 3 PS3 last year because they’re just constantly f***ing break, right?”*

Oh, yeah. Yeah, there are three there. So that and then we've got two working in the house at the moment. And I've probably gone through like eight more because they always constantly break.” (PT)

Constantly failing modern consoles made PT replace his PS3 multiple times. There is also a mention of the relationship between losing digital support for a console and breaking down. Should the support be lost, games downloaded from the internet and stored on the console HDD would last only as long as the console itself. PT then presented his stack of broken consoles. What stems from this is the fact that console breakdowns combined with losing system support are a worrisome issue for participants, making some of them ‘stockpile’ hardware as a countermeasure. Moreover, worth highlighting is the comparison made to retro hardware. Despite decades since being manufactured, they are still on the whole running without any problems. This leads to criticism directed at modern hardware as being designed with planned obsolescence in mind. More voices are emphasising the quality of older gaming items:

“This machine is still going [pointing at a retro console]. And so many years on it stood the test of time. It’s amazing.” (PU)

Some collectors, owning many retro consoles, have never encountered a malfunctioning one:

“I haven’t really come across an older console that has had an issue. I have probably traded about 15 or 20 Mega Drive consoles over the last year.” (M)

When talking about robustness, it also applies to retro mediums. What participants highlight is that old data carriers very rarely break, and even if some issues did occur, they are easily repairable:

“I could just get on with my old cartridges, I could put them in. 30 years they probably still work. No updates asked for. It isn’t hard as it?” (PU)

Retrogamers find the aspect of reliability of retro games a benchmark of how the industry should treat the consumer regarding hardware production quality. For some, that inhibits their use of modern gaming platforms as they feel not respected as customers. This issue becomes even more significant when considering digitally downloaded games are facing discontinued online support. As identified in the earlier subthemes (*'loss of control over digital'* and *'designed to be online'*), it deems past purchases unusable. This, again, turns participants against the modern gaming marketplace.

4.7.8 Uneven playing field

Participants also brought up an issue related to the apparent lack of fairness in the multiplayer gaming environment. What is at the centre of these conversations are microtransactions. Although these will be covered in more detail later on, an explanation of what they are is required to understand this subtheme better:

"Microtransactions are where you buy the game in the shop for £40 or whatever, and you can grind and play the game for hours and earn money, but if you pay the games company an extra £10 in real money, you don't need to do any of that. They will give you 10,000 tokens so you can buy loot boxes to unlock new gear and better guns, and better armour. It will give you an advantage." (SX)

Some microtransactions provide consumers with an advantage over others in owning better in-game items and providing other beneficial features. The subject of offering some an upper hand over others is what participants are openly hostile about:

"They can also not be good in the sense of giving players advantages over you if you don't want to buy it. Then you might as well stop playing because people that have bought it are going to kill you faster than you're going to

kill them. So, yeah, DLC [In this case, microtransactions] is highly contested.” (G)*

Retrogamers see this practice of paying for advantages as questionable and creating an unfair environment for the use of products in an online setting:

“It's not cheating because it's technically a part of the rules of the game, but it's like going to the Olympics and taking steroids because you're not actually getting there through your own hard work you're skipping stages of it. And that's really a problem for online games where if it's a competitive game basically you're giving somebody the ability to buy the way to success in the game rather than actually getting it by skill.” (BE)

The apt comparison with the Olympics allows for a better understanding of how retrogamers perceived microtransactions. This leads to a situation where it does not matter who spends more time becoming more experienced with the product but who invests more money towards in-game purchases. An excellent example of these industry practices comes with a recent and anticipated Star Wars games launch, as narrated by PT:

“Like there's been all that EA stuff recently with the Star Wars game. Not that I play it. But basically, they locked away all the content so that you had to do microtransactions. So if you want to have like a really, really good character, you have to buy that character. So it doesn't matter how good you are at the game. All that matters is who spent the most money. So if you've got someone who just bought the game for, like, £50, and then somebody bought the game £50 and spent £100 on upgrades, they're going to win on a multiplayer game, and then how is that fair?” (PT)

As retrogamers mention, this issue does not only apply to select, singled-out cases and is gradually becoming an industry standard. Microtransactions are lucrative for developers, but participants are negative towards them due to microtransactions' polarising effect on the gaming industry. Participants cannot understand the sense of achievement derived from in-game purchases:

“That is just crazy. It makes the game unwinnable. What is the point in playing if you can weigh the odds in your favour that much? Where is the satisfaction going to get out of this game? And I'm really good at this game. If somebody turns up and goes, ‘I really played it for an hour, but I spent £200 to get the best armour’, and they just go bang, and you die because they've got more money than you. It's weird. And then you have been gaming for a long time... That is probably the single most annoying thing that will alienate you from modern gaming than anything else. The pay-to-win mentality.” (SX)

This ‘pay to win’ approach is a contributing factor making retrogamers avoid modern multiplayer experiences and, as a result of the previously mentioned modern gaming’s focus on online multiplayer, often pass up on such games entirely.

Considering such an uneven consumer ‘*playing field*’, one could see how retro games offer a more relaxed and ‘*fair*’ gaming environment. In contrast, they provide a multiplayer experience where an advantage can be reached only by devoting more time to the product. In retrogaming, progress and user skills and experience cannot be purchased.

4.7.9 Made for profit

Over the course of conversations, participants placed much focus on the shift which took place in the video gaming industry recently. They feel that currently, gaming corporations place a much larger emphasis on generating profit. The pivotal moment was when large developers fully realized the potential for profit in the market:

“You’ve got people like Electronic Arts, Eidos. There are lots of companies that saw this as big money, and I think that is when things really started to change.” (BR)

What participants feel is that creativity and product quality, as outlined in previous subthemes, does not matter as much as in the past and has been substituted with an emphasis on sales figures:

“So yeah, I don't think... to them it doesn't matter that much because if the game sells, well, that's what the aim was.” (DK)

When exploring the topic in more detail, participants revealed more regarding their approach towards this change and how they felt treated by the industry as consumers. The market has shifted from creating products for users to enjoy to focusing more on financial gain. In participants' opinion, it creates an increasingly profit-oriented environment. The industry, as a result, has *“lost that innocence of producing fun things to play” (BR)*. BR believes that this was when the situation started deteriorating from an end-consumer perspective. Games are currently encouraging consumers to spend as much money as possible on one title by offering more paid content and explicitly targeting *“whales' who will spend hundreds of pounds on one game.” (SX)*. SX believes that this change makes companies see him less as a gamer and more as a consumer. Some participants feel that gaming corporations' emphasis on profit passed the point of *‘focus’*:

“It's like they are never satisfied some of these corporate hacks. They aren't interested that we have invested our time and money. Dedicated to one single game. They want to squeeze every single penny they can out of us, which I don't really agree with. I think there's a little bit of corporate greed in there, which I'm not liking very much.” (PU)

As mentioned above, in the past, the industry was more strongly focused on consumer satisfaction and enjoyment. At the same time, retrogamers acknowledge that retro games were also quite an expense *‘back in the day’*, but they had one fixed price, and the consumer received the whole experience:

“It feels like current-generation gaming is now geared towards getting as much money out of the consumer as it is humanly possible. I mean, they

weren't cheap back in the day. They were expensive things, but they had a standard price point.” (DY)

Participants outlined the different ways the modern-day gaming industry is exhibiting profit orientation. The following areas will aim to present this in a structured and more detailed way.

4.7.9.1 Downloadable Content

The first profit-oriented gaming strategy introduced by participants in the interviews related to DLCs. DLC, or downloadable content, is defined as additional downloadable content within an existing video game environment (TechTerms.com 2019). This content can take up the forms of extra maps, storylines and other gaming environment elements that significantly impact the product. As put by BE:

“DLC, I tend to relate that to improving a game, you know, expanding it, making a bigger world for the game.” (BE)

Even though these additions to games expand the gaming experience, participants are negative towards this ubiquitous modern-day gaming concept:

“Going back to the digital content, it's mainly DLC's, that's what they call them - extra content. I'm not the biggest fan of them... In a way, I think it's a bit of a con. Of getting more money out of gamers.” (M)

The reason for which retrogamers challenge these addons comes from the additional payment required from the user:

“When I think of DLC, it just puts me off. As soon as I think of it, I think. Additional content where I will have to sign up for something. Buy something else. And I just refuse. The standalone game. That is the way I like it.” (DY)

A common thread amongst participants is that they do not understand why they must make an additional payment for content to complete or expand the product. As far as they are concerned, *“I think you've already... already paid for the game. You shouldn't be having to pay extra for whatever it is that you're doing”* (BE). The fact that one is not receiving the complete experience is something aggravating:

“It's kind of annoying that you don't get the complete game right away, and you're paying overtime, and your experiences are not complete. And you just spend more money.” (DK)

When describing how DLC transactions work, in many cases, one is not downloading anything from external servers. The additional content offered to consumers is frequently already embedded in the product which they have purchased and requires a payment to be unlocked. Clearly, that was not an industry practice in the past. Retrogamers consider the current approach as questionable:

“You've got this game on disk, and it has all the extra content on the disk, but it stays locked until you pay attention extra fee to unlock it. [...] Now that's wrong.” (BE)

These corporate practices of *“artificially inflating the price of the product”* (SX) are one of the reasons why retrogamers disliked modern gaming goods, seeing it purely as a way of increasing profits at the expense of the consumer:

“But in gaming, that is very much the norm. [...] If people can think of a way to make more money out of you, out of the consumer, they will do it. In many respects, that's why modern games are hated the way they are by so many people who are into retrogaming.” (SX)

Participants compared this practice to asking to pay for a ‘shell’ of the product to face completing it by unlocking downloadable content hidden behind

paywalls. Some participants cannot understand why additional content is not made freely available to them like in the past:

Why haven't they made that into the game? In games like Tekken, for instance, on the PS one [retro]... You have the complete it seven times to get different characters. But these days, like Tekken 7 [modern], you can pay X amount, and you can buy different characters. I mean, why not make them unlockable?" (K)

The above fragment shows that in some retro games, unlockable content is available once the player completes a specific achievement, while in modern gaming, it is often available only behind paywalls. The presented-day downloadable and unlockable content practices affect retrogamers who keep away from such purchases:

"In terms of single-player, I cannot even remember the last single-player piece of DLC that I have purchased. DLC is strongly contested in the [retro] community." (G)

Retrogamers claim that it is a factor contributing to people refusing purchases of modern gaming products as they used to in the past:

"And that is another reason why people [his generation] aren't buying games as much as they used to. They will say, 'well, I'm not buying that because that company is renowned for having horrible DLC practices.'" (SX)

The significance of these practices on retrogamers finds its outlet in their negativity towards modern-day marketing strategies of gaming companies. As consumers, they feel *"getting ripped off"* (T) by the fact that they are not receiving a complete product while asked to pay a premium to download or unlock additional content. Being interested in retrogaming, they see how the market has changed for the worse in that respect and, as a result, are less keen to purchase such content and invest themselves in modern gaming.

4.7.9.2 Microtransactions

A second modern-day practice mentioned during the conversations are microtransactions. These are small payments that users can make in exchange for virtual gaming goods, which can come in the form of in-game currencies, random chance purchases and in-game items. Similarly to DLCs, microtransactions are not met with enthusiasm by retrogamers. They find them intrusive and do not see why they were asked to make yet another expenditure after spending a considerable sum on a product.

"I think games today are not as much fun. You spend too much time grinding your way through a game that is frustrating, and then within an hour of playing, you're probably being asked to pay for an upgrade, like a modification to your character: £2. It gives a new outfit or something like that. £3 gets you a new gun. That is just frustrating. Because you have just paid out a lot of money for a game, and you're already being asked, 'how would you like to spend a bit more'. <Laughing>. It's just like 'NO'." (BR)

It is frustrating when the consumer discovers post-purchase that key expected elements are not included. Some examples include football games not having all the expected teams and players. Another involves a much anticipated Star Wars game – Battlefront – which requires microtransactions to include well-known and storyline-central characters.

Retrogamers are pessimistic about these in-game purchases. They believe that all the virtual items should be included as standard and not driven by publishers' profit motives, especially that in some cases, they added only cosmetic value:

"If a game lets you play halfway through it and then says, 'right, okay, to go any further, you need to pay for X, Y, or Z', I'll take the game back to the shop and demand my money back. As far as I'm concerned, I've

bought the game, and that should be from the start of the game to the end of the game. Okay, there might be bits of downloadable content that would improve the game, but I should be able to play through the story of the game without that extra or without having to pay for gold or weapons or whatever within the game. So I'm very much anti-microtransactions. I don't like them. Because the way I see it, it's the developers... If they're doing their job properly, they will [calculate] the cost of the production of the game, and they will sell it at the appropriate price. But what they're essentially doing is they're selling it at that price, but then they say, 'You know what? We don't think we've made enough money out of you, so here you go. You can buy these. It doesn't do anything.' You may be getting some coins so you can upgrade your character a bit quicker or whatever."
(BE)

The bottom line here still is:

"I will not be buying any of the micro transactions on it just because, as far as I'm concerned, they've got my money." (BE)

Because these one-off transactions involve small payments, keeping track of the sum spent throughout product use might be challenging. One of the participants recalls a friend who spent over £2000 on in-game microtransactions.

Another explanation why some are likely to spend larger sums on microtransactions is a certain form of balancing on the verge of gambling - random chance purchases. These "loot boxes" (G) offer a paid randomised opportunity to obtain items, with the aspect of 'chance' being an issue. What makes matters worse is that often this business strategy targets children and minors who are particularly vulnerable to such practices. In the researcher's interpretation, retrogaming is seen here as a form of a safe haven, where players are free from such ethically questionable business strategies. SX sees a deeper issue with microtransactions in this rich quote:

"I think some good education comes from the DLC [microtransactions] aspect of things - taking shortcuts. I quite enjoyed the last Assassins Creed

game set in Egypt, but you could buy a map for about £5 that will show you exactly where all the best treasure was. Well, what's the point, really? People want everything instantly these days. I want to buy the latest Lady Gaga album. I want it now, and I will buy it now, and I will have it within 5 minutes. Nobody has to work for anything anymore. To strive for anything anymore. Nobody has to make an effort to do anything, so why try? Games are designed so bad you can have the full game experience in the shortest time possible by paying for it.

It's like... I know it's going to be a horrible example, and I know you're going to use it in your dissertation, and I can speak from experience. And I know we are all going to be anonymous... Hopefully... It's like making love to your girlfriend you have been passionately in love with 5 years, and it means something. It's deeper. It means something. Even though it's the worst sex you ever had being down the pub for too long. It still means something rather than paying someone £100 for a blowjob in Amsterdam. It might be instantly gratifying, but it doesn't make you feel anything. There's no empathy there. There is no love there... you know it might be as well be a robot doing it. It's pointless. It's meaningless. It has no emotional connection. And experiencing a game from start to finish that you've got to work for does..." (SX)

According to SX, microtransactions are a ‘*symptom*’ of the need for instant gratification – a contemporary phenomenon. It allows consumers to progress or gain an instant advantage. However, it reduces the sense of achievement stemming from using the product and impedes the resulting emotional connection related to its use. Microtransactions are seen not only as ethically questionable marketing strategies but also as ones taking the pleasure away from the gaming experience and contributing to participants’ resistance towards the modern marketplace.

4.7.9.3 Paying to play with others

Another area identified as a financial pain point was the approach modern gaming companies took towards multiplayer gaming. In participants' experiences, online gaming on established modern platforms requires monthly subscriptions:

"Because online depending on the way you're playing, you have to pay for it." (K)

The thought of making an additional payment for multiplayer experiences on top of the product price is not welcomed:

"I'm not a big fan of a lot of these new games we have to sign up. You have to pay like a monthly fee and buy additional packs. I don't get that. [...] You are paying £40 a month for Xbox live arcade, and it is like five seconds of playing the game, and you get killed." (DY)

PU makes an interesting observation with respect to payments for online multiplayer experiences:

"PlayStation+ [subscription service] required. You can't play it, unfortunately, which I think is annoying. I kind of like to get 100% out of a game. I don't understand why they have to make us pay more. I paid for the game. Give me a break. I have downloaded your updates. Let you twist my arm. Why won't you let me play more of it? I don't get that at all." (PU)

Restricting and monetising access to online features does not allow players to have a full product experience, which they should have, in their opinion. That becomes incredibly frustrating to participants since many new titles offer only online multiplayer experiences, as mentioned earlier. In contrast, retrogaming's only barrier is the physical one – the necessity for individuals co-experiencing the product to share the same space.

4.7.9.4 Controlling the market

Participants have an interesting perspective on the rapidly progressing digitalisation in the context of the modern industry. As mentioned earlier, they are negative concerning digital downloads as it lacks the tangible aspect and, among other factors, cannot be re-sold to a third party:

“Obviously, if you have bought your game not digitally and it wasn’t up to your expectation, you can take it back. You cannot do that with downloadable content. Quite a few people might have got burnt by that.”
(G)

In participants’ eyes, the shift towards digital copies is not purely for the consumer's benefit. It is also an attempt to control and potentially close down the pre-owned and exchange markets. Participants see that move as being in the interest of gaming corporations, not the consumer:

“It’s something that the games companies want because the games companies don’t want you to be able to take your game once you finished it and go and sell it to CeX or Game or whenever. They don’t want you to be able to do that because that means somebody can then go buy a second-hand copy instead of buying a new copy from them. So the second-hand market is something that the games industry would love to kill off, but they’ve not been able to do it so far, thankfully. But the longer we can keep tangible items, then the longer we can stave off that closure of the secondary market. As long as you’ve got something in your hand that you can take into the shops, ‘here I want to sell this’, you can do that.”
(BE)

During conversations, retrogamers reported such attempts in the past. When preparing their last console, Microsoft considered making it an online play-only system. This would effectively deem reselling or lending owned games for this system impossible. Participants could sense that the main reason behind this ‘digital conversion’ is generating profits for providers:

“It’s already happened on PC, and we know for a fact that Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo don’t want to release physical games anymore, to be honest. They want everything to be on an online store because that would kill off the second-hand market immediately and mean more money for them. Because without a second-hand, there is more to gain.” (SX)

Participants are negative about a scenario where they would be unable to trade, lend or gift their purchases. The idea that companies could have more control over their game collections was met with resistance.

4.7.9.5 Retro - not all about money

While talking about modern gaming practices, participants tended to recall how the industry used to be and what was its approach towards products and consumers.

In the past, market practices were more unequivocal. No elements of the game were hidden away from the consumer. Once a transaction took place, the buyer received the item and was able to use it straight after purchase in its full form:

“These old games didn’t do that, you know. You just bought a game. You loaded it, you paid it that’s it. Done. It’s simple. It’s quick and easy access.” (BR)

Going into more detail and referring to the subthemes mentioned earlier, retro games did not offer content which would expand on the gaming experience. The included experience was always complete, and a consumer purchasing the item had the certainty this would be the case with no additional costs incurred:

“There wasn’t a DLC for a retro... [...] It’s all on the cartridge.” (K)

Similarly, retro games do not offer any of the in-game purchases found in modern-day products:

“You don’t have to pay for additional features” (PU)

There is no other way to obtain the in-game items and progress but to engage with the product and simply play it. Participants see the past as a time when games were not made primarily to generate profit. As much as that aspect was important in their eyes, entertainment and fun were the focus of retro game design:

“The day a bunch of people write a game to make money and not to entertain people and bring a smile to their faces, you may as well not do it’. And that’s how I see modern gaming and retro gaming. Back then, it was about entertainment and fun. Today - money. It’s all about money.” (BR)

As soon as the emphasis in industry shifts too much towards profit, its ‘innocence’ and developers’ passion for games is lost. Participants feel that these changes occur because they are not being listened to as consumers. What they want does not matter to developers anymore:

“Developers don’t necessarily listen to us mere mortals, like the people who play these games, so why should we care what they think really? I mean, what is it that these new systems have to offer?” (PU)

What retrogamers find in retrogaming in this context is being respected and treated well as consumers. Summarizing this subtheme and the five outlined contributing factors, participants perceive the modern gaming industry as overtly focused on profiting from consumers. That takes the shape of monetizing content elements and product features that used to come included with the product in the past. Emphasis on the gain is potentially affecting the pre-owned game market by introducing and developing ‘digital download environments’, effectively diminishing customer control over the purchased product.

The researcher understood the combination of factors representing this subtheme as contributing to retrogamers' resistance towards the contemporary gaming marketplace and its offerings.

Summarising the whole major theme of 'resistance towards the modern marketplace' the researcher interprets participants' resistance as an attempt to escape the marketplace by the means of selecting retrogaming goods over modern products. Such distancing can offer emancipatory prospects (Arnould 2007; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). One of the ways that can be achieved is by reflexively challenging (Ozanne and Murray 1995) extra market activities such as using items in a way different than intended (De Carteau 1994; Maffesoli 1996). By going against the 'marketing code' (Arnould 2007) they can erode marketers control over their consumption practices. Looking at participants' opinion of the modern gaming marketplace a link with the notion of marketplace escape should be made. Participants prefer retro games over modern products giving them a 'second life' and in so doing not treating them as intended by marketers (being disposed of). Looking at this repurposing and what participants express about the contemporary gaming market the researcher sees retrogaming as a means by which participants are trying to escape the modern gaming industry and mistreatment.

4.8 Chapter Summary

To summarize, this chapter aimed to present findings and interpretations related to participants' meanings of retrogaming consumption. The identified themes and constitutive pattern shed light on retro consumption conceived as attempted '*resistance towards change*'. This common thread emerged for all the major themes related to participants' experiences with retrogaming:

- Resistance towards temporal changes
- Resistance towards disconnecting with others
- Resistance towards digitalisation
- Resistance towards the modern marketplace

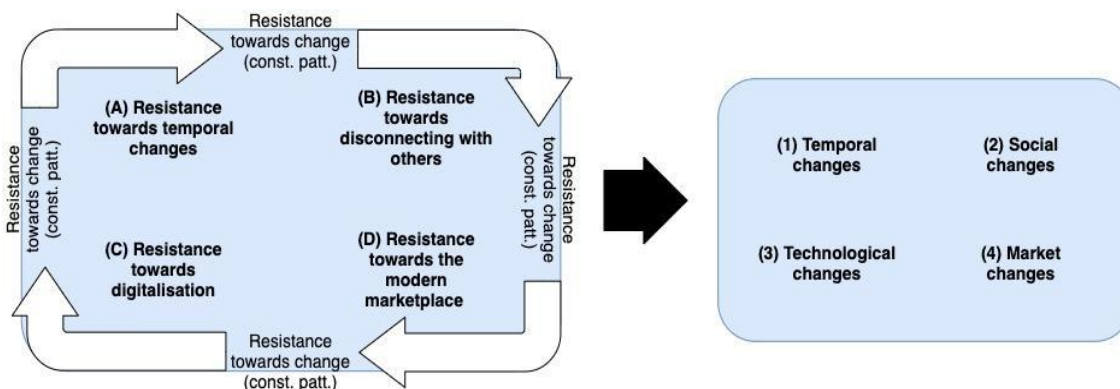
as was presented in figures 4.1 and 4.2.

There is scope for the findings of this study to be generalisable. In order to achieve that, the four above major themes are translated into four dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption (see Figure 4.4):

- Temporal changes
- Social changes
- Technological changes
- Market changes

The below figure shows the process of translating the identified resistance-related themes into generalisable dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption.

Figure 4.4 The translation of resistance themes into generalisable dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption



Examining Figure 4.4, the first dimension of temporal changes was related to changes in participants' lives relatable to ageing, changing life roles, less free time (time poverty), and desire to be immortalised (intergenerational nostalgia).

Change in the social dimension emerged in the way modern gaming has affected experiencing products with others and the ability to socialize.

Next, participants' resistance towards change, in the form of retrogaming consumption, was dictated by changes taking place in the technological sphere. In this case, the digitalization of gaming products impeded retrogamers' experiences interacting with, owning, sharing and trading modern gaming

products. In this instance, the digitalisation of consumption can be seen as a representation of technological change.

Finally, changes in how the modern gaming marketplace operates and how modern companies treat their customers met with resistance can be translatable into a generable dimension of market changes.

Adding to the value of this chapter, the set of findings ascribed to collecting and community aspects of retrogaming has made the researcher realize that retro forms of consumption take place in specific collecting conditions and within unique community environments.

Now that the findings of HP interviews have been presented it is necessary to present the contributions of this research and discuss them in the light of existing literature. This will take place in the following discussion chapter preserving the topical order of the findings chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Contributions to knowledge stemming from this research add to the understanding and conceptualisation of retro consumption and the possible meanings of such consumer behaviour. This chapter aims to present and discuss the value added by this doctoral thesis. The way in which this work benefits knowledge transcends the topic of retro and adds to that of collecting behaviour only demonstrating the value of phenomenological exploration in consumer behaviour. At the same time, the concurrence of a collecting discourse and retro consumption should not be surprising. Collecting activities have the ability to connect the collector with personal or collective past and facilitate reminiscing (McIntosh and Schmeichel 2004).

This research provided several contributions to existing theory and knowledge of retro consumption phenomenon. The principal empirical and theoretical contributions are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Principal theoretical and empirical research contributions

Contribution	Summary	Location
Empirical – new collector typology	Identification of a new collector typology based on in vivo community terms highlighting the importance of the mode of collecting – <i>‘the hunt’</i> and <i>‘the journey’</i>	Section 5.1.2
Theoretical – retro consumption as resistance towards change conceptual framework.	A conceptual framework organising four dimensions (temporal, social, technological, and market dimensions) affecting the expression of retro consumption	Section 5.2 (Figure 5.5)
Empirical – Personal nostalgic experiences	Adults and young adults who experience role overload can also	Section 5.2.1.2

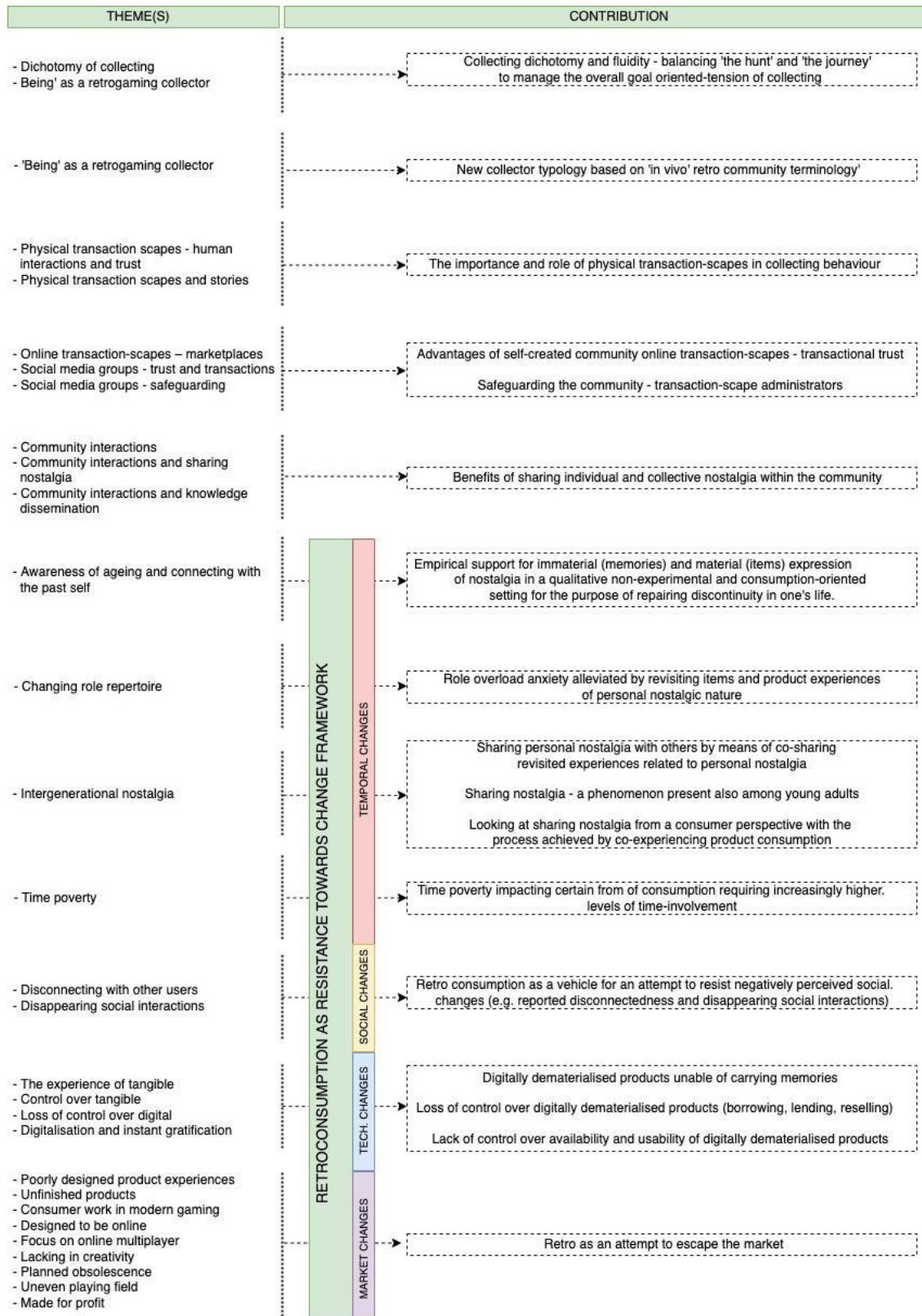
alleviating the effects of role-overload	alleviate related feelings of anxiety and day-to-day life burden by relying on personal nostalgic experiences	
Empirical – retro consumption as resistance towards technological product/service changes	Technological changes identified as a factor impacting the decision to engage in retro consumption. Participants perceived progressing digitalisation of products as taking away their sense of control and ownership. Digital products were also seen as unable to carry memories and acquisition stories for ‘self-defining’ purposes.	Section 5.2.3
Empirical – retro consumption as an attempt to escape the marketplace	Changes in organisational market strategies, feeling mistreated by the gaming marketplace and exploited as consumers impacting the decision to engage in retro consumption in an attempt to escape and resist the modern marketplace.	Section 5.2.4

From an empirical perspective this research provided principal contributions in the areas related to the identified change dimensions. Due to the exploratory element of this doctoral thesis, it has also provided additional major empirical contributions in the form of a new collector typology based on in vivo community terminology.

The structure of this chapter is presented in Figure 5.1. and mirrors that of the findings chapter, beginning with collecting-related contributions and progressing towards retro-related ones. The role of Figure 5.1 is also to

demonstrate the relationships between identified themes and resulting contributions navigating the reader through this chapter.

Figure 5.1 Connections between uncovered themes and contributions



Gaining a better understanding of collecting will commence with uncovering the dichotomy and fluidity of the collecting process. A new view on collector typology will follow, enriched by 'in vivo' terminology. Another interesting contribution is the importance of physical transaction-scapes in collecting behaviour. The focus will then shift towards self-created and self-managed online community transaction-scapes and their role for collectors. Finally, the last contribution discussed in the context of collecting focuses on the benefits and reasons for sharing individual and collective nostalgia amongst collectors.

What follows is a discussion of the contributions arising from the constitutive pattern - the notion of retro consumption seen as resistance towards change, with each of the four identified change dimensions:

- temporal changes
- social changes
- technological changes
- market changes

The above four dimensions form a conceptual framework intending to improve understanding of factors contributing to retro expression and its meanings.

Similarly, figure 5.1 signposts the knowledge stemming from each change dimension relating to specific themes. The contributions to knowledge stemming from this research answer three research questions introduced at the outset of this doctoral thesis:

RQ1 Why do 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men play retro video games?

RQ2 What does this retro gaming behaviour signify about the meanings of retro consumption practices of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men?

RQ3 What are the implications of this retro gaming behaviour for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future?

The rich findings from this work go beyond retro consumption and offer insights into collecting behaviours. Thus, contributions in those prior areas will not relate directly to established research questions.

Figure 5.1 is disaggregated into its component parts and elucidated throughout the chapter. It serves as a guide to the structure of the discussion and signpost contributions discussed in each of the coming sections.

5.1 Collecting and community behaviour

The first part of the discussion chapter focuses on contributions to collecting behaviour knowledge.

To benefit the reader, it is important to briefly remind what constitutes the act of collecting and provide more details surrounding this type of consumer behaviour. A broadly accepted definition by Belk et al. (1991) suggests that:

“We take collecting to be the selective, active, and longitudinal acquisition, possession, and disposition of an inter-related set of differentiated objects (material things, ideas, beings, or experiences) that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from the entity (the collection) that this set is perceived to constitute.”

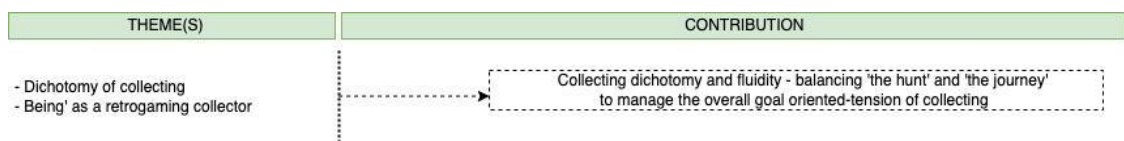
(Belk et al. 1991 p.180).

A person participating in collecting behaviour acquires objects whose original use and function are either of secondary or no importance to that individual (McIntosh and Schmeichel 2004). Up until the 1980s, there has been little academic research devoted to the act of collecting (Danet and Katriel 1989), with consumer studies joining this stream with work by Belk (1982) and Belk et al. (1988).

The following subsections present the original contribution of this research in the areas of collecting and collecting community behaviour.

5.1.1 The importance of the collecting journey – Balancing the process

Parts of conversations with participants related to their perception of the collecting process. This should not be surprising as acquiring items is a key element of collecting behaviour, in some instances, of greater importance than studying and cataloguing them (Belk 1991).



The contribution emerged from the reported perceived dichotomy of approaches towards collecting. In some instances, retrogamers referred to acquiring items as *'the hunt'* while in other as *'the journey'*. The researcher sees both these approaches as interwoven into the process of collecting, with the possibility of coexisting as its opposing facets.

First, collecting seen as *'the hunt'*, comes across as a more primordial activity. Existing literature compares collecting to one of humankind's oldest activities – hunting (Pearce 1995) – with some collectors referring to themselves as *'hunters'* (Long and Schiffman 1997). With its competitive nature (McIntosh and Schmeichel 2004), the process of collecting can represent aggressive characteristics:

"In many respects, collecting resembles hunting: one locates the prey, plans for the attack, acquires the prey in the presence of real or imagined competition for it, and feels elated. The prey becomes a trophy – a symbol of one's aggression and prowess."

(Formanek 1991 pp.328-9 in Pearce 1994)

This reflects the thoughts expressed by participants during conversations, with many referring to expanding their collections as *'hunting'* retrogaming items.

In that process, they would affix their minds to specific items and '*hunt*' them down in the real world or online.

Thus far, the literature on collecting behaviour presented the act as inherently 'aggressive'. However, this research shows a different approach where collecting is more relaxed and tranquil – '*the journey*'.

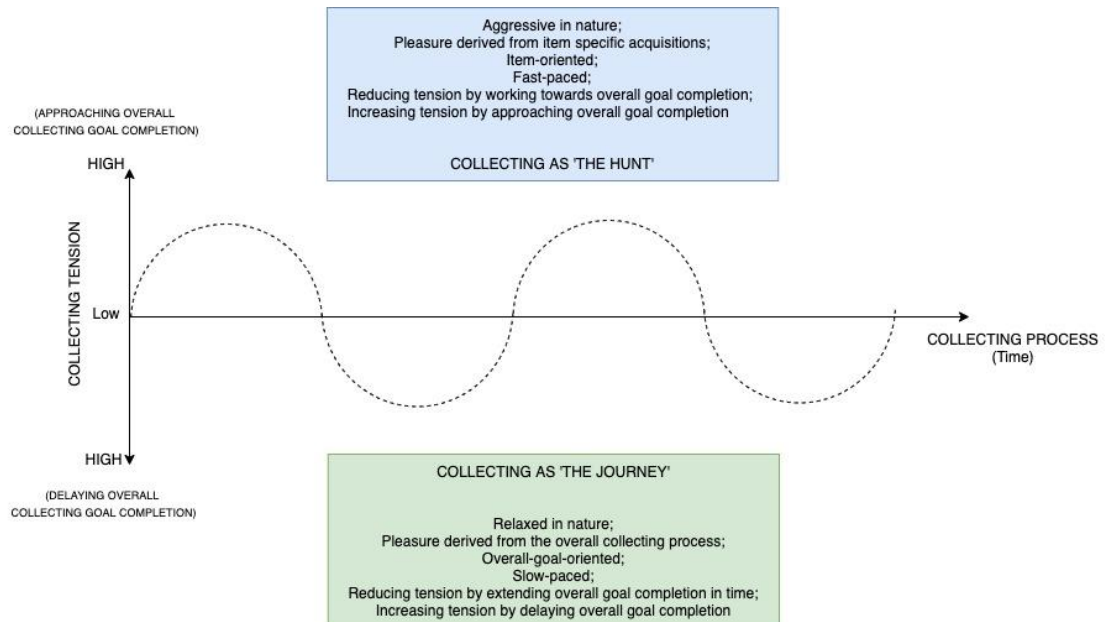
While participants talked about '*hunting*' for specific items, they also saw collecting as a '*journey*' to savour and take time in completing. Here the pleasure was derived from the entirety of the collecting process and a slower pace of completing a collection as opposed to the more item-specific, immediate, and rapid excitement of 'the hunt'. '*The journey*' of collecting strikes a chord with a remark made by Belk (1994 in Pearce 1994) suggesting the prolonging the collecting process: "*a common strategy to avoid completion is to redefine or add new collecting interests as completion nears.*" (p.324).

The researcher sees both '*the hunt*' and '*the journey*' as co-existing within the collection process spectrum. The dichotomy uncovered focuses on collectors' efforts for closure seen as achieving a collecting goal(s) (Belk 1988) and the resulting tension and tension reduction present throughout the process (Danet and Katriel 1989). By obtaining items in a more expedite and 'aggressive' manner ('*the hunt*') the collector reduces the tension by moving closer to the overall completion goal. However, tension increases with the impending collecting completion should 'the hunt' take over the collecting process. Thus, by slowing down the process of collecting ('*the journey*'), tension is reduced by extending goal attainment in time. Concurrently, slowing down the collection process too much increases collectors' tension by delaying the pleasure coming from final goal realisation.

Shifting between both approaches, collectors can manage the overall goal-oriented tension of their collecting activities. Therefore, both modes of the collecting process should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

The collecting process seen through the prism of tension creation and reduction is fluid, with collectors switching between '*the hunt*' and '*the journey*' collecting stances to manage their overall goal attainment tension. The process' fluidity is represented by collectors shifting between both collecting stances, as outlined in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 A visual representation of the duality of the collecting process – balancing ‘the hunt’ and ‘the journey’ to manage the overall goal-oriented tension of collecting



In contrast to existing conceptualisations, Figure 5.2 highlights the evolving nature of collecting activities. Managing their level of tension, collectors navigate between the extended pleasure of collecting as a long-term journey and the instant gratification of the hunt for specific items.

Naturally, there will be variations in collectors' movements through this pattern, with some more focused on the hunt and others more on the journey. What supports this approach and highlights the importance of finding a balance between the two 'modes' of collecting is how participants ostracised the extreme case of those rushing through collecting, overemphasising 'the hunt' aspect of the process and neglecting 'the journey' – the 'blitz collectors'. These, alongside other types of collectors identified during conversations, will now be examined in more depth to underpin the research contribution of a collector typology.

5.1.2 Collector typology

The first principal empirical contribution emerging from this study is a valuable insight into collecting behaviours - a new collector typology.



Conversations with participants revealed different types of collectors in the retrogaming community based on their collecting behaviour (Table 5.1). Although the identified types might seem specific to the retrogaming community, there is scope to generalise these into a typology applicable to different forms of collecting.

Table 5.1 A new typology of collectors

Collector type	Status	Characteristics
User collectors	Community members with full community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items Using items as originally intended Balancing between collecting as 'the journey' and 'the hunt' of collecting
'Shelf collectors'	Community members with partial community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items Displaying and storing collected items Balancing between collecting as 'the journey' and 'the hunt' of collecting
'Blitz collectors'	Community members with partial community recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting genuine items in a quick fashion. Overemphasising 'the hunt' and neglecting 'the journey' of collecting

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived as not indulging in the process of collecting
<i>'Pretend'</i> collectors	Marginalised by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting items which are not genuine
<i>'Plastic'</i> collectors	Marginalised by the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting genuine items • Joining the community because of its increasing popularity • Lack retrogaming knowledge and thus authenticity as retrogamers
<i>'Traders'/'scalpers'</i>	Engaging with but existing outside the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiting from selling items to collectors

This collector typology is particularly valuable because the introduced classification applies existing terminology used by the investigated community. The researcher sees this new typology as one of the principal empirical contributions of this doctoral research.

Additionally, it builds on three characteristics recognised and articulated by the community. First, the authenticity of collected items distinguishes collectors who seek genuine items from *'pretend collectors'* who gather inauthentic items. The second attribute looks at whether the collector uses the collected item as originally intended or only displays it. Finally, the third characteristic focuses on their approach to the collecting process as *'the hunt'* or *'the journey'*. The resulting typology's strength lies in applying 'in vivo' terminology and application of characteristics collectors use to distinguish and categorise community members.

5.1.3 The importance of physical transaction-scapes

Gaining understanding of retrogaming practices revealed the important role physical transaction-scapes play for participants. These physical transaction

environments contributed towards building item acquisition stories, used in consumer self-identity projects to exhibit collector prowess and dedication and exert collector's dominance.

THEME(S)	CONTRIBUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical transaction scapes - human interactions and trust - Physical transaction scapes and stories 	<div> The importance and role of physical transaction-scapes in collecting behaviour </div>

During conversations, participants would often juxtapose 'physical world' means of acquiring collectable items with digital approaches creating a contrast which unveiled just how important acquisition stories are for collectors.

The increasing use of digital technologies in people's lives has affected both consumer behaviour and collecting as a paradigm of consumption (Bianchi 1997; Ryyänen and Hyyryläinen 2018). Digital transformation allowed the emergence of alternative digital item acquisition channels, such as online marketplace platforms (e.g., eBay, Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace) and digital stores (e.g., CeX).

Aware of the possibility of purchasing items online, retrogamers in this study often highlighted amplified meaningfulness of acquiring items in 'real world' physical transaction-scapes. In contrast, digital alternatives such as online ordering or digital downloads lacked in experiences not providing opportunities for retrogamers to form meaningful acquisition memories and turn them into stories.

The researcher sees one of the reasons behind the importance of acquisition stories as linked with the collecting process. Prior studies suggest the collecting 'journey' or 'hunt' for collectables is, in many cases, more significant than ownership of the pursued item (Belk et al. 1991). It should not be surprising that the recollection of such events would be meaningful to collectors. Significance of acquisition stories is visible in the disregard for '*blitz collectors*' – possibly their neglect of the '*journey*' and rapid collecting could have deprived them of acquisition stories to share.

At the same time possessing acquisition stories allows for competing with other collectors. Sharing recollections of these 'purchase events' with other community members is not only a proof of ownership but also one-of-a-kind accounts of how they were acquired, demonstrating collector's prowess and dedication.

The researcher suggests that acquisition stories are mediums for navigating one's sense of individual and collective self and past self. Self-defining functions have been associated with physical possessions and attracted considerable academic interest (Belk 1988; Belk 2014; Jyrinki and Leipamaa-Leskinen 2006; Mittal 2006; Noble and Walker 1997; Sayre and Horne 2006). The affection and sentiment for the past, or nostalgia, is also known to have a denoting effect on the intrinsic self-concept (Baldwin et al. 2015). Combining temporal considerations with the notion of possessions, a sense of collective and/or individual past emerges (Belk 1991, Kleine et al. 1995) '*instrumental to knowing who we are*' (Belk 1991 p.128). What naturally compliments this are places and circumstances of acquiring such important possessions. Collecting behaviours make that process particularly evident considering how, reportedly, collectors can vividly recall stories surrounding acquisitions (Belk 1995).

The contribution discussed here shows that not only possessions but also acquisition stories can play a role in navigating one's sense of self and past self. Acquiring goods digitally deprives collectors of the meaningful physical transaction-scape acquisition stories functioning as defining elements in their 'self-projects'. This affirms one explanation for the importance of physical transaction-scapes – their role in forming meaningful acquisition stories and their 'self-defining' role for retrogamers (and, more generally, for collectors).

The above considerations also beckon exciting questions for future exploration:

- Are online purchase experiences capable of creating valuable self-defining acquisition stories?
- What impact might this shift from physical to digital acquisition have on the expression of the self?

Another theme contributing to the importance of physical transaction-scapes was related to the need for human interaction. These focused on the steady growth of online transactions changing the retail environment and its effect on people both in a consumer and social context. As consumers, there were concerns that an online shift and gradual disappearance of physical stores might progressively take away the ability to interact with and test products, which, in turn, would negatively impact the shopping experience. From a social viewpoint, participants believed that the shift towards being and shopping online is taking away the opportunity to interact with others. The disappearance of these interactions negatively affects people's well-being and mental health. Retrogamers claimed that people seclude themselves obstructing their communication skills. This reported change in the social fabric is explained by increased online consumer activity as a factor. Considering this, participants' preference for physical transaction-scapes is a means for reconnecting with others in the real-world and experiencing human interaction. Recent research seems to support participants' reported experiences, with factors such as social exclusion (Dennis et al. 2016) and the search for social interaction (Rippé et al. 2018) impacting consumers' preference for physical store retailers.

Finally, physical transaction-scapes were an opportunity for trust to be formed between the collector and the seller. Participants could interact with sellers, negotiate face-to-face and inspect item quality. Oftentimes, such relationships resulted with sellers setting aside sought-after items for specific clients.

The importance of physical transaction-scapes can be linked to several factors listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Roles of physical transaction-scapes in collecting behaviour

Role	Meaning
Self-project related	Forming acquisition stories which ground one's sense of self and past self
Competitive	Competing with collectors by sharing acquisition stories demonstrating prowess and dedication to their collecting goals
Social	Opportunity for human interaction and connecting with others
Transactional	Building meaningful, trust-based relationships with sellers resulting in preferential treatment

As Table 5.2 conveys, there are benefits to recalling stories that help establish one's sense of past and can be used by individuals in forming their self-identity. Secondly, hedonic uses, which collectors employing acquisition stories use to demonstrate their commitment and collector skills. Socially, physical transaction-scapes, through the necessity to leave one's household, create an opportunity for human interaction and offer a potential for connecting with others. Finally, face-to-face interactions can also help collectors form relationships with sellers, offering a transactional advantage during the search for and item acquisition.

5.1.4 Transactional trust in self-created online transaction-scapes

Conversations revealed that many retrogaming items were acquired via social media (SM) groups created by retrogamers. This research provided insight into the inner workings of acquisition mechanisms present in these self-established consumption environments and contributed to knowledge on trust mechanisms.

THEME(S)	CONTRIBUTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online transaction-scapes – marketplaces - Social media groups - trust and transactions - Social media groups - safeguarding 	<div> Advantages of self-created community online transaction-scapes - transactional trust Safeguarding the community - transaction-scape administrators </div>

Closed SM groups were interesting transactional environments considering shopper-vendor trust relationships. Partly, trust stemmed from community membership and group members' shared interest in retrogaming. Another source of transactional trust lies in buyer-seller communication based on personal Facebook accounts. Such an approach was considered personal, transparent, and more trustworthy - should any of the parties breach the agreements of the transaction, their 'personal reputation' was at stake.

Interestingly as an s-commerce environment offering limited or no transaction oversight, closed groups in the retrogaming domain introduced their own mechanism to instil trust. Group administrators' role exceeded that of

managing site content and admitting new members. They have taken up a safeguarding role fostering trust in transactions, shielding group members from any unwanted activities. Their role was focused on several areas of the SM group. First, administrators would vet new group members' SM profiles to ensure their authenticity. This was also done for those who wished to sell or organise a raffle for the first time. In cases where a background check was inconclusive, administrators would act as intermediaries, overseeing transactions and, in some cases holding payments until the item was received.

Another important role in instilling trust was resolving transactional disputes between buyers and sellers. Administrators would act as arbitrators and make rulings based on provided information. If the culpable member would not fulfil their side of the transaction, administrators could use another 'deterrent' and ban an individual from the group.

To ensure fraud cases do not spread to other groups, administrators from various SM pages created their own 'admin groups' where they would share details on blacklisted individuals and have them banned across the whole SM community.

In the described settings, online transactions were made between group members, making the exchange a consumer-to-consumer (C2C) one. Depending on the provider's involvement in the transaction process, C2C e-commerce platforms form two distinct groups:

- a) intermediaries offering financial guarantees, insurance and consumer protection schemes (Dan 2014), such as eBay;
- b) an exchange space with minimal interference in the transaction (Chen et al. 2009), as is the case with, e.g., Gumtree.

However, C2C transactions in this study were made on SM pages, not on platforms designed explicitly for transactional purposes. Commerce carried out on SM is referred to as s-commerce and is treated as a subset of e-commerce (Kim and Park 2013; Liang and Turban 2011). C2C s-commerce is a type of commerce where one SM user sells products or services to other users through SM (Zhao et al. 2019). Here, interested parties must interact and form their own arrangements regarding product testing/viewing, payment method and delivery

(Chen et al. 2016). In summary, according to Liang and Turban (2011) s-commerce must possess three properties:

- a) use of SM platforms
- b) community interactions
- c) commercial activities

All of these factors were present on retrogamer social media sites validating their role as s-commerce platforms.

Trust plays an important role in the success of an s-commerce platform as it facilitates the formation of relationships and purchase intentions between buyers and sellers (Chen and Shen, 2015; 2018; Kim and Park, 2013; Leung et al., 2020). The significance of trust in s-commerce stems from the fact that there are few such platforms (e.g., renren.com) to introduce third-party identification designed to reduce transactional risks. S-commerce transactions occur without intermediaries or organisational protection (Leung et al. 2020).

Existing C2C s-commerce studies explored transaction relationships from two perspectives – shopper-shopper and shopper-vendor (Leung et al. 2020). In both types, it has been established that trust is a factor which significantly affects users' purchase intention (Lu et al. 2010; Yahia et al. 2018).

This doctoral study extends understanding of these trust relationships by identifying a gap in existing research on C2C s-commerce trust. Current studies have not considered closed SM groups formed and managed by SM users where s-commerce is taking place. In such groups, transactions only occur between group members without any vendor presence. Building on the evidence that trust impacts purchase intention in s-commerce environments (Leung et al. 2020; Yahala et al. 2018), this doctoral study identifies factors influencing transactional trust and purchase intention in closed SM groups. This contribution is presented in figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Factors influencing trust in C2C s-commerce in social media groups

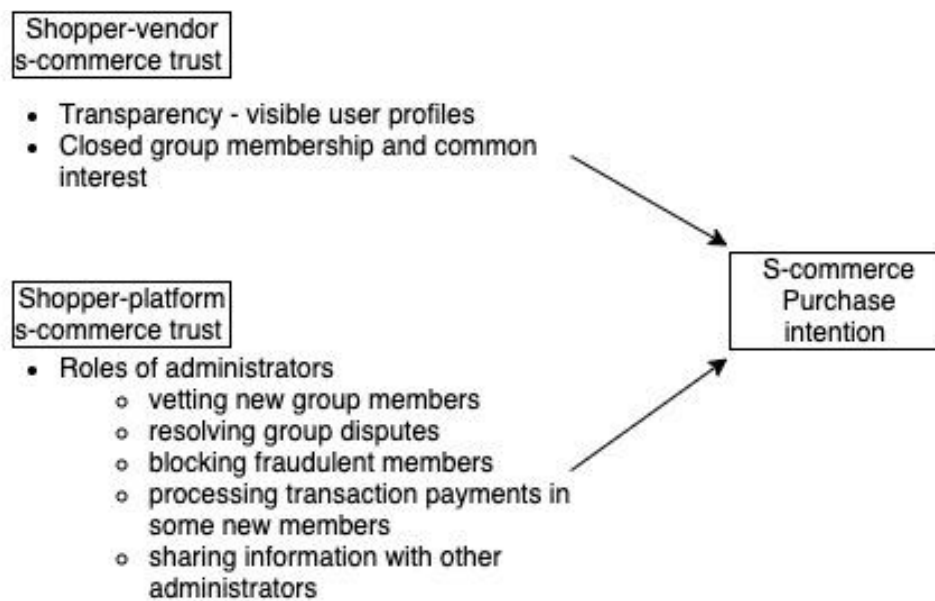


Figure 5.3 shows the impact of s-commerce transactional trust in closed SM groups on transaction intention materializes in two areas. From a shopper-vendor (or inter-group members') perspective, trust comes from the transparency offered by social media user-profiles and other like-minded individuals being a part of the group. Shopper-platform transactional trust emerges from the safeguarding role of group administrators ensuring SM pages are safe transaction environments.

The researcher believes it would be beneficial to present participants' trust evaluation in a broader transaction-scape context. To provide a more comprehensive overview of these various transaction-scapes, additional characteristics of item prices, scope, and availability have been established based on participants' remarks. Table 5.3 outlines these combined evaluations.

Table 5.3 Evaluation of various transaction-scapes and their characteristics

Transaction-scape characteristic Transaction-scape type	Item prices	Geographic scope and item availability	Transactional trust
Physical – C2C - flea market; car-boot sale. + charity shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very low prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - occasional ‘bargains’ - Low prices often a result of seller’s lack of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item condition often not verified nor guaranteed • Face-to-face interaction with the seller • No returns policy
Physical – B2C – stalls at events; dedicated marketplaces and stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seller’s high focus on profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • item condition verifiable • Face-to-face interaction with the seller • Some scope for returns
Virtual – brokered C2C transaction platforms – e.g., eBay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, high prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prices include platform fees - Bidding system • Dependent on seller’s knowledge of the item being sold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, national, global 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item condition often not verified nor guaranteed • Risk of being scammed • Risk of receiving an item not fitting the description
Virtual – unbrokered C2C transaction platforms – e.g., Gumtree, Shpock, Facebook Marketplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dependent on seller’s knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, national • Usually, face-to-face pickups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item condition often not verified nor guaranteed • Risk of being scammed • Mailing items involving high risk
Virtual – C2C self-formed online groups – e.g., Facebook groups,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Fair’ prices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prices ‘regulated’ by members as offers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, national and global – group dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator’s safeguarding role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vetting new group members

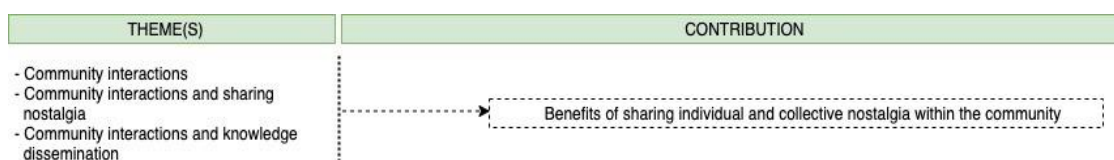
	visible to everyone - Raffles		- Resolving transactional issues - Intermediaries for some transactions ● Increased trust resulting from group membership ● Increased trust resulting from parties' transparency – personal SM profiles ● Increased trust in item condition guarantee resulting from the above factors
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Table 5.3 clarifies the advantages of self-created s-commerce groups over other types of transaction-scapes. First, they offer more in terms of transactional trust, which emerges both from closed group membership ties and the role administrators play in ensuring the group's transactional integrity. Another benefit is the various geographic scopes they offer. Finally, reportedly, prices on these platforms are 'fairer' than those in other transaction environments. Item visibility to all group members and possible comment-adjustments were a factor regulating their prices.

To summarise, participants reported SM groups as environments where transactional trust stems from safeguarding roles of group administrators and the perceived transparency offered by using one's personal SM account. The researcher believes that the reported contributions in this area can be relatable not only in retrogaming self-formed SM groups but also in other SM communities exhibiting transactional activities.

5.1.5 Sharing nostalgia within the community

One of the areas in which this research contributes is identifying a social behaviour shared by its members - sharing nostalgic recollections.



Sharing and exchanging nostalgic memories occurred both in an online and offline setting and was related to two types of nostalgic experiences. First, these were personal experiences with retrogaming items and related to their past gaming activities, representing Stern's (1992) personal nostalgia.

Interestingly, the second was slightly less personal and anecdotal, involving generalisable nostalgic recollections of eras participants were brought up in. They would relate to, e.g., growing up in a different decade, with its distinct culture, products, entertainment and seminal past events. Here nostalgia, classified as cultural (Havlena and Holak 1996) or collective (Baker and Kennedy 1994), pertains to a type of nostalgia common across a larger group of people, characterised by personal involvement and quite often occurring in the context of a whole culture or generation.

Literature on collecting specifies the number of social behaviours which exist within collecting communities (Spaid 2018). The earlier described hunting behaviour characterised by completion for items is one example. Moreover, Long and Schiffman (1997) suggested that in some circumstances, hunting might become a collaborative act with individual collectors networking and exchanging collecting knowledge. Other types of social behaviours are sharing and consulting. Sharing constitutes allowing other collectors to admire one's collection while consulting focuses on sharing knowledge and expertise (Belk 1995; Hughes and Hogg 2006; Spaid 2018). The reported sharing of nostalgic recollections adds one more social dimension to collecting communities.

For collecting communities revolving around items classified as retro, interactions with other members allow for exchanging and sharing nostalgic recollections. Having identified nostalgia sharing as an element of this retro community interactions, a question of its role arises.

Following the ideas of Sedikides et al. (in Sani 2008), one explanation could be linked with the capacity nostalgia possesses in enabling the increase of self-continuity amongst individuals. Davis (1979) hypothesized that nostalgia is an emotion able to tackle cases of self-discontinuity in one's life and activate when contrast between the past and present selves exists. By recalling and sharing memories during events, participants employ nostalgia, tackling self-discontinuity issues.

Discontinuity can also affect one's collective self, defining an individual as a group member and at the same time differentiating them from non-members (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Similarly, cultural/collective nostalgia addresses discontinuity issues arising from the collective self. This explains why participants were keen on recalling and sharing collective memories. By doing so, they increase their sense of collective self, in this case strengthening their identity as a part of a particular generation which grew up during a specific time.

The researcher believes that such cultural/collective nostalgic exchanges could also solidify participants' conviction as to the existence of their collective self-identity, proving there are others with whom they share their nostalgic experiences.

Another role of sharing collective nostalgia amongst retrogamers is one of the benefits it confers to a group. It gives rise to positive ingroup evaluations and creates an inclination to approach other in-group members (Wildschut et al., 2014). Applied to the discussed phenomenon, evoking and sharing collective nostalgia can be a part of the relationships forming process between retro community members and strengthening community bonds.

The identified phenomenon of nostalgia sharing plays several roles for retro community members. First, through the act of evoking and sharing individual and cultural/collective nostalgia, it increases the sense of self-continuity amongst its members. Second, collectively, it could act as evidence of their group self-

identity while reinforcing it. Finally, experiencing and sharing collective nostalgia has the ability to positively impact community relationships and interactions.

5.2 Retro consumption as resistance towards change

In the second part of this chapter, the discussion progresses towards the emerging constitutive pattern and its implications for an improved understanding of retro consumption. The following sections focus on answering research questions posed at the start of this doctoral thesis:

RQ1 Why do ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men play retro video games?

RQ2 What does this retro gaming behaviour signify about the meanings of retro consumption practices of ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men?

RQ3 What are the implications of this retro gaming behaviour for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future?

The identified constitutive pattern binding established themes was that of an *‘attempted resistance towards change’*. Change should be understood here as a shift from a previously known past state into a present, altered one. Retro and nostalgic consumption is a channel via which consumers’ resistance to various forms of change manifests. In the interviews, this contemporary ‘reorganisation’ was met with discontent, anxiety and uncertainty, which represents similarities to the notion of a general disillusionment with the present proposed by Davis (1979) supporting the emergent pattern’s alignment with accepted notions related to nostalgic/retro consumption.

As seen in the findings section, there were four main themes related to resisting change:

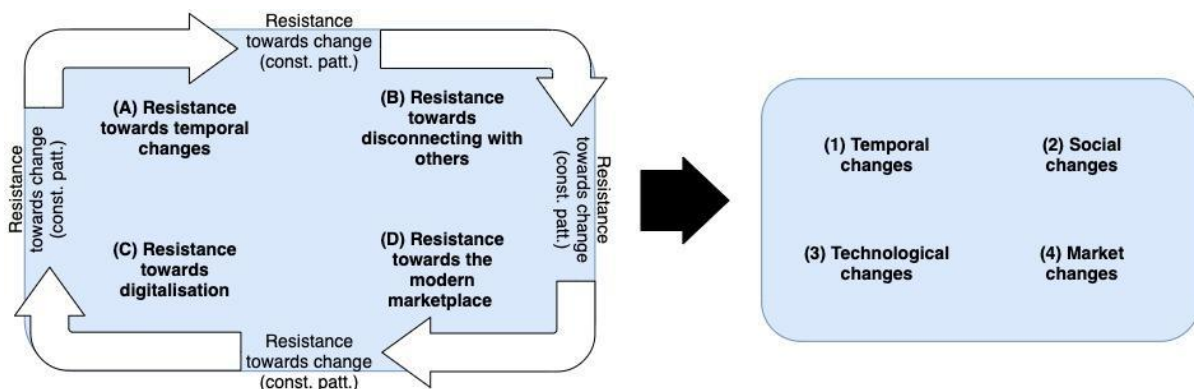
- a) Resistance towards temporal changes;
- b) Resistance towards disconnecting with others;
- c) Resistance towards digitalisation;
- d) Resistance towards the modern marketplace.

The researcher believes it is realizable to translate these themes into generalisable dimensions to classify factors impacting retro consumption,

applicable to different manifestations of the phenomenon. By looking at each of the main themes through the prism of the constitutive pattern, it was possible to establish four dimensions related to changes in the present that retro and nostalgic consumption can stem from (see figure 5.4):

- (1) temporal changes;
- (2) social changes;
- (3) technological changes;
- (4) market changes.

Figure 5.4 The translation of resistance themes into generalisable dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption



Each of the identified change dimensions contributes towards the expression of retro consumption behaviour. The first dimension of temporal changes refers to notions of nostalgia, one's changing role-repertoire affected by passage of time and other temporal factors such as 'time poverty' identified in this research. The second retro-evoking dimension are social changes affecting one's sense of connectedness with others. The first two dimensions show similarities to emergent themes on nostalgic reactions identified by Goulding (2001), which focused on experiencing nostalgia and that of social interactions, only further justifying their presence.

This research was able to identify two other dimensions which can contribute towards the expression of retro consumption, benefiting understanding of the phenomenon. The third dimension of technological changes is where retro consumption emerges as a result of technological changes, in the eyes of the affected putting the consumer at a disadvantage. The final dimension are market

changes, with factors corresponding to how consumers feel mistreated by modern marketplace practices.

Insights gained from interviews with participants led the researcher to believe that dimensions of '*technology*' and '*the market*' should be added to broaden the knowledge of the meanings of retro consumption.

As addressed in the literature review, nostalgia is a recurring theme present in studies involving retro goods (Bartmanski and Woodward 2015; Goulding 2002, 2003; Leigh et al. 2006) and retrosapes (Holbrook 2003; Patterson and Brown 2003), with some works stressing the central role of nostalgia as a driver of retro (Brown 1999; Franklin 2002; Goulding 2002). Notions of nostalgia concerning consumption have been explored in-depth, with the works by Goulding (2001,2002) being the most notable ones. By looking at the nostalgic experiences of consumers at heritage sites, Goulding (2001) identified areas from which a nostalgic consumption-related reaction emerges. Based on the results of her study, these influences would rise from different types of nostalgia experienced and discontent caused by factors such as individuals' role repertoire, alienation from the present, and state of social belonging.

What broadly encapsulates this are findings in Goulding's (2002) examination of age-related vicarious nostalgia in a consumption context emphasising the individuals' disillusionment with the present. A similarly understood dissatisfaction with the present is also identified as one of the themes in this doctoral research. It echoes what literature on nostalgia has been emphasising – that nostalgic evocation of the past occurs amid fears, discontent, anxiety and uncertainty for the present (Batcho 1995; Davis 1979). Taking a more holistic view, nostalgic consumption-related reactions can result from one's negative opinions of the present, discontent with one's state of social interactions and life role repertoire. Nevertheless, the overarching 'discontent with the present' characterising sources of nostalgia, albeit including the above-mentioned factors, is a broad term more befitting psychology and sociology.

Therefore, the researcher believes that adding the dimensions of (3) technological changes and (4) market changes to nostalgic and social notions outlined earlier makes for a more comprehensive understanding of the retro phenomenon.

Adding two dimensions is justified from a hermeneutic phenomenology perspective, where allowing participants to steer the conversation is paramount. Participants placing significant emphasis on sharing contemporary technological and market-related experiences incessantly juxtaposed with the past weighs in on the decision to include these two areas.

There are more reasons to support the inclusion of these two dimensions. One could argue for the technological dimension considering the pace and scope of technological change experienced by consumers in the last 30 years and the profound effect it has had on the way people consume, experience, and interact with products and services. Together with technological change, organisations' approach towards consumers is also constantly evolving, impacting organisations' product design decisions, delivery strategies and payment systems. Transformations such as these taking place in the marketplace further justify the fourth market dimension.

It is also worth mentioning that Goulding (2001, 2002) conducted the most recent exploration into the factors influencing nostalgic and retro consumer reactions. Unsurprisingly, since then, in specific industries (such as gaming), considerable developments have taken place in technology and marketing strategies. The researcher is convinced that both technological and market change factors are significant enough to be considered separately from the general 'disillusionment with the present' found in literature (Davis 1979; Stern 1992). Just as social and individual nostalgia-oriented factors have been pointed out under this generalising umbrella, the factors identified by this research carry enough significance to be separate dimensions.

Finally, as the nature of the newly identified dimensions relates to aspects of product/service design and market practices, introducing them could better describe nostalgic and retro reactions related to consumption.

What became apparent throughout conversations was that not every individual needed to experience and express fear, discontent, and anxiety towards all of the conceptualised dimensions. Moreover, not all factors must act simultaneously for a retro consumption reaction to occur. One of the participants – S – can serve as a good example. S did not bring up topics related to social,

technological and market changes, nor would he express much discontent during conversations. His recollections exhibited mostly stories attributable to temporal changes. During interviews, he claimed he would only occasionally ‘jump in and out of’ retrogaming owning few items mostly stored in his attic. In comparison, other participants exhibiting additional factors were involved in retrogamers to a more considerable degree (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Examples of participants’ exhibited change dimensions and retro consumption reactions

Participant name	Exhibited Change Dimensions	Retro consumption reaction
S	Temporal	Occasional retro gamer; very small collection held in the attic; very rarely participating in community activities both online and offline.
DK	Temporal, Social	Occasional retro gamer; very small collection of digitalised retro titles; rarely participating in community activities both online and offline.
PU	Temporal, Social	Moderate collection partially displayed; occasionally participating in community activities both online and offline.
SX	Temporal, Social, Technological, Market	Large collection displayed throughout the house; highly involved in community activities both online and offline
PT	Temporal, Social, Technological, Market	Large collection displayed throughout the house; highly involved in community activities both online and offline; regularly creating retrogaming content for his YT channel
BR	Temporal, Social, Technological, Market	Large collection displayed in a dedicated

		shed; highly involved in community activities both online and offline; regularly creating retrogaming content for his YT channel.
M	Temporal, Social, Technological, Market	Collection size unknown; highly involved in community activities both online and offline; administrator of multiple retrogaming forums.

The varying presence of identified change dimensions and the effect they appear to have on the strength of the expression of retro consumption need to be considered. This could explain why some participants were more involved in their retrogaming interests than others.

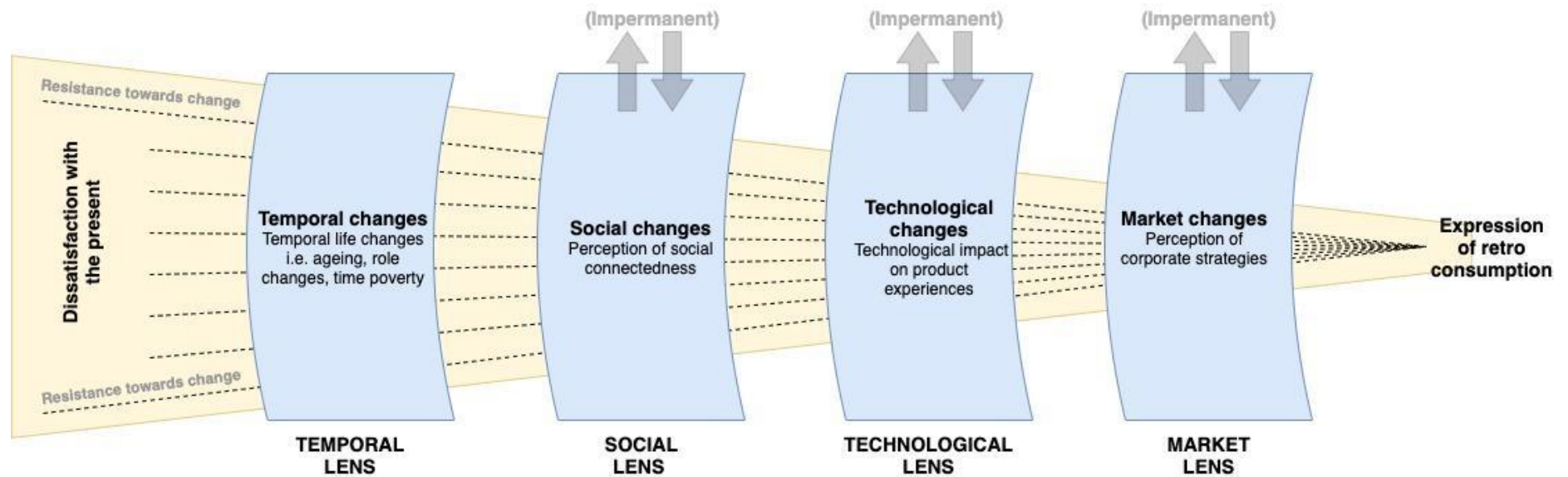
The main theoretical contribution of this research is the resulting conceptual framework organising four dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption taking into account the strengths of their expression and varying presence on individual gamers. This framework benefits this doctoral study by combining identified knowledge and presenting it in a diagrammatic way (Figure 5.5). Frameworks are *“a set of assumption, concepts, values and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality”* (Forsberg et al 2005 p.11). The value of using frameworks lies in the orderliness they lend to the research process and the key role they play in identifying and binding existing knowledge (Pearce 2012). Most notably, in this case, it can help conceptualise a studied phenomenon (Pearce 2012). For this research, the proposed framework provides a *“supporting structure”* for conceptualising the phenomenon of retro consumption.

Since the presence or absence of change dimensions seems to have an impact on the strength of the expression of retro consumption amongst participants, the visualisation of the framework is that of a combination of lenses. Each lens represents a specific change dimension. Looking at the framework

from left to right, it begins with a dissatisfaction with the present as it is considered as the starting point for nostalgic reminiscing about the past (Davis 1979).

The following element in the framework is the temporal lens relating to temporal changes in one's life surfacing as nostalgic reactions. As nostalgic references were present in all the interviews, the framework adopts the temporal lens (dimension) as an invariable one. It focuses on changes taking place in the temporal domain with its primary focus on nostalgia. Supporting the invariable aspect of this lens is also the regular presence of a nostalgic element in studies related to the expression of nostalgia and retro consumption (Blanchette 2013; Catwright et al. 2013; Goulding 2001, 2002; Kessous and Roux 2008).

Figure 5.5 The four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework



The following three lenses are impermanent, with expression of retro consumption not dependent on their presence. However, they impact the 'strength' of retro consumption expression, as shown in table 5.6. The second dimension (lens) is the social one, associated with societal changes and one's perceptions of social connectedness. What follows is the technological lens that channels dissatisfaction with the present through the prism of technological changes and their impact on consumer experiences and interactions with products/services. The final market lens is where the expression of retro is affected by market changes such as corporate strategies' impact on the approach towards consumers and product decisions.

The reason behind applying the 'lens' terminology lies in each identified dimension's role in the expression of retro consumption. Just as a beam of light intensifies with every additional lens added to the eyepiece and allows for a clearer representation of the image, each added dimension of the framework results in a more intense and apparent expression of retro consumption.

The proposed framework offers this study's primary theoretical contribution to understanding the meanings of retro consumption and a way to conceptualise the phenomenon.

First, it helps to organise knowledge in the subject matter and "*provide support for thinking about thinking*" (Moseley et al. 2005, p.34). It informs that the expression of retro stems from a dissatisfaction with the present. It also shows that retro consumption manifests itself because of resistance towards change as identified in the constitutive pattern. The framework then suggests ways that resistance towards change can be channelled through the four change lenses.

Another contribution of this framework lies in its introduction of two significant dimensions which can affect the expression of retro consumption identified in this research – technological and market changes. The importance of the aforementioned 'lenses' lies in how often participants referred to technological and market-related factors in expressing their dissatisfaction with the present and preference for retro. It also shows that technological progress and changing market strategies are significant enough to become standalone factors. This also shows that dissatisfaction with the present can take various forms, with this framework systematizing that.

The framework also provides a platform for future research in retro consumption to further explore the impact of technological and market changes on individuals' expression of retro for other forms of retro consumption. At the same time, the researcher believes it can grant subsequent retro studies with an underpinning structure.

Another benefit of the framework is the impermanent nature of the social, technological and market lenses. Such an approach considers possible differences between dimensions impacting individuals' expression of retro consumption.

Concurrently, this framework offers an insight into the 'why?' of retrogaming consumption of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men addressing RQ1. Participants engaged in retrogaming is a form of resistance towards change, causing their dissatisfaction with the present. Conversations with retrogamers lead to an understanding that the four identified change dimensions – temporal, social, technological and market – contribute to their interest in retro video games.

The use of this framework goes beyond the studied retrogaming phenomenon and could be translatable to other forms of retro consumption, addressing RQ2. Knowledge gained from exploring retrogaming signifies that expressions of retro consumption are forms of resistance towards negatively perceived change which can emerge from the four identified dimensions of temporal, social, technological or market changes.

As seen in RQ1 and RQ2, this study also set out to explore the meanings of retrogaming consumption in the context of two generations of men – Generation X and Millennials. As prior research in this area addressed in the literature review suggested differences between meanings of retro consumption can exist based on the age and generational affiliation of participants (Goulding 2001, 2002).

It is necessary to highlight that the researcher did not identify any differences in meanings of retrogaming behaviour between Generation X and Millennial men. Both groups of men represented a similar outlook on retrogaming and no differences in the meanings for these groups were identified. Upon reflection, a possible explanation could be that the investigated generations were temporally too close to each other for any visible differences. Perhaps in the

context of retrogaming, the generational gap needs to be bigger for differences in meaning to appear (e.g., comparing Gen X and Gen Z retro gamers).

The following sections will discuss components of the four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework in more detail, presenting further contributions to knowledge within each identified lens. Each change dimension will be described in more detail and further explore what participants' retrogaming behaviour signifies about the meanings of retro consumption.

5.2.1 Temporal changes

Temporal changes were identified in participants' accounts as a fixed lens impacting the expression of retro behaviour. Labelling this dimension as 'temporal' transpired due to the common denominator of participants' emerging accounts – their experiences and accounts related to broadly understood 'time'. What conversations revealed were three subthemes, all exhibiting a link with the passage of time and temporality:

- Awareness of ageing
- Changing role repertoire
- Pursuing intergenerational nostalgia through sharing experiences
- Time poverty and consumption

THEME(S)	CONTRIBUTION
- Awareness of ageing and connecting with the past self	Empirical support for immaterial (memories) and material (items) expression of nostalgia in a qualitative non-experimental and consumption-oriented setting for the purpose of repairing discontinuity in one's life.
- Changing role repertoire	Role overload anxiety alleviated by revisiting items and product experiences of personal nostalgic nature
- Intergenerational nostalgia	Sharing personal nostalgia with others by means of co-sharing revisited experiences related to personal nostalgia Sharing nostalgia a phenomenon present also among young adults Looking at sharing nostalgia from a consumer perspective with the process achieved by co-experiencing product consumption
- Time poverty	Time poverty impacting certain from of consumption requiring increasingly higher levels of time-involvement

The section on temporal changes will use the above figure as a structure guiding the discussion.

5.2.1.1 Awareness of ageing and connecting with the past self

A common thread in participants' accounts were memories of the past. They would raise nostalgic recollections of their gaming beginnings and overall childhood/adolescence with an evident yearning for those moments. Stern (1992) refers to such narratives as personal nostalgia, understood as a longing for remembered occurrences from the past. It became apparent that engaging in retrogaming allowed participants to re-experience events, now of nostalgic nature and, in a broader sense, rekindle their past memories.

However, retrogaming was not solely serving the purpose of re-experiencing the past. Regarding nostalgia orders, there would be a variation of all three types as defined by Davies (1979). Several retrogamers simply stated that the past was a better place and accepted that as a fact, while others were more reflective of the feeling. While still affectionate of past gaming, they could point out its shortcomings. Some participants, however, experienced what Davies (1979) referred to as 3rd order or interpreted nostalgia, meaning they explored their feeling in more detail, glimpsing its source. Some participants were able to determine that retrogaming and accompanying nostalgia was a way in which they addressed the issue of becoming older and the phenomenon of ageing. Therefore, this research contributes to knowledge by empirically supporting the connection between awareness of ageing and expressions of nostalgia in a qualitative, non-experimental, consumer-oriented setting.

Awareness of the passage of time makes humans realise the inescapable notion of mortality they oppose. Terror management theory [TMT] (Greenberg et al. 1986) suggests that faced with this, individuals seek certain types of behaviours, such as defending cultural beliefs, striving for self-esteem and investing in close relationships (Greenberg et al. 2008 in Shah and Gardner 2008), which allow them to buttress their sense of meaning and cope with ageing and mortality. In a series of experiments, Routledge et al. (2008) and Routledge et al. (2010) suggested that nostalgia can also provide life meaning and help

individuals cope with awareness of ageing and mortality. Awareness of ageing and nostalgic reactions are often connected with the discontinuity hypothesis, where nostalgia is seen as an emotion serving the purpose of repairing discontinuity in one's life (Davis 1979). This approach indicates that nostalgic recollections and behaviours occur with a clear contrast between past and present selves, often emerging from personal and/or professional changes in one's environment. What accompanies discontinuity are often feelings of anxiety, fear or uncertainty. The role nostalgia plays here is to link an individual with the past and alleviate the unpleasant experience of discontinuity (Sedikides et al. 2008).

Conversations with participants made it clear that they were experiencing discontinuity visible in their often-stated discontent with the present and glorification of the past. Some participants' awareness of ageing, and in other cases, the early considerations of their retrogaming collection's fate after their death, suggests a clear linkage between immaterial (memories) and material (items) expressions of nostalgia and their role in TMT. It is worth highlighting that not every participant expressed such awareness of ageing and mortality, which is understandable as not everyone might be capable (or yet capable) of reaching Davis' 3rd order nostalgia (1979) and being reflective of the emotion. Other explanations for this reflective selectiveness might be the very personal nature of such realisations and participants' reservations about sharing them.

This research empirically supports the connection between awareness of ageing and immaterial and material expressions of nostalgia and shows their emergence in a qualitative non-experimental, and consumer-oriented setting. Retro consumption in the form of collecting and consuming retrogaming goods allowed participants to connect their present selves with their past ones. In addition, considering the above, this research proves that such nostalgic functions can take tangible form and express as forms of consumption.

5.2.1.2. Changing role repertoire

Another temporally oriented theme focused on changes taking place in their individual role repertoire in contemporary society. One of the principal empirical contribution brought forward here demonstrates that individuals as young as Millennials and Generation Xers alleviate feelings of role overload with personal nostalgic experiences.

Role theory states that individual identities are developed and sustained from role relationships. This suggests that a meaningful existence depends on people's role repertoire over their lifetime and the resulting relationships (Goulding 2001). According to role theory, with age and role loss, such as loss of job, health, spouse and friend, one experiences a deterioration of the sense of self and anxiety (Gove 1994). However, Chase and Shaw (1989) believed that not only role loss could result in a weakened sense of self and anxiety. Their work hypothesised that having multiple roles can bring similar results to an individual's sense of self and well-being. Gergen (1991) further supported this with his concept of the saturated self. His notion referred to the increase in the range of relations (both real and virtual) and a growing number of obligations. What resulted was an expansion and intensification of individuals' role repertoires. Also, Erikson's (1963) model of role acquisition and crisis through one's lifecycle suggested that although role acquisition is a positive phenomenon, transitioning between roles can be a trying process.

In this doctoral research, participants' accounts would often relate to such life role overload. Retrogamers opened up about how their life changed compared to the when they first started playing video gaming in their childhood. Mentioned changes involved transitioning into adulthood - being in relationships, having or expecting children and having a career, amongst other commitments. Retrogamers would often contrast their current role repertoire with the past including retrogaming's involvement in this process. Retrogaming was a way in which they could 'return' to childhood times and re-live nostalgic experiences from a 'simpler' role-repertoire period.

This strikes a chord with Goulding's investigations into consumers' nostalgic reactions and their underlying causes in the context of visiting heritage living interactive museums (1999, 2001). In her research, Goulding distinguished a group of visitors between the age of 30-50 labelled '*aesthetics*'. When interviewed, they revealed being in a state of role overload resulting in anxiety and the present appearing volatile and pressurizing. Visits to the living museum made '*aesthetics*' experience vicarious nostalgia, meaning a yearning for a moment that took place prior to one's lifetime.

In contrast with those findings, this doctorate contributes to knowledge by suggesting that adults and young adults who experience role overload can also alleviate related feelings of anxiety and day-to-day life burden by relying on personal nostalgic experiences. Instead of looking towards an idealised and romanticised vicarious past, participants turned towards their own individual experiences and used retro consumption in the form of retrogaming in an attempt to relive them. The researcher sees this nostalgic reaction as a form of resistance directed at role overload and role changes resulting from passage of time, moving to a different life stage and related seminal events (e.g., starting a family; focusing on one's career).

This research also suggests that some young consumers who are seeking nostalgic experiences through retro consumption as a result of role overload tend to focus on items which relate to their personal experiences, not only impersonal and historical ones (vicarious nostalgia), as existing research suggests (Goulding 2001, 2002).

5.2.1.3 Intergenerational nostalgia through sharing experiences.

Participants saw retrogaming not only as something to re-experience but also to share with others. There was a willingness to 'pass down' interest in retrogaming and, related to it, personal nostalgia to the younger generation, termed '*intergenerational nostalgia*'. This study contributes towards the understanding of sharing nostalgia by showing that sharing can be done not only by employing stories but also by co-sharing experiences related to personal

nostalgic revivals. Moreover, it suggests that sharing nostalgia is not a phenomenon limited only to older adults.

As much as the concepts of interpersonal or simulated nostalgia are known and defined (Baker and Kennedy 1994; Havlena and Holak 1996), it has not been fully explored how one's personal nostalgia can be passed down to another (Batcho 2018). The phenomenon of sharing nostalgia was first suggested by Davis (1979), who mentioned the possibility of cross-generational nostalgia leapfrogging and referred to it as intergenerational nostalgia. He suggested that upon becoming middle age, individuals' nostalgic revivals might include some of the passed down nostalgic recollections of their parents and grandparents.

A proposed means through which personal nostalgia can be shared between generations is that of storytelling. While recounting the stories and the person sharing them, the 'recipient' of passed down personal nostalgia turns these narratives into a part of their extended past (Batcho 2018).

The role of stories in sharing nostalgia has been recently experimentally tested by Wildschut et al. (2018), investigating intergenerational transfer of nostalgia from older to younger adults. Their experiments indicated that nostalgically charged written personal accounts could induce nostalgia among younger participants.

This doctoral research expands on existing knowledge of intergenerational nostalgia in various ways and suggests three new areas for academic enquiry.

First, conversations with participants proved that individuals share (and attempt to share) personal nostalgia with others not only by means of stories but also co-sharing experiences related to those personal nostalgic revivals. This was clear in how driven participants were to involve their loved ones with retrogaming – the source and embodiment of their personal nostalgia. By co-experiencing, in this case retrogaming, participants had the opportunity to pass on their personal nostalgia presenting an unexplored gap in research.

Secondly, a striking observation is that participants of this research who found it important to share retrogaming experiences with their younger loved ones were much younger (in their 30s and early 40s) than ones from Wildschut

et al. (2018) study (mean – 60y/o) and what was implied by Davis (1979). This suggests that sharing nostalgia is not only a phenomenon typical for older adults but also for those younger.

Finally, the researcher believes this to be the first study to explore sharing personal nostalgia from a consumer perspective, where that process is achieved by co-experiencing nostalgically imbued items through their consumption with others.

It is worth noting that a factor impacting the discussed findings was selecting hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology for this research providing an in-depth, participant-led exploration of retrogaming. It uncovered that more vehicles for sharing personal nostalgia with others exist than assumed earlier.

5.2.1.4. Time poverty and consumption

One recurring theme during conversations with participants was their relationship between free time and their gaming activities. On multiple occasions, they would talk about not having enough free time to engage in modern multi-hour gaming experiences. This doctoral study suggests that in some instances, for products where time involvement is important, consumers with time poverty might opt for products requiring less involvement. What might transpire is a look towards the past at retro products which might fit that criteria.

The term ‘time poverty’, first introduced by Vickery (1977), denotes a chronic feeling of having too many things to do and not enough time to do them. Time poverty is reportedly increasing in society and, as a result, has become an object of more systematic study in the past decade (Whillans 2019). This has led to the identification of four factors contributing to time poverty both in and outside of a work setting – societal, institutional, organisational and psychological (Giurge et al. 2020).

A factor that relates to this finding and contribution are societal drivers. An important social change contributing to the ‘acceleration of time’ and hence time

poverty is modern technology and the impact it has on the lives of individuals and families. Because of rapid developments in the internet and mobile technologies, people face a plethora of experiences leading to an increasing worry of missing out, which can contribute to the feeling of time poverty (Giurge et al. 2020).

Corresponding with the notion of time poverty participants' relationship between time and gaming activities. One of the core reasons for reverting to retrogaming centred around their lack of time for modern gaming experiences. Despite being visually and technologically superior, most modern gaming, in their eyes, was ill-designed simply because of necessary time involvement. These gaming experiences were not fitting their busy schedules and avoided.

In contrast, retrogaming offered a more approachable and less time-intensive alternative. This suggests that time poverty can impact preference for certain forms of consumption. In such circumstances, alternatives are sought, which was one of the reasons why participants started to look towards past forms of gaming. Time poverty could also explain the rising popularity of mobile gaming because of little time involvement required (Mintel 2020). Time poverty-affected approach towards consumption could become more prevalent in the future if the current trend continues (Whillans 2019). This could result in more consumers seeking less time-engaging product and service alternatives – also retro ones - with potential avenues for new research enquiry.

It would be interesting to investigate consumers' perceptions of less time-intensive alternatives in gaming with the potential to apply them to future product and service design offerings. Another avenue for research could go beyond retrogaming by exploring different types of content, product and services.

To summarise, the temporal dimension of the four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework is also the first area to address RQ1 and RQ2. It appears one of the reasons why Millennial and Generation X men play retro video games is because of temporal changes taking place in their lives. The significance of this behaviour can be associated with various factors, such as nostalgia induced by the coming of age, changing role repertoire, sharing nostalgic experiences with others and time poverty.

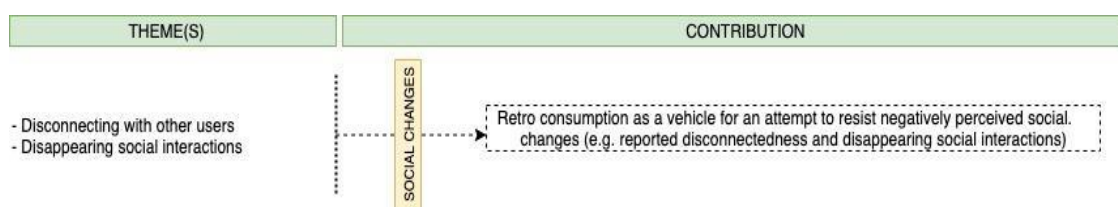
This research provides evidence for the role retro consumption plays in facilitating the connection between present and past selves allowing self-relevant

attitudinal continuity. In the discussed area on changing role repertoire, retro consumption was a vehicle used to stimulate nostalgic experience, thus alleviating feelings of role overload. Co-sharing nostalgic experiences with others made possible by consuming retro with them showed that retro consumption plays an important role in forming intergenerational nostalgia. It has also shown that the process itself does not have to be limited to sharing stories but also co-sharing experiences.

Finally, it appears that some types of retro consumption might be an answer to time poverty when more modern alternatives require continuous engagement and a substantial time investment.

5.2.2 Social changes

Resisting social changes was another lens contributing to participants' expression of retro consumption. Interviews highlighted that modern modes of consumption can harm social connectedness and how individuals communicate and interact. The contribution stemming from this area shows the application of characteristics of retro gaming consumption and acquisition as a means of counteracting adverse effects of societal changes.



In this research, participants attempted to resist social changes by means of retro consumption. Selecting retro gaming goods was a way to resist the disconnect between users created by modern gaming products. In the past, the only way that transpired was when individuals gathered in the same physical spaces. With technological progress, developers overcame the 'physical' barrier and increasingly opted for shared user experiences in an online environment only.

In participants' opinion, modern experiences lacked the social element and engagement with other users, compared with the closeness provided by retro

multiplayer experiences. The 'retro approach' offered a chance to form and deepen relationships with others. In contrast, relationships formed in modern online experiences came across as disposable and detached. Moreover, some participants depicted their experiences with others in online environments as abusive and hostile. As a result, instead of choosing modern online multiplayer experiences, they opted for retro gaming products which reminded them of face-to-face shared user experiences and allowed their re-experiencing.

The reported changes in social connectedness resulting from shifts in consumption acted as antecedents for their retro gaming preferences. This could partially explain why participants highlighted the importance of physical transaction-scapes when purchasing retro goods. This gaming context allowed them to shop in the physical world more socially, interact with others, and form relationships.

Retrogamers also highlighted disappearing social interactions because of a changing retail landscape with physical stores fading into digital transaction environments. In their opinion, purchasing items online reduced the need to interact with others, which has a detrimental impact on social connectedness and mental well-being. Taking this discourse further, they suggested that social life shifted from the physical world to the virtual. Consumer behaviour and the online social transition were seen as negatively affecting the fabric of society.

Topics related to social interactions have previously appeared in literature focusing on nostalgia. Holak and Havlena (1998) observed an indicator of the significance of the relationship between nostalgia and others when analysing descriptions of nostalgic memories, which, in many cases, related to family, friends and social events.

From a psychological perspective, there are reasons to believe that nostalgia stimulates social connectedness and reduces feelings of loneliness (Wildschut et al., 2006; Zhou et al., 2008). On the other hand, research relating the need to belong' (Baumeister and Leary 1995) to nostalgia showed that a belongingness deficit activates nostalgia. By telling participants that they will be facing a lonely future, Seehusen et al. (2013) were able to elicit increased levels of nostalgia.

Social connectedness and alienation have also appeared in academic research focusing on nostalgic consumers. Goulding's (2001) study of living museum visitors uncovered that those experiencing nostalgia during visits harboured different sources for the reaction. Findings uncovered four themes seen as antecedents of the reaction, with two – the degree of alienation experienced in the present and the quality and desire for social contact – representing a social context.

It becomes clear that social connectedness and nostalgia are closely tied. In a loop-like relationship, feelings of social disconnect and alienation are an antecedent of nostalgia, while nostalgic emotions increase social connectedness. Clearly, what participants reported relates to the notion of social connectedness. During conversations, they expressed concern about the state of modern-day social ties and how consumption impacts these relations.

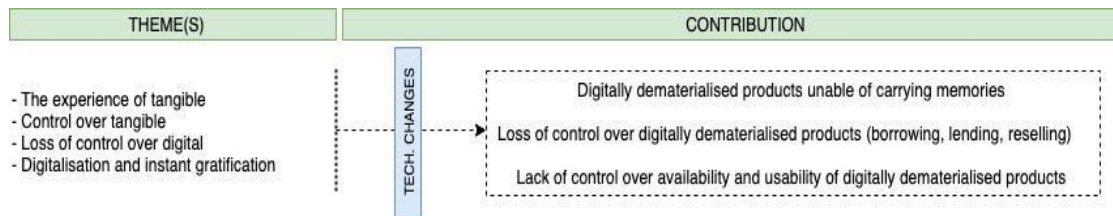
Contributions stemming from this research area show how some participants used retro consumption to counter the effects of societal changes – the reported social decline and disappearing social interactions. By investing themselves in retro gaming, with its reported more social mode of consumption (face-to-face) and acquisition channels, they attempted to resist observed social shifts. One cannot omit the community aspect of retro gaming, which in some cases contributed towards improved social interactions as a result of community groups and organised events.

These social changes address RQ1 and RQ2. Counteracting the negative characteristics of social change is another identified reason for participants' retro video gaming. Relating to the notion of retro consumption, in an attempt to resist these changes, individuals pursue retro, which reminds them of idealised past social structures. Some types of retro, such as the researched retro video gaming, will even allow them to engage/ re-experience past social interactions.

5.2.3 Technological changes – digital dematerialisation of products

Technological changes were the next identified dimension of the change lenses framework that impacted retro consumption expression. Conversations

with participants unveiled that digitalisation of consumption and the process of digital dematerialisation was at the heart of technological changes participants were experiencing in the gaming market. At the same time, this area represents one of the principal empirical contributions of this study.



According to Ryytänen and Hyyryläinen (2018), the digitalisation of consumption stresses how consumers interact with various digital technologies and how it affects their consumption of goods and services. One of the facets of digitalisation is digital dematerialisation of possessions, where products that once had a tangible representation are increasingly becoming immaterial streams of data (Belk 2013). The digital shift in consumption affects not only video gaming but also other industries such as photography, video entertainment, and music. This research demonstrates that the process of products becoming digital and losing their tangible characteristics was an issue for participants and became a factor contributing towards their decision to seek (tangible) retro alternatives.

Compared with previous studies, which focused largely on dematerialised personal items and mementoes [e.g., letters, pictures] (Petrelli and Whittaker 2010; Siddiqui and Turley 2006), this doctoral research offers contributions to knowledge on individuals' perception of digitally dematerialised products. In this doctoral study, these were gaming products available on the video gaming market, dynamically shifting towards being entirely digitally dematerialised.

Several contributions enrich knowledge on how some consumers perceive products losing their physical form in favour of a purely digital presence. According to retrogamers, purchasing digitally dematerialised gaming products did not offer the same experience as tangible products on multiple levels. The first contribution focused on the inability of digitally dematerialised products to

play a significant role in forming and carrying memories and consequently having reduced value for them as possessions.

What seemed to be the differentiating factor were the sensory cues that physical goods allowed, such as seeing, touching and even smelling the items. These interactions with the purchased items, themed '*the experience of tangible*', were pleasant and allowed for a richer experience of and connection with the acquired game.

Possessions are key to one's 'self' in the process of forming memories and maintaining a sense of past. Belk (1990) observed that individuals are not only defined by extending their 'self' by incorporating objects in the environment into their identity. Adding a temporal dimension, 'the self' can also be extended through time as we are "*defined by our pasts and our futures*" (Belk 1990 p.669). In this sense, possessions can be regarded as memory markers, serving as means of storing memories that facilitate a relationship with the past. As a result, individuals acquire and retain items that accumulate their memories to create and maintain their sense of past (Belk 1990; 2013). It is unequivocal then that possessions, therefore products as well, play an important role in forming one's sense of past. In this study, participants related to the notion of games as carriers of memories. There, however, were concerns over how the advancing process of digital dematerialisation might impact that function of their gaming possessions.

A few studies hint at consumers' approach towards digitally dematerialised possessions as carriers of memories and the sense of past. In some cases, digital cues (photos, videos, timelines) might prompt the sense of past and act as digital photo albums or online memory banks (Belk 2013). However, according to Siddiqui and Turley (2006), there is a difference between digitally dematerialised and tangible goods. The only remark presented in their one-page extended abstract suggests that collections of digital items such as photos, letters, songs and cards '*presented a sense of past that was qualitatively different from the tangible collections for their informants*' (p.647). Petrelli and Whittaker (2010), on the other hand, claimed that their participants came to see digital mementoes as valuable and worth keeping.

Participants of this research were clear about perceiving digitally dematerialised products as unable to carry memories, seeing physical items as more apt vehicles of extending one's self into the past. In contrast to previous

studies (Siddiqui and Turley 2006; Petrelli and Whittaker 2010), it is a firm statement of consumers' perceptions of digitally dematerialised goods' ability to carry memories and maintain a sense of past.

At this point, the identified earlier importance of physical transaction-scapes and acquisition stories they offer is also worth mentioning. As discussed, recounting such events has the potential to ground one's sense of past, and be used in their 'identity projects'. The researcher believes participants' revealing concerns related to 'past-oriented' abilities of both gaming products and their acquisition processes signifies the prominence of the physical dimension in maintaining a link with their past self.

Another area contributing towards the understanding of digitalisation of consumption relates to the issue of losing control over digitally dematerialised products, affecting common activities such as borrowing, lending and reselling. Here, digitalisation influenced participants' sense of ownership. Digital downloads felt not as fully owned as tangible products would be, and thus not worth buying. What could explain this stance is the ability to manipulate and experience items with multiple senses positively impacting the process of forming psychological ownership (Peck and Shu 2009). Not all the senses become engaged with the tangible dimension missing, resulting in a diminished sense of psychological ownership.

A further contribution to knowledge stemming from participants' approach towards digitally dematerialised products raises issues of control over such purchases. The main claim is the inability to make decisions regarding purchased digital products typical of owned tangible products. Conversations revealed frustrations with modern dematerialised products taking away the freedom to borrow and lend possessions. Sharing items was not the only problem identified. It is impossible to resell digital items, as digitally dematerialised products are tied to virtual accounts and, in some cases, to specific devices preventing such transactions.

A sense of control and ownership is one of the central aspects of collecting activities (Belk 1995), as only ownership of items allows for desired presentation and interaction with possessions (Danet and Katriel in Pearce 1994). In a dematerialised context, Watkins et al. (2015) looked at digital collections where

they identified that participants had issues with eliciting control over their collections in terms of organizing them. They also talked of the inability to move digital possession between devices giving a game-related example with their participant, as a result, losing an entire in-game card collection.

This doctoral research presents this issue from a broader perspective related to the notion of control over digitally dematerialised products and one not limited to the context of collections. Conversations with participants showed that the aspect of control over products can be a factor contributing towards the expression of retro consumption.

The final contribution brought forward by this research was the reported lack of control over the availability and usability of digitally dematerialised products. The interviewed participants reported that digitally dematerialised products are usually made available to consumers via online platforms, and it is the governing organisation's decision whether a product will continue to be accessible to consumers or taken off. In some cases, product availability depends on the organisation's decision to maintain support for a particular gaming platform. Here, users face the risk of losing access to their purchases or not being able to use them fully, e.g., online features of the product accessible via the platform.

This research contributes to knowledge of digitally dematerialised products by showing that consumer narratives evolved from questions of privacy (Siddiqui and Turley 2006) and inter-device product transferability (Watkins et al. 2015) to concerns over control and ownership of the purchased product. Additionally, it identified issues with access to products stemming from digital platform providers' decisions and platforms' lifecycles.

From a critical marketing perspective, these factors could be an outcome of putting the consumer at a disadvantage. More specifically, relating to the concept of consumer vulnerability, where consumers face limitations in exchange relationships. The imposed hindrance links to transactional aspects out of the buyer's control during its course (Andreasen and Manning 1990). Baker et al. (2005) offer a comprehensive definition of consumer vulnerability:

“Consumer vulnerability is a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or from the consumption of marketing messages and products. It occurs when control is not in an individual’s hands, creating a dependence on external factors (e.g., marketers) to create fairness in the marketplace. The actual vulnerability arises from the interaction of individual states, individual characteristics, and external conditions within a context where consumption goals may be hindered, and the experience affects personal and social perceptions of self.”

Baker et al. (2005 p.134)

In this research the disadvantage results from a power imbalance between consumers and the gaming industry linked to technological changes in the progressing digital dematerialisation of products. Dissatisfaction with such technological changes contributed to participants’ turn towards the past where such developments were yet to come in the distant future.

The overall contribution of this resistance towards digitalisation is that technological developments imposing changes in product design and marketing can emerge in different ways and become significant factors in some consumers’ decision to pursue retro products. Retro becomes a means by which consumers can attempt to resist technological changes. In this study, participants’ concerns were centred on the perceived value of modern digitally dematerialised products and some of their limiting factors and juxtaposed with more tangible retro products.

Some scholars believe that dematerialised digital goods are inferior to tangible, listing factors such as difficulties establishing an emotional connection and attachment with these possessions as arguments (Belk 2013; Siddiqui and Turley 2006). This research contributes to this knowledge by adding the questions of digitally dematerialised products’ ability to form meaningful memories and their role in consumer identity projects.

Several studies have focused on digital possessions and their ability to act as extensions of one’s self. For instance, Siddiqui and Turley (2006) looked at extending ‘the self’ to the digital world relating to collections of digital items such

as photos, letters, songs and cards. They identified uncertainty as the main element present in a tangible-to-digital transition, which was “*rooted in concerns about ownership and security of digital pictures which perhaps echo the control aspect of [tangible] possessions*”. (Siddiqui and Turley p.647).

Another issue arising from their work related to the missing emotional attachment for many dematerialised possessions. Although not dematerialised, also digital virtual possessions such as in-game items have been said to miss some attributes which generally allow for deeper relationships with tangible items (Watkins and Molesworth 2012). It appears that the absence of a tangible dimension does impede one’s self-extension, usually achievable by physical contact or proximity with the possession - a process referred to by Belk (1988) as contamination.

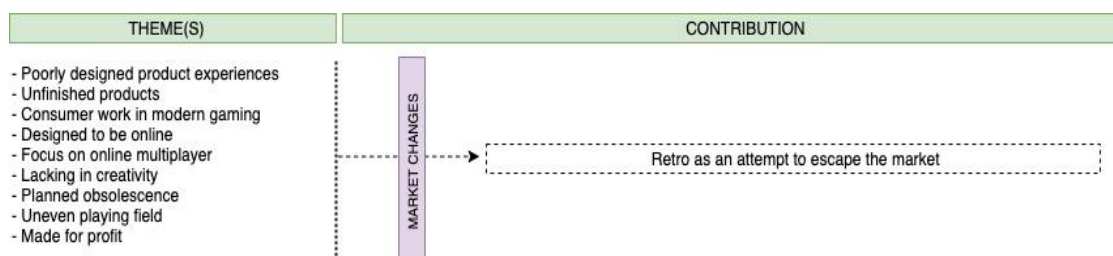
On the other hand, some scholars believe digital goods are as real as physical ones and capable of addressing their owners’ desires. Their users can form attachments similar to those with tangible possessions (Lehdonvirta 2012). Some take this discourse further, claiming that digital goods might represent superior value for some, such as global nomads (Bardahi et al., 2012).

This doctoral research’s principal empirical contribution to this discourse is that digitally dematerialised products, because of their intangible nature, are poor carriers of memories and do not provide enough value for their self-identity projects. Further, it uncovers issues experienced with digitally dematerialised products related to loss of control (inability to borrow, lend and resell) and lack of control over their availability and usability on supplier platforms. Thus, it clearly shows how technological changes can be a factor contributing towards the expression of retro consumption. Participants felt that technological changes to gaming products had a negative impact on their product ownership experiences and freedom. At the same time, the presented contributions shed light on the negative aspects of digitalisation of consumption and the consumption of digitally dematerialised products. They also have the potential to spark a further discussion. As the tangible-based pre-owned market is a vital source of retro and nostalgic goods, some areas of retro consumption are bound to be affected by progressing digital product dematerialisation. This might result in the future of retro becoming dominated by business-held and controlled content.

Finally, technological changes are the third area contributing towards understanding why participants played retro video games and addressing RQ1. The significance of the discussed behaviour (RQ2) is learning that technological product changes resulting from progress seen by consumers in a negative light might push them towards looking for retro product alternatives. In this sense, retro consumption would be a way in which consumers could attempt to avoid unwanted products while at the same time manifesting their opposition to such changes.

5.2.4 Market changes – retro as an attempt to escape the market

Participants devoted a considerable amount of time expressing their negativity towards changes taking place in the modern gaming market, which relates to the next lens present in the framework – market changes. Their thoughts on this surfaced in nine themes listed in Table 5.5.



Participants highlighted a shift in the gaming industry's approach towards product development and pricing strategies. Their experiences with the contemporary gaming market revealed an imbalance in the relationship between producers and platform providers. What they saw as a modern trend were products released unfinished and of sub-standard quality both technically and creatively. Online gaming platforms allowed for products to be fixed post-purchase and updated via digital 'patches', increasing the amount of 'work' users were burdened with. Moreover, the necessity for online connectivity redefined how an individual consumer could use a purchased product and experience it with others.

Table 5.5 Subthemes related to market changes in the gaming market

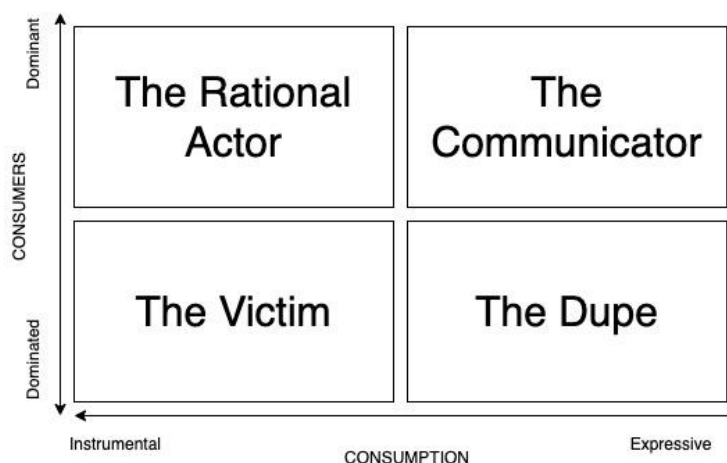
Subtheme	Brief description
Poorly designed product experiences	Gaming products designed in a way not focusing on enhancing the overall user experience
Unfinished products	Releasing unfinished and sub-quality products
Consumer work in modern gaming	Consumers forced to undertake additional 'work' digitally downloading the product and updates
Designed to be online	Internet connection necessary to use the gaming product Purchased product availability dependent on online platform support
Focus on online multiplayer	Neglecting single-player and local multiplayer experiences favouring online multiplayer
Lacking in creativity	Modern gaming products lacking in creativity
Planned obsolescence	Poor reliability of modern gaming hardware and data carriers
Uneven playing field	Creating an unfair online multiplayer environment by introducing microtransactions advantaging some users
Made for profit	The gaming industry focusing too much on financial gain and not enough on offering consumers complete and high-standard products

The change in the gaming market was also in how companies profited from products with paid downloadable content (DLC) and microtransactions,

becoming a modern norm. A shift towards DLCs led to situations where some users could gain an advantage by purchasing additional skills and items, which participants considered unfair. By consuming retro, participants found a way to resist their perceived mistreatment by the contemporary gaming market. Retro served as a vehicle that participants used in their attempt to escape negative modern market practices, by choosing older products they linked with more positive marketplace values. The identification of the market change dimension represents a valuable principal empirical contribution to knowledge of this research as it shows how the modern marketplace treats consumers and contributes towards their expression of retro consumption.

The identified shifts in the market made participants feel disconnected from modern gaming where they felt mistreated as consumers. They perceive the industry as directly dominating the market and, as a result, indirectly dominating the gamer consumer. Their position can be further illustrated by drawing on the work of Aldridge (2003), where he suggested different ways of perceiving the consumer, depending on her power relationship with consumption and how that consumption is expressed (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6 Aldridge's 2x2 matrix contrasting different consumer discourses
(Adapted from Aldridge 2003)



In this 2x2 matrix, consumers can be either dominated or dominant in the power relationship between production and consumption. The second dimension pertains to the expression of consumption which can be either functional or more

symbolic. Combining the two axes creates four types of consumers. '*The Victim*' is a consumer disadvantaged as a result of consumption, which might involve being tricked by 'the system' or making poor decisions. Another dominated consumer type is '*The Dupe*' subjected to control due to her consumption. The dominating '*Rational Actor*' approaches consumption and decision-making in a reasoned fashion and with her self-interest in mind. Finally, the unrestrained and expressive '*Communicator*' uses consumption to achieve a symbolic exchange, approached in a more playful and rebellious way. What characterises '*The Communicator*' is the self-awareness of the meaning and reflexivity accompanying consumption (Ellis et al. 2011).

Drawing upon this matrix can provide interesting insights into participants' involvement in retrogaming. Before their 'shift' towards retro, participants existed in an environment in which they took up the position of actors dominated by producers. Either scammed by developers being sold imperfect and incomplete products requiring downloadable content to be acquired to supplement the product experience ('*victimised*') or controlled in the way of how, where and in what form (tangible or digital) is the product delivered and owned ('*duped*'), the power relationship was not in their favour. When conscious of this relationship, participants' dynamic with producers shifted towards a more dominant position, where they engaged in consumption with the aforementioned 'awareness' of its demonstrative capabilities. As a result, consumption was approached from a '*knowing*' and '*self-aware*' perspective, characteristic of '*Communicators*', and took up a form "[...] *distancing themselves from and resisting the market through alternative expressions of consumption*" (Ellis et al. 2011, p.168). The researcher sees this expression in retrogaming consumption, which became a cognizant expression of participants' resistance to changes in the modern gaming market.

The idea of consumers distancing themselves and resisting the market is relatable to the concept of consumers attempting to escape the market. Consumer escape should be understood as an alternative mode of consumption processes carrying emancipatory potential (Arnould 2007; Firat and Venkatesh 1995), achieved by practices aimed at distancing consumption and consumers from the market (Kozinets 2002). However, Baudrillard doubted that autonomous consumer action led to the rejection of consumption and freeing oneself from the

market (1970/1998). To him, such an escape was futile as consumption and the economy prevents individuals from leaving the market due to the all-dominating consumption of signs. The only possibility seen by Baudrillard lies in differentiation, understood as rejection of certain objects in favour of others, which still at its core remains consumption, thus preventing an escape from the market.

Firat and Venkatesh (1995) saw an opportunity for distancing from the market by positioning the consumer in social spaces on the peripheries and outside of the market system, with some examples of such spaces being swap meets and flea markets.

Maffesoli (1996) and De Certeau (1984) suggest that consumers can engage in 'extra-market' activities. The latter offers an option of 'detournement' or re-appropriation of market resources and their use in ways not predicted by marketers in everyday practices. According to this logic, consumers are slowly but steadily eroding marketers' control through these micro-emancipatory practices. For that to happen, consumers need to become reflexively challenging consumers (Ozanne and Murray 1995), meaning they need to develop a *"reflexive distance from the marketing code"* (Arnould 2007, p.99). This can be interpreted as being aware of its existence and its structuring effect on consumers rather than living thoughtlessly within the codes' boundaries. Consumers can deflect this code if they separate the 'resource' from its meaning originally embedded by marketers (Ozanne and Murray 1995). At this point, a link with retrogaming can form. Participants took the retro items (resources) that the market considered obsolete and used them in ways which were at that point not predicted by marketers – being used, looked after, collected and given a 'second life'. Taking the above re-appropriation of resources into account, together with the motive of being mistreated by the modern market, the researcher sees retrogaming as a 'vehicle' used by consumers in their attempt to escape the market. They achieved that by partially or completely rejecting modern gaming products and substituting them with retrogaming.

Retro consumption can also be positioned within the processes of fetishization and reification of items (Murray and Ozanne 1991). The above-mentioned re-appropriation of items becomes an objectification of abstractions

which can result from anti-market anxiety, as described in the 'Cult of Macintosh' (Belk and Tumbat 2005). In this research, the anti-market attitude participants reported in the interviews referred to how the contemporary gaming market treats them as consumers. Their retrogaming activities and preferences imbued with the '*spirit of counterculture*' (Bradshaw and Firat 2007 ed. Saren et al.) oppose the status quo dictated by modern corporate gaming practices. The idea (or spirit) of opposition became objectified and commodified in retrogaming items, effectively reifying them for retrogamers. Consumers pursued emancipation through commodity fetishization embedding, in this case, retrogaming items with meanings which fulfil their desires – gaming goods representing a respectful approach towards the consumer.

Arnould (2007) suggested that consumers' capability for autonomous action and emancipation could find fertile soil in an online environment. This research provides evidence supporting that prediction as the retrogaming community gathered not only during physical events but also had a strong online presence. Online spaces were not only instrumental in forming an '*ethical connection*' between its members (Maffesoli 1996) but proved to play the role of exchange platforms. The use of online communities as self-governed trading platforms resulted from another form of market escape – that of the market's influence over online marketplace platforms often used as sources of retrogaming items. These platforms, mimicking social spaces on the peripheries of consumption, such as flea markets and swap meets, were reportedly drawn increasingly towards traditionally understood marketplaces, with inflated prices and speculation becoming more common. Moving closer to contemporary market mechanisms was perceived as a shift in the wrong direction. Consequently, participants created their own social media transaction-scapes, attempting to liberate and distance them from the market and its influences. In these self-created spaces, they can employ their own transaction rules such as:

- offering 'fair prices' for items
- allowing others to own a very expensive item by the use of raffles
- offering some items for free

When exploring the information gathered from participants on resistance towards the modern gaming market, the researcher also encountered evidence of participants' resistance towards elements of the notion of the 'working consumer' (Cova and Dali 2009) they were involved in.

The concept of the working consumer evolved from service-dominant (SD) logic (Vargo and Lush 2004), which focused on mutually beneficial value co-creation between producers and consumers. The work undertaken by consumers forms surplus value, which the company can use (Cova et al., 2015). Some, however, argued that the immaterial labour undertaken by consumers could be used to the producer's benefit and leave the consumer at a disadvantage (Cova and Dali 2007, 2009; Zwick et al. 2008).

The negative facet of value co-creation, referred to as double exploitation, focuses on two premises seen in participants' experiences with the modern gaming market. Although creators of immaterial labour, consumers usually cannot reap the tangible benefits from their knowledge, enthusiasm and contribution to the manufacturing process (Zwick et al. 2008). Relating to this idea, participants reported that producers of modern games knowingly offer consumers unfinished products, which are then 'tested' by customers post-purchase during use. With the ability to remotely retrieve the working consumers' immaterial labour through digital usage data, online reviews and insights, producers can fix and perfect their products whilst not offering any remuneration to consumers.

There is a second way in which the market is exploiting working consumers. Monetary value is not the only currency consumers need to spend to receive the fruits of their labour. Many retrogamers brought up the issue of the long time needed to download frequent online updates fixing and patching issues with freshly released gaming products. From this perspective, consumers are 'working' to improve an already paid for product because mending needs to be paid for again with their valuable time. Additionally, fixing issues with the purchased product demands an internet connection, again putting pressure on the consumer to have one readily available. Zwick et al. (2008) saw such skewed approaches towards co-creation as contradictory to the initial postulates behind the idea. One should not overlook the role of technology in these shifts. Progressing digitalisation is fragmenting consumer roles, not only creating new

ways of information sharing between consumers but also between them and producers. Technology is accelerating the evolution of traditional roles of producers and consumers. Once seen as cogs in the process of economic exchange, consumers are increasingly becoming prosumers and active co-creators (Ryynänen and Hyyryläinen 2018). The dawn of the working consumer has accelerated thanks to technological progress, which is seen as a positive. However, as conceptualised by some academics (Reider and Voß 2010) and suggested by this research, it can also result in disadvantageous consequences.

Considering negativity towards the exploitation of customers shared in conversations with participants and highlighted above, the researcher interprets it as one of the motives for their retrogaming preference in an attempt to evade the modern gaming market. Due to technological limitations, retro products had to be complete on launch since any updates and add-ons were impossible.

In summary, the function retrogaming plays for participants is to form an opportunity for emancipation and an escape from the market. This is achieved by attempting to resist the modern marketplace by re-appropriating old gaming items which left the consumption cycle, reifying and charging them with an anti-market ethos. The escape is not only limited to consuming retro items in favour of modern ones but also means functioning as retro consumers in spaces which remain on the verge of the mainstream market. These are not only physical transaction-scapes, such as pre-owned shops and car-boot sales but also self-formed and self-governed online consumption spaces - exchange groups and social media market sites with specific transaction rules emphasising fairness and trust. At the same time, expanding social media groups by marketplace functions is a way of escaping the influence of the mainstream market on how the pre-owned market operates, both offline and online. Lastly, retrogaming consumption enables consumers to evade negative aspects of consumer labour they face in the modern gaming marketplace.

Market changes were also the final factor contributing to the reason why participants chose to engage in retrogaming activities, addressing RQ1. What this signifies for retro consumption, relating to RQ2, is that contemporary market practices and how consumers perceive them can be a factor contributing towards the expression of retro.

5.3 Chapter Summary

As highlighted throughout this chapter this research provided several primary contributions to existing theory and knowledge of retro consumption phenomenon. The most important theoretical and empirical contributions stemming from this work have been summarised in table 5.6 (see table 5.1 for complete table).

Table 5.6 Principal theoretical and empirical research contributions

Contribution
Empirical – new collector typology
Theoretical – retro consumption as resistance towards change conceptual framework.
Empirical – Personal nostalgic experiences alleviating the effects of role-overload
Empirical – retro consumption as resistance towards technological product/service changes
Empirical – retro consumption as an attempt to escape the marketplace

Retrogaming proved to be an interesting form of retro consumption to explore and one which enriched not only the understanding of retrogaming behaviour but also the conceptualisation of retro consumption. This study identified four areas contributing to the expression of retro consumption – the temporal, social, technological and market dimensions.

The study shows that technological change can contribute towards the expression of retro consumption amongst some individuals. Another realisation was the fact that for some, retro can be an attempt to escape the market that is mistreating the consumer. Moreover, this research resulted in the creation of the four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework based on four identified dimensions with the potential to be translatable to other forms of retro consumption. At the same time, this doctoral research presented some valuable contributions to collecting behaviour knowledge.

The following chapter will summarise the key findings and contributions of this research. It will also present the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to investigate the lived experience of retrogaming consumption of Millennial and Generation X men and answer the three posed research questions:

RQ1 Why do 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men play retro video games?

RQ2 What does this retrogaming behaviour signify about the meanings of retro consumption practices of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men?

RQ3 What are the implications of this retrogaming behaviour for the conceptualisation and practice of retro marketing in the future?

The researcher attempted to gain understanding of the retrogaming phenomenon through hermeneutic phenomenology and the process of hermeneutic analysis – Diekelmann's 7-stage analytical process of hermeneutic understanding. However, staying true to the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, there is no one truth or perspective. Therefore, findings and interpretations presented in this work should be seen as what stood out in the data and were of significance to the exploration of retrogaming and retro consumption.

Findings of this doctoral thesis address the first research question on the reason why Gen X and Millennial men play retro video games and shed light on the meanings of retrogaming consumption. As captured in figure 4.3 phenomenological conversations with participants revealed a constitutive pattern binding all the remaining findings on retrogaming – resistance towards change. Retrogaming is a means by which retrogamers attempt to resist change taking place in different domains of their life.

To begin, resistance emerged as a response to temporal changes involving the realisation of ageing, changing life-role repertoire and time poverty. Another area of resistance is that of disconnecting with others as a result of social changes, such as diminishing social interactions. The third identified factor interestingly relates to resistance towards technological changes impacting how modern products can be consumed and managed by their owners. In this

instance, the focus is on the progressing digitalisation of products and the way these changes impact consumer experiences and control over products. Finally, resistance surfaces in response to modern marketplace practices of gaming companies. Here, participants list unethical aspects of marketing strategies leading to, e.g., selling unfinished products and overemphasising corporate profit.

From these findings, the researcher identified more generalisable dimensions where resistance towards change emerged – temporal, social, technological and market-related. For each of these areas, retro serves as a means of attempting to resist and escape changes. The conceptual framework of the four change lenses of retro consumption (figure 5.5) emphasises these connections. The four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework

On a temporal level, retrogaming is a way for participants to evoke nostalgia and revisit the past when they were younger, and their role repertoire was not overloaded. Socially, they see retrogaming as a means of seeking a connection with others both when consuming gaming products and when acquiring them. From a technological standpoint, retro items allow for more ownership control and a richer sensory product experience due to their tangible nature.

Looking at market-related factors, participants select retro gaming in an effort to avoid the contemporary mainstream gaming marketplace and the corporate practices which they deemed unethical.

In summary, Gen X and Millennial men consume retro as a form of resistance towards change which originates from the four identified dimensions of temporal, social, technological and market changes.

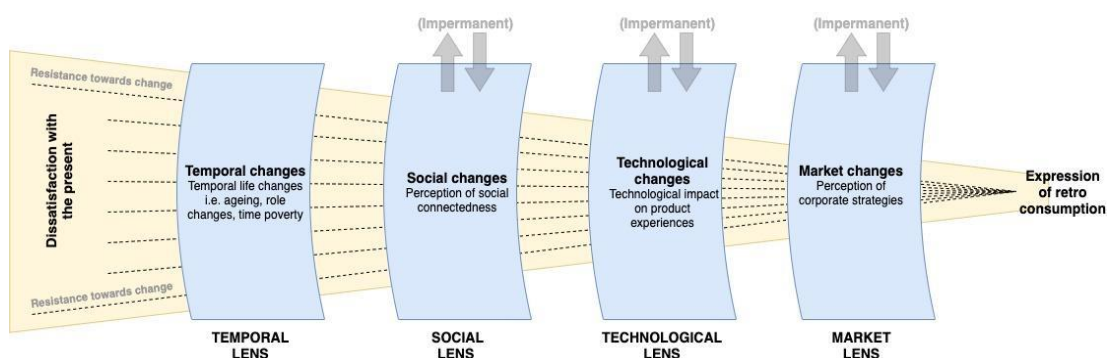
What is important to address here in relation to RQ1 and RQ2 is that there were no differences in meanings of retrogaming consumption identified between the two investigated generations of males. The reason behind this might lie in the temporal proximity of the two investigated generations.

Exploring retrogaming behaviour was also significant for a better understanding of retro consumption, addressing the second research question. The identified four dimensions affecting the expression of retro consumption change the way contemporary retro consumption should be perceived. They

expand the conceptual horizons of the retro phenomenon by transcending nostalgic and social factors identified in previous research linking yearning for and consuming 'the past' (Bartmanski and Wodward 2015; Goulding 2001,2002; Muehling et al. 2014; Seehusen et al. 2013; Vignolless et al. 2013). The identified changes in the technological and market dimensions should be seen as standalone factors having a profound impact on consumers' turn towards old products and expression of retro consumption. The researcher sees the potential for an increase in significance of these two factors in the near future of retro consumption as the rapid rate of technological advancement can only accelerate technological product changes and market practices of companies. The researcher also believes that the identification of four diverse dimensions affecting retro consumption allows for their transferability to other forms of retro consumption.

The identification of four dimensions affecting retro consumption creates an improved conceptualisation of the retro phenomenon, addressing RQ3, with the potential of this new approach to be transferable to other forms of retro consumption. With that in mind, this research proposes a conceptual framework of change lenses of retro consumption, which combines the four identified dimensions of temporal, social, technological and market changes that contribute towards the expression of retro consumption (see Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 (Repeated) Conceptualisation of the expression of retro - the four change lenses of retro consumption conceptual framework



The framework allows for flexibility in its adaptation to other forms of retro consumption through the impermanent nature of three of its lenses. Also, as a result the proposed conceptual framework can be applied to products which are either aesthetic, technology-oriented or both.

The proposed conceptualisation of retro also provides contributions to practice. Businesses deciding to incorporate these findings into their decision-making will see that beyond nostalgia, there are other forces, such as social, technological and market factors, contributing towards some consumers' decision to engage with retro consumption. This new outlook on retro can be used by companies planning to utilise retro in their strategy to better understand what is fuelling their target customers' turn towards retro and, in turn, inform their product decisions and marketing communication approach.

A major contribution of this research was the understanding that retro consumption can be an expression of resistance towards change with that change stemming from different areas or, as referred to in this research – dimensions or lenses.

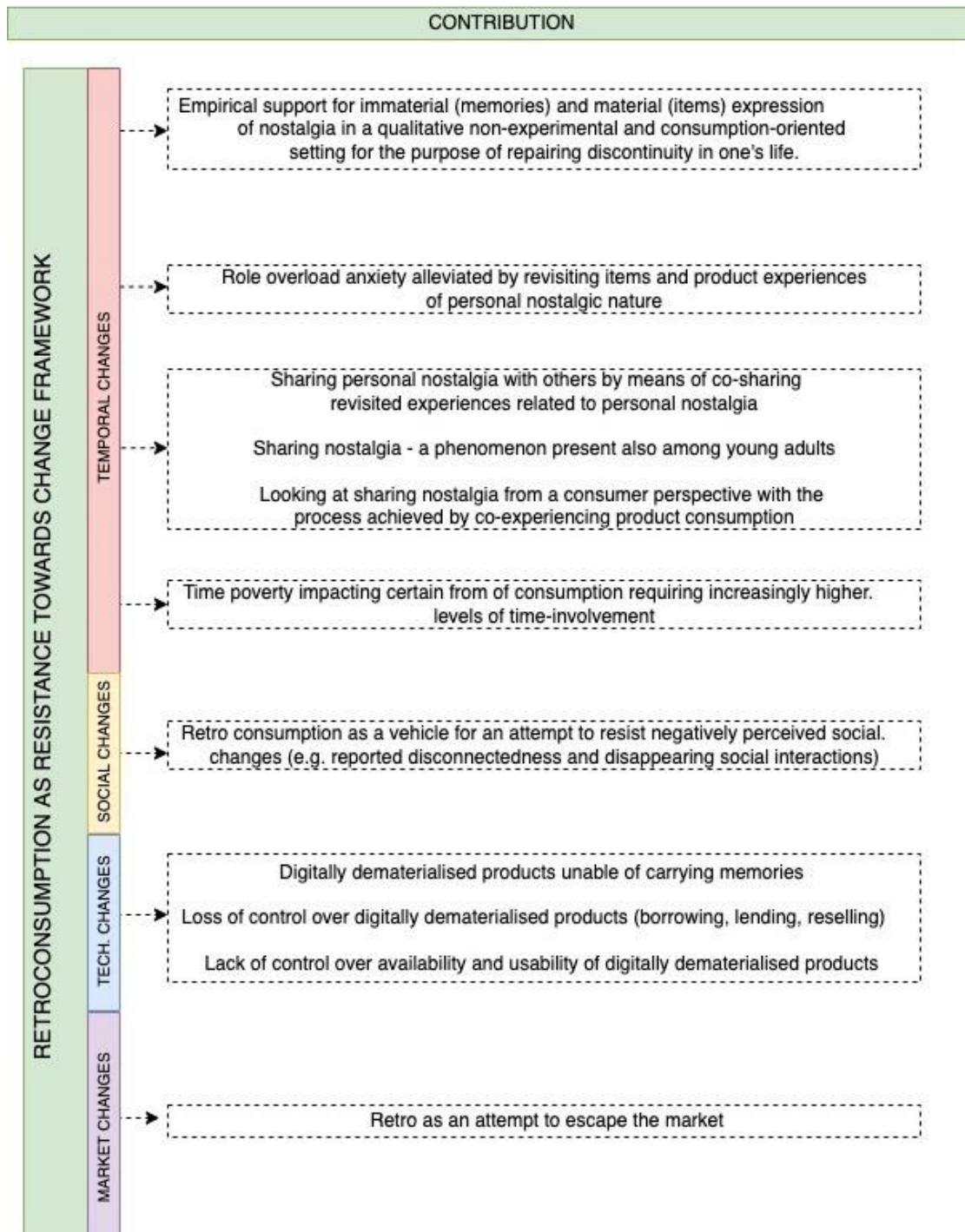
There were also contributions stemming from each of the four change dimensions identified in this research (Figure 6.1). In the temporal dimension, this research provided empirical support for the role of immaterial and material expressions of nostalgia play in repairing discontinuity in an individual's life. Next, conversations with participants revealed how retro items and related personal nostalgic experiences contributed to alleviating anxiety caused by social role overload. In the same area, co-sharing revisited personal experiences used as a means of sharing nostalgia with others. It is also believed to be the first study to explore sharing nostalgia from a consumer perspective by co-experiencing nostalgically imbued items through their consumption with others. Interestingly this phenomenon was present among young adults, contrary to existing research. Finally, retrogamers identified time poverty as a factor capable of contributing towards the expression of retro consumption.

From a social standpoint, retro consumption was a way to offset social disconnectedness by seeking retro products and means of acquiring them, which encouraged engaging with others.

The technological dimension revealed concerns related to the digitalisation of consumption and the dematerialisation of contemporary products. There were issues raised concerning the lack of control of such items personally (sharing, re-selling) and from the perspective of longevity of the platform making them available. There were also profound questions of digitally dematerialised products' ability to carry memories for their owners.

Finally, retro consumption was a way to escape the contemporary marketplace with the way it was mistreating consumers.

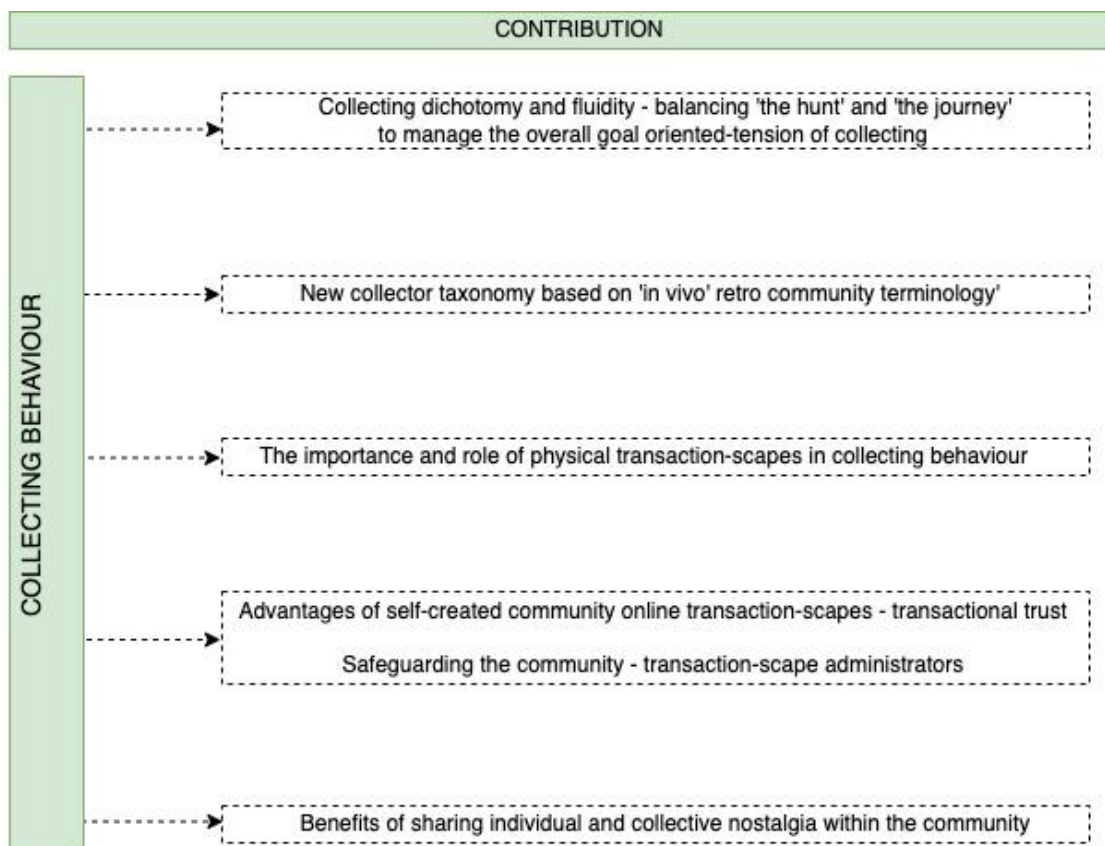
Figure 6.1 List of contributions to knowledge stemming from each of the four change dimensions



Some of the contributions in this research transcended the topic of retro consumption and encompassed collecting behaviours (Figure 6.2). Reported participants' collecting behaviour suggested a fascinating dichotomy of the collecting process and the need for finding a balance between its two opposing modes – 'the hunt' and 'the journey'. Conversations revealed a new collector

taxonomy based on 'in vivo' retro community terminology built on a set of characteristics recognised and articulated by the community. Participants also discussed the importance of physical transaction-scapes for human interactions and their role in creating meaningful acquisition stories. Still, regarding acquiring retro items, it was discovered that retrogamers created online community spaces that they used for more secure transactions. Through a system of vetting and overseeing transactions, administrators of these groups safeguarded self-created online spaces. Also, this research identified the phenomenon of sharing nostalgic recollections among members of the retrogaming community. Finally, findings and contributions related to collecting behaviour were a positively unexpected outcome of this research and provided one more learning - retro consumption often exists within a collecting environment.

Figure 6.2 Contributions to knowledge related to collecting behaviour



Finally, there is also a methodological contribution. As far as the researcher is aware this doctoral thesis is the first application of Diekelmann's

(1992) 7-stage hermeneutical analytical process of hermeneutic understanding to a consumer study proving its suitability for marketing research.

Limitations of the study

One of the possible limitations is the focus on male participants in this study. Showing a female perspective on retrogaming could have potentially further enriched the understanding of retro gaming. Nevertheless, visiting retrogaming events and online forums made evident that the phenomenon is almost exclusively male-dominated, justifying the sampling decision.

Another limitation of this study, relatable to the previously mentioned one, was the inability to recruit women. Due to the male-dominated nature of the retrogaming community, the limited time and resources would make recruitment considerably more difficult. As a result, a decision was made not to make an attempt at that.

The next potential limitation of this study was that it was not able to present any differences between the Generation X and Millennial men in regard to the meanings of their retrogaming consumption. Both groups represented a similar outlook on retrogaming and the role it plays in their lives. A possible explanation of this might lie in the age proximity between the two generations. Nevertheless, the researcher identified the above as one a research limitation.

The final limitation of this study lies within the nature of Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology and its ontological tension between revealing and concealing of phenomena. In conversations with retrogamers and engaging with the analytical process of hermeneutic understanding, the researcher's own preconceptions and understandings have influenced his interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon (Heidegger 1962). As a result, there is a possibility, as with all qualitative studies, that the researcher has not uncovered other interpretations which are likely to exist.

Recommendations for future research

There are multiple research opportunities based on this doctoral study's findings and contributions. The first avenue for research would be to conduct

studies looking at different types of retro consumption while applying the four change lenses of the retro consumption conceptual framework suggested in this study. That would explore its applicability for other forms of retro and could result in a more structured approach towards investigating and conceptualising retro phenomena. Another area worth exploring is that of digitalisation and digital dematerialisation of products and how consumers of various ages perceive those processes and their control over such products. Also, from a self-identity project perspective research could focus on forming product-related memories and how that might impact retro consumption and nostalgia towards products/brands in the future. What also seems to be an interesting research area is how our ever-busier lives and resulting '*time poverty*' impact our product and service choices.

An interesting future research opportunity could lie in addressing one of the identified limitations of this research and focusing on a broader generational span. Perhaps looking at Generation Z retrogamers could bring out some intergenerational differences regarding the meanings of retrogaming consumption.

The fact that this research focused only on men should mean that only men are retrogamers. Given more time and resources, a future avenue for research in the area of retrogaming consumption could focus on attempting to recruit women retrogamers for a similar study.

Regarding collecting behaviour, further research could be devoted to better understanding the identified '*journey-hunt*' dichotomy of the collecting process.

Final words

I can still remember the excitement of leaving for Oxford and embarking on my PhD journey. Starting something new in a new place and surrounded by new people. Writing this now I can say it was a very gratifying process. I do however remember the time spent reading, searching databases, analysing, and writing up. I also cannot forget all the hours devoted to recruiting participants, driving over 3000 miles to speak to them and finally days upon days of transcribing.

Once I started interviewing It was surprising how much participants would open up about their retrogaming and the role these experiences play in their lives. It was fascinating how much people want to be listened to, especially when talking about their passion.

Still I vividly recall how stressed I was before my first interview. Asking my supervisors for advice, they told me something that helped me a great deal and that I'll never forget:

"What are interviews if not a form of conversation? We train conversations all our lives". I share this now with my students – I hope you don't mind!

There were also a few moments when I simply felt exhausted but somehow marched on... and gladly so!

Now at the risk of sounding odd, I would like to address you directly *My Thesis*. During my time in Oxford and a lot has happened. Things changed; people came and went but you were always there at the back of my mind. And now that you will be 'gone' it gives me mixed feelings of comfort and happiness but at the same time anxiety and a sense of a void. You have been my companion for the past 7 years and I am grateful for it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Recruitment advert – poster



Recruitment advertisement

"Meanings of retrogaming consumption of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men"

Research participants needed!

Hello! My name is Kamil and I'm looking for participants willing to join my doctoral research focusing on the meanings of retrogaming consumption.

If you are a male who enjoys playing retro video games and you were born between 1961 and 2000 you are eligible to participate.

If you decide to take part in the study **I will conduct 2 interviews** with you where we will talk about your retrogaming experiences.

All the information collected during the interview sessions will be kept strictly confidential. In addition I will ensure that the gathered data will be de-identified. This means that any identifiable information will be removed and replaced by a code.

If you are interested in participating in the study please contact me using the details below or private message me on FB:

Kamil Wyczynski
Contact details: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk
mobile: 07443 287 396

The study will be conducted by
Kamil Wyczynski, PhD research student in Marketing,
Prof Janine Dermody, Professor in Marketing
Dr Jackie Clarke, Reader in Marketing
Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University.

This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee UREC Ref no: 161051

kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk mobile 07443287396 Retrogaming doctoral research - participants needed
Kamil Wyczynski kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk mobile 07443287396 Retrogaming doctoral research - participants needed
Kamil Wyczynski kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk mobile 07443287396 Retrogaming doctoral research - participants needed
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Kamil Wyczynski kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk mobile 07443287396 Retrogaming doctoral research - participants needed

Appendix 2: Letter to forum / social media group moderators



FACULTY OF BUSINESS, DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING PHD RESEARCH STUDENT IN MARKETING

Principal researcher: Kamil Wyczynski

Email: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 07443287396

Director of Studies: Prof Janine Dermody

Second Supervisor: Dr Jackie Clarke

[Date]

RE: 'MEANINGS OF RETROGAMING CONSUMPTION' Research Study

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a doctoral research student at Oxford Brookes University exploring the meanings of retrogaming consumption. The reason why I am approaching you is because I am seeking participants for my research study and I believe that the forum/social media website you are moderating is a relevant location where I could, with your permission, advertise my study between [specific dates].

The aim of the study is to broaden the understanding of retrogaming consumption by focusing on 'Generation X'* and 'Millennial'** male gaming enthusiasts.

This study will look at retrogaming from the perspective of retromarketing. It is an approach towards marketing which revolves around the concept of reintroducing products or services from a bygone era. The findings from this study will carry implications for the theory and practice of retromarketing.

I have enclosed a participant information sheet giving more details as to what the recruited study participants will be asked to do. When you have read this document and if you agree to advertise my study on the forum I would like you let me know when and where can I post the advert

I have also attached the recruitment advertisement to this message for you to know how it looks like. On it potential participants will find essential information concerning the research project and my contact details.

In addition, if you believe that you are a person who qualifies for the study I will grateful if you would consider becoming a participant.

If you have any questions concerning the study which have not been covered in this letter or in the enclosed participant information sheet please do not hesitate to contact me directly. You will find my contact details at the top of this letter.

Many thanks for your time to read this letter,

Sincerely yours,

Kamil Wyczynski

Appendix 3: Recruitment advert for forums and social media groups



Recruitment advertisement

"Meanings of retrogaming consumption of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men"

Research participants needed!

Hello! My name is Kamil and I'm looking for participants willing to join my doctoral research focusing on the meanings of retrogaming consumption.

If you are a male who enjoys playing retro video games and you were born between 1961 and 2000 you are eligible to participate.

If you decide to take part in the study **I would like to conduct 2 interviews with you** where you will be asked to talk about your retrogaming experiences.

Each meeting will last approximately 90 minutes and will be held at a place convenient for you.

All the information collected during the interview sessions will be kept strictly confidential. In addition the researcher will ensure that the gathered data will be de-identified. This means that any identifiable information will be removed and replaced by a code.

If you are interested in participating in the study please contact me using the details below:

Kamil Wyczynski
Contact details: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk,
mobile: 07443 287 396

The study will be conducted by
Kamil Wyczynski, PhD research student in Marketing,
Janine Dermody, Professor in Marketing
Dr Jackie Clarke, Reader in Marketing
Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University.

This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee UREC Ref no: 161051

Appendix 4: Letter to shop owners



FACULTY OF BUSINESS, DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

PHD RESEARCH STUDENT IN MARKETING

Principal researcher: Kamil Wyczynski

Email: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 07443287396

Director of Studies: Prof Janine Dermody

Second Supervisor: Dr Jackie Clarke

[Date]

RE: 'MEANINGS OF RETROGAMING CONSUMPTION' Research Study

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a doctoral research student at Oxford Brookes University exploring the meanings of retrogaming consumption. The reason why I am approaching you is because I am seeking participants for my research study and I believe that your shop is a relevant location where I could, with your permission, advertise my study.

The aim of the study is to broaden the understanding of retrogaming consumption by focusing on 'Generation X'* and 'Millennial'** male gaming enthusiasts.

This study will look at retrogaming from the perspective of retromarketing. It is an approach towards marketing which revolves around the concept of reintroducing products or services from a bygone era. The findings from this study will carry implications for the theory and practice of retromarketing.

I have enclosed a participant information sheet giving more details as to what the recruited study participants will be asked to do. When you have read this document and if you agree to advertise my study in store I would like you to place the recruitment advertisement in an area where your customers can see it. On the advertisement they will find essential information concerning the research project and my contact details.

In addition, if you believe that you are a person who qualifies for the study I will be grateful if you would consider becoming a participant in the study.

If you have any questions concerning the study which have not been covered in this letter or in the enclosed participant information sheet please do not hesitate to contact me directly. You will find my contact details at the top of this letter.

Many thanks for your time to read this letter,

Sincerely yours,

Kamil Wyczynski

Appendix 5: Snowball sampling invitation letter



**FACULTY OF BUSINESS, DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
PHD RESEARCH STUDENT IN MARKETING**

Principal researcher: Kamil Wyczynski

Email: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk

Tel: 07443287396

Director of Studies: Prof Janine Dermody

Second Supervisor: Dr Jackie Clarke

[Date]

RE: 'MEANINGS OF RETROGAMING CONSUMPTION' PhD Research Study

Dear Sir,

You have been given this letter by someone you know who is involved in a research project and who thought you might be interested in it as well.

In this letter I would like to invite you to participate in this study and give you some information about it so that you can decide if you want to take part in it.

I am a doctoral research student at Oxford Brookes University studying the meanings of retrogaming consumption. The aim of the study is to broaden the understanding of retrogaming consumption by focusing on 'Generation X'* and 'Millennial'** men being retro gaming enthusiasts. The number of products and services influenced by the past is increasing, including fashion goods, toys, cars, motorcycles, cosmetics, gaming, restaurants and hotels being only a part of them. There still are however some areas which require more insight and retrogaming as a relatively young type of a retro product and digital in nature is definitely one which should be looked at in more depth.

This study will look at retrogaming from the perspective of retromarketing. It is an approach towards marketing which revolves around the concept of reintroducing products or services from a bygone era. The findings from this study will carry implications for the theory and practice of retromarketing.

The research involves two interviews during which I would like to talk about your retrogaming experiences. I have enclosed a participant information sheet giving more details about the study. If you decide to participate in the study please contact me using the details at the top of this letter. I will be also happy to answer any questions concerning this study which have not been answered in this letter or in the enclosed participant information sheet.

Many thanks for your time to read this letter,

Sincerely yours,

Kamil Wyczynski

Appendix 6: Participant Information Sheet



Study title

“Meanings of retrogaming consumption of ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men”

You are being invited to take part in a Doctoral dissertation research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

Retro marketing is a ubiquitous approach towards marketing, which revolves around the concept of reintroducing products or services from a bygone era. The number of products and services influenced by the past is increasing, including fashion goods, toys, cars, motorcycles, cosmetics, gaming, restaurants and hotels. There still are however some areas which require more insight and retrogaming as a relatively young type of a retro product and digital in nature is definitely one which should be looked at in more depth. The aim of the study is to broaden the understanding of retrogaming consumption by focusing on “Generation X”^{*} and “Millennial”^{**} men being retro game enthusiasts. The findings from this study will carry implications for the theory and practice of retromarketing.

Glossary:

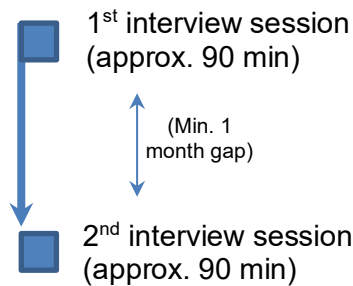
^{*}Generation X - term used in sociological and consumer literature referring to people born between 1961 and 1980.

^{**}Millennials - term used in sociological and consumer literature referring to people born between 1981 and 2000

Study outline

The study will be divided into two in-depth interview sessions. The topics of the first sessions will focus on retrogaming and your experiences related to this phenomenon. The meetings will take place with an at least one-month interval between the two (See figure 1). During the meetings in a loose conversation you will be asked to share your retrogaming experiences.

(Figure 1. Study schedule)



Why have I been invited to participate?

As the study focuses on males' meanings of retrogaming it is necessary for the participants to be involved in retrogaming. That is why, based on your interest in retrogaming, you have been invited to become a part of this study. If you decide take part in the project you will become one of the 20 study participants chosen by the researcher. In addition as this study focuses on "Generation X" and "Millennial" retrogamers, you will be attributed to one of these two groups.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. Once you sign it you will still be free to withdraw at any time and withdraw any unprocessed data, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

As mentioned, if you choose to take part in the study you will be involved in two in-depth interview sessions. The interviews will take place with at least 1 month between them. Each interview will last approx. 90min and will be recorded using a voice recorder.

The topics of the interviews sessions will focus on retrogaming and your experiences related to this phenomenon. The interview sessions will take place in a setting of your choosing where you will feel comfortable, however preferably it could be a space related to your retrogaming interests.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of taking part of this study will be twofold. First of all you will contribute to furthering existing knowledge on the meanings of retrogaming for consumers. Second, you have an opportunity to explore your own involvement in retrogaming and discover new things about your passion you were not aware of.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All the information collected during the interview sessions will be kept strictly confidential. In addition the researcher will ensure that the gathered data will be de-identified. This means that your identifiers will be removed and replaced by a code. The researcher handling the data will be handling the data using the code. If necessary only the researcher will be able to link the code with the original identifiers and the individual who provided the data.

Collected data will be stored in two places. Raw data will be stored in a password protected University Google Drive account. In addition to that data and results will be kept securely on a password-protected computer. Access to files themselves will also be password protected to ensure strict confidentiality. Data generated in the course of the research will be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the project.

The information you provide can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e. it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you are interested in participating in the study please contact the researcher in order to establish the date, time and location of the first interview. Also, if you have any questions about the project the researcher will be happy to answer them.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

This study will be used in the researcher's dissertation for a PhD degree in Marketing. The results of this research will be published in the form of a doctoral thesis and peer reviewed academic journals. You will be offered a summary of the findings if you request them by email.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The researcher is carrying out this research as a student at the Oxford Brookes University, Faculty of Business, Department of Marketing. This study is not being externally funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Registration No: 161051, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the researcher using the details provided:

Researcher: Kamil Wyczynski
Email: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk
Mobile: 07443287396

First supervisor: Prof Janine Dermody
Email: jdermody@brookes.ac.uk

Second supervisor: Dr Jackie Clarke
Email: jclarke@brookes.ac.uk

Additionally if you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to carefully read this information sheet. I hope that you will decide to participate in the research project.

Appendix 7: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Project Title:

"Meanings of retrogaming consumption of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial' men."

Researcher details:

Kamil Wyczynski, PhD Research Student in Marketing,
Oxford Brookes University
Wheatley Campus (N316)
OX33 1HX
Email: kwyczynski@brookes.ac.uk
Tel: +44 7443287396

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, and my unprocessed data, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.
4. I understand and agree that the interviews will be audio-recorded.
5. I understand and agree with visually recording images used in the collage making task.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Please initial box

6. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 8: Interview guide

Study title
“Meanings of retrogaming consumption of ‘Generation X’ and ‘Millennial’ men”

Interview guide – phenomenological interviews

Date of the interview:	
Place of interview:	
Participant name:	
Age:	

SESSION 1

1. Engage in a general social conversation (lifeworld)

Aim(s):

- To create a relaxed atmosphere and build trust between the researcher and the atmosphere
- To ensure the informant feels comfortable and his answers are honest and comprehensive

Guide:

Talking about:

- where the person is from
- family
- work
- holidays

NOTES:

2. Focusing on the experience/phenomenon

Aim(s):

- To make sure the person shifts from the general conversation to talking about retrogaming

Guide:

Asking the participant to take a few minutes to focus on the experience, describe it fully and think of particularly impactful moments related to it.

3. The phenomenon

Aim(s):

- To make the participant speak about the retrogaming
- To explore participant's experiences with retrogaming

Guide:

Starting point of the research project is a general question concerning the phenomenon.

- "Please try to remember the last time you played retrogames and tell me about the situation, how you felt and how you acted."

or/and

- "Please tell me about your experience with retrogaming when it first started"

NOTES

1. The phenomenon – continued

Aim(s):

- To reflect upon the content from interview session 1
- To continue exploring participant's experiences with retrogaming

Guide:

Start the interview by reflecting upon the content of the first interview session. Use that stage to clarify any queries.

Exemplary topics and questions to assist the phenomenological interview.

- 1) The beginning of their interest in retrogaming
 - a) When has your interest in retrogaming begun?
 - b) How did it start?
 - c) Is there any memory that you associate with those beginnings?
 - d) How do they bond with these objects?
- 2) For sessions taking place in areas which are filled with retrogaming items
 - a) What is the story behind this item?
 - b) Questions about having a separate space for there objects
- 3) The following general interview guide will be used in a situation when the informant has not tapped into the experience qualitatively and with sufficient meaning and depth (Moustakas 1994):
 - a) What dimensions, incidents and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you?
 - b) How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?
 - c) How did the experience affect significant others in your life?
 - d) What feelings were generated by the experience?
 - e) What thoughts stood out for you?
 - f) What bodily changes or states were you aware of at the time?
 - g) Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?

NOTES

Appendix 9: Ethics approval from Oxford Brookes University



Professor Janine Dermody
Director of Studies
Department of Marketing
Faculty of Business
Oxford Brookes University
Wheatley Campus

30 November 2016

Dear Professor Dermody

UREC Registration No: 161051
Meanings of retrogaming consumption of 'Generation X' and 'Millennial Men'

Thank you for the email of 30 November 2016 outlining the response to the points raised in my previous letter about the PhD study of your research student Kamil Wyczynski and attaching the revised documents. I am pleased to inform you that, on this basis, I have given Chair's Approval for the study to begin.

The UREC approval period for this study is two years from the date of this letter, so 30 November 2018. If you need the approval to be extended please do contact me nearer the time of expiry.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic effects from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S Quinton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Sarah Quinton
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Jackie Clarke, Second Supervisor
Kamil Wyczynski, Research Student
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team
Louise Wood, UREC Administrator



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