

## Gender Differences in Motivations and Gratifications to Play Video Games: The Study of the Sims Players' Experiences

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### Abstract

This research explores gender differences in motivations and gratifications related to playing video games such as The Sims. We analyzed both men' and women' differences in game related motivations and gratifications to identify which factors make a game more gratifying for a specific gender of players. We conducted in-depth interviews with 18 male players and 20 female players of The Sims. We also analyzed online forums of The Sims. We found that main gratifying factors related to game-playing experience include appearance, character, storyline, control and complexity, fantasy and social interaction. The findings propose that game researchers with the uses and gratifications theoretical framework should consider the importance of including game features as gratifying factors in their questionnaires. Finally, we have provided implications for future research about gender differences in motivations and gratifications based on uses and gratifications theory.

**Keywords:** gender differences, gratifications, motivations, video games.

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## Introduction

Video games are among the most popular form of entertainment around the world. Game companies have predicted that worldwide revenue from video game sales delivered via the PC or video game consoles will grow from \$18.7 billion in 2019 to \$34 billion in 2022 (DFC Intelligence, 2021). According to the report on video games outlook, the online and offline game market in the Asia-Pacific region, excluding Japan, is expected to grow from \$11.2 billion in 2019 to \$30.3 billion in 2022 (Dharia, 2020). Such expanding popularity of video games has opened the doors for research on various aspects of video games. The game industry has shown particular interest in understanding factors that make playing video games an enjoyable experience to find ways to preserve existing players and acquire more audiences (Bueno et al., 2020).

The issue of gender differences in video games has also drawn increasing attention from game researchers (for instance see Kafai et al., 2008; Heeter et al., 2019). These studies did not specifically explore how players' gender influences gaming motivations and gratifications. They just included respondents' gender in their survey questions. For example, Sjöblom et al. (2017) investigated how genres and content types of video games influence players' gratifications. They found that there is a negative correlation between female gender and enjoyment from multiplayer online games. Bueno, Gallego and Noyes (2020) explored what kind of gratifications players have from augmented reality games (ARGs). They just included players' gender as an independent variable and spending money on in-game features as a dependent variable. They found that the female players buy in-game features to make the game less challenging. However, these studies did not specifically analyze gender differences in gratifying motives to play video games. Research with uses and gratifications paradigm does not explore gender differences in their study about gratifications from playing video games. To address these limitations, we attempted to add knowledge to the literature about gratifying factors that motivate players to play a specific game by exploring what differences exist between men and women in terms of gratifying motives. By analyzing online forums in which game players write their game-related issues and by in-depth interview we answer questions such as what are gratifying factors for both men and women to play video games? Is there any gender difference in terms of gratifying motives to play video games? What are potential differences? What are the reasons that a game like *The Sims* succeeds in attracting a significant portion of female players?

**Research on motivations and gratifications to play video games**

In media research, uses and gratifications theory conceptualizes reasons for selection of particular media and media content as gratifying factors (Rubin, 2002). There are various studies using uses and gratifications theory to explore motivations people have to play video games. Most studies with the uses and gratification theory have included gender differences in their questionnaire and did not specifically explore how players' gender influences their gratifications. Sherry et al. (2006) presented one of the comprehensive studies on video game uses and gratifications. They found that male players consistently ranked all gratifications higher than females did. So, it indicates that there is not any principal difference between men and women in terms of gratifying motives except that men consider gratifications more significant to play video games.

The primary limitation of the uses and gratifications paradigm in quantitative studies is that researchers just ask participants to indicate how important they find specific motives that are provided to them. If researchers present such a cumulative categorization from TV age to players of video games, players do not respond to some game categories. Therefore, uses and gratifications categorization does not lead us to further exploration of why a specific game is successful in attracting a large number of players while some others are not. Another limitation of the uses and gratifications approach in game studies is that it does not include in-game features as gratifying factors. It has categories such as diversion, escape from real-life problems, social interaction and pastimes which can be the reason to play video games in general but could not be the real reason to play a specific game and continue playing it.

**Research on gender differences in motivations to play video games**

A limited number of studies have explored how players' gender influences their gratifications from playing video games. The literature has mainly explored how gender differences influence genre preferences. The literature found that women enjoy role playing games, both offline (Vosmeer et al., 2006) and online (Taylor, 2003), racing games, soccer games and platform games (Kerr, 2003). Lucas and Sherry (2004) found that female players prefer non-mental rotation games more than mental rotation games whereas male players like mental rotation games. They defined traditional games (e.g., puzzle, quiz/trivia, card/dice) as games that do not require mental rotation, while games with physical enactment and imagination factors (e.g., fighter, shooter, fantasy/role playing, action/adventure) require mental rotation to play effectively.

Vosmeer et al. (2006) explored which features a game should have to become more attractive to female players. They found that most important features include: strong storyline, female protagonist and the possibility of exploration and problem-solving.

### **Game features as predictors of gender differences in gratifications**

A limited number of studies have explored game features as predictors of gender differences in game-playing motivations and gratifications. Reinhard and Dervin (2007) reviewed the literature on the most important aspects of video games that influence game-playing enjoyment. They categorized these aspects into two categories. The first category is the structure of video games that included elements of video games that influence interaction between players and game features. The second category includes features of the game content such as narrative and characters. This category is influenced by the technology used to play video games.

We reviewed three sets of studies focusing on motivations and gratifications and gender differences in video game playing. The first set of studies have employed the theoretical framework of uses and gratifications to explore motivations people have to play video games. This line of study has included gender differences in their exploration too. The second line of study has specifically focused on gender differences in video games but not from uses and gratifications perspective. The third line of study has focused on game feature preferences; however, it does not include gender differences. We reviewed these studies and prepared a categorization of motivations and gratifications people have to play video games. This categorization and operational definitions of motivating and gratifying factors are provided in Appendix 1.

### **Theoretical framework**

We have applied theoretical synthesis of motivations, gratifications and gender differences. Motivation is described in media research as driving factors for people to use a particular medium or media content. In the case of video games, motivations can encourage players to choose a particular type of video games, continue to participate, progress and stay inside the virtual space of video games (Mysirlaki & Paraskeva, 2011). Players' motivations for playing video games are divided into intrinsic or extrinsic motivations (Malone, 1981). Intrinsic motivation originates from players' desire to play the game for the sheer of gaming. Extrinsic motivation makes playing video games a means for other purposes such as earning money by selling in-game features (Constantiou et al., 2012;

Guo & Barnes, 2009). We have applied intrinsic motivation as a part of our theoretical framework for designing in-depth interview questions and data collection from online forums. The literature defined the concept of gratification as “the perceived attributes of a medium related to time use and expanded choice of content” (Dimmick & Albarran, 1994: 224). We defined gratifications as opportunities that video games provide to players to enjoy their in-game activities (Bucy, 2004; Chung, 2007). This concept reflects the attributes of the medium instead of users’ psychological needs and personal characteristics that can be the reason to use any sort of media. The concept of gender differences is simply defined as what female players compared to male players prefer during game-playing and how it influences players’ gratifications from game features. A limitation of current studies about motivations and gratifications for playing video games is that they have mainly measured gratifications based on personal needs. Consequently, they have ignored how media-specific characteristics influence users’ gratifications. Theoretically, this research is a contribution to the literature about media gratifications by exploring how media-specific characteristics influence people’s gratifications during the actual use of media features.

### **Research questions**

There is a solid and flourishing body of research on motivations and gratifications people have to play video games, while there are few studies on some specific games. Based on data collected from online forums as a rich source of information primarily related to game-playing experience and in-depth interview with players of the Sims, we have explored gratifications that are directly associated with media-specific aspects rather than including “less directional motivations such as diversion and pastime” (Jansz et al. 2007: 313). So, our broad question is:

- What are the motivations and gratifications that urge both male and female players to play The Sims?

The Sims is among few games that has gratified female players highly. We have explored gender differences in terms of motivations and gratifications to play The Sims. In other words, based on the analysis of both male and female players’ discourses, we have explored whether gender differences for game-play motivations and gratifications exist and what are possible differences. So, our questions are:

- Is there a gender difference in motivations and gratifications to play The Sims?
- What are gender differences in terms of motivations and gratifications to play The Sims?

## Methodology

We have applied two qualitative research methods for data collection including online forum analysis and semi-structured in-depth interview. In this study, we consider online discussion forums on the Internet as the arena where players expressively post their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with a game. Also, in the online forums, gender differences in terms of gratifying and motivating factors based on the name of people who have written their comments can be observed. Vosmeer et al. (2007) are among few researchers who have used online forums to explore how gender discourse is constructed out of language in online forums. They assert that online forums constitute relatively a new and promising source for qualitative research within media studies. Video game players use online forums to post questions concerning the game that they are playing or discuss all sorts of game-related topics. We collected data about gender differences in motivations and gratifications to play video games from game forums on different websites in January 2021. The websites were found by typing in keywords “The Sims 4” and “forum”, “The Sims 5” and “forum” in the search machine of Google. The criteria for selecting online threads include any remark within the postings in which gratification discourse is provided. Also, forums should have the name of the people who have written their comments to collect data about how gender differences influence motivations and gratification to play video games. In all, we chose online threads based on two criteria. First, they should have sections about gratifying motives for playing The Sims. Second, they should have the name of people who have written their comments about the game. This criterion helps to include gender differences in our data. We chose six online forums and thirty threads that have players’ gender differences in motivations and gratifications for playing The Sims. The name of forums, the title of threads and the web address of forums are provided in Appendix 2.

After data collection from The Sims 4 and The Sims 5 online forums, we prepared in-depth interview questions including questions about gratifying motives to play video games, disturbing factors that discourage players to continue playing the game and how interviewees’ gender influences satisfaction and dissatisfaction from the game. We recruited players who could elaborate on their experiences related to gratifying motives based on two sampling approaches: convenience sampling and criterion sampling. First, we started recruiting players via convenience sampling. We sent an invitation letter to students at a large university via email on April 2021. This time was the beginning of the first semester, and students were not busy with school assignments

and they could easily participate in our research. More than 50 people emailed us back to participate in the study. The convenience sampling of students was applied as the initial step despite its several limitations because students are described as primary audience of video games (Hsu et al., 2009). Research has also confirmed that students are hardcore players of video games so that some even play video games excessively (Chang et al., 2006). We applied criterion sampling in the second step. We chose cases that met some criteria of our research purposes, such as playing *The Sims 4* or *The Sims 5* for at least four years continually and playing the game in the past three months to be able to describe their gameplay experience clearly. Finally, we recruited eighteen male players and twenty female players of *The Sims 4* and *The Sims 5*. Interview sessions continued for two hours and half to three hours. Finally, we gave participants 40 US\$ as a gift of gratitude.

The process of our data collection and data analysis includes two steps. First, all posts that had a section about gender differences in motivating and gratifying factors to play video games were copied and pasted on the word file. Second, we transcribed responses to interview questions. We analyzed data by Nvivo 9, the software for qualitative data analysis. We analyzed data by open coding to identify main categories related to gender differences in gameplay gratifications and motivations. Then, we started constant comparative method of analysis to develop themes about gender differences in motivations and gratifications to play video games.

As we collected data from online forums, the data are pretty deep since the point in this data collection method is its remarkable unobtrusiveness (Vosmeer et al., 2006) and we can reasonably be sure that the postings reflect players' motivations to play video games. The other advantage of data from online forums is that players only post game-related discussions, so it helps us to focus on gratifying factors that are directly related to the gameplay experience. As Vosmeer, Jansz and Van Zoonen (2006) discussed, a possible drawback of this method of data collection is that researchers are not in the position to ask participants to clarify or further explain their comments. To address such a limitation, we conducted in-depth interviews with players of *The Sims 4* and *The Sims 5*.

We chose *The Sims* as our case study because it is the best-selling video game with an annual sale of 5.63 billion \$ in 2020. Players of Video games are mainly male, whereas video games are not popular among female players. To explore gender differences in motivations and gratifications to play video games we had to choose a game that is popular among female

players as well. The Sims players are mainly female considering that 60% of its players are female (Joshua, 2021). The results from a large-scale survey among The Sims players also confirmed this assertion that a significant percentage of The Sims players are women, considering that 62% of participants were female (Jansz et al., 2007).

### Findings

Our analysis of posts in online forums and interview files indicates that main gratifying motives for playing The Sims 4 and The Sims 5 include: appearance, character design, storyline, control and complexity of the game, cheats, fantasy and social interaction. Operational definition of these motives is provided in Appendix 1.

### Appearance

Our analysis of the interview files and threads such as “interesting things in The Sims” and “Sims 3 or Sims 4 is better?” (Appendix 2) indicates that detail in graphics and the realistic design of the game are factors that increase gratifications people obtain from playing video games. The Sims 4 compared to its predecessors is more gratifying due to the improvement of these two features. The following quotations confirm it:

*I know, the graphics in the game are stunning, even much better than Sims 3. It astounds me how some people can still doubt it.* (Charlotte, Female)

*I like the way you can change tiny little details. Changing the colors of sofas, beds, tables, and so on is great. Objects can be like any color! It's great how you can change The Sims clothes colors. Objects can be like any color.* (Sophia, Female)

*I love the level of detail in creating the faces and body shapes, not comparable to other games.* (Henry, Male)

### Pace of the game

One of features that illustrates gender difference is the pace of the game, that has not been indicated in the literature. There was a thread under the title of “My Game Is Slow” in The Sims 5 forums, in which players posted their dissatisfaction from the pace of the game. The analysis of this thread and interview files confirms that male players are dissatisfied with the slow pace of their characters’ movement and time-consuming activities such as their avatar’s sleep. In another thread under the title of “the pros and cons of The Sims 4”, male players described their dissatisfaction from the slow pace of the game as:



*It takes a long time to do simple tasks, but still I remember that was even more painful when your Sims took an hour to go to the toilet. Furthermore, the fastest speed setting seems incredibly slow (David, Male).*

*I wonder why they don't move, it takes a long time to run my life. Even fast speed is not that much fast. EA [Electronic Art] must improve it in Eps [expansion packs] (Oliver, Male).*

Contrary, female players are not dissatisfied with slow pace of the game, they are satisfied with time-consuming daily activities. Female players do not consider it necessary to have more pace for some parts of the game, especially characters' movements. For example, Olivia (female) described her satisfaction from the pace of the game as:

*I know some people are complaining about the pace of the game, but I quite like it. I like the current pace for some actions like sleeping, going around the building, dancing and having food out. During working or sleeping hours, I pass the time by checking on my Sims careers and their happiness points. It's not a big deal to me really. Indeed, I do not want fast activities, I don't like my Sims rush to do their life (Isabelle, Female)*

*I'm playing on medium settings... My graphics card isn't even supported but it runs just fine. All is ok with me, I think no more pace is needed (Emma, Female).*

*Even Faster!!! Want your Sims run instead of walk? ...Like in my life, I like to do things slowly but completely (Luna, Female)*

## Characters

We found that players have remarkable sentimental attachment to their avatars. The emotional interaction between players and characters is so strong that any unpleasant happening such as characters' death may emotionally hurt players. Betty (female) who does not want to use cheats to save her characters explained:

*I get attached to them, and feel sad when they die.*

Sophia (Female) also described sentimental attachment to her avatar as:

*The Sims was the first time I felt genuinely upset that my Sim-self was passing on from old age.*

Emily (female) has written a thread under the title of “Tell your sad stories” to have others’ pity on her story. She described how she made her first character in The Sims 5 out of love, but after buying a birthday cake for her avatar<sup>1</sup>, she realized that her Sim was growing old. However, the great flexibility of game features in the Sims 5 to have control over characters’ destiny increases emotional attachment to characters.

For example, Benjamin and Rossman described how they resurrected their characters because of their sentimental attachment to their avatars:

*If they get old and I feel like too emotional attached I just let them live on by cheats (Benjamin, male)*

*The Sims 4 was the first time I felt genuinely upset that my Sim-self was passing on from old-age. I resurrected him by cheats. (Rossman, Male)*

### Storyline

The literature suggests that combing characters with storyline can improve game engagement through identification (Reinhard & Dervin, 2007). One of specific features of The Sims is that players are free to create their own life story and play it with their avatars. The inseparability of characters, especially Sim-self from storyline of the game as a unique characteristic of The Sims increases players’ immersion in the virtual space of the game. For example, Olivia (female) explained how she developed various characters, who were all familiar to her. Her description includes:

*I made my favorite characters based on what I am in my life. I made my favorite family. I played them through several generations. I had quite an involved storyline going on from those who I knew.*

Our analyses of threads and interview files, especially sections related to how players tell their story of The Sims indicate that storyline of the game is closely connected with players’ gender. For example, female players like to tell the story of a female protagonist and events happening in their lives. The gender difference in storyline has tight connection with identification with avatars. Another evidence of gender difference in storyline is women’s enthusiasm to narrate female-related activities such as collecting gems and metals. For example, threads on gem collection and reactions to them were exclusively written by the female plyers.

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1 When players buy a birthday cake for their avatars, they age up.

## Control

Control is defined as mastering game-playing and how much of a fit is between player's skills and requirements of the game (Reinhard & Dervin, 2007). This kind of control has a close relation with difficulty level and complexity of the game. Our analysis of interview files and threads, specifically "Gameplay Feedback" indicates that player do not enjoy game-playing if the game is not challenging. For example, Isabella (female) mentioned that the game is confusing for her and she stopped playing the game because she could not bring it under control. Her description is:

*I've just stopped playing after about half an hour and found that the whole thing is really confusing and challenging to bring under my control.*

Video games offer different satisfaction of the interpersonal orientation of control to different people based on their individual ability to master the game (Lucas & Sherry, 2004). In Sims 3, the low difficulty level and lack of challenging features have frustrated some players, specifically male players. Huntsman (Male) has written a section under the title of pros and cons of The Sims 4, and he described lack of challenge and difficulty in the game as dull and concluded:

*The game looks more like a chick-flick than a video game simulator.*

Other male players have described their dissatisfaction from control over The Sims as:

*The Sims has definitely turned into a chick-flick soupy game*  
(Kermis, Male)

*The game is far too easy now, which surely takes away the game simulator aspect* (Mark, Male)

Also control refers to the level at which players want to have control over their avatars' actions (Lucas & Sherry, 2004). This kind of control over characters' destiny is one of most gratifying factors to play The Sims 5 (Jansz & Vosmeer, 2007). Our data analysis of motivations to play The Sims 5 indicates that control ability gives players gratification of mastering their Self-sim. Some interviewees described gratifications from control over the game in these terms:

*I love playing The Sims because I'm a control freak, and it gives me pleasure to tell people what to do! (Lucas, Male,)*

*I love the thought of playing a game where you control a neighborhood and telling all kinds of different stories (Christopher, Male).*

### **Fantasy**

In studies on video games in general and The Sims in specific, fantasy element has been defined as a significant gratifying feature. In this part we present results of gender differences related to the fantasy world of the game. We also elaborate on how The Sims takes players to the fantasy world of the game. One of main characteristics of The Sims 4 and The Sims 5 like its predecessors is combining fantasy world with real life in the form of Simtopia<sup>1</sup> (Kousari, 2016) which allows players to escape from harsh realities of life. Our analysis of players' desired features for The Sims before their release and for its expansion packs confirms that male players prefer including harsh realities of real life in this life simulation game. Contrary to male preferences, female players mentioned that they are completely dissatisfied with including harsh realities of real life to expansion packs of The Sims. Female players mentioned fantasy world of The Sims 4 and The Sims 5 as their most favorite element to escape from some problems of their daily lives. The following quotations describe how the virtual space of the game allows female players to escape from real life problems:

*It's a reality life simulator; I like it as people don't get shot, raped, murdered or kidnapped. (Mary, Female)*

*I like my Sims to live in a perfect world, without a Pandora's Box. (Brenda, Female)*

*I respect people that have different opinions and views but I don't like to see rape/murder/kidnapping in the Sims because these are quiet offensive. I was raped at 15, so why would I want to sit on my laptop in my spare time and play a game that involves something that has made my life hell since the day it happened 3 years ago? (Elizabeth, Female)*

### **Social Interaction**

The usual way of social interaction through video games is to engage in online game-playing. Our analyses of the thread such as "Would People Play If The Sims Was Online?" "Is The Sims Online attracting?"

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<sup>1</sup> The term is a combination of Sims and Utopia.

and interview questions about enjoyments from social interaction in the virtual space of online games confirm that the female players do not like playing the online version of *The Sims* and they do not engage in social interaction with other players. Our analysis illustrates the gender difference that male players are gratified with online form of the game. The following quotations illustrate gender differences in terms of social interaction.

*I still can't believe that they haven't made the Sims a multiplayer game. The game is all about creating people and interacting and as stuff, yet it's all single player* (Christopher, Male).

*It would be good I loved playing the Sims expansions online too...* (Paul, Male, 27)

*I wouldn't be interested in it. The Sims Online didn't appeal to me at all I play the Sims to make my own little families and do exactly what I want with them. I hate other people getting involved* (Michela, Female)

*The point of the Sims is that you create the storyline of the game and its characters based on what you like. It's for you, it's all about you.... But please no multiplayer* (Hillary, Female)

*I dislike an online multiplayer version of The Sims, I guess I just feel like my Sims' worlds are private and are mine* (Zhou, Female)

## Conclusion and Discussion

The point in our research is that we focused on motivations and gratifications which are directly related to the game itself as well as qualitatively studying the discourse of both men and women in exploring gender differences. Previous studies have included some motives which are less directional to the game itself such as pastime and recreation (Jansz et al., 2007) or mood management based on uses and gratifications paradigm to study why people play video games in general (Sherry et al., 2006) and some games in specific (Jansz et al., 2007). Regarding our first question, results indicate that the main gratifying motives related to playing the game include appearance, character design, storyline, control and complexity of the game, fantasy and social interaction. Vosmeer, Jansz and Van Zoonen (2006) indicate that the most important factors that make a game more attractive to girls are the strong storyline, a female protagonist and the possibility of exploration and problem-solving. Our results indicate that women choose female gender for their avatars in most cases. Also, women usually have tendency to develop storyline related to their chosen

gender. Combining characters with storyline can improve game engagement through identification (Reinhard & Dervin, 2007). So, we can conclude that two gratifying factors of creating favorite characters and a strong storyline based on players' desires help in satisfying various tastes resulting from gender differences. We also found that girls do not care for competitive games that require more hand-eye coordination skills and less cognitive perceptual skills, while boys do prefer such game features. The Sims 4 excellently meets women abilities to control the game while our results indicate that some male players are not satisfied with lack of complexity and challenge in the game and consider it to be a chick-flick.

We define fantasy as to do the things one cannot do in real life or to be able to dream about things one does not have in real life. Our results indicate that women, contrary to men, enjoy the fantasy world of the game as a way to escape from some harsh realities of life such as rape, shooting, drug use. Some men criticize the fantasy world of the game to be too unreal for not giving them the chance to do things they dream about such as making career in politics to become a president or to be able to engage in criminal conducts. Social interaction is defined as experiencing game-playing with friends or others. A principal way for social interaction in game-playing is through online environment. One of other significant gender differences is that women, contrary to men, do not like to play the game online because they do not like others intrude on their private game environment. This result confirms the literature that young women are less motivated by the social interaction gratification than young men (Lucas & Sherry, 2004; Jansz & Vosmeer, 2007; Vosmeer et al., 2007). One of gratifying factors exclusively expressed for The Sims 3 is using cheats. Vosmeer, Jansz and Van Zoonen (2007) for the first time included cheatings of the games in their qualitative analysis as a gratifying factor by which most their respondents try to eliminate competition motive. However, our analysis indicates that players both enjoy avoiding cheats as a challenge as well as using it at times to tweak the game based on their will and to have ultimate control over characters' destiny rather than making the game easier. This factor as a new and exclusive gratification to play the game confirms the significance of including in-game gratifying motives in surveys which apply uses and gratifications paradigm as their theoretical framework. Our implication for further inquiry emerging from our study is to survey game players based on in-game gratifying factors such as feature preferences and current uses and gratifications categorization so that conflate uses and gratifications paradigm and game feature preferences as the two correlated lines of studies. It is implicated

that future research apply unobtrusive data collection methods such analysis of the game forums in addition to interviews and surveys.

### **Ethical considerations**

The author has completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

### **Data availability**

The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## **Appendix 1. Game feature categories**

<b>Game feature categories</b>	<b>Operational definition</b>
Appearance	The level of details in the graphics How realistic the game looks
Narrative	The game's story(storyline)
Character	What the character I play was capable of having interesting characters in the game What my character looked like
Control	It provides the ability for mastering the game Playing, not watching the game Having greater choice over what I could do Responding to what I wanted to do
Complexity	It's easy to learn, but hard to master Having as much a chance to succeed as fail It's not totally difficult to figure out
Social interaction	To experience game-playing with friends or family members To share the experience with friends or others
Fantasy	To do the things I can't do in real life To pretend to be someone else To be able to be in somewhere else To be able to dream about things I don't have in my real life
Escapism	To escape from a busy working day To escape from a busy household To escape from real life problems

**Appendix 2. Name of online forums**

The name of forums	Web address of forums	Name of threads
Fanpop	<a href="http://www.fanpop.com/spots/the-sims-3/forum">http://www.fanpop.com/spots/the-sims-3/forum</a>	Interesting things in The Sims 4 Sims 4 or 5 is better?
Customsims	<a href="http://www.customsims3.com/forum1">http://www.customsims3.com/forum1</a>	Your Favorite Sim Tell your sad stories Thieving Sims Play the game with no cheats Influencing twins My game is slow
Electronic Arts UK community	<a href="http://forums.electronicarts.co.uk/sims-3/">http://forums.electronicarts.co.uk/sims-3/</a>	Screenshots thread Gameplay Feedback Show your SIM FRIEND Problems with the game Would people play the Sims 5 online? Try for a baby What if your sim could fly What new thing you like Sentimental attachment Breast sliders Career path Pregnancy question
The Sims 5 official website	<a href="http://forum.theSims5.com/jforum/forum_s/list.page">http://forum.theSims5.com/jforum/forum_s/list.page</a>	My story
The Sims forums are my favorite place	<a href="https://kotaku.com/the-sims-forums-are-my-new-favorite-place-on-the-intern-1632046735">https://kotaku.com/the-sims-forums-are-my-new-favorite-place-on-the-intern-1632046735</a>	Uncomfortable situations Disgusting things in The Sims Weird and creepy family issue My Sim's Nipples trough her dress Elders who are awesome My Sim is pregnant and my boyfriend is dead
Neo-seeker	<a href="https://www.neoseeker.com/forums/1695/t6177-sims-online/">https://www.neoseeker.com/forums/1695/t6177-sims-online/</a>	Is The Sims online attracting? Music of the game



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