

# **Retroactive Nostalgia in the Nintendo Fandom**

A qualitative interview study on the three motivations to develop nostalgia

Student Name: Bertalan Zoltán Varga

Student Number: 449271

Supervisor: dr. Leandro Borges Lima

Master Media & Business

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master's Thesis

*June 2021*

# **Retroactive Nostalgia in the Nintendo Fandom**

A qualitative interview study on the three motivations to develop nostalgia

## **ABSTRACT**

The age of digital media has brought new possibilities for fandoms and online communities to flourish in unprecedented ways. While fandoms have become more accessible for newcomers, they also present ever-expanding learning environments based on the history of the communities, which in turn allow for new ways for fans to practice and develop their social identities within fandoms. This notion allows one to question the state of nostalgia within fandoms, and to debate whether nostalgia is a static notion or it is something that develops throughout a fan's journey within a fandom. To explore potential explanations to this notion, this thesis takes the example of Nintendo and sets out the main research question: How does nostalgia manifest in the social identity of the members of the Nintendo fandom? Being an exploratory study, this research used qualitative interviews in order to gather the sufficient data for analysis. This research has welcomed a total of eleven participants, who were recruited from social mediums or from referrals by the participants themselves. Through analysing participants' stories via narrative analysis, three motivations to develop nostalgia have been observed: nostalgic, historical, and personal. Each of these dimensions were also related to the individual fan's journey. Furthermore, a seemingly directional relationship and hierarchy has also been established based on participants' past experiences and reflections on the three motivations. Besides the presence of the three motivations to develop nostalgia, this study revealed the importance of childhood experiences to develop certain motivations later on, and the key differences between in-group and out-group members of the Nintendo fandom in terms of practicing their fan identities. This research offers a new look at nostalgia's development through taking the perspective of the individual fan, and presents recommendations for future research that aim to contribute to the current state of academic understanding behind nostalgia, fandoms, and social identity.

**KEYWORDS:** *nostalgia, social identity, fandom, Nintendo, retrogaming*

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Theoretical background</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 The relevance of Nintendo in contemporary gaming culture	3
2.2 Retrogaming	7
2.3 Fandoms	10
2.4 Nostalgia	12
2.5 Social identity	16
2.6 Concluding theory	17
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 Why qualitative methods?	18
3.2 Note on the time during which this study took place	19
3.3 Sampling strategy	20
3.4 Operationalization	21
3.5 Data collection and analysis	22
3.5.1 Data collection	22
3.5.2 Data analysis	24
3.6 Reliability and validity	25
<b>4. Analysis</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 The three motivations to develop nostalgia	28
4.1.1 Non-exclusive presence of motivations to develop nostalgia	28
4.1.2 Historical motivations develop, nostalgic motivations maintain nostalgia	32
4.1.3 Childhood experiences as barriers for nostalgia	34
4.2 Helping factors to develop and maintain nostalgia	36
4.2.1 Universal accessibility surrounding Nintendo	36
4.2.2 Retrogaming as a reliable source of entertainment	38
4.2.3 Maintaining nostalgia through social gaming	41

4.2.4 What makes an in-group or out-group member of the fandom?	42
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1 Answering the research questions	47
5.2 Limitations of this thesis	49
5.3 Recommendations for future research	49
<b>References</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>57</b>
Appendix A: Interview guide	57
Appendix B: Codebook	62
Appendix C: Participants summary	76
Appendix D: Consent form	78

# 1. Introduction

Modern media has allowed fandoms to flourish in unprecedented ways and video game fandoms are no different (Hemphill et al., 2017). In fact, digital media has opened the opportunity for past phenomena to be used to create and maintain contemporary cultures (De Kosnik, 2016). This relationship inspired this thesis with the interest of exploring such manifestations, in particular nostalgia's role in the formation of the Nintendo fandom. Fandom in the context of this study refers to the collection of individuals who are invested in developing their social identity as a member of the in-group in a given culture (Hemphill et al., 2017; Mummendey et al., 1999). The Nintendo fandom in particular is a fascinating entity to research, as the company has been a trendsetter within the video game industry over the past 30 years, allowing the brand to establish an audience that encompasses multiple generations with the same intellectual properties (IPs), such as the Legend of Zelda or the Super Mario franchise (Shaw, 2010; Sheff, 2011). This phenomenon raises the question of nostalgia's role in the creation and maintenance of such fandoms. With each generation, there has been an influx of new members to the fandom, driven by experiences with the same IPs as older members. Therefore, this study aims to explore the driving forces behind the formation of the Nintendo fandom and more importantly, the role of nostalgia in identifying with the fandom. Hence, the driving research question of the study goes as follows:

**RQ:** How does nostalgia manifest in the social identity of the members of the Nintendo fandom?

In addition, the following sub-questions are presented in order to find answers to more in-depth questions regarding the phenomenon:

**Sub-RQ 1:** How do members of the Nintendo fandom relate nostalgia to the inherent characteristics of the fandom?

**Sub-RQ 2:** What are the motivations behind developing nostalgia towards the Nintendo brand and its products in the eyes of fans?

**Sub-RQ 3:** How does nostalgia towards Nintendo and its products influence fans' contemporary gaming habits?

This thesis relies on the ever-developing research concerning fandoms and nostalgia. In particular, the study emphasizes the individual fan's experience regarding Nintendo, and aims to observe patterns that can lead to inductive conclusions for future research. This notion is a direct consequence of the process of fandom research moving from a group-oriented approach to an individual-oriented one (Sandvoss, 2014). However, the effect of the group is not underestimated and is still taken into consideration throughout the analysis. To allow the research to contrast the individual motivations and group effect upon a fan's identity, the idea of social identity theory is used. This theory allows to separate the two concerns into in-group and out-group characteristics, and allows the inspection of nuanced relationships between the two group types (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The scientific relevance behind this thesis lies in the lack of research targeting the Nintendo fandom directly, as research concerning the company is mostly common in business or medical studies (Dos Santos et al., 2015; Naugle et al., 2014). Therefore, this thesis aims to fill the void for specific research regarding the characteristics of Nintendo fans and their culture. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study makes it unique, as many scientific papers that have social identity at their core are often quantitative, making the direction of this thesis distinctive in the field. Additionally, the nature of the Nintendo fandom makes it a fascinating group to explore in terms of social relevance, as it spans many generations tied together with the same titles and is greatly present in contemporary pop culture that audiences all around the globe experience and reproduce increasingly due to technological and cultural changes (Sandvoss et al., 2017; Sheff, 2011).

The structure of this thesis is divided into five major sections. This first section presented an introduction to the core ideas behind the thesis and presented an outline of the main motivations behind the research. The following second section presents an in-depth overview of the theoretical background detailing the core concepts used in the study. The third section elaborates on the reasoning behind the choice of qualitative research methods and the overall methodological framework of the research, while the fourth section continues with a detailed elaboration of the analysis. Lastly, the thesis ends with a conclusion chapter, which presents the

answers to the research questions and offers recommendations for future research.

## **2. Theoretical background**

In order to build a theoretical foundation for the thesis, a number of core concepts have been identified from previous academic studies and literature. Namely, the concepts of retrogaming, nostalgia, fandoms, and social identity were all found to be common amongst research studying similar areas (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Neys et al., 2014; Reysen et al., 2016). In the sections below, the aforementioned concepts are discussed in detail and related back to the research question of this thesis.

### **2.1 The relevance of Nintendo in contemporary gaming culture**

In order to tackle the broader implication of the coming concepts on the Nintendo fandom, it is key to establish an understanding of the company's role in video game history first. Nintendo is a Japanese video game and gaming console production firm known for being one of the cornerstones of video game history. This reputation originates from the very early days of gaming during the 1980s, when Nintendo released the now renowned titles of Super Mario and The Legend of Zelda, amongst many others (Shaw, 2010; Sheff, 2011). The high reputation of being a consistent player in the industry resulted in Nintendo gaining a loyal following around its brand. Even when the company was underperforming in the early 2000s and the first half of the 2010s, the perceived quality of their products and the brand image was not hurt in the eyes of their customers (Shay & Palomba, 2020). Hence, Nintendo is a brand that is generally trusted by its fans due to their history of releasing high quality products. Nintendo's popularity does not only benefit the brand itself in the past decades; there have been a number of other outlets that have capitalized on the popularity of Nintendo and released game art and guides for various titles released exclusively on the brand's consoles (Sheff, 2011). The ecosystem that surrounded Nintendo in its most successful years during the early 1990s has allowed the brand's popularity to soar and establish a long-term status for the firm as one of the leaders of the video game industry for the upcoming decades. Nintendo's popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s also allowed a number of other game producers to rise in relevance via exclusive contracts for their games to be released solely on Nintendo systems (Arsenault, 2017; Sheff, 2011). One of the

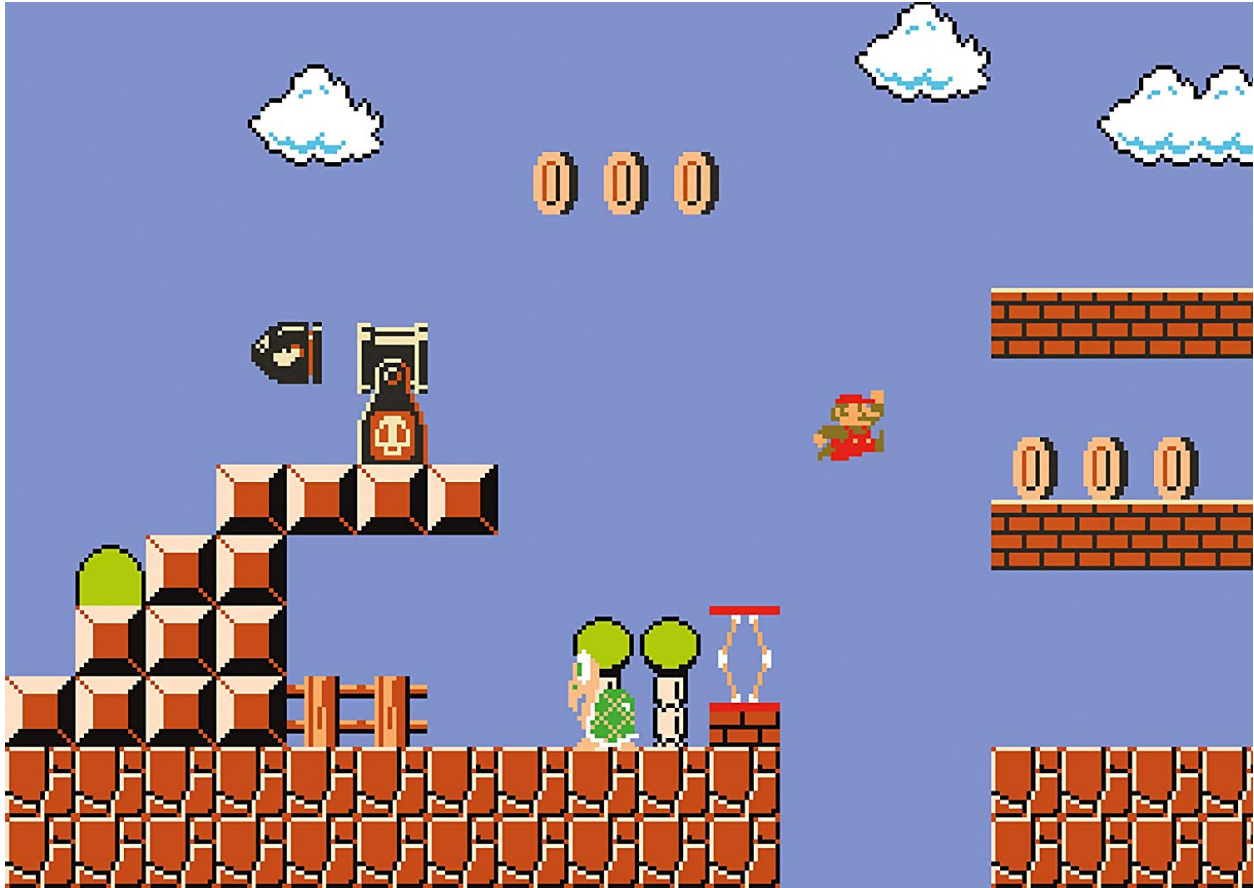
more known examples is the Dragon Quest franchise, which still remains as a running series to this day (Chunsoft, 1986).

Nintendo's history in gaming dates far back before video games were first invented. The company started as a manufacturer of handmade cards called hanafuda, a style of traditional Japanese playing cards (Sheff, 2011). The brand quickly became popular in the era, and set the cornerstones of the business for the upcoming decades. During the 1970s and 1980s, when the concept of video games has become a trending topic, Nintendo quickly became a global landmark in the video game industry with the release of the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985, the same year when the iconic Super Mario franchise took its first step towards being one of the most known video game titles of all time (Shaw, 2010; Sheff, 2011). In the following decade, Nintendo became known for publishing some of the other world-renowned titles of the video game industry, such as Pokemon, The Legend of Zelda, Donkey Kong, and many more. Such titles are now considered to be some of the key games originating from the golden age of gaming in the 1980s-1990s, and are a core source of nostalgia for gamers all around the globe.

**Figure 1**

*The original Super Mario Bros for the Nintendo Entertainment System (Nintendo, 1985)*





The Nintendo brand did not only conquer Japan in the 1980-90s: the brand has seen immense interests in Western markets, especially in the United States of America (Sheff, 2011). Nintendo's success in the West as a widely liked game and console production company is a result of the brand's attempt to target families as a broader audience, rather than solely focusing on teenagers or young children (Arsenault, 2017). These practices allowed the brand's productions to be more accessible for people across all ages and therefore positively influence its brand image. Making titles more accessible and family friendly also made it easier for Nintendo to target parents, resulting in generations of children whose childhood was heavily influenced by their time spent on Nintendo products. Some of Nintendo's practices were often criticised, however, as Nintendo was known for frequently censoring releases that featured imagery that was deemed inappropriate by the company in order to maintain their image as a family friendly video game brand (Arsenault, 2017; Sheff, 2011). Nonetheless, Nintendo's efforts with their widely successful Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) console resulted in a video game 'renaissance' between 1985 and 1995, a period in which the brand has established its role as a

constant provider of entertainment for American families for generations to come (Arsenault, 2017). Throughout the following decades Nintendo has consistently released new hardware with each new generation of consoles alongside their main competitors of Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation. Many of the old exclusive Nintendo titles made a recurring appearance on their new generation consoles, allowing multiple generations of kids to experience the "Nintendo Magic" on the console of their time (Arsenault, 2017; Shaw, 2010; Sheff, 2011). To conclude, Nintendo's historical presence in the global video game market has allowed the brand to become a consistent entity in the field. For many generations of kids and adults, the word Nintendo is inseparable from gaming and it is remembered as a reliable and familiar source of entertainment, which fuels the brand's success and image to this day (Shay & Palomba, 2020).

## Figure 2

*Breath of the Wild (Nintendo Switch) was an introduction to many newcomers to the long-running The Legend of Zelda franchise (Nintendo, 2017)*



## 2.2 Retrogaming

Retrogaming is a concept that has been an upcoming phenomenon in the videogame industry for the past decade. Retrogaming refers to contemporary video game productions that involve elements of game titles from earlier eras, typically from the 1980s and '90s (Suominen, 2008). However, other researchers consider games made in the aforementioned eras to be retrogames as well (Ahm, 2020). This thesis understands retrogames as an intersection between the two definitions, and involves both new and old productions in its understanding. While the contemporary production of retrogames is common amongst smaller developers, major players in the industry such as Nintendo also do not shy away from creating games with retrogaming elements in order to appeal to their audiences (Gilbert, 2017). Most importantly, games with retro elements capitalise on the power of nostalgia, either by offering gameplay and/or visuals reminiscent of an era, or, in the case of Nintendo, capitalising on earlier titles and maintaining a video game series over decades (Heineman, 2014). Other features of retrogames include certain game genres, such as side scrollers, metroidvanias (a fusion of genres from the Metroid and Castlevania franchises often played on Nintendo consoles), but also artistic choices, such as pixelated graphics and soundtracks that are reminiscent of video game music of the '80s and '90s (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Most retrogames combine a number of such characteristics to achieve the true retro effect that can enchant players and provide experiences reminiscent of the era. A notable example of this practice is Axiom Verge, a metroidvania title that pays homage to the early generations of video games by adopting their audiovisual aesthetics and presenting that retro experience in a modern package (Figure 4). The practice of producing games with retro elements allowed Nintendo to establish fanbases for the same game titles over different generations: from Gen X to Gen Z, each generation of kids had the possibility to play with the iconic Super Mario franchise on the Nintendo game-console of the era. This practice significantly contributed to the development of the Nintendo fanbase, which eventually grew out to be a fandom that encompasses multiple generations of gamers with a shared appreciation and understanding towards the company's productions.

### Figure 3

*One of the major inspirations of modern retrogames: Super Metroid for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (Nintendo, 1994)*



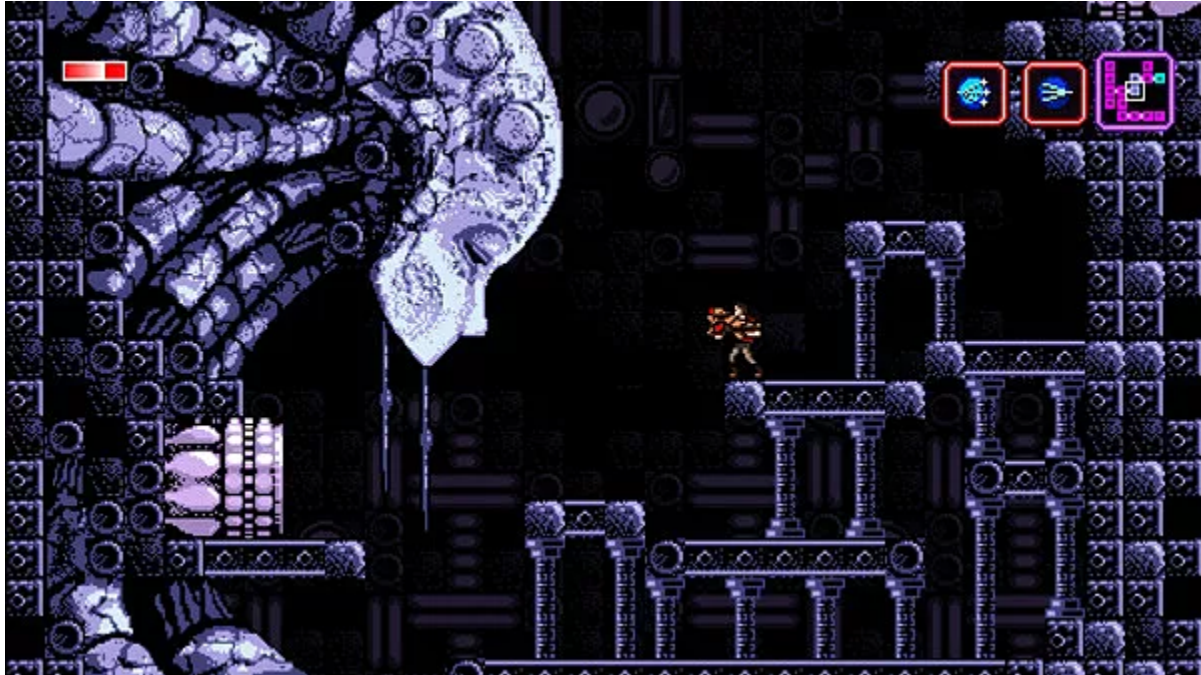
Furthermore, one must further exemplify the power of nostalgia when it comes to engaging with old games. Previous literature has uncovered multiple dimensions in which nostalgia is present in retrogames, both in playing contemporary productions and games from earlier decades (Ahm, 2020; Garda, 2013). Garda's (2013) proposition of retrogames being retroactive and restorative point towards an understanding that amplifies the role of nostalgia in engaging with such games. Retroactive gaming and restorative gaming both imply that playing games with retro elements has an inherent goal of the individual player to re-experience feelings encountered earlier in their life. However, this assumption portrays the element of nostalgia as an inseparable entity from playing retrogames. In contrast to this assumption, Ahm (2020) has found that individuals who play retrogames do not merely play those titles for nostalgic reasons. Rather, individuals who actively seek out and play retrogames are drawn to the titles in two ways: historical play and nostalgic play. While nostalgic play entails the general approach towards retrogaming, namely the nostalgic impulse to play such games, historical play introduces the idea that individuals engage with such games out of personal interest without an already existing nostalgic connection to them (Ahm, 2020). Historical play is a groundbreaking concept in its context, as it allows to horizontally distribute the motivations behind playing retrogames,



and to put the individual's interest and their nostalgia in comparison in ways previous researchers have not considered before.

**Figure 4**

*Axiom Verge (Nintendo Switch), a modern metroidvania retrogame (Thomas Happ Games, 2017)*



The relevance of retrogaming within Nintendo's brand development is apparent. Being one of the largest video game producers and the stepping stone of countless contemporary and old retrogames, it can be argued that the company's fandom faces a similar distinction within its fandom like the distinction between historical and nostalgic play in retrogames. As many of Nintendo's game titles can be considered retrogames, they possess both the aforementioned historical and nostalgic attractiveness for players of all kinds. Especially regarding the historical aspect, one may argue that the cultural and artistic aspect of Nintendo's brand has made its trademark potentially more inviting for many players. Even to this day, Nintendo is considered to be by many the go-to platform for retrogames (Kohler, 2018). An inherent proof of this is the online store of the company, accessible on their consoles, called the Nintendo eShop. This online store is home to countless major and independent titles that build on retrogaming elements to attract players. Furthermore, the brand's Nintendo Online service provides subscribers with

access to many ported games from the 1980s and 90s, making it an attractive offer for individuals who play retrogames out of nostalgic motivations, but also for individuals with historical interests in the artistic and cultural values of said titles (Ahm, 2020; Kohler, 2019).

## 2.3 Fandoms

Fandom is understood in this thesis as a collection of individuals who develop their social identity around the in-group of a particular culture (Hemphill et al., 2017; Mummendey et al., 1999). The concept of an in-group refers to a collection of members within a group that possesses the most relevant characteristic of that group or fandom (Mummendey et al., 1999). The in-group concept stems from social identity theory which is explored more in depth in a later segment of the theory section of this thesis. Fandoms have been becoming increasingly accessible since the beginning of the 21st century due to technological and cultural changes allowing many individuals to maintain consistent cultural engagements in ways that were not available before the digital era (Jenkins, 2009; Sandvoss et al., 2017). Such change also raised academic interest towards research within the formation and maintenance of fandoms, which has gone through three waves of fan studies, as described by Sandvoss et al. (2017). The first two waves of fan studies mainly concerned power relations within fandoms. First, the relationship between the individual fan and the fan object, the main entity that interests individuals within the fandom (e.g. a football club, a celebrity, a video game franchise), were highlighted (Thompson, 1995). Later, researchers realised that the introduction of social media and online groups allowed social hierarchies to translate themselves to structures within fandoms (Sandvoss et al. 2017). However, these first two waves did not concern the role of the individual, resulting in a shift of focus upon the sole fan's journey within these cultures. It was in this stage of fandom research where the question of 'why' arose, and took a more qualitative turn by exploring fans' individual motivations and the relationship between their identity and the fan objects (Sandvoss, 2014). Hence, the approach of this thesis towards researching fandoms is a product of the aforescribed convergence process towards a qualitative focus in the individual fan's journey, rather than researching the fandom as a whole. However, taking such an approach does not mean to defer from previous assumptions. The power relationships between fans and fan objects are still present, however, this thesis emphasizes the importance of understanding the way individuals perceive power relations between themselves and the fandom's key characteristics.

As established in earlier sections, this thesis focuses on the individual journeys of fans throughout the process of becoming members of the Nintendo fandom. Therefore, it is key to form an understanding of the initial processes that take place when an individual enters a fandom for the first time. Jenkins (2009) argues that online communities exist in the forms of ‘participatory cultures’, meaning that such groups are established and maintained by the members of said communities, and that online environments open the doors to a vast number of opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and interactions that contribute to the individual member’s experience in various ways. According to Kompare (2017), at the point of discovering a culture, individuals are required to be initiated into the fandom by curators, who are established members of the culture with extensive knowledge and experience regarding the characteristics of the fandom. These characteristics can also be conceptualised as fan objects, or the main entities that interest individuals within a fandom (Sandvoss, 2014; Thompson, 1995). These curators play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and identities of new fans, as their practices and knowledge make up the characteristics of the in-group of a culture and consequently influence the social identities of fans within (Kompare, 2017; Mummendey et al., 1999). This notion raises the question of the extent to which newcomers can shape their identity in relation to already established values and experiences within a culture, such as nostalgia.

Kompare (2017) argues that such transmissions of information between curators and newcomers are not merely just common characteristics of fandoms, but rather they are necessary steps in the process of developing fan cultures. A fandom’s culture is made up of practices that curate the identities of the members within. In order for this culture to develop and traverse between members, curators are nothing but necessary to maintain and forward information to newcomers in order to keep the fandom alive. Kompare’s (2017) propositions also imply that becoming a curator is a natural component of adopting the culture of a fandom. As new fans get integrated into a fandom, their understanding and assessment of fan objects gets implemented in their curated version of the fandom’s story (Geraghty, 2014). However, according to this assumption, one may argue that as interpretations within the fandom get passed down upon each new generation of fans, attitudes and emotions will be passed down as well. Especially, in the case of newcomers to the fandom who are driven by historical interests, the information passed down by curators are presenting a potentially endless source of tools to use for a complete assessment of the fandom itself. Furthermore, Kompare (2017) emphasizes that curation requires

connection. This connection takes place in the interaction between fan and curator, both in online and offline settings. The aforementioned assumptions regarding the formation of a new member of a fandom point towards a duality between the individual and collective aspect of being a fan. On one hand, fandom members actively interact with each other in order to reproduce the group's culture and learn from curators. On the other hand, an individual's interpretation of the fan objects, and therefore the fandom itself, is reimplemented in their narrative as curators later on. Therefore, one may state that Kompare's (2017) fascinating description of such characteristics allows for an interpretation of the seemingly circular processes behind maintaining and curating a fandom on both the individual and the collective level.

According to De Kosnik (2016), there should not be any boundaries set within the adoption of fandom characteristics. De Kosnik (2016) argues that memory, therefore, nostalgia is at the core of formulating fandoms and the immense technological and cultural change brought by the 21st century has only amplified this relationship further. Kompare (2017) also emphasizes that the seemingly constant involvement of technology within curating fandoms allowed fan objects to be disseminated with ease. Knowledge about cultures has moved online, and therefore made cultures more accessible for newcomers (Jenkins, 2009). This change has brought a general disregard to the boundaries of time and opened up the in-group of fandoms for a new wave of members whose social identities have been formed by the curators' memories and past experiences (De Kosnik, 2016; Kompare, 2017). This phenomenon is not unheard of: Oushakine (2019) has noticed similar tendencies within Eastern-European cultures, where new generations of post-soviet youth reach to their cultures' communist pasts in order to shape their own identities, often in various forms of self expression. Such theory raises fascinating questions about how nostalgia is preserved and improved in contemporary fandoms, and how its concept has evolved throughout the digital age.

## **2.4 Nostalgia**

The concept of nostalgia lies at the core of this thesis, but also at the core of many meanings one encounters on a daily basis. Nostalgia, often defined as an individual's longing for events of the past, is present in countless contemporary productions, let them be games, films, retail products, and many more (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018; Sloan, 2015). However, the concept of nostalgia is not a product of modern times, but rather a concept



that has been developing for the past millennia. Scholars have been researching the core ideas behind nostalgia for many centuries, throughout which the concept has been often defined as a bittersweet intersection of longing and suffering to a happier place and time (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Sedikides and Wildschut (2018) also define the process of nostalgizing as an individual's sentimental attempt to connect to a personally relevant and self-defining occasion through rose-coloured glasses. Interestingly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary mentions nostalgia on a similar base as homesickness, defining the term as a "wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for returning to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition" (Nostalgia, n.d.). Such definitions point towards the nature of nostalgia being a building block of an individual's identity originating from one's past emotional experiences.

A typical phenomenon related to nostalgia that most people might be familiar with is the marketing practices of contemporary corporations, featuring heavily nostalgic elements to drive customer traffic towards their products (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). This proves to be an effective tactic, as nostalgia fueled marketing tends to induce more conforming feelings within audiences. In other words, nostalgia possesses the power of enchantment: turning something ordinary into a magical thing in the consumer's eyes (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Furthermore, Sloan (2015) argues that nostalgia is contemporarily used to fill the modern customer's need for retrospection, and to simulate memories that induce customer action. Simulate is an important word here, as it implies that the feeling of nostalgia can be created within an individual. When comparing literature on retrogaming and nostalgia, Hartmann and Brunk's (2019) findings about the creation of such enchanting nostalgia in marketing resemble fascinating similarities between how retrogaming productions and marketing practices use this power. While Garda (2013) argues that nostalgia in games can be both retroactive and restorative, Hartmann and Brunk (2019) introduce the concepts of re-instantiation, re-enactment, and re-appropriation. The last concept is significant in the context of this thesis, as it highlights the ability of the past being interpreted differently by contemporary eyes. Furthermore, Hartmann and Brunk's (2019) aforementioned concepts in essence represent the same assumptions as Garda's (2013): nostalgia in contemporary productions is targeted towards individuals who have had previous experiences with the product in question. However, both propositions fail to mention individuals who are motivated to pursue potentially nostalgic content for different reasons, such as historical or cultural interests. Ahm (2020) argues that both nostalgic and historical interests can play a role in

an individual's motivation to engage with content involving nostalgic elements. Oushakine's (2019) statements about post-soviet youth also reinforce these assumptions, as the people he has researched described nostalgic feelings towards an era without physical experiences of those times and were motivated by cultural and historical reasons to adopt feelings of nostalgia.

Additionally, nostalgia manifests itself in the development of digital cultures, as many are based on shared memories towards a particular period of time. For example, individuals who grew up playing Nintendo's Super Smash Bros. series in the early two-thousands with their friends are more likely to have positive attitudes towards the series to this day and influencing their choices (Gallagher, 2019). According to Dimitriadou et al. (2019), such bias can be induced by the collective identity within such groups and individuals' preference towards in-group products. Furthermore, nostalgia manifests itself in social connectedness and transmits meanings within groups where individuals share nostalgic sentimental elements (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Lambert et al. (2010) also argue that social settings naturally foster the transmission of nostalgia, as social settings are sources of meanings. Nostalgia present in social settings also helps individuals to shape their identity and frame the narrative of their own life (Sedikides et al., 2016). In other words, nostalgia helps people to find meaning for their lives. Sedikides and Wildschut (2018) also argued that the meaning-making power of nostalgia can potentially fill a meaning gap in an individual's life, and can therefore be utilised as a tool to refine one's identity.

Previous literature defines nostalgia as a rather individual phenomenon that is involved with the development and reinforcement of one's identity. However, if social settings help individuals to find meaning in their life through nostalgia reinforced by the in-group of such settings, one may question whether the notion of nostalgia is individualistic or collective. Evidence of the presence of collective nostalgia has been confirmed in a series of studies conducted by Wildschut et al. (2014), in which the researchers have reported participants being more in favour of approaching other group members who shared similar experiences, in addition to evaluating the in-group more positively if collective nostalgia was present. Therefore, it can be stated that when it comes to the phenomenon of nostalgia, one can make a distinction between collective and personal nostalgia (Kao, 2012; Wildschut et al., 2014). Interestingly, Wildschut et al. (2014) argue that while shared experiences in a group are sufficient to experience collective nostalgia, they are in fact not necessary. This assumption indicates that there might be another level of nostalgia in between collective and personal, a type of shared experience that can induce

collective nostalgic feelings while stemming from personal experiences. Wildschut et al. (2014) have called this notion a common frame of reference, a type of nostalgia that offers the benefits of collective nostalgia in abstract social groups, based on similar experiences and feelings towards a particular event or entity. Such assumptions point towards similar tendencies to Ahm's (2020) and Oushakine's (2019) discussions about individual motivations for joining social groups based on historical or nostalgic motivations: the findings of Wildschut et al. (2014) confirm that collective experiences within groups do not necessarily require to be taking place at the same times for each member. Rather, remote experiences may also offer individuals an alternative to join the in-group of a culture or fandom.

While collective nostalgia can bring many benefits to in-group members, it can impact out-group members and newcomers negatively. The presence of collective nostalgia poses a threat to the out-group, resulting in rejection by the in-group and frequent exclusions from the group's cultural experiences (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019). Such contrasts can induce out-group members and newcomers to seek their way into the in-group, and the aforementioned common frame of reference may offer the opportunity to reach a new status within a given social setting. In order to combat rejection from the in-group, members may engage with others while influenced by social desirability bias. Social desirability bias refers to the notion of behaving in a certain way in order to be accepted by others in a given context (Lavrakas, 2008). In turn, some members may portray nostalgic feelings within a group in order to avoid rejection, while having no or few experiences regarding the subject. In order to reach said acceptance, some members may feel inclined to adopt various values in order to fit in better with others, and to reach a status that otherwise would be impossible. Such members may be considered as impostors by other group members (Warner et al., 2007). These notions add to the existing understanding of nostalgia within social settings. While Ahm (2020) defined the historical and nostalgic motivations behind an individual's engagement with retrogames, or groups in general, another motivation could be purely individualistic: the urge of one's identity to be accepted within a group. In other words, nostalgia may be a desirable trait of a group that out-group members may wish to obtain and to reinforce their identities with. Therefore, one could argue that the range of motivations may also be diverse, and in the context of this paper it can range between nostalgic, historical, and personal.

## 2.5 Social identity

The last core concept that this thesis explores is the phenomenon of identity creation, or rather the formation of new fan identities developed around the brand of Nintendo and its products. In order to understand human behavior within groups, this study utilizes the social identity theory commonly used in cognitive studies. In its most general form, social identity theory proposes that an individual's perception of structural characteristics of intergroup relations is a key factor for their identification with the in-group, resulting in active efforts to adopt in-group characteristics that allow reaching a more favorable position within the group (Mummendey et al., 1999). In turn, social identity theory highlights the idea of people adopting identities that might be perceived as positive and distinct (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hence, certain in-group characteristics may help members to refine their personalities and identities in ways they might seem unique (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). This distinctiveness could also result in the heightened degrees of belonging and inclusion to the group, therefore, increasing feelings of identification (Reysen et al., 2016). Therefore, traits and characteristics of groups that may be considered the most unique would appear more desirable to obtain for members in order to reinforce and distinctify their identities. However, the extent to which certain characteristics are desirable for members still remains a subjective matter. Nonetheless, as collective nostalgia is a relatively unique trait within any group, it can be argued that such nostalgic experiences shared by the in-group can appear to members as obtainable characteristics to adopt in their identities (Wildschut et al., 2014).

When one discusses social identity theory it is key to mention two other concepts that play a key role in the identification process. These concepts are self-categorization and social comparison: the idea of individuals constantly comparing themselves to other members of the in-group in order to shape their own identities (Hornsey, 2008). To be more specific, self-categorization theory also proposes that group members categorize themselves as others in ways that are based on characteristics of the in-group of that particular cohort (Turner & Hogg, 1987). Adopting one's identity in such ways has been researched and confirmed by Neys et al. (2014), who have found that individuals in gaming communities adopt an identity from within the gaming culture as it brought them feelings of enjoyment and connectedness. Individuals in both the in-group and the out-group like to think of themselves as members of the group in order to avoid feeling excluded, therefore they actively seek ways to refine their own identities in

comparison to the characteristics of the in-group. These characteristics make the group a unique entity, and therefore put more emphasis on shared experiences, collective nostalgia, cultural habits and rituals. Hence, it may be argued that considering said group characteristics while researching identity formation within groups like the Nintendo fandom may lead to a better understanding behind the reasons why members adopt certain in-group traits.

## **2.6 Concluding theory**

The digital age has made it extremely convenient to conserve fandoms via online mediums (Sandvoss et al., 2017). Newcomers and already existing group members can learn the fandom's historical background from such sources, and can therefore reach an entry to the in-group without direct experiences with the events described on said mediums (Wildschut et al., 2014). Therefore, it can be argued that the digital age has lowered the barrier for fandoms and their in-groups to broaden, and the barriers for newcomers have also been lowered. Furthermore, out-group members and newcomers can avoid being rejected by the in-group via using said resources to reinforce their current identities (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Previous literature presents three ways of reaching an in-group status within fandoms: nostalgic, historical, and personal, with nostalgic being the most common and most traditional way to achieve said status (Ahm, 2020). In order to achieve an in-group status through nostalgia, members require having experiences similar to the in-group, resulting in a linear progression from being a newcomer to becoming a curator (Kompare, 2017). Furthermore, reaching an in-group status through historical motivations may be the result of pure interests regarding the historical, cultural or artistic traits of the group. Members with such motivations may use already existing information online to develop an understanding of the fandom's culture, and by understanding the events and experiences that induce nostalgic feelings within in-group members, potentially resulting in acceptance by members. Finally, another way to achieve this status is to become an impostor within a culture in order to develop or reinforce one's identity (Warner et al., 2007). This method is quite similar to the historical method, however, while the first is based on historical motivations, the second is purely motivated by the individual's need to reinforce their identity.

The theoretical review has presented multiple angles that can be taken when studying an individual's journey in becoming a fan of the Nintendo brand. The three paradigms of achieving in-group status allow for a critical overview of fan motivations, which can be further utilized in

the methodology of this study. In short, the existing theory laid the foundations for the following sections of this thesis, and allowed for a more complex approach that can be translated into relevant research methodologies discussed in the following chapter.

### **3. Methodology**

Before tackling the results of this study, it is key to establish a thorough understanding of the methodological approaches that were used in order to get sufficient data for the analysis. For this very reason, this section presents a detailed overview of the choices with regards to qualitative methods, sampling, data gathering and analysis, operationalisation and overall validity. Besides an overview, each subsection involves arguments and thought processes behind the specific choices taken throughout the study in order to further emphasize the legitimacy and validity of the research.

#### **3.1 Why qualitative methods?**

In order to begin with the overview of the methods used in this thesis, it is crucial to establish the reasons behind choosing a qualitative approach. This thesis aims to take on a more inductive direction as opposed to testing already existing knowledge, and as such, it is often recommended to utilize qualitative methods in order to construct grounded theories for generalisations in the scope of the study (Given, 2008; Melia, 2010). However, it is important to be aware of the strengths and limitations of such approaches, namely the benefit of offering more consistent generalisations within a specific sample at a loss of generalisability on a global scale (Strauss, 2010). Additionally, this thesis follows the latest developments in academic research regarding fan studies, with a specific focus on extracting information from the individual's journey and the meaning making of their member status (Sandvoss, 2014). In order to gain insights regarding these notions, it is considered to be appropriate to choose methods from the qualitative toolset to allow for analyses stemming from the participants' experiences.

Furthermore, qualitative research by nature is more selective than quantitative methods, and therefore it is more forgiving when it comes to purposive or snowball sampling methods as means to gather sufficient data (Roy, 2012). This useful characteristic greatly benefits the direction of this thesis, allowing to specifically target the Nintendo fandom and its members and

develop theory arising from findings specifically from within that culture. Qualitative methods are also common ways to conduct research that involves cultures and social topics which are more qualitative by nature, making it an appropriate fit for research regarding fandoms.

Last but not least, using qualitative methods to research topics surrounding social identity seems to be an uncommon technique in the academic realm as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. As these concepts often arise in psychological research, quantitative methods are the most common ways to tackle research. Such research involves the use of surveys and focus groups to gather meaningful data. This thesis aims to test said concepts in a qualitative setting in order to contribute to the academic understanding of social identity through qualitative data that originated from participants' told experiences. Therefore, qualitative research was not only a personally motivated choice for this thesis, but an academic one as well.

### **3.2 Note on the time during which this study took place**

It is important to be aware of the limitations imposed by surrounding factors during the time of writing this thesis. Namely, this thesis has been written during the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result the method of gathering the necessary information was also adjusted. Generally such difficulties would limit qualitative research as there would be less chances to interact with participants in the usual interview and experimental settings. As it is elaborated further in a later section of this chapter, this thesis uses interviews as a means to gather data from respondents. Therefore, it was the most socially responsible approach to conduct as much of the research process as possible in online settings to meet regulations and limit the chance of negative effects following the procedures. While this might seem as a serious limitation at first, the international nature of the Nintendo fandom would have allowed for the inclusion of individuals residing in various countries in the sample. Therefore, online interviews would have been considered as a viable way of collecting data regardless of the pandemic. Additionally, the global shift to online environments for conducting interviews has allowed academics to improve methodologies concerning interviews that take place on platforms such as Zoom or Skype (Gray et al., 2020; Howlett, 2021; Upadhyay & Lipkovich, 2020). The findings and recommendations resulting from such research are therefore considered and implemented in the interview strategy of this thesis.

### **3.3 Sampling strategy**

Due to the niche nature of the Nintendo fandom, this research relied on purposeful sampling with the further reliance on snowball and emergent sampling in order to gather a total of eleven respondents (Rapley, 2014). Purposeful sampling was expected to be especially useful, especially in the age of Web 2.0, as social media platforms offer a convenient way to get access to the environments where members of such niche cultures interact and reinforce their identities through user-generated content (Massanari, 2015). The social medium this study relied on was LinkedIn, as it was assumed that the platform's rather neutral nature would allow for an all-around array of participants in the forms of in-group and out-group fans of Nintendo. However, in case of a shortage of participants, communities present on Reddit and Discord would have been considered as well, which was not needed in the end as the research quickly received all required respondents from call to actions on LinkedIn and referrals from participants. In short, participants for the research were searched for on LinkedIn's platform through the methods of purposive and emergent sampling, while snowball sampling was used in cases where participants were able to point the researcher towards other members of the fandom who can offer similar valuable additions to the goals of this study.

The above described sampling strategy was chosen due to the nature of the group this study focuses on. Fandoms are niche cultures by nature and therefore it is a challenging task to get randomised samples. Therefore, purposive sampling allows the researcher to identify samples that would fit the criteria of the study and would raise the confidence in the usefulness of responses in relation to the goal of the research.

The final sample of this study consisted of a total of eleven participants, with seven of them being respondents to calls on LinkedIn, and four of them being recruited from referrals by other participants. The interviews lasted for the span of four weeks. While most interviewees have made first contact, as they applied to calls on social mediums, interviewees who were recommended by other participants were contacted via email. A short description of each interviewee can be found in Appendix C, which offers insights for the analysis section as well.



### **3.4 Operationalization**

This section presents arguments behind the process of turning the theoretical framework into an analytical framework in order to create a more transparent and logical flow throughout the study.

As the study was interested in the individual fan's journey within the Nintendo fandom, the data collection and analysis methods reflected this direction as well. Namely, this study used qualitative semi-structured interviews as a means to gather the required data from participants, and it later relied on narrative analysis in order to present the findings of the research. The arguments behind choosing these methodological tools are presented throughout section 3.5. Following the idea of a fan's journey, the data collection and analysis were done in a sequence that allowed one to follow along said journey as well. The interview guide of this study followed a similar structure as the theory chapter, namely a direct line from the participants' past and current involvement with the Nintendo brand, followed by their explanations of the traits of the Nintendo fandom and their means to practice their fan identities, and lastly concluding with questions regarding participants' evaluation of some fan objects as nostalgia-heavy entities within the fandom and their motivations to develop nostalgia (Appendix A). It was an important aspect throughout each interview to gather this information from each participant in order to bolster the effectiveness of comparisons during the narrative analysis phase, and it allowed to guide participants towards a complete story from the general foundations of their fandom up until the complex details of their motivations and in- or out-group traits. More details about the interview guide is presented in section 3.5.1. Collecting data in such a way was also expected to help with analyzing findings easier across participants during narrative analysis. As the analytical framework was kept consistent throughout the study, the stories of each participant were able to be analyzed in a consistent manner as well.

In other words, the theoretical framework served as a structural backbone for the methodology used in this study and is reflected in both data collection and data analysis. The concepts discussed in the theory chapter allowed for the creation and arranging of questions in a logical order that helped participants to formulate narratives starting from discussing broader implications of fandom up until discussing complex topics regarding motivations and social identity. The following section elaborates further on the implication of the data collection and analysis methods and presents further information related to specific parts of the methodology.

### **3.5 Data collection and analysis**

In this section, the details behind the data collection and analysis processes are discussed in detail. Specifically, this section explains the reasons behind choosing semi-structured interviews as the data collection method and narrative analysis as the data analysis method.

#### **3.5.1 Data collection**

This study relied on interviews as a means to gather analyzable information from participants. More specifically, the type of interviews used in this research is semi-structured interview. This method is one of three general types of interviewing techniques, alongside structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are characterised by low-to-no deviation from a set of questions established in the interview guide by the researcher. This method allows for the collection of structured data and is often more useful in mixed method or quantitative research, however, it does not allow for the exploration of topics that might arise during the interviews (Paley, 2010). Unstructured interviews are characterised by features opposite of structured interviews, as this form of interviewing techniques does not follow preset guidelines and is more often used in exploratory research. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study as they pose a technique that lies between structured and unstructured interviews, making it possible to follow a pre-established interview guide but still offering the opportunities of adding additional questions in case new topics arise during the interviews that are deemed useful for the purpose of the study. The fact that participants are asked to talk about their experiences with Nintendo and the fandom makes a good case for picking this interviewing technique to gather data for analysis. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow participants to present more detailed stories as opposed to structured interviews (Paley, 2010). Given that the goal of the study is to gather input based on participants' life experiences, it is more sensible to rely on semi-structured interviewing techniques as it allows to set a boundary on given topics and give participants enough room to express themselves.

In order to establish a general structure for the interviews, an interview-guide has been established before starting the interviewing process to aid the flow and process of the interview sessions (Appendix A). In semi-structured interviews, the interview guide serves the crucial purpose of helping the interview curator to stay on track while allowing for some deviation from

the guide to gain deeper insights from the participants. In order to achieve this effect, the interview guide needed to be somewhat generic as questions that are deemed to be too specific should vary from participant to participant. Moreover, the questions offered enough freedom to vary the course of the interview in case responses did not satisfy the goals of the study or new topics arose that were deemed to be useful for the purpose of this research.

The interview guide also included stimuli for the participants to help them talk about their experiences and connection to Nintendo related nostalgia through screenshots from popular titles released on the brand's game consoles (Appendix A). The fan objects are also introduced in the guide as screenshots from three various games that carry high nostalgic value, namely the first Super Mario game released for the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Nintendo 64 version of Mario Kart, and The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild released for the Nintendo Switch (Nintendo, 1985, 1996, 2017). These games were picked for multiple reasons. Firstly, Super Mario is considered to be one of the most popular game franchises, and it is expected that participants have had some kind of experience with the franchise in the past, allowing them to form opinions and narratives in relation to it. Second, Mario Kart is one of the top-selling franchises from Nintendo, and as it is a common title to play with others it would fit findings from previous literature that emphasize the power of shared experiences when forming identities (Dimitriadou, 2019). Lastly, The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild is a critically acclaimed title for Nintendo's latest console at the time of writing this thesis (Plunkett, 2018). Newcomers to the brand are highly likely to have encountered this game in the past years, and older fans are most likely familiar with The Legend of Zelda franchise at this point. Therefore, a screenshot from the latest title in the franchise is expected to be a reliable stimulus to help participants form a narrative in relation to the fan object's contribution to Nintendo's nostalgic fame.

Furthermore, there were two pieces of software that have been used as instruments to make the research process more efficient and streamlined. Firstly, the online conference tool Zoom was used to conduct the interviews (Zoom Video Communications, n.d.). Zoom was deemed particularly useful due to its popularity and ease of access for participants, with only needing a link to join the interview environment. Zoom was also used as a means to record the interviews that allowed transcribing them after each session was finished. Another piece of software that played a key role in this research was ATLAS.ti. ATLAS.ti is a commonly used tool within qualitative research as a means to code textual data and prepare for analysis

(ATLAS.ti, n.d.). Considering that the interviews were transcribed into text documents, ATLAS.ti was particularly useful to streamline the coding process and aid the analyses that followed. This software was also used to generate a codebook that contains a comprehensive list of codes used alongside their explanations and linked codes (Appendix B).

Finally, in order to establish the ethics necessary to conduct a transparent study, participants were served a consent form that contained detailed information about the study and its purpose, participants' rights as participants, privacy statements, and more. The consent form can be found in Appendix D.

### **3.5.2 Data analysis**

The core research method used in this study is narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is a qualitative content analysis research method that focuses on analysing stories told by participants in order to conduct theory to understand a phenomenon. The word narrative itself refers to a story containing a set of events that unfold throughout a specific period of time, usually involving transformation in the character of the teller and ends with a resolution, or in other words, an ending (Forster, 1927). In general, narrative analysis seeks to answer whether stories reflect the state of an individual or social circumstances. This distinction is important in the context of this thesis, as the research question aims to explore the development of an individual within the Nintendo fandom. Therefore, the state of an individual's identity within the fandom carries a high potential for a story that paints the journey of an in-group member, as well as the social circumstances within this group. In order to gather data used in the narrative analyses of this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with ten-to-fifteen participants from within the Nintendo fandom.

Analysing stories is challenging, as researchers still debate the best practices for conducting this type of analyses. However, the nature of stories allows for some standardized analyses that help the researcher's work. For example, stories are generally characterised by a repeating structure: setting, complication, resolution, evaluation, and moral (van Dijk, 1977). While this framework would not apply to each and every text that is analysed, the focus on the resolution becomes important in this research, both when conducting the narrative analysis and the interviews. In the context of this thesis, the resolution of becoming a nostalgic member of the in-group in the Nintendo fandom can be considered as the ultimate resolution of the subject,

therefore, an important notion to keep in mind during the research process. In other words, the general structure of narratives allows the researcher to analyse many stories in a similar manner, even if the answers of the participants vary greatly from question to question. Another key aspect of the structure of stories is their ordering: the order in which a story is told tells the researcher about traditions, motivations, viewpoints, social roles, and most importantly, identities. As a story is merely a chain of events, the causal relationship between elements of a story helps one to understand the message that is being constructed, and analyse how specific events are meaningful for a particular group or audience (Riessman & Speedy, 2007). In other words, narratives tell the researchers about more than what simply happened through the story of an individual: a narrative contains valuable insights about interpretations, beliefs, and attitudes (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). Furthermore, narratives often entail descriptions of wider social phenomena, or shared ways of thinking originating from cultural understandings (Rolling, 2010). This makes narrative analysis fitting for research that aims to analyse multiple individuals' attitudes towards a specific entity, for example the Nintendo fandom. Narrative analysis becomes even more powerful when researchers seek to examine both the narrative within the individual and the group itself. Therefore, this study aims to utilise these benefits of this research method, and to construct theory around the manifestation of nostalgia along the process of becoming a member of the Nintendo fandom.

### **3.6 Reliability and validity**

The last major component of this study's methodology section concerns the reliability and validity of the research. Reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of measurements, while validity refers to the extent this measurement is measuring what it is supposed to (Robson, 2002). This research was particularly focused on establishing high levels of validity of reasons connected to the nature of the study. Considering that high levels of reliability require the data being replicable, it is not sensible to focus on it in qualitative research. While similar findings might be reproduced, it is not likely that participants in a different study would supply input that would match the results of this research. Qualitative research generally avoids focusing on reliability for this very reason, and puts more emphasis on increasing the quality of the study through focusing on increasing the level of validity as much as possible.

Before discussing the steps that were taken to achieve said validity, it is important to

reflect on the threats and biases that can impact validity levels in qualitative studies (Robson, 2002). Firstly, the most common type of threat to validity is respondent bias. This bias refers to the extent participants' responses are affected by factors related to the study's environment. Such bias can lead to participants' answers being different from their actual opinions, which impacts the quality of the research. The second threat to validity is researcher bias, which carries a similar notion like respondent bias but from the researcher's perspective. As a researcher it is key to remain objective throughout the study and pay additional attention to not let previous knowledge impact the research process. The last type of threat to validity is reactivity, which refers to the effect of the researcher's presence upon the respondent during the research process, most importantly during interviewing (Robson, 2002).

In order to increase the quality of this study, there has been additional effort from the researcher's side to mitigate the above mentioned threats to validity. Firstly, there has been a significant amount of time spent in studying the online environments in which the members of the Nintendo fandom interact with each other. Such practice increased the general understanding of the fandom itself, however, increased involvement in said groups negatively impacts researcher bias as it allows for more assumptions to arise during the research process. Being aware of this effect and objectively evaluating all interactions was therefore a key aspect of this study from a researcher perspective. Another way of reducing the amount of assumptions was to double check answers that carried meanings not entirely clear to the researcher. Therefore, parts of interviews that were unclear were only included in the analysis after double checking with the corresponding participant to ensure that the interpretation represents the respondent's intent. Furthermore, this study has an elaborate audit trail as well. This means that the interview guide, the transcripts, memos, recordings and additional forms have all been documented in order to further increase the quality of the study. Additionally, considering that this research belongs to a master thesis study, the process has been overlooked by an academic supervisor to ensure that the quality of the research is consistent and meets academic standards. The aforementioned techniques to increase validity in qualitative research are deemed as best practices and are recommended by academics such as Robson (2002).

Lastly, a pretest interview was conducted in which the research methodology was tested for potential pitfalls. Testing research methods is generally a constructive process as it allows the researcher to fine tune the research instruments and contributes to the legitimacy of the study.

This thesis' pretest was conducted with the intention to determine that the interview guide could help participants formulate a cohesive narrative of their stories including the Nintendo brand. In addition, the stimulus used in the second half of the interview was required to be tested both in a methodological and technical standpoint, as it required using the video conferencing tool's features to expose the participant to the stimuli. Furthermore, the pretest played a key role in the creation of the interview guide, as the last question required participants to reflect on some of the theory regarding the three types of motivation to develop nostalgia (Appendix A). The core idea behind this question was to see whether participants find these types of motivations sensible in the context of the Nintendo fandom, and whether they can relate these to their own experiences. This exercise aimed to further emphasize the validity of this study's findings and to remove potential researcher biases, by having participants themselves categorize their identities and motivations. In summary, the pretest was concluded as a success, and considering the minor changes in the interview guide that followed, it was decided to include the pretest in the overall analysis of this thesis as well.

## **4. Analysis**

The eleven interviews conducted with participants from all areas of the Nintendo fandom produced an immense amount of data relating to multiple topics stemming from the theory chapter of this thesis. Namely, the core topics of motivations to develop nostalgia, fandom and identity, and current gaming habits and influences have been the core areas participants touched upon in their narratives. The sub-sections below take multiple aspects of the aforementioned areas in the form of narrative analysis, often by comparing different participants' stories in order to present a holistic and balanced overview of the results. In order to present the analysis in a more structured manner, this core section is divided into two sub-sections, both of which include further sub-sections as well to allow for a focused look at the main topics in this study. The first larger section exclusively focuses on the core findings related to the presence of motivations to develop nostalgia, while the second larger section presents discussions on helping factors that support the findings regarding the aforementioned motivations. The anonymous list of participants and a brief overview of their narratives can be found in Appendix C.

## **4.1 The three motivations to develop nostalgia**

In this first major section of the analysis, the most important findings regarding the three motivations to develop nostalgia. These motivations are nostalgic, historical, and personal motivations. The next three subsections go into detail how these motivations in many cases coexist within fans' journeys, and how patterns seemingly resembling relationships between them were present in the narratives of the participants of this study.

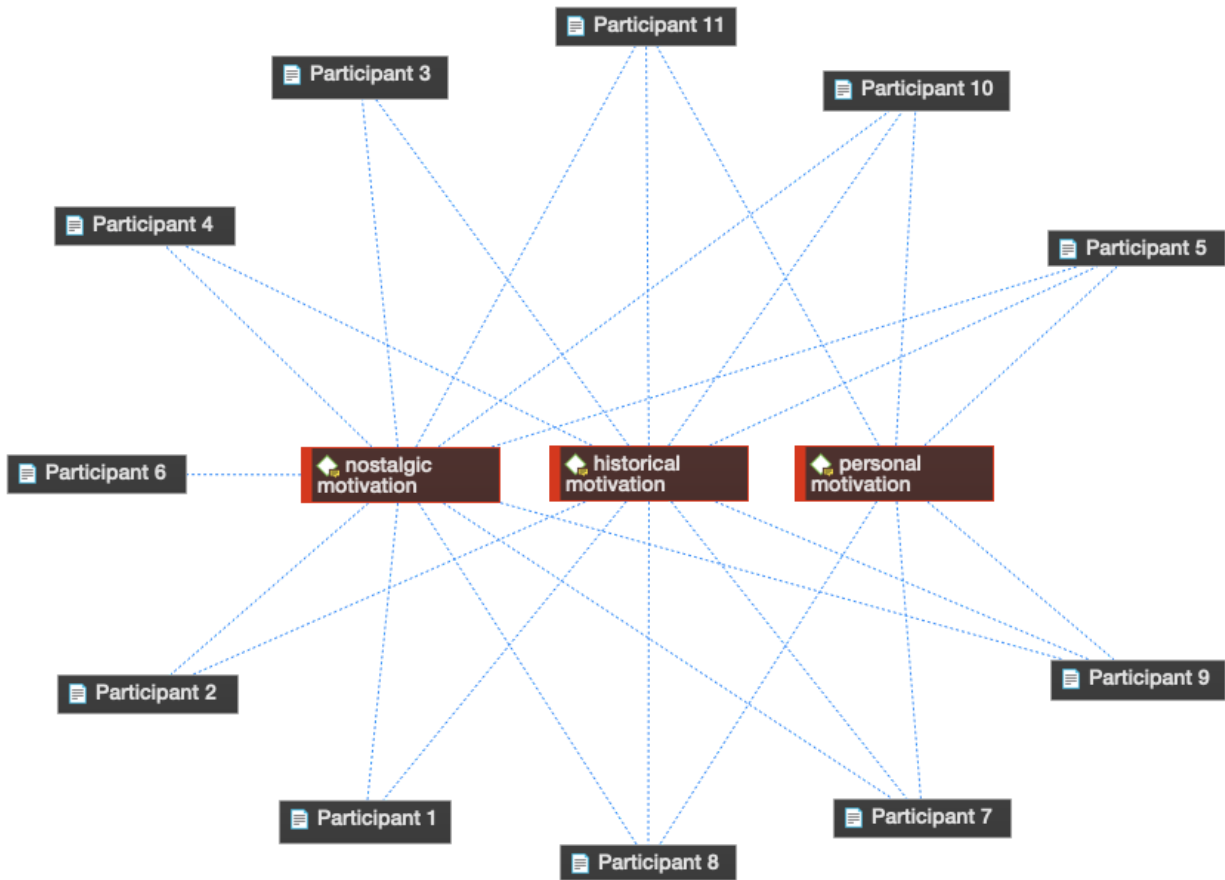
### **4.1.1 Non-exclusive presence of motivations to develop nostalgia**

Perhaps the most interesting finding resulting from the interviews was the presence of all three motivations that can contribute to an individual's development of nostalgia towards a particular fan object. As found in various publications, the motivations of nostalgia can vary between nostalgic, historical, and personal (Ahm, 2020; Kompare, 2017; Warner et al., 2007). Important to note that these three motivations to develop nostalgia have not been found being mentioned together in past publications. By qualitatively coding all interviews based on these notions, it was found that participants not only showed tendencies to one of said motivations, but more often than not to multiple motivations at once. Figure 5 offers a visual representation of the presence of each motivation in each participant's narratives.

#### **Figure 5**

*Network of motivations to develop nostalgia amongst participants*





While each of the above motivations had unique nuances for each participant, there were a number of patterns that helped conceptualize these motivations in the context of the thesis. These patterns also helped to introduce a more systematic coding process that made this analysis possible, as much of the previous theory presented rather abstract ideas of the ways such motivations are able to manifest (Ahm, 2020; Kompare, 2017; Warner et al., 2007). It is important to note that each participant was presented with a brief explanation of the three theories at the end of each interview. Participants were asked to reflect on the legitimacy of the ideas behind the three motivations, and were also asked to reflect on them in relation to their own identities. The patterns discussed below are therefore based on both the researcher's observations and the participants' explicit identifications as well.

First and foremost, the overwhelming presence of nostalgic motivations needs to be discussed. As it can be seen on Figure 5, every participant showed patterns that indicate nostalgic motivations to develop nostalgia towards Nintendo. An almost universal pattern amongst

participants was their exposure to Nintendo products during their childhood. Such experiences did not need to be extensive, however: some participants have only had minor social gaming experiences with Nintendo and still managed to develop nostalgia that guides their current emotions towards the brand to this day. As Participant 2 mentioned, even having minor social gaming experiences with the Gamecube version of Mario Kart was enough of an incentive for them to purchase the latest release on the Switch console for social gaming with friends.

An interesting detail in participants' narratives about nostalgic motivations is the supposed requirement perceived by them of having childhood experiences with Nintendo in order to develop nostalgia towards the company and its titles. Participant 7 went to the extent to say that new fans' experiences and emotions towards the brand are not equal to those who played Nintendo titles during their childhood. This notion was also reflected in participants' descriptions of a typical Nintendo fan: childhood experiences, owning all Nintendo consoles, and nostalgia towards game generations that Nintendo became known for. As most of these talking points arose at some point or another during each interview, it seems as if childhood experiences are a barrier to entry of the in-group of the Nintendo fandom. Fandom members seemingly look at nostalgia as a key to enter the group and be considered a 'true' fan, even if the fan is a member of the out-group. This also signals a level of awareness of more casual out-group fans that might not have had childhood experiences but still possess the Nintendo fan identity.

Patterns that signal historical motivations have also frequently appeared amongst participants. As previous theory discussed, historical motivations often manifest in fans' active efforts to explore a culture due to interest in its history, aesthetics, and cultural characteristics (Ahm, 2020). Hence, excerpts of participants' narratives were coded as being signals of historical motivation in cases they contain patterns that contain the aforementioned interests. Important to note, that historical motivations to develop nostalgia do not necessarily require past experiences with the Nintendo brand (Wildschut et al., 2014). These nuanced details allowed to create a distinction between coding excerpts as nostalgic and historical motivations in case there were doubts about similarities. Interestingly, many participants who had nostalgic motivations also had historical motivations to develop nostalgia, however, not necessarily always with Nintendo. Participant 8 specifically mentioned how their interests towards games from the '80s has developed nostalgia-like feelings towards the era as well, mainly by watching community-made YouTube videos over the games and the history of Nintendo's consoles, or

even older PlayStation consoles or Atari platforms. Mentions like this were also coded as nostalgic motivations as they still contribute to the understanding of nostalgic motivations in video-game contexts. Additionally, when comparing participants' narratives, the frequent occurrence of nostalgic and historical motivations together may signal a potential relationship between the two. This relationship is explained more in depth in section 4.1.2.

The least coded motivation to develop nostalgia was of the personal type. This type of motivation was understood in this thesis as an individual developing nostalgia towards a fan object due to external effects. Such effects can include third-party factors that may nudge an individual to adopt an wished identity, oftentimes to obtain a particular status within a community (Lavrakas, 2008). An example of such motivation may be someone having a friend group of Nintendo fans, and in order to fit in the group the person adopts a Nintendo fan identity as well, and during this journey they develop an emotional connection with the brand that leads to nostalgia. In other words, personal motivations can introduce an individual to a fan object without needing past experiences or historical interest in it. While this type of motivation may seem similar to the historical variant, the key distinction between the individual's intrinsic motives and third-party factors makes it possible to distinguish the two. Interestingly, some participants discussed the 'hype factor' maintained by online communities that accompanies many current titles. Participant 5 explicitly stated that such activities in online realms often induce them to get involved as well in order to relate to the group better. Furthermore, this participant highlighted how they were introduced to their favorite game developers through online discourses, and how their gaming habits and interests were formed by discussions around popular gaming events. They also added how nowadays their gaming-related choices are impacted by those experiences and how they further explored said game developers' other titles, highlighting the notion of personal motivations being prerequisites to historical motivations in certain scenarios. This notion applied to both Nintendo and FromSoftware as well, the latter being also a Japanese game-production company famous for their Souls series with titles like the Dark Souls trilogy (FromSoftware, 2011).

Interestingly, multiple participants have discussed how they can identify with personal motivations in other aspects of their lives. For example, Participant 11 mentioned having nostalgic feelings towards the music of the Beatles and Oasis, two British bands that are some of the most iconic collectives of British pop in the second half of the 20th century. This is a similar

notion to what Oushakine (2019) discussed in their paper about the second-hand nostalgic effect of adopting identities from past eras. Participant 8 discussed how they think personal motivations are present amongst many followers of street fashion and garments that feature graphics of more known franchises, such as Star Wars, in order to appear as an in-group of that particular fandom. In combination with other participants referencing online hype as a reason to become involved with particular fan objects, it seems as if personal motivations appear more around fan objects that are present in popular culture.

The last observation regarding the three types of motivations to develop nostalgia was their non-exclusive nature. As Figure 5 shows, almost all participants' narratives showed patterns that pointed towards multiple motivations at the same time. Furthermore, participants seem to be aware of these diverse and complex mixes of motivations of other fans as well. This was also reflected in participants' descriptions of other Nintendo fans and their motivations to become nostalgic fans, as Participant 4 elaborately discussed how complex motivations can be for a Nintendo fan, from being motivated by a competitive culture to playing titles because their environment encourages it through social gaming via titles like Super Smash Bros. Ultimate (Nintendo, 2018). With this notion, the general patterns pointing towards the coexistence of the three types of motivations to develop nostalgia are further elaborated in the next section.

#### **4.1.2 Historical motivations *develop*, nostalgic motivations *maintain* nostalgia**

To elaborate on patterns discussed in the previous section, some particular tendencies between the different motivations to develop nostalgia towards Nintendo are further discussed. Amongst participants who had both nostalgic and historical motivations to develop nostalgia, there was a seemingly strong relationship between the two types. Namely, individuals with strong nostalgia towards Nintendo tend to go out of their way to learn more about the time periods and titles that were most detrimental to their identities as Nintendo fans. Interestingly, these actions do not resolve in mostly communal activities, but rather the opposite. As most participants preferred single player games, their historical motivations manifested in individual actions as well. For example, multiple participants mentioned that their way of further developing experiences regarding their favourite titles and consoles manifests in consuming digital content about that specific entity, or simply playing titles via buying consoles from older

generations or using emulators. The following quote from Participant 7 summarises the general pattern behind historical motivations that arose during the interviews:

“I bought a Gamecube after I got a Wii (...) I think the reason was just to know where everything came from. It's also a history thing. I grew up with the Gameboy Advance the Nintendo DS and the Wii but I heard all these stories of people who had other consoles asking if I've ever played Super Mario Sunshine or The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker, and I've never done that, so I really wanted to know where all this comes from. Also it's more content, more games to play so that's one more reason why I wanted to play the classics, just to know where games were coming from history-wise.” (Participant 7)

Multiple participants discussed that they often educate themselves about their games of interest in the form of documentaries on streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, but more importantly YouTube, on which knowledgeable content creators publish feature-length video-essays about the Nintendo fandom, games, history, and much more. By consuming such content, some participants explicitly stated that their nostalgia towards the particular era or fan object was developed further, as in the quote above. Furthermore, participants' narratives showed patterns that signalled how learning broadens their knowledge of Nintendo and their favourite titles, and offers more surface to connect emotionally to, which in turn seem to induce stronger nostalgic feelings. Opposed to learning, merely playing retro games and titles from one's childhood serves more of a preservative purpose and appears to not increase one's nostalgia, but rather maintain it.

Furthermore, as it has already been discussed in section 4.1.1, the fine line between personal and historical motivations makes it possible for individuals to further converge, but rather in a one-directional manner. This direction, being also reinforced by participants, was the convergence of personally motivated fans towards historically motivated ones. This comes after the notion of adopting nostalgia from being involved with the fandom as a result of personal motivations, and the experiences developed in this state leading to become further invested in the historical aspects of the community, now induced by historical motivations. This seems to be a logical direction to take, as according to participants' explanations, nostalgia is perceived as an exclusive and desirable in-group trait. This notion, combined with the social identity theoretical

understanding of out-groups seeking ways to converge towards the in group, allows for this assumption to take place (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wildschut et al., 2014).

In other words, there seems to be a path from personal to historical to nostalgic motivations when looking at participants' stories and experiences with Nintendo-related nostalgia. Some participants who identified more with personal motivations ended up performing actions that were historically motivated to further develop their identities started by personal motivations, and mainly nostalgically motivated participants relying on both nostalgic and historical motivations to maintain and expand their already existing nostalgia towards the fan objects that define their identities. Hence, the most apparent pattern is the central role of historical motivations for both in-group and out-group members, as it seems to be a common tool for developing both new and existing experiences alike.

### **4.1.3 Childhood experiences as barriers for nostalgia**

While the previous sections discussed how the three motivations can exist at the same time for Nintendo fans, it may be argued that each of these motivations will not carry the same impact on participants' developments as fans. Therefore, a hierarchy needs to be established between the motivations based on participants' narratives to further understand their nature. This section presents a more focused analysis of the relationships between the three motivations and aims to present a conclusion to the main patterns found regarding the types of motivations to develop nostalgia.

An almost universally shared feature in participants' narratives was their exposure to Nintendo titles at an early age of their lives. This exposure ranged between solely single player content, to solely multiplayer experiences, to a mix of the two, with the last variant being the most common. The importance of this pattern is most apparent in participants' descriptions of Nintendo fans and the role of nostalgia in the creation of a Nintendo fan. Almost all participants mentioned how members of the fandom are generally guided by their childhood experiences which in their opinion was also the reason why people are still playing Nintendo titles to this day as adults. This is also reflected in participants' current gaming habits, with retrogaming being a widely shared activity between the majority of them. To elaborate more on the retrogaming practices of participants, section 4.2.2 discusses this topic further. Furthermore, while childhood nostalgia may be considered as a strong bias from the participants towards their perception of the

Nintendo fan identity, the fact that the participant with no childhood experiences with Nintendo shared the same opinion seems to increase the validity of this notion. One participant also added how they think the reason behind increased nostalgic motivation for people with childhood experiences lies in children's increased fascination with games as opposed to adults': they argued that it is easier to impress a child, therefore such experiences induce stronger nostalgic connections later on in one's life. The aforementioned patterns signal that nostalgic motivations may be considered as the least attainable types of motivations to develop nostalgia for newcomers to the Nintendo fandom. As nostalgia has also been described by participants as a trait desirable for out-group members in the Nintendo fandom, it further suggests that nostalgic motivations are the hardest to attain for new members of the fandom. Important to note, that while nostalgic motivations can be arguably put on the top of the hierarchy based on accessibility for newcomers, it was the most frequently coded motivation amongst participants. However, this result is expected due to the sampling of respondents already requiring participants to identify as Nintendo fans.

In addition, participants with both nostalgic and historical motivations sometimes showed how nostalgia precedes historically motivated actions with titles. As an example, Participant 10 discussed how they have been consuming content about the creation of their favourite childhood game, the original *Spyro the Dragon* (Insomniac Games, 1998). This is a clear case of nostalgic motivations being a requirement to historically motivated action in cases where both motivations are present. Furthermore, as section 4.1.2 has also discussed, the direction from personal to historical motivation for fans can be seen as a unidirectional notion, which implies that personal motivations lie below historical ones in the hierarchy tree.

This first larger section of the analysis argued that there is a hierarchy between the three motivations to develop nostalgia. While much of these motivations are subjective and do not entirely represent all members of the Nintendo fandom, the participants' narratives elaborating about the coexisting motivations allowed to boil down the relationships between them to a general overview of the hierarchy based on obtainability during the development of a fan: nostalgic motivations stand on top with presenting the largest barriers of time and experience. Then, followed by historical motivations, which offer opportunities to fans with either additional nostalgic or personal motivations to further develop their nostalgia and identities. Lastly, personal motivations stand at the bottom of the hierarchy with the least requirements for

adoption, considering that they can be induced by a variety of factors that often originate by third-parties. This hierarchy also appears logical when imagining a fan's journey in the Nintendo fandom, as it can be reflected in the idea of someone converging from personal, to historical, to nostalgic motivations throughout their journey as fans. However, the opposite direction of this convergence is difficult to imagine as a desired path for fans, as it would require them to move from the (nostalgic) in-group towards the out-group, which contrasts the ideas presented in various aspects of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wildschut et al., 2014).

As the extent of these motivations change from fan to fan, the patterns and arguments in this section might be the most subjective matter of this analysis. However, a direction and hierarchy between the three motivations were clearly noticeable amongst participants. While these results may be purely qualitative, their notion presents a case for further quantitative research that can reflect on these patterns on a larger sample of participants.

## **4.2 Helping factors to develop and maintain nostalgia**

In this second larger section of the analysis, this study takes an in-depth look at patterns that arose throughout analysing participants' narratives with respect to the factors that appeared when discussing motivations to develop nostalgia. These patterns have been categorised under the following four topics: accessibility, retrogaming, social gaming, and a comparison between in-group and out-group characteristics. The subsections below offer analyses of these patterns with examples and reflections on relevant theories.

### **4.2.1 Universal accessibility surrounding Nintendo**

It is important to reflect on participants' discussions on accessibility, as it was a common topic within narratives both when discussing Nintendo products and fandoms that surround the brand. The notion of accessibility took many forms in participants' narratives. Some of them reflected on Nintendo being a family-oriented company and their approach to designing experiences that fit players of all kinds. Others went even further, and elaborated on the accessible nature of the communities that developed out of members' passion towards Nintendo products. Interestingly, there have been varying opinions on Nintendo's influence on the formation and development of said communities, as a number of participants mentioned how the fandom and the brand are separate entities with their own independence, while some others



arguing that there is a one-way stream of influence between Nintendo's practices and the characteristics/practices within its surrounding fandoms. But one opinion was universal: Nintendo is an accessible brand and so are the communities that are based on its brand and titles.

Furthermore, the image of Nintendo being a family friendly company was reflected in the narratives of the participants. Family friendliness also seemed as a part of accessibility in participants' eyes, as multiple of them have discussed how the child-friendly nature of Nintendo products help to adopt titles at an early age. While childhood experiences are often a catalyst for nostalgic connections later on in participants' lives, their narratives also show how getting into an emotional connection with the brand has no age limit but is a factor that allows many children to develop a connection with the brand at an early age. Participant 6 has also discussed how in their country's culture Nintendo took the place as 'the family console' and how it also induces millennial parents to buy Nintendo systems for their own children as well. This comes after their reflection on Nintendo being seen as a constant provider of entertainment with generational releases of titles in the same franchises, which in turn helps maintain nostalgia across generations of children:

“(Nintendo) keeps people buying and keeps them attached to a certain product, and gives an emotional attachment to it, and I want my kid to have the same experience as well”  
(Participant 6)

Interestingly, both Participant 4 and 6 have described Nintendo's most iconic character, Super Mario, as being in the same category as Disney's Mickey Mouse: a character and brand that is aimed towards children but enjoyed by all ages alike. This notion further elaborates the accessible nature of Nintendo, and brings an important addition to the understanding of the development of nostalgic motivations. Childhood experiences are therefore more determinant than those experienced later on, and therefore can induce nostalgia at a much more likely rate.

Accessibility was also discussed by Participant 8 as a reason why non-gamers are able to enjoy social gaming activities. This connects to the narrative many participants shared, which states how Nintendo's social gaming/co-op oriented designs add to the accessibility of the brand's products. Online communities seem to facilitate the same level of accessibility, albeit being seemingly independent of Nintendo's involvement as well. Hence, it appears as if there's a

one-way communication between Nintendo and its fandom, while the fandom's practices do not reflect on Nintendo's actions. When discussing the fandom's dynamics, it is important to highlight how these online communities allow participants to practice and maintain their fan identities (Jenkins, 2009; Sandvoss et al., 2017). According to participants' narratives, community leaders and in-groups on these platforms appear as helpful and constructive members, and they often take the roles of YouTube content creators and community moderators on Reddit, for example. Furthermore, the most common platform for participants' fan activities was Youtube, with YouTube content creators being the most powerful opinion leaders and curators in these communities. Interestingly, Participant 6, who is a parent of two, mentioned how they plan to introduce their children to Nintendo as well since it was the go-to console for their generation when they were younger. This raises a rather new idea in fandom formation theories, as many parents of children born today have had gaming experiences as children, which can influence their choices for gaming consoles for their children. Since Nintendo was an extremely popular platform for the past generations, it may be argued that a new type of curators and gatekeepers to fandoms are millennial parents of contemporary times (Kompare, 2017).

#### **4.2.2 Retrogaming as a reliable source of entertainment**

When comparing participants' narratives, some patterns of playing certain titles and franchises from their childhood have arisen. This sub-section aims to further reflect on the retrogaming practices of participants in order to achieve a more in-depth understanding of their (nostalgic) gaming habits, as already briefly touched upon in section 4.1.3.

A frequently appearing element in participants' stories was their vivid remembrance of childhood experiences with video games, let them be Nintendo titles or from other producers. What was even more fascinating is the involvement participants have with those titles up until contemporary times. As discussed in earlier sections, re-playing games as a form of re-experiencing emotions and re-enchanted oneself with the wonders that were once their childhood's cornerstones is a common signal of nostalgic motivations to develop nostalgia towards Nintendo (Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Furthermore, playing retrogames, games from earlier generations and games that were made with representative elements to said generations, seem to be played by participants in order to maintain their nostalgia towards the fan objects that defined their childhoods and their identities as a whole (Ahm, 2020; Suominen, 2008). However,

playing such retrogames does not imply that they are exclusively played for nostalgic reasons. As Participant 7 noted, they actively play retrogames to learn more about Nintendo's history and to further enforce their identity as a Nintendo fan. However, this notion was rather rare amongst participants when comparing against purely nostalgically motivated gaming behavior. In other words, retrogaming seems to be an activity used by both nostalgically and historically motivated participants, however, it appears to be more often used for nostalgic purposes.

Participant 6 has explicitly discussed that they particularly like to play games that they have had previous experiences with because they have a clear set of expectations and know the "fun potential" these games can carry. Sometimes, however, such expectations can backfire, as Participant 2 and 3 specifically named rather disappointing experiences with the re-releases of the Aladdin and Lion King SNES games. While the glamorous nostalgia towards these titles was present, participants could not enjoy the games to their full potential as they did not offer a pleasant experience graphics- and gameplay-wise. This points towards an interesting dissonance caused by the video game industry's development and how modern mediums make older ones obsolete in some participants' eyes.

To further elaborate on playing games from earlier generations, participants have presented various scenarios. For example, it is common for participants to install emulators on their computers in order to play titles from earlier generations without needing the original hardware to run the games. As some participants have moved towards PC gaming in the past decade, this offers a more convenient way for them to re-enact nostalgic experiences and manifest their nostalgic motivations to practice fandom. A more common example of playing retrogames was to purchase their re-released versions on modern consoles, like the Nintendo Switch. As mentioned in the theory chapter, there are numerous retro titles that have found their new home on the Switch eShop roster (Kohler, 2019). While this is also a form of emulation, the fact that these games are still being played on Nintendo consoles seem to contribute to the nostalgic experiences of players. Games such as the aforementioned Aladdin and Lion King games fall into this category, but new releases in the Sonic franchise can also be taken as fitting examples. An even more advanced form of emulation is the rather new wave of mini-consoles that allow players to play older titles with replicas of old Nintendo and Sega consoles with a collection of classic titles pre-installed. Participant 4 has discussed how these mini-consoles bring up feelings of nostalgia for them in similar ways like playing on emulators on their

computers or contemporary systems. On the more modern end of retrogaming, it is common for participants to play new releases of titles in franchises that they were involved with as children. The most commonly named example for such a franchise was Pokemon, with multiple participants citing their childhood experiences with the Gameboy editions of the franchise being determinants in their current interests, especially in social gaming. Therefore, new releases that fall under the retrogaming genre seem to therefore contribute to maintaining nostalgic motivations. Lastly, games with retro elements from independent producers seem to be common titles for participants to play from all sides of the fandom spectrum. Being mostly indie games with gameplay styles reminiscent of earlier generations, they seem to be a common, but rather casual alternative for participants and are universally characterised by participants as reliable sources of familiar entertainment.

Sometimes, retrogaming can take a non-digital form as well. Participant 4 has mentioned how their fandom lately manifests in collecting sets from the collaboration of Lego and Nintendo, and how building Lego sculptures of their favourite characters induces a level of re-enchantment and nostalgic feelings reminiscent of their childhoods. Furthermore, this participant has also highlighted how some fans also manifest similar emotions by collecting games and consoles, both rare and common, in order to further maintain their nostalgic motivations. While none of the participants have identified themselves as collectors, it is important to mention that physical manifestations of motivations exist as well outside of the digital world.

Another element that arose when comparing participants' narratives was their explicit mentions of escapism as a way to cope with their daily challenges and to be taken back to nostalgic times. The nostalgic connections originating from their childhood allow participants to experience emotions that they obtained at an earlier point of their lives, as a form of re-enchantment, which resemble similar notions to Garda's (2013) descriptions to nostalgic gaming experiences. Therefore, it is further emphasized that retrogaming may be considered as a powerful tool for Nintendo fans to maintain nostalgia and an identity that is pleasant for themselves.

Lastly, it is important to note that most participants have always had a Nintendo system, and the nostalgia resulting from these eras seem to be determinants for their current day habits and actions, like the types of games they play, key franchises they follow, the console they pick

up, etc. In a way, as children's habits are impacted by their parents' choices, parents have immense power in enabling this nostalgic motivation for their children later on in their lives. Another interesting aspect of this pattern is the relatively new phenomenon of parents' gaming preferences being transferred to their children's'. As many millennials are now parents, they had Nintendo systems in their childhood like the NES or SNES. Games and franchises arising from these eras may shape parents' choices for their kids' systems, as seen in a participant's narrative on their wishes to have their kids experience the same titles as they did when they were children. Therefore, to further emphasize the ideas discussed in section 4.2.1, parents may be considered as a new form of curators for the Nintendo fandom as they have the power to influence their children's identities and motivations later on in their lives.

### **4.2.3 Maintaining nostalgia through social gaming**

As discussed in section 4.2.2, social gaming experiences were key factors for many participants to develop nostalgia towards the Nintendo brand. When comparing participants' narratives, the presence of social gaming throughout their lives was a common point of discussion, with some of the most frequent titles mentioned being Pokemon, Mario Kart, Mario Party, and other Nintendo-produced couch co-op games. Participants' narratives regarding social gaming being a factor in maintaining their connection to the Nintendo brand throughout their lives is a seemingly important factor in maintaining and developing nostalgia as well, making it a relevant detail to consider when discussing the three motivations to develop nostalgia.

A particularly important feature of social gaming is its potential to be the initiation activity of a new fan's journey towards becoming a fan. Such patterns were noticed within multiple participants' narratives, such as one who mentioned how their family gatherings often consisted of social gaming sessions and how these activities kickstarted their own fan journeys. As discussed in earlier sections, such initiations seem to be crucial factors in determining the nostalgic motivations players experience later on in their lives. However, it is not necessary to be a child when initiated: as Participant 8 noted, the aforementioned accessibility of Nintendo titles present a low barrier of entry for newcomers and allow for social gaming without past experiences. Participant 8 has also discussed how it is a common occurrence for them to put on a game such as Mario Kart during social gatherings in their student home, which led them to notice that people who have not had Nintendo experiences beforehand have still had an easy time

getting into the games and were able to have pleasant experiences. Therefore, it can be argued that the accessibility of Nintendo titles is beneficial for social gaming, and is a catalyst for establishing fans' first experiences at any age. This notion aligns with previous theory as the adoption of nostalgically loaded identities were not seen as necessarily bound to a set of criteria based on specific experiences (Oushakine, 2019; Wildschut et al., 2014). However, nostalgia still seems to be more prevalent for participants who had social gaming experiences with Nintendo products as children, as it was seen as more of a determinant characteristic than casual gaming experiences.

Most participants also discussed how they see Nintendo as a family friendly console and explicitly talked about how the brand emphasizes couch co-op play which distinguishes the brand from other gaming platforms, similar to ways described in the theory chapter (Arsenault, 2017; Sheff, 2011). Two participants brought up the PlayStation system which is often played for titles that are more competitive, such as Call of Duty or the FIFA line. While these titles are also social-gaming oriented, the competitive and repetitive nature of these franchises make them unappealing for most participants who rather enjoy playing Nintendo titles locally with friends. This notion further emphasizes the accessible notion of Nintendo's brand and products associated with it, which also entails the lowered bar of entry and easier adaptability for new fans within less competitive communities. Most titles mentioned by participants in this category were often Nintendo produced titles as well, with Mario Kart, Mario Party, and Super Smash Bros. being mentioned as examples for accessible co-op games. Lastly, there was a seeming tendency for more casual players and out-group members of the Nintendo fandom to engage in more social gaming than their in-group counterparts. While this is merely an observation, it is a fascinating detail that adds more nuance to the understanding of social play amongst Nintendo fans.

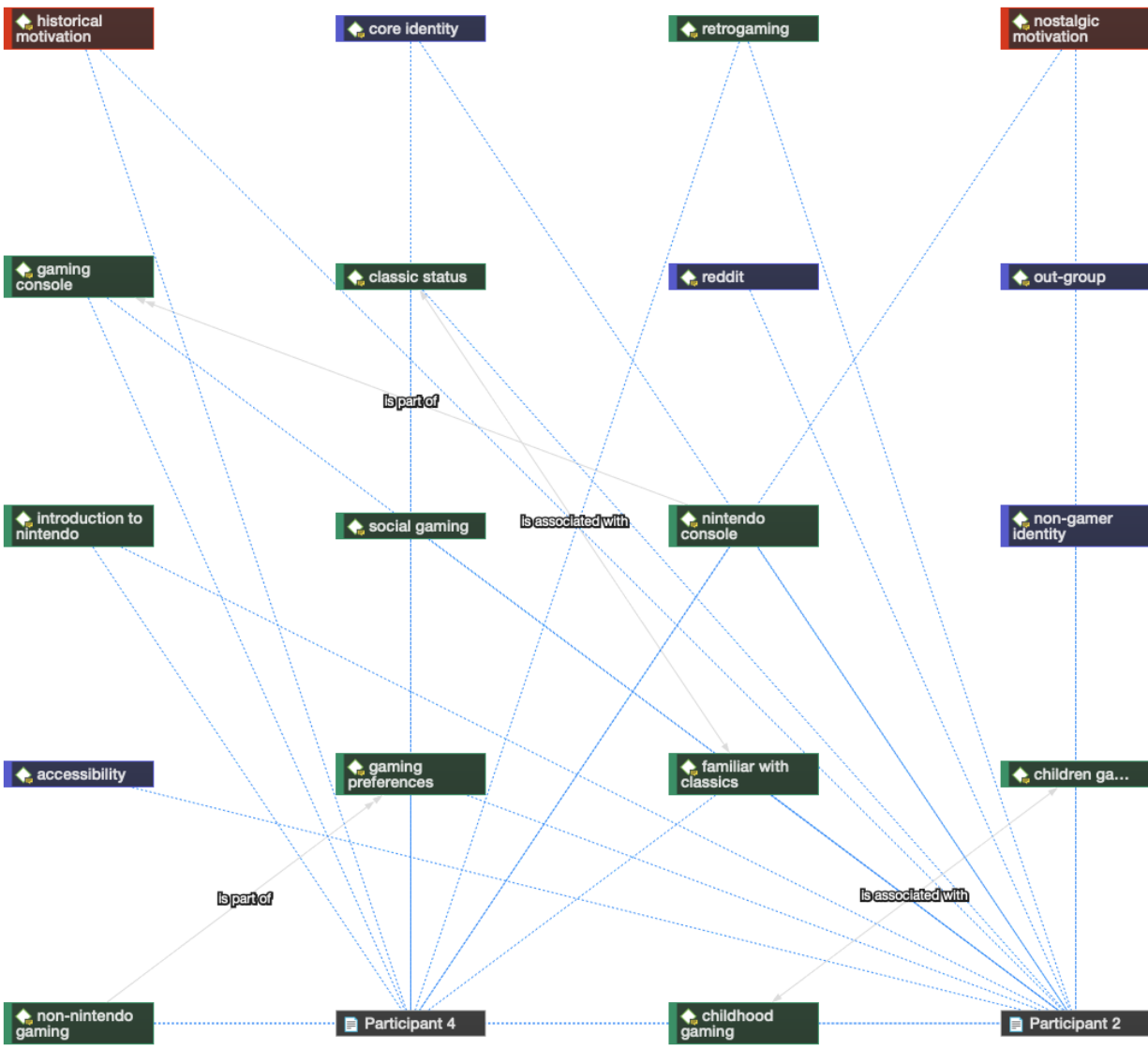
#### **4.2.4 What makes an in-group or out-group member of the fandom?**

As narrative analysis often emphasizes the importance of comparing the stories of multiple participants, this section aims to find patterns that apply to both an in-group and out-group member of the Nintendo fandom. This contrast aims to further increase the understanding of shared characteristics between participants. An ATLAS.ti output of the shared codes between the two participants can be seen in Figure 6 below. The out-group fan in this section is represented by Participant 2, while the in-group fan is represented by Participant 4.

The classification of the two participants was done based on their own discussions on identification and self-categorization within the fandom as well as the amount of fandom traits perceived in their narratives (Hornsey, 2008; Turner & Hogg, 1987). As it can be seen from the figure, Participant 2 did not develop as strong of a Nintendo fan identity as Participant 4 did. This seems to connect to the fact that Participant 2 did not have a Nintendo console as a child and only had social gaming experiences on friends' consoles at the time, while Participant 4 has been playing on Nintendo consoles for their entire life. Therefore, Nintendo was not as ingrained in the childhood experiences of the second participant, and failed to develop a stronger connection later on. However, Participant 2 still showed interest in playing the titles they were familiar with as children, sometimes from their PC experiences. While some experiences discussed by Participant 2 were not Nintendo related, they were still considered during analysis as they serve as examples for gaming behavior that showcase one of the three motivations to develop nostalgia. Figure 6 serves as a representation of shared topics within the narratives of the two participants.

**Figure 6**

*Shared codes between an in-group (Participant 4) and out-group (Participant 2) member*



Analysing the shared characteristics between the two participants serves as the first step to understanding the complex nature of the Nintendo fandom through the eyes of both in-group and out-group members. As discussed in section 4.1.3, it was an overwhelming opinion amongst participants to describe childhood experiences as catalysts for developing nostalgic motivations later on in one's life. This opinion was shared between Participant 2 and 4 as well. While Participant 2 did not have extensive childhood experiences with Nintendo outside of social play, in fact they only started to become interested in gaming in their mid-teens, they still recognize the power of those experiences in determining their and others' gaming behavior today. Both participants discussed their peers' and their own actions in ways that show patterns of a



restorative and re-enacting nature of retrogaming, signalling tendencies that align with previous theories about the ways nostalgia manifests in contemporary actions of consumers (Garda, 2013; Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). Furthermore, both participants identified with being nostalgically motivated to play Nintendo titles as well. This is a fascinating notion, as Participant 4 is considerably more involved with Nintendo than Participant 2, but they both discuss how those childhood experiences are determinants for their contemporary actions. Therefore, it seems as if the power of childhood experiences lies at the time they took place in a person's life, not the length or the extent they were present in it. This notion of nostalgic motivations being vaguely identified with may have led to the frequent coding of this type of motivation as well. Hence, this idea contributes to the understanding of why nostalgic motivation was coded as the most frequent motivation to develop nostalgia across all participants, no matter their group status. Additionally, both participants discussed how their modern gaming habits and purchases are influenced by preferences that are determined by their previous gaming experiences as children, from gameplay styles to graphics. These experiences do not have to be specific to Nintendo, however. As Participant 2 mentioned, some of their PC gaming experiences from their childhood often reappear in their purchasing behavior of new games, which seem to be generally independent titles of games that are follow-ups in Nintendo franchises like Mario Kart or The Legend of Zelda. Participant 4 appears to be more active in playing games with such retro potentials, as they often play games from previous generations on emulators or purchase remasters of titles with enhanced graphics that they enjoyed in the past. However, the incentive seems to be the same: positive experiences as children appear as gaming behavior as adults. This behavior aligns with Sloan's (2015) discussions about nostalgia translating into contemporary action for consumers in general, and confirms that this notion is present within the Nintendo fandom as well, no matter the member's group status.

After the previous paragraph one might get the impression that nostalgia amongst the participants is more one-dimensional than it seems. However, in reality the opposite seems to be the case. As it can be seen from the differences between the two participants, their distinguishing characteristics appear heavily in ways they actually practice their fandom. In fact, their differences mostly show when one subtracts gaming from the equation and looks at the participants' actions outside of gaming. The most notable difference in this regard is the platforms the participants practice their fandom on. Participant 2, being an out-group and more

casual fan of Nintendo, is mainly informed about happenings surrounding Nintendo from online fan communities, such as public groups on Reddit. The participant has also described interactions in these communities to be more on the casual end with more easy-to-consume content generated by members. On the other hand, Participant 4's practice of fandom extended beyond the realms of online communities, for example in the form of watching documentaries about specific games or producers, building Lego sets of Nintendo characters, listening to music from their favorite titles, and surrounding themselves with individuals with whom they are able to discuss their fandom. Participant 4 has also discussed how they get their updates about happenings surrounding Nintendo from gaming-oriented online news outlets, which allow for more in-depth understanding of the details behind new and old releases in the gaming world. This pattern was also apparent in other in-group participants' narratives who also started with the first Nintendo consoles and had similar experiences as Participant 4 outside of gaming.

To summarize, from analyzing the contrasts between an in-group and out-group participant in this study, it appears as the two have very similar ways to develop nostalgic motivations towards Nintendo, but differ significantly in ways they practice their fandom. In other words, the in-group members of the Nintendo fandom seem to be defined by their extracurricular activities outside of playing Nintendo titles. While participants in the study often discussed nostalgia as a key feature of the in-group of the Nintendo fandom, it seems that it is not an exclusive trait at all. Nostalgia is experienced in similar ways between fans from both ends, which may also explain why out-group fans presented similar explanations for nostalgia within the fandom as in-group members. While only qualitative assumptions do not suffice to make concrete statements, the contrasts and shared characteristics offer a good incentive to further inspect these relationships in the future in the form of mixed-methods research.

## **5. Conclusion**

To conclude this thesis, the sections below offer an overview of the answers this study has brought to the research questions, in addition to discussing the limitations that concerned the research and recommendations for future research.

## 5.1 Answering the research questions

This section offers an overview of the findings this research has unveiled, and applies them to the appropriate research questions stated in section 1. The research questions of this thesis were stated as follows:

**RQ:** How does nostalgia manifest in the social identity of the members of the Nintendo fandom?

**Sub-RQ 1:** How do members of the Nintendo fandom relate nostalgia to the inherent characteristics of the fandom?

**Sub-RQ 2:** What are the motivations behind developing nostalgia towards the Nintendo brand and its products in the eyes of fans?

**Sub-RQ 3:** How does nostalgia towards Nintendo and its products influence fans' contemporary gaming habits?

The general answers to the above questions can be divided into two parts: nostalgia manifesting in the gaming behaviour of Nintendo fans, and their extracurricular activities outside of gaming. These actions are seemingly induced by one or multiple of the following three motivations to develop nostalgia: nostalgic, historical, and personal. From the interviews conducted with participants, it has been seen that current gaming habits reflect participants' past experiences with Nintendo products, most often from their childhoods. This finding seems to align with the theory of Lambert et al. (2010), who discussed that social settings such as childhood social play bolster the development of nostalgia. The aforementioned gaming habits can often be conceptualised as retrogaming, that entail playing new and old titles that build on the styles and patterns introduced by games from earlier generations. This study also allowed to reflect on previous understandings of retrogaming and present a new, more complete look on the concept driven by a title involvement with nostalgia regardless of the time of their release (Ahm, 2020; Suominen, 2008). Playing retrogames is a shared trait between in-group and out-group members of the Nintendo fandom, signaling that nostalgic motivations are present across most members of the fandom. Furthermore, the key distinction between the two segments of the community lies in their activities outside of gaming. In-group fans seem to be engaging in nostalgic activities through mediums outside of video games, such as documentaries of their

favourite titles or gatherings with individuals of similar interests towards Nintendo.

The manifestation of nostalgia in the social identity of members of the Nintendo fandom appears to be a rather complex process. The aforementioned three motivations seem to have a non-exclusive nature that offers a direction and hierarchy between them for members to use in their fan journeys. Personal motivations appear to be prevalent at early stages of fandom, with the lowest barriers of adoption. Historical motivations act as a mediator between personal and nostalgic, as they allow one to develop nostalgia through various actions. Historical motivations also appear to be a natural step from personal motivations, as the motivating factors shift from third-parties to the individual self. Furthermore, historical motivations allow a more dynamic development of nostalgia, which offer an opportunity for nostalgically motivated fans to increase their rather static nostalgia. In order for these relationships to arise, they naturally need to be present at the same time for fans. As seen in section 4.1.1, more often than not, these motivations appeared together for participants as opposed to being sole factors to develop nostalgia. The coexistence of multiple motivations at the same time was a rather surprising finding, as the previous theory mainly focused on single motivations as opposed to more dimensions of the motivations to develop nostalgia, which makes this finding of this research rather unique in the field (Ahm, 2020; Kompare, 2017; Warner et al., 2007).

Furthermore, nostalgia was perceived as a core trait of the Nintendo fandom amongst participants, and it was seen as a desired trait for the out-group, as expected from previous theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wildschut et al., 2014). Nostalgia is seen as an inherent trait for Nintendo fans, with this opinion being universally shared by both in-group and out-group members. Moreover, childhood experiences have been frequently discussed by participants as determinants for nostalgic motivations later on in one's life. Considering how nostalgic motivations appeared for all participants who have played Nintendo titles as kids, the impact of childhood experiences on later stages of fandom seems to be apparent.

In conclusion, the manifestation of nostalgia appears in forms of three motivations during a member's journey in the Nintendo fandom. These motivations - nostalgic, historical, and personal - seem to have a hierarchy based on the order they can take place in said fan's journey. Nostalgia is seen by both in-group and out-group fans as a determinant for nostalgic motivations, but does not appear to be exclusive to in-group members, but rather descriptive to the fandom as a whole. Actions induced by the three motivations appear in both gaming and non-gaming

action, with extracurricular activities being more common for in-group members. The presence of the three motivations within participants' narratives offer a new look at fan journeys, and the specific case of Nintendo offers an excellent look at the power of nostalgia and the various ways it may manifest in the social identities of fans.

## **5.2 Limitations of this thesis**

While this thesis managed to develop a new look at fan journeys in the Nintendo fandom, it is important to consider the limitations that surrounded it and improvements that should be taken in case of future reproduction of this research. Firstly, the most important limitation of the findings is their purely qualitative nature. As the study focuses on some theories that are often researched with quantitative methods, such as social identity theory, the findings of this thesis would have been more reliable and the arguments would have been better supported with additional quantitative data, especially at determining the hierarchical structure between the three motivations to develop nostalgia and the extent of each motivation within participants' narratives. Therefore, future attempts to study nostalgia within fandoms would benefit from mixed-methods research, as the powerful implications of both qualitative and quantitative have become apparent by the end of the study. Secondly, the sampling process would have benefitted from a more focused strategy instead of purposive sampling. While the narratives of this study's participants' have offered extremely valuable insights, it is recommended for future researchers to target members of specific online communities regarding fandom, as these platforms appeared to be common environments to practice nostalgia by the participants of this research as well. Lastly, the present COVID-19 pandemic made qualitative data gathering rather challenging. While it offered new opportunities for interviewing participants, it has removed the human element of the research methods and made the data gathering process more systemic. Conducting interviews online also limited the types of stimulus that could have been introduced in the research, as it removed the possibility of experimental elements without the cost of time.

## **5.3 Recommendations for future research**

The findings of this thesis offer a wide range of recommendations for future research, both from a methodological and topical standpoint. Firstly, as section 5.2 has discussed, research involving the motivations to develop nostalgia can benefit greatly from quantitative methods.

However, as these motivations have not been established under one theoretical framework before, there are no existing tools that allow to measure these three motivations appropriately. Therefore, it is recommended for future researchers to create the quantitative requirements and tools, such as scales to measure the extent of each motivation's influence, which in turn would allow for more insightful results in quantitative or mixed methods studies in similar contexts.

Secondly, it is recommended to conduct more qualitative studies of similar kinds in the context of other fandoms as well. While Nintendo's fandom offered a great case for this study, other fandoms may show different variations of the hierarchy and direction between the three motivations to develop nostalgia. As the Nintendo fandom is already characterised by nostalgia, it would be beneficial for fandom studies if communities with lesser nostalgic characteristics would undergo similar analyses as well, for example communities that develop around music, fashion, national identities, and many more. Therefore, it is important to replicate this study in different contexts for broader implications within fandom studies.

The third and last recommendation concerns a topic that arose during one of the interviews and presents an interesting subject for a future study regarding fan development. Multiple participants have discussed the impact parental decisions have had on them in order to become Nintendo fans during their childhood, which was mentioned as one of the determinants of nostalgic motivations later on in a fan's journey. Participant 10 has also discussed how their parents have introduced them to Nintendo and were therefore important players in determining their gaming preferences. However, many parents in the contemporary world are from generations who have had gaming consoles available to them during their childhoods and are currently fans of Nintendo or other game producers. Furthermore, the gaming preferences of said parents may influence the gaming experiences they would allow for their children, and therefore may act as curators for the fandom in a way. Participant 6, who is a parent of two, has explicitly mentioned that they want their children to experience Nintendo's titles the same way they did, due to their positive childhood experiences with the brand. This notion poses a new factor that should be taken into consideration when examining fan journeys in gaming fandoms, and offers new opportunities for exploratory research in the realms of fandom and social identity studies.

## References

- Ahm, R. K. (2020). (Re)playing (with) video game history: moving beyond retrogaming. *Games and Culture*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412020955084>
- Arsenault, D. (2017). *Super power, spoony bards, and silverware: the super nintendo entertainment system*. MIT Press.
- ATLAS.ti. (n.d.). *What is ATLAS.ti?* <https://atlasti.com/product/what-is-atlas-ti/>
- Chunsoft. (1986). *Dragon Quest* [Nintendo Entertainment System game]. Japan: Enix.
- De Kosnik, A. (2016). *Rogue archives: digital cultural memory and media fandom*. MIT Press.
- Dimitriadou, M., Maciejovsky, B., Wildschut, T., & Sedikides, C. (2019). Collective nostalgia and domestic country bias. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 25(3), 445–457. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000209>
- Dos Santos, L. R., Carregosa, A. A., Masruha, M. R., Dos, S. P. A., Da Silveira Coêlho M. L., Ferraz, D. D., & Da Silva Robeiro, N. M. (2015). The use of Nintendo Wii in the rehabilitation of poststroke patients: a systematic review. *Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Diseases : The Official Journal of National Stroke Association*, 24(10), 2298–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jstrokecerebrovasdis.2015.06.010>
- Forster, E. M. (1927). *Aspects of the Novel*. London: E. Arnold.
- FromSoftware. (2011). *Dark Souls* [PC Game]. Japan: FromSoftware.
- Gallagher, R. (2019). *Replaying the past: Wholesome nostalgia or morbid melancholia?* [PDF]. DiGRA. [http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/DiGRA\\_2019\\_paper\\_324.pdf](http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/DiGRA_2019_paper_324.pdf)
- Garda, M. B. (2013). *Nostalgia in retro game design* [PDF]. DiGRA. [http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper\\_310.pdf](http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper_310.pdf)
- Geraghty, L. (2014). *Cult Collectors: Nostalgia, Fandom and Collecting Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Gilbert, A. S. (2017). Crowdfunding nostalgia: kickstarter and the revival of classic pc game genres. *The Computer Games Journal*, 6(1-2), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40869-017-0031-x>
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx-doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9781412963909>

- Gray, L. M., Wong-Wylie, G., Cook, K., & Rempel, G. R. (2020). Expanding qualitative research interviewing strategies: zoom video communications. *Qualitative Report*, 25(5), 1292–1301. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol25/iss5/9>
- Hartmann, B. J., & Brunk, K. H. (2019). Nostalgia marketing and (re-)enchantment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 36(4), 669–686. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.05.002>
- Heineman, D. S. (2014). Public memory and gamer identity: Retrogaming as nostalgia. *Journal of Games Criticism*, 1(1), 1-24. <https://gamescriticism.org/articles/heineman-1-1/>
- Hemphill, L., Kocurek, C. A., Rao X. (2017). Approaches to understanding identity. In Click, M. A., & Scott, S. (Eds.). *The Routledge companion to media fandom*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637518>
- Holstein, J.A., & Gubrium, J.F. (2012). Introduction: establishing a balance. In *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Hornsey, M. J. (2008). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory: a historical review: social identity theory and self-categorization theory. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2(1), 204–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2007.00066.x>
- Howlett, M. (2021). Looking at the ‘field’ through a zoom lens: methodological reflections on conducting online research during a global pandemic. *Qualitative Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120985691>
- Insomniac Games. (1998). *Spyro the Dragon* [PlayStation game]. Japan: Sony Computer Entertainment.
- Jenkins, H. (2009). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: media education for the 21st century*. MIT Press.
- Kao, F. (2012). An exploratory study of collective nostalgia. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 40. 515-518. <https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1012747/volumes/v40/NA-40>
- Kohler, C. (2018, May 8). *Nintendo can do so much better than virtual console*. Kotaku. <https://kotaku.com/nintendo-can-do-so-much-better-than-virtual-console-1825871773>.
- Kohler, C. (2019, January 14). *Super Nintendo game names are buried in the Switch online NES app*. Kotaku. <https://kotaku.com/super-nintendo-game-names-are-buried-in-the-switch-onli-1831748157>.



- Kompare, D. (2017). Fan curators and the gateways into fandom. In Click, M. A., & Scott, S. (Eds.). *The Routledge companion to media fandom*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637518-14>
- Lambert, N. M., Stillman, T. F., Baumeister, R. F., Fincham, F. D., Hicks, J. A., & Graham, S. M. (2010). Family as a salient source of meaning in young adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*, 367–376. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2010.516616>
- Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412963947
- Massanari, A. L. (2015). *Participatory culture, community and play: learning from Reddit*. Peter Lang.
- Melia, K. (2010). Grounded theory: evolving methods. In Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (Eds.). *SAGE qualitative research methods* (pp. 170-177). SAGE Publications, Inc.  
<https://www-doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9780857028211>
- Mummendey, A., Kessler, T., Klink, A., & Mielke, R. (1999). Strategies to cope with negative social identity: predictions by social identity theory and relative deprivation theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(2), 229–245.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.2.229>
- Naugle, K. E., Naugle, K. M., & Wikstrom, E. A. (2014). Cardiovascular and affective outcomes of active gaming: using the Nintendo Wii as a cardiovascular training tool. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research, 28*(2), 443–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1519/JSC.0b013e31829999c3>
- Neys, J. L. D., Jansz, J., & Tan, E. S. H. (2014). Exploring persistence in gaming: the role of self-determination and social identity. *Computers in Human Behavior, 37*, 196–209.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.04.047>
- Nintendo. (1985). *Super Mario Bros* [Nintendo Entertainment System game]. Japan: Nintendo.
- Nintendo. (1994). *Super Metroid* [Super Nintendo Entertainment System game]. Japan: Nintendo.
- Nintendo. (1996). *Mario Kart 64* [Nintendo 64 game]. Japan: Nintendo.
- Nintendo. (2017). *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* [Nintendo Switch game]. Japan: Nintendo.
- Nintendo. (2018). *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* [Nintendo Switch game]. Japan: Nintendo.

- Nostalgia*. (n.d.). Merriam-Webster. Retrieved 13 March, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nostalgia>.
- Oushakine, S. A. (2019). Second-hand nostalgia. *Post-Soviet Nostalgia*, 38–69. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429318931-3>
- Paley, J. (2010). Qualitative interviewing as measurement. *Nursing Philosophy : An International Journal for Healthcare Professionals*, 11(2), 112–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1466-769X.2010.00>
- Plunkett, L. (2018, February 23). *Breath of the Wild wins big at 2018 DICE awards*. Kotaku. <https://kotaku.com/breath-of-the-wild-wins-big-at-2018-dice-awards-1823252711>
- Rapley, T. (2014). Sampling strategies in qualitative research. In Flick, U. (Ed.). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 49-63). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446282243.n4>
- Reysen, S., Plante, C. N., Roberts, S. E., & Gerbasi, K. C. (2016). Optimal distinctiveness and identification with the furry fandom. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*, 35(4), 638–642. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-015-9331-0>
- Riessman, C., & Speedy, J. (2007). Narrative inquiry in the psychotherapy professions. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry* (pp. 426-456). London: Sage.
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Rodriguez, A. G., Cotta, C., & Leiva, A. J. F. (2018). *An evolutionary approach to metroidvania videogame design* [PDF]. XVIII Conferencia de la Asociación Española para la Inteligencia Artificial. [https://sci2s.ugr.es/caepia18/proceedings/docs/CAEPIA2018\\_paper\\_246.pdf](https://sci2s.ugr.es/caepia18/proceedings/docs/CAEPIA2018_paper_246.pdf)
- Rolling, J. H. (2010). Art education at the turn of the tide: The utility of narrative in curriculum-making and education research. *Art Education* 63(3), 6-12. <https://surface.syr.edu/tl/15/>
- Roy, K. M. (2012). In search of a culture: navigating the dimensions of qualitative research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 74(4), 660–665. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.00981.x>

- Sandvoss, C. (2014). The Death of the Reader? Literary Theory and the Study of Texts in Popular Culture. In Hellekson, K. & Busse, K. (Eds.). *The Fan Fiction Studies Reader* (pp. 61-74). Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press.
- Sandvoss, C., Gray, J., & Harrington, C. (2017). Introduction: Why still study fans? In Gray, J., Sandvoss, C., & Harrington, C. (Eds.). *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (pp. 1-26). New York: NYU Press.
- Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Cheung, W.-Y., Routledge, C., Hepper, E. G., Arndt, J., ... Vingerhoets, A. J. J. M. (2016). Nostalgia fosters self continuity: Uncovering the mechanism (social connectedness) and consequence (eudaimonic well-being). *Emotion, 16*, 524–539. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/emo0000136>
- Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2018). Finding meaning in nostalgia. *Review of General Psychology, 22*(1), 48–61. <https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000109>
- Sedikides, C., & Wildschut, T. (2019). The sociality of personal and collective nostalgia. *European Review of Social Psychology, 30*(1), 123–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463283.2019.1630098>
- Shaw, A. (2010). What is video game culture? Cultural studies and game studies. *Games And Culture, 5*(4), 403-424. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412009360414>
- Shay, R., & Palomba, A. (2020). First-party success or first-party failure? A case study on audience perceptions of the Nintendo brand during the Wii U's product life cycle. *Games and Culture, 15*(5), 475–500. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412018813666>
- Sheff, D. (2011). *Game over: how Nintendo conquered the world*. Vintage.
- Sloan, R. J. S. (2015). Videogames as remediated memories: commodified nostalgia and hyperreality in Far Cry 3: Blood dragon and gone home. *Games and Culture, 10*(6), 525–550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412014565641>
- Strauss, A. (2010). Notes on the nature and development of general theories. In Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (Eds.). *SAGE qualitative research methods*. 8-18. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://www-doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.4135/9780857028211>
- Suominen, J. (2008). The past as the future? Nostalgia and retrogaming in digital culture. *The Fibreculture Journal*. <https://eleven.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-075-the-past-as-the-future-nostalgia-and-retrogaming-in-digital-culture/>

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, 33–47, Monterey: Brooks/Cole.
- Thomas Happ Games. (2017). *Axiom Verge* [Nintendo Switch game]. NA: Thomas Happ Games.
- Thompson, J. B. (1995). *The media and modernity: a social theory of the media*. Polity: Cambridge.
- Turner, J. C., & Hogg, M. A. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: a self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
- Upadhyay, U. D., & Lipkovich, H. (2020). Using online technologies to improve diversity and inclusion in cognitive interviews with young people. *Bmc Medical Research Methodology*, 20(1), 159–159. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-020-01024-9>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1977). *Text and context: Explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse*. London: Longman.
- Warner, R., Hornsey, M. J., & Jetten, J. (2007). Why minority group members resent impostors. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.332>
- Wildschut, T., Bruder, M., Robertson, S., van Tilburg, W. A. P., & Sedikides, C. (2014). Collective nostalgia: a group-level emotion that confers unique benefits on the group. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(5), 844–844. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037760>
- Zoom Video Communications. (n.d.). *About - Zoom*. <https://www.zoom.us/about>

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview guide

### Introduction

// Small talk and icebreakers. //

-----

### Retrogaming and Nintendo

**Tell** me about your connection with gaming.

**How** would you describe your connection to the Nintendo brand?

- > What are your favourite titles?
- > When did you have your first experience with Nintendo?

**Do** you play games for nostalgic reasons?

**Do** you play games that are designed with nostalgic elements in mind? (Think about point and click games, or titles with pixelated graphics, etc.)

**Do** you play games from previous generations for reasons besides nostalgia?

-----

### Fandoms and identity

**Have** you ever become invested in something that you felt completes your identity?

- > Following this thought, what do you think was the motivation behind you becoming invested in Nintendo?

**Could** you tell me some reasons why you think people (would want to) become Nintendo fans?

**How** would you describe the average Nintendo fan within the community?

- > To what extent can you identify with older/more established members of the fandom?

**How** did you discover the existence of the Nintendo fandom?

**How** do you learn about happenings within the fandom? Where do you go to interact with other members or get information about Nintendo-related events and activities?

**When** people discuss Nintendo related things around you or online, do you often feel like you are missing out on something? How do you act in these situations?

-----

### **Nostalgia within**

Questions for the images:

- Describe what you see in the image.
- When you look at this image, what are the first things that come to mind?
- Tell me about your personal experiences/connections with the game/franchise you see in the image.

// Images stimulus done //

**Why** do you think I showed you these games specifically?

**After** looking at these images, how would you describe the importance of the games/franchises shown within the Nintendo fandom and its culture?

**What** characteristics of Nintendo can induce nostalgia within fans?

**In** your opinion, what role does nostalgia play in your identity as a Nintendo fan?

**Why** do you think someone would play these games if they have never played them before?

-----

// **Directly ask about their evaluation of their nostalgia towards Nintendo** //

// Nostalgic (had experiences with the brand in the past) / Historical (interested in the culture and artistic values of the brand) / Personal (perceived benefits with joining / feeling of missing out /









## Appendix B: Codebook

### Open codes grouped by axial codes

#### ◇ Fandom and identity

##### 19 Codes:

- **accessibility**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| the participant talks about Nintendo and/or its fandom in terms of accessibility (helpful community and curators, available information, easy to get into, casual, etc.)

- **community activity**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| gaming activities outside of video games

- **community lurker**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| does not actively participate in online communities

- **core identity**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| participant talks about something that defines their core identity and what they really identify as

- **ex-fandom**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

- | used to be fans but don't consider themselves as that anymore

- **facebook**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

- | facebook as a means to learn and be updated about the gaming world and Nintendo

**1 Linked Codes:**

- \_ is a → ● fandom medium**

**Comment:**

- | a type of medium / platform where fans interact

- **fandom medium**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

- | a type of medium / platform where fans interact

**7 Linked Codes:**

- ← is a \_ ● facebook**

**Comment:**

- | facebook as a means to learn and be updated about the gaming world and Nintendo

- ← is a \_ ● friends and family**

**Comment:**

- | participant mentions friends and/or family as a source of information about the happenings within the Nintendo fandom

- ← is a \_ ● instagram**

**Comment:**

- | participant uses Instagram as a medium to interact with the fandom

- ← is a \_ ● reddit**

**Comment:**

| follows subreddits to inform oneself about happenings within the community

← is a \_ • **twitter**

**Comment:**

| participant gets updates about happenings in the Nintendo fandom on Twitter

← is a \_ • **video game websites**

**Comment:**

| medium on which the participant updates themselves on what's happening in the gaming world

← is a \_ • **youtube**

**Comment:**

| follows youtubers or watches youtube content to inform oneself about happenings within the community

• **friends and family**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| participant mentions friends and/or family as a source of information about the happenings within the Nintendo fandom

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is a → • **fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

• **gamer identity**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| considers themselves as a gamer

| can be present with non-gamer identity, as participants can be gamers in their own sense but would not want to identify with the stereotypical 'gamer' identity

**1 Linked Codes:**

← **contradicts** \_ • **non-gamer identity**

**Comment:**

| participant talks about not having a strong feeling of identifying with the ‘gamer’ term

- **gamer stereotype**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| the term ‘gamer’ has a negative connotation in the participant’s eyes

- **in-group**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| can be considered as an in-group within the nintendo fandom

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is part of → ● **nintendo fan identity**

**Comment:**

| nintendo is significant part of their identity / either a franchise or the brand itself shows up in the participant’s description of their identity

- **instagram**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| participant uses Instagram as a medium to interact with the fandom

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is a → ● **fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

- **nintendo fan identity**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

nintendo is significant part of their identity / either a franchise or the brand itself shows up in the participant's description of their identity

## 2 Linked Codes:

← is part of \_ • in-group

### Comment:

can be considered as an in-group within the nintendo fandom

← is part of \_ • out-group

### Comment:

can be considered as an out-group within the nintendo fandom

## • non-gamer identity

### Groups:

◇ Fandom and identity

### Comment:

participant talks about not having a strong feeling of identifying with the 'gamer' term

## 1 Linked Codes:

\_ contradicts → • gamer identity

### Comment:

considers themselves as a gamer

can be present with non-gamer identity, as participants can be gamers in their own sense but would not want to identify with the stereotypical 'gamer' identity

## • out-group

### Groups:

◇ Fandom and identity

### Comment:

can be considered as an out-group within the nintendo fandom

## 1 Linked Codes:

\_ is part of → • nintendo fan identity

### Comment:

nintendo is significant part of their identity / either a franchise or the brand itself shows up in the participant's description of their identity

## • reddit

### Groups:

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| follows subreddits to inform oneself about happenings within the community

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is a → • **fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

• **twitter**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| participant gets updates about happenings in the Nintendo fandom on Twitter

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is a → • **fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

• **video game websites**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| medium on which the participant updates themselves on what's happening in the gaming world

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ is a → • **fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

• **youtube**

**Groups:**

◇ Fandom and identity

**Comment:**

| follows youtubers or watches youtube content to inform oneself about happenings within the community

**1 Linked Codes:**

**\_ is a → • fandom medium**

**Comment:**

| a type of medium / platform where fans interact

---

◇ **Gaming history and habits**

**18 Codes:**

• **childhood gaming**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

| gaming experiences as a child

| 26/05/2021, 11:33, merged with  
| played the gameboy during the holidays as a child

**2 Linked Codes:**

← **is associated with \_ • children games**

**Comment:**

| child-oriented games as first experiences with gaming

← **is associated with \_ • pokemon with friends**

**Comment:**

| playing pokemon as a social activity

• **children games**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

| child-oriented games as first experiences with gaming

**1 Linked Codes:**

**\_ is associated with → • childhood gaming**

**Comment:**

| gaming experiences as a child

| 26/05/2021, 11:33, merged with  
| played the gameboy during the holidays as a child

• **classic status**



**Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

nintendo games are classics / mentions nintendo and their games as parts of the 'classic' gaming world

**1 Linked Codes:**

- ← is associated with \_ ● familiar with classics

**Comment:**

recognised the classic titles in the stimuli

26/05/2021, 11:17, merged with familiar with older titles

can explain old nintendo games even without playing them / did not play older nintendo releases but can still describe their gameplay and story in detail or surface level

**● escapism****Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

participant talks about playing games as a form of escapism, to get away from the problems in their lives

**● familiar with classics****Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

recognised the classic titles in the stimuli

26/05/2021, 11:17, merged with familiar with older titles

can explain old nintendo games even without playing them / did not play older nintendo releases but can still describe their gameplay and story in detail or surface level

**1 Linked Codes:**

- \_ is associated with → ● classic status

**Comment:**

nintendo games are classics / mentions nintendo and their games as parts of the 'classic' gaming world

- **gaming console**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

| participant talking about gaming consoles they owned or currently own

**1 Linked Codes:**

← is part of \_ ● **nintendo console**

**Comment:**

| a type of nintendo console

- **gaming preferences**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

| either aware or unaware of their tendencies to buy/play games that are fundamentally similar, either in gameplay style or aesthetic ways

**2 Linked Codes:**

← is part of \_ ● **non-nintendo gaming**

**Comment:**

| gaming that is not related to nintendo at all

| 29/05/2021, 20:40, merged with

| sims

| played a lot of sims

← is part of \_ ● **PC gaming**

**Comment:**

| type of non-nintendo gaming

- **introduction to nintendo**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

| games that introduced the participant to the nintendo brand

- **nationality and culture**

**Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

participant discusses their nationality and / or culture as a factor in their gaming experiences

**● nintendo as an umbrella for titles****Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

in contrast to the code 'nintendo titles are individual experiences'

participant describes nintendo titles under the nintendo 'umbrella', meaning that them being nintendo productions is inseparable from the titles

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ **contradicts** → ● **nintendo titles are individual experiences**

**Comment:**

Nintendo releases do not belong under the Nintendo umbrella, the participant looks at them individually as opposed to considering them part of the Nintendo brand

e.g. plays the games for what they are but they don't put them under the umbrella of all Nintendo products

contrast to the code 'Nintendo as an umbrella for titles'

**● nintendo console****Groups:**

- ◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

a type of nintendo console

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ **is part of** → ● **gaming console**

**Comment:**

participant talking about gaming consoles they owned or currently own

**● nintendo titles are individual experiences****Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

Nintendo releases do not belong under the Nintendo umbrella, the participant looks at them individually as opposed to considering them part of the Nintendo brand

e.g. plays the games for what they are but they don't put them under the umbrella of all Nintendo products

contrast to the code 'Nintendo as an umbrella for titles'

**1 Linked Codes:**

← **contradicts** \_ • **nintendo as an umbrella for titles**

**Comment:**

in contrast to the code 'nintendo titles are individual experiences'

participant describes nintendo titles under the nintendo 'umbrella', meaning that them being nintendo productions is inseparable from the titles

• **non-nintendo gaming**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

gaming that is not related to nintendo at all

29/05/2021, 20:40, merged with  
sims  
played a lot of sims

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ **is part of** → • **gaming preferences**

**Comment:**

either aware or unaware of their tendencies to buy/play games that are fundamentally similar, either in gameplay style or aesthetic ways

• **PC gaming**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

type of non-nintendo gaming

**1 Linked Codes:**

\_ **is part of** → • **gaming preferences**

**Comment:**

either aware or unaware of their tendencies to buy/play games that are fundamentally similar, either in gameplay style or aesthetic ways

● **pokemon with friends**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

playing pokemon as a social activity

**1 Linked Codes:**

**\_ is associated with → ● childhood gaming**

**Comment:**

gaming experiences as a child

26/05/2021, 11:33, merged with  
played the gameboy during the holidays as a child

● **popular culture**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

participant talks about how nintendo is part of popular culture

e.g. mario in advertisements, merch, music, etc.

● **retrogaming**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

participant talks about playing either old games or new productions with retro elements

● **social gaming**

**Groups:**

◇ Gaming history and habits

**Comment:**

gaming as a social activity

26/05/2021, 11:47, merged with  
flash games with friends  
a type of gaming social gaming experiences

---

## ◇ Motivations to develop nostalgia

### 3 Codes:

#### ● historical motivation

##### Groups:

◇ Motivations to develop nostalgia

##### Comment:

participant talks about topics that signal historical motivations towards developing nostalgia

playing games / learning about franchises / involving oneself with a gaming related entity for historical motivations (e.g. aesthetics, culture, history, etc.)

29/05/2021, 19:52, merged with  
historical gaming interest  
curious about older games and their aesthetic

26/05/2021, 11:40, merged with  
revisiting favourite franchises  
buys newer releases or replays games from their childhood

#### ● nostalgic motivation

##### Groups:

◇ Motivations to develop nostalgia

##### Comment:

participant discusses topics that signal nostalgic motivations to develop nostalgia

revisiting games for reasons purely stemming from nostalgic experiences that one had at a particular point in time

#### ● personal motivation

**Groups:**

- ◇ Motivations to develop nostalgia

**Comment:**

participant talks about behavior that is considered as a personal motivation to develop nostalgia

## Appendix C: Participants summary

Participant number	Description
Participant 1	Out-group, casual fan who has owned multiple Nintendo consoles in the past. Mainly discussed nostalgic and historical motivations.
Participant 2	Out-group, extremely casual fan whose only owned console was the Switch. Had minor encounters with Nintendo titles as a child in social settings, but still considers themselves as a fan. Rather historical motivation, with minor nostalgic ones as well.
Participant 3	Out-group player with similar interests as Participant 1. Been a Nintendo player since their childhood, with the first experiences being within social settings playing Pokemon. Rather nostalgic motivations, with some patterns pointing at historical motivation as well.
Participant 4	In-group fan with strong connections to Nintendo since their childhood. Has had all of the Nintendo consoles. Possesses all of the motivations, but is more nostalgic (based on their current gaming habits), while still actively doing habits that signal a strong historical motivation as well.
Participant 5	Out-group fan who has owned multiple Nintendo consoles in the past. Described themselves as someone whose gaming habits are often guided by online discussions. More of a personally motivated fan, who discussed habits that show occasional historical motivations as well.
Participant 6	Out-group fan who used to be more closely connected to Nintendo in earlier parts of their life. Has owned multiple Nintendo consoles in the past. Only discussed nostalgic motivations, and plans to forward their experiences to their children.
Participant 7	In-group fan, owned all Nintendo products in the past. Considers



	Nintendo as a core building block of their identity, and frequently plays games on emulators or on earlier systems. Their discussions show strong nostalgic and historical motivations.
Participant 8	Out-group, casual fan, mostly playing Nintendo in social settings and to play retrogames. Their narratives involve a lot of nostalgically motivated actions, and also identified with historical motivations both within and outside Nintendo's realm.
Participant 9	In-group fan who has owned most of Nintendo's consoles, and currently plays the Switch as their go-to system. They are very much aware of happenings in the fandom, and also practice their fandom outside of the community. Has all motivations, but shows patterns of mostly historical ones.
Participant 10	An in-group fan who has been playing Nintendo systems as their main consoles since their childhood, and was introduced to the brand via social gaming with family. Discussed how their historical motivations manifest in learning action, and their retrogaming habits that reflect nostalgic motivations.
Participant 11	In-group fan who has had all Nintendo consoles, but also plays titles from most other major gaming systems. Appears to be a heavily nostalgically motivated fan based on current gaming habits, but also frequently mentions behavior that signals an equally strong historical motivations.

## **Appendix D: Consent form**

### **CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH**

#### **FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:**

Bertalan Varga

449271bv@eur.nl

#### **DESCRIPTION**

You are invited to participate in a research about nostalgia amongst Nintendo fans. The general purpose of the study is to understand how nostalgia manifests in the identities of members of the Nintendo fandom.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms, the interview questions will be related to gaming, the Nintendo brand, your activities as a fan, and experiences with Nintendo and/or other gaming related topics.

The interview is planned to be held in an online environment via the use of Zoom, a video conference software. In case circumstances allow for it, the interview may be held in-person. In the case of you not feeling confident with holding the interview on Zoom, then alternatives for the software, such as Microsoft Teams or Discord, may be considered.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will record the interview's audio digitally, or with a mobile device in case of an in-person interview. The recordings will only be used to create transcripts that increase the validity of the research. The full transcripts will not be made public after the thesis is published.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

#### **RISKS AND BENEFITS**

I am aware that sharing personal information while participating in this study may induce some level of discomfort in respondents. For this reason — unless you prefer to be identified fully (name, nationality, gender, etc.) — I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will only use pseudonyms to identify participants while discussing results in the thesis.

I will use the material from the interview and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications. This research will not have any commercial implications whatsoever.

### **TIME INVOLVEMENT**

Your participation in this study will take approximately one hour. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

### **PAYMENTS**

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

### **PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS**

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

### **CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS**

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied with any aspect of this study, you may contact me at any time — even anonymously, if you wish.

### **SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM**

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity.

Thus, you **DO NOT NEED** to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your

identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name

Signature

Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name

Signature

Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.