



A Step Towards Reader Acceptance of Hypertext Fiction: From Annoying Distraction to Enjoyable Experience.

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A Step Towards Reader Acceptance of Hypertext Fiction: From Annoying Distraction to Enjoyable Experience

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Preface

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Abstract

The first hypertext novel (Douglas, 2000), *afternoon, a story* (see bibliography, Joyce 1990) was published in 1990. Despite its existence for over 20 years, hypertext fiction is little known amongst “ordinary” readers of fiction and has failed to achieve the popularity and mainstream audience envisaged by early theorists. The domain itself is highly theorised but there is little, if any, empirical evidence available to back up the sometimes grand claims of theorists. In fact, research conducted to date highlights the frustration and disorientation readers experience and attempts to present conventions and guidelines that authors and designers should follow in order to improve the experience (Pope 2006, Gee 2001).

This research aimed to investigate hypertext fiction from the reader’s perspective in an effort to identify features that hinder or foster enjoyment. Readers were presented with a variety of hypertext fictions and asked to join an online discussion group to present their views and opinions. The qualitative data gathered was analysed to identify important themes raised by the participants. Subsequently, more data was gathered from a questionnaire, designed in relation to the qualitative data, in an attempt to corroborate the initial analysis.

It is interesting that while the qualitative data was largely negative, the questionnaire results were less so. It was found that readers are not averse to hypertext fiction and the majority of participants would choose to read it again in the future, although they would opt for a text-only work. Although the multimedia and gaming elements contained in the hypertext fictions in this research were not considered particularly enjoyable participants saw the potential. Participants would be willing to interact with hypertext fiction through such features if they were intuitive to use, added something to the story and were seamlessly integrated. Participants want to control hypertext fiction, particularly with regard to pace of reading, length of time spent reading and interactive elements (such as multimedia and gaming). Indeed, it was found that participants want much more control over the experience than the works in this study allowed them.

Due to the subjective nature of reading, the small number of participants and the limited number of hypertext fictions presented in this study, it is not considered possible to generalise the results. However it seems clear that authors would be able to attain a wider audience for their work as long as they consider the reader with regard to interface, design, interactions, writing style and plot.

Future research could be conducted using younger participants, a different selection of

participants and a wider range of hypertext fictions.

Chapter 1 Problem Overview

Paul (1995) defines hypertext fiction as follows:

“....non-linear narratives created for the computer medium. Hypertexts (fictional and nonfictional) are composed of text segments that are linked electronically by multiple paths in an open-ended, unfinished textuality; thus they allow manifold combinations of their segments.”

Definitions of hypertext fiction are problematic as discussed below. Suffice to say at this point that it is a form of hypertext and that the first hypertext fiction (Douglas, 2000), *afternoon, a story* (see bibliography, Joyce 1990), was published in 1990.

Nelson (Nelson, 1965) coined the term “hypertext” defining it as “...a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper”. Today many, often contradictory, definitions of hypertext exist. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition:

“Text which does not form a single sequence and which may be read in various orders; spec. text and graphics (usu. in machine-readable form) which are interconnected in such a way that a reader of the material (as displayed at a computer terminal, etc.) can discontinue reading one document at certain points in order to consult other related matter.”

In academia definitions and their focus differ between disciplines (Wardrip-Fruin 2004). Literary community definitions tend to focus on the link (the mechanism connecting chunks of texts, providing readers with choice) (Ryan 2001, Aarseth 1994). In contrast, the computer science community views this focus as incomplete because it ignores hypertext’s powerful ability to use information to build associations and knowledge (Schraefel et al 2004, Nürnberg 2003).

Hypertext fiction essentially follows the same basic structure as hypertext and, likewise, has no simple, single, overriding definition. Critics, authors and readers do not agree on what hypertext fiction is, should be or could be. Indeed, there are a variety of terms in use throughout the discipline that appear to be used interchangeably (see Table 1.1).

| TERM | ALTERNATIVES | REFERENCE |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Hypertext fiction | Interactive fiction Participatory fiction Cybertext Ergodic literature Multimedia fiction Hypermedia fiction Hyperfiction | Petrelli and Wright (2009) |
| Fiction | Narrative Literature Story Storytelling Creative writing Text | |
| Reader | Wreader Secondary author | Carusi (2005) |

Table 1.1 Terms in use, their alternatives and references

For our purposes hypertext fiction is defined simply as a type of digital literature which comprises nodes of text with links connecting them. Readers are able to choose from the available links to navigate the fiction, essentially finding their own path through the story.

There are many flavours of hypertext fiction each using different presentation environments and systems (see Table 1.2), different components (text, images, sound, video, Adobe Flash™ technology etc), different literary styles and different interface design styles. All of these options (and indeed any other imaginable options) are included or omitted at the whim of the author. Essentially, there are no rules, guidelines or conventions

| SYSTEM | FEATURES/DETAILS |
|-------------------|--|
| Storyspace | Developers: J D Bolter, M Joyce and J B Smith Website: http://www.eastgate.com/storyspace/index.html Vendor: Eastgate Systems Platform: Windows, Mac |
| Literatronica | Developer: J B Gutierrez Website: http://www.literatronica.com/src/initium.aspx Vendor: Free Platform: Web-based |
| Card Shark | Developer: M Bernstein and D Greco Experimental system |
| Thespis | Developer: M Bernstein and D Greco Experimental system |
| Guide | Developer: P J Brown Website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guide_(hypertext) Platform: Windows, Mac |
| Hypercard | Developer: Apple Inc Website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HyperCard (apple site redirects to wikipedia article) Vendor: Apple Inc (ceased selling March 2004) Platform: Mac |
| Storyspinner | Developers: C J Hooper and M J Weal Website: http://storyspinner.ecs.soton.ac.uk/ Vendor: Free |
| Connection System | Developers: R Kendall and J-H Réty Website: http://www.wordcircuits.com/connect Vendor: Free (open source) Platform: Web-based |

Table 1.2 Hypertext Systems

Eight years after the birth of hypertext fiction, Miller (1998) stated “What’s most remarkable about hyperfiction is that no one really wants to read it, not even out of idle curiosity”. Similarly Pope (2006) suggests that the past 10-15 years has largely seen interest only from “...’experts’ – academics, journalists and writers themselves”. Today hypertext fiction has still not achieved mainstream popularity and, despite the immense enthusiasm and optimism of theorists, has failed to capture the interest of many readers.

The literature repeatedly identifies a number of problems readers encounter when tackling hypertext fiction; namely, lack of closure (ie no traditional end to the story), no coherent story, troublesome navigation, unfulfilled expectations and interface usability issues. However Pope (2006) and Gee (2001) suggest that there are very few research papers that address or investigate these issues. Instead much of the available research focuses on authoring tools (Mitchell 2009, Bernstein, Anderson and Moulthrop 2002, Bernstein et al 2001, Gutierrez and Marino 2008, Zellweger et al 2002, Kendall and Réty 2000), creating or modelling complex story structures (Gutierrez, 2008) and in-depth individual readings of specific hypertext fictions (Walker 1999, Selig 2000 and Higgason 2004).

There appears to be very little empirical research aimed at investigating the reader experience. Some exceptions are Gardner (2003) who investigated reader interaction with hypertext fiction systems, whilst Pope (2006) and Gee (2001) researched the usability and design of such systems.

New or novice hypertext fiction readers tend to approach the medium with the idea of a book in mind. Burbules (1997) suggests that the conventions of reading a book are so familiar to readers that they "...tend to impose such a pattern on textual material in the process of reading, even when the content is resistant to it". However early researchers thought this approach to reading was unlikely to lead to an enjoyable reading experience: "...to require hypertext to function like a book is a bit like expecting a jetliner to behave like a locomotive (yes it's very fast, but the blasted thing won't stay on the rails)" (Moulthrop, 1991). In addition, Kendall (1999) suggests that hypertext should offer "...a reading experience fundamentally different from reading print". Similarly, Dobson (2007) points out that "...too often e-literature is held to the standards of print literature, and critics eschew it because it fails to meet those standards. But any art form is bound to fail if we judge it according to the standards of another". Furthermore Hayles (2007) suggests "...to see electronic literature only through the lens of print is, in a significant sense, not to see it all". Hayles concludes that it is necessary to take relevant elements from both the literary and print traditions and combine them with the modifications and transformations that electronic literature brings.

Early theorists (eg Moulthrop 1991) hailed hypertext fiction as a new reading phenomenon that would completely revolutionise the reading process and enable readers to become co-authors by actively constructing the story through the choices they make. In reality, readers have expressed discomfort in taking such an active role (Wright and Petrelli 2007) or have failed to see their role in reading hypertext fiction as a creative process (Gee 2001). It is not clear if this vision of transforming reading is achievable or, indeed, if the processes involved in reading print fiction are too different from those involved in reading hypertext fiction. Moulthrop (1991) suggests that whether reading print or digital fiction "readers are not passive recipients but active co-creators of meaning". Schilit (1999) disagrees, arguing that "...passive reading... is what we tend to do with paperback fiction". Burbules (1997) suggests that all reading takes place within certain contexts and social relations; as these change so too will the practice of reading. Similarly, Marshall (2003) suggests that reading practices are changing rapidly and that this is to be expected because "...reading practices have always varied according to the genre of the materials, the reader's purpose, and the introduction of new technologies". This suggests that print and digital readings are different and these differences "...will have an effect on the ways

we interpret, understand, and remember what we read” (Bruce 1995 in Burbules 1997). However, Burbules (1997) also recognises that there will be similarities between the two different media – “...indeed, traditional text can be read hypertextually and hypertexts can be read quite traditionally”.

There therefore seems to be no consensus in the literature regarding the similarities and differences of reading print and hypertext. The debate is still raging with further research clearly needed. Pope (2006) proposes that empirical research is the only way forward and that interface design has been particularly neglected. Pope suggests that advocates of hypertext fiction tend to ignore reader response and argues that an understanding of, and focus on, reader response is necessary in order to bring hypertext fiction into the mainstream. Even advocates of hypertext fiction agree that the medium needs “...stable conventions to curb its creators and guide its consumers” (Douglas, 2000). Jensen (2001) concurs with the need for hypertext conventions to assist the reader in making sense of the text and suggests that “... more defined conventions within hyperfiction would also strengthen the appeal to a wider audience”.

Hypertext theorists often claim that the non-linear, flexible nature of hypertext fiction means that it is more enjoyable than traditional linear print fiction which restricts the reader (Rau 2001). However Rau suggests that such grand claims are likely to give readers high expectations, not only leaving them disappointed but also ensuring that they “...miss its achievements and its beauty”. Rau does not refute that it is possible to enjoy hypertext fiction but suggests that readers need guidance in order to appreciate it.

Jensen (2001) suggests that hypertext theorists have prevented the medium entering the mainstream by their domination of the development of hypertext theory combined with their belief that “...poststructuralist aesthetics will be the most appropriate ones for hyperfiction” and “...their crusade against the traditional values of print literature”. Jensen argues that a move away from works based purely on postmodernist ideas (eg, Joyce’s *afternoon, a story* and Moulthrop’s *Victory Garden* (see bibliography, Moulthrop 1992)) will allow hypertext fiction to become more accessible and more appealing to “average” readers.

In summary, the main problems with hypertext fiction identified by this overview are:-

- there is no single, clear, precise definition or vocabulary for describing this area;
- there are no rules, guidelines or conventions for authors and designers of hypertext fiction;
- it appears that average readers struggle to enjoy hypertext fiction and the main interest in the field has been from academics and writers;

- barriers to reader enjoyment are reported to be confusing navigation, unfulfilled expectations, poor interface usability and non-traditional literary structures;
- there is no agreement as to how readers should approach hypertext fiction, in terms of reading processes, in order to enjoy it.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The literature and research on hypertext fiction raises a number of issues which could be creating a barrier to reader enjoyment. These include the user interface, navigation, lack of closure, lack of a coherent story, the cognitive load related to interactivity and the expectations readers bring with them to the experience. This section examines these issues with reference to the available literature.

2.1 The User Interface

Pope (2006) suggests that "...the perceived success or failure of the interface to facilitate navigation and deliver the story has emerged as a highly influential factor in reading enjoyment". Pope is optimistic about the future of hypertext fiction, but only if readers' responses are considered and effective interface design is undertaken. Pope suggests "...we must pay close attention to the interface, because it is clearly a major influence upon readers' responses to the digital book and hypertext fiction".

The difficulty readers experience could be related to the fact that each hypertext fiction essentially has its own distinct interface and conventions for navigation. Pope's study presented participants with various hypertext fictions using different presentation environments and interfaces (eg Storyspace, HTML and Adobe Flash™ technology). Pope's participants found the interfaces messy, confusing and distracting due to obscure or hidden navigation tools, irrelevant multimedia elements and a failure to meet their expectations. Pope concludes that "where the operation of the interface does not follow any set of conventions for interactivity or navigation, the effort of learning the author's particular language of interactivity as well as a new kind of narrative structure is too much". Pope suggests that authors must take the responsibility of guiding readers through the narrative by implementing good interface design and effective navigation tools.

Pope (2009a) suggests that hypertext fiction comprises a mix of narrative, medium and interface schemas, which has the potential to confuse and frustrate readers. Pope argues that readers carry their own experience-based expectations (eg gaming, print reading, web browsing) and that hypertext fiction is unlikely to fit squarely with any of these schemas as often it comprises new narrative structures and new interface elements. Pope suggests that a balance between "newness and familiarity" is required and that, based on the fact that hypertext fiction is a screen-based activity, web conventions are most likely to foster understanding and require less effort on the part of the reader (Pope 2009b).

Pope's empirical research found that users preferred interfaces which follow conventional web design conventions and guidelines and that too much interactivity or on-screen distractions can lessen the enjoyment of the narrative itself. Gee (2001) also conducted empirical research with readers and reported findings consistent with Pope's. Gee suggests that the interface should not "... challenge traditional document design values if it is to be accepted by readers". It would appear that designers of hypertext reading systems, such as Storyspace, have largely ignored these findings (Pope 2006) and created unfamiliar and sometimes difficult to learn interfaces (Gee 2001, Pope 2006). The diversity of interfaces in proprietary hypertext fiction systems (see Table 1.2) are likely to have hindered reading enjoyment as users are required to "learn" a new interface either before or during reading the narrative.

2.2 Navigation/Disorientation

Navigation problems, which lead to disorientation, are a recurring theme in hypertext research. It is interesting to note therefore that in the early days of hypertext research Bernstein suggested that the navigation problem had receded and that "observers" doubted that any such issues "could indeed prove a pervasive threat" (Bernstein 1989, Bernstein 1999). Bernstein further suggests that authors "intentionally disorient readers for artistic effect".

Every participant in Pope's (2006) study reported becoming disoriented and 90% identified it as a serious problem. It is interesting that readers assigned an essentially linear narrative appeared to experience less problems. It seems that disorientation occurs when there is no perceived connection between the source and target node - participants "were easily frustrated when linking seemed baffling, pointless or just random" (Pope 2006). One participant commented "it was so disjointed and I spent so much time trying to work out where I was in the 'book' that I didn't actually take the story in" (Pope 2009a). Schneider (2005) agrees that the apparent freedom hypertext fiction offers readers by allowing them to choose between links can in fact lead to disorientation and distraction due to the extra cognitive processing required.

Kendall (1999) suggests that obscure, uninteresting or hard to find navigation can disrupt the reading experience whereas interesting navigation tools can become a rewarding part of the reading experience. However Gee (2001) reports that "...the navigation systems required for such texts can significantly interfere with readers' ability to derive value or pleasure from the fiction". Pope (2009b) suggests that navigation tools should allow readers to travel freely to any part of the narrative in order to facilitate story comprehension. Pope's participants also expressed a desire for overview tools indicating

the size of the total reading and their progression through the nodes.

Burbules (1997) suggests that many computer users, especially younger ones, use their computers for playing games which has led to "... [a] diminishing capacity to concentrate" and "... [the use of] links without reflecting on them". Burbules believes that the link is often seen as a secondary aspect of hypertext which undermines its importance in shaping what we read and understand. This suggests that hypertext readers need to learn to read links in order to use the information they convey to make more informed choices about navigation.

2.3 Closure

Participants in Pope's (2006) study were frustrated at their inability to find the end of the story and felt that "...without some author-designed endplace, the whole narrative feels as if it is unfinished". Furthermore, Pope's participants expressed their desire for the author to provide closure and it was felt that such closure was lacking in all but one of the hypertext fictions in this study. Pope (2009a) suggests that at this point in the life of hypertext fiction "... a beginning, middle and end would seem to be more likely to engender reader involvement and eventual aesthetic pleasure".

Although authors may not wish to provide readers with a definitive ending, it is important for authors to be aware that readers are likely to be more satisfied when they believe "the work is over rather than merely abandoned" (Kendall, 1999). Repetition of nodes is seen by hypertext theorists as an identifier of closure in hypertext fiction and Kendall agrees that if the reader believes they have read most, if not all, of the available text then they are more likely to feel that the narrative has closure. Kendall proposes elements such as a table of contents, central map or conditional links can assist the reader in finding unread material and therefore lead them to closure.

Douglas (1993) suggests that since many hypertext fictions do not provide a traditional sense of closure, specifically that all the strands encountered in the story have been pulled together into a cohesive ending, readers must find their own sense of closure through a feeling of satisfaction that they have a sufficient understanding of the story for it to be a complete narrative. However, Douglas also suggests that in order to achieve closure, readers must also be convinced of plausibility, coherence and resolution.

2.4 Interactivity

Hypertext theorists suggest that hypertext fiction is profoundly different from print fiction in its use of interactivity. Schneider (2005) refutes this by suggesting that all reading is

interactive and that passive reading simply does not exist – “... the most basic procedures of text understanding itself are thus fundamentally interactive, for no text will ever produce meaning without the reader’s activation of schemata, frames and scripts, or other forms of stored knowledge, such as categories”.

Jensen (2001) suggests that the use of the term interactive to describe a reader’s experience with hypertext fiction exaggerates the power of hypertext fiction and assuming the definition of interaction as “mutual and simultaneous activity on the part of the two participants” (Douglas 2000 p42 in Jensen 2001) is accepted, hypertext fiction is just not interactive. Indeed, Aarseth (1997 in Jensen 2001) criticises the application of the term interactive to hypertext fiction suggesting that “...to declare a system interactive is to endorse it with a magic power”. However it seems that in hypertext theory the word interactive has been given a much broader meaning and is generally regarded as requiring the reader to “... make physical inputs” (Jensen 2001).

Hypertext theory suggests that interaction essentially gives the reader power in that they are able to choose (within the limits defined by the author) their own path through the narrative. However it appears that interactivity must be used wisely as simply providing the reader with numerous, meaningless links to choose from will leave readers feeling powerless (Kendall 1999). Furthermore, readers need to be able make a relevant, cognitive connection between the source and destination text and feel that following the link moves the narrative forward in some way. However, Kendall warns that authors should provide a balance between “continuity and variety” because “a work that always yields exactly what is expected becomes predictable and monotonous, while too many surprises and non sequiturs can lead to confusion or even incomprehensibility”.

Pope’s (2006) results suggest that the interface had a major impact on participants’ enjoyment of the story, either due to being unable to “fathom out the interface” or because of the way the links disrupted the narrative. In this respect, Pope (2009b) suggests that the level of interactivity of a hypertext fiction should not be such that it interferes with an absorbing reading experience. Participants in Pope’s study were often distracted by the interactive elements of the interface at the expense of enjoying the story. Liu (2005) similarly suggests that “hyperlinks distract people from reading and thinking deeply about a single subject”. One participant in Liu’s study noted that “It is hard to concentrate on reading documents on the web. I need to learn how to ignore distracting colourful or blinking graphics.”

Marshall (2004) suggests that readers have a compulsion to click prematurely, thereby ensuring that they do not find the complete story. In addition, Knulst et al (1996) suggest

that "... in multimedia-land people are not encouraged to wait until they know more about a subject before they click on to the next". Marshall (2004) suggests that printed material affords the use of anticipatory gestures, such as getting ready to turn the page, but hypertext fiction removes the potential for such gestures as clicking a link is an all or nothing transaction. Furthermore, Marshall suggests that when readers are confused by what they are reading they simply click a link to more text, rather than apply themselves to the current text in order to understand it better.

DeStefano and LeFevre's (2005) review of existing empirical research suggests that the decision making process forced on hypertext readers by links increases cognitive load which adversely affects performance. Furthermore, they suggest that each link followed potentially interrupts the reading process if the content of the source and target nodes are seemingly unrelated. Weal (2005) suggests that when reading a traditional linear narrative, readers are aware of the rules which require them to read from beginning to end in order that the story will make sense. This enables the author to make assumptions about the knowledge the reader has gained about the plot, characters etc. However, Weal questions whether this is a fair assumption to make about readers of certain styles of hypertext fiction – "...why place the link in the middle of the text if we wish the reader to read all of it?". Conversely, Douglas and Hargadon (2000) suggest that inline links enable immersion in the text, whereas menus of links are likely to distract readers from the text.

Mangen (2008) distinguishes two types of immersion:

- technological - "...created and sustained by the technological features and material devices involved in its display";
- phenomenological - arises from the reader's imagination when interacting with a text.

She suggests that phenomenological immersion (ie getting lost in a book) is not compatible with digital texts due to their intangible nature and the additional cognitive load they require. She proposes that this leads to less focussed reading. Like Marshall (2004), Mangen suggests that such shallow reading is more likely to lead to distraction. Indeed, she argues that we are psychobiologically and phenomenologically predisposed to be attracted to such distractions when the text no longer holds our attention.

Chaouli (2005) points out that hypertext theorists hail interactivity as a good thing which so dramatically changes the relationship between author and reader that the two roles become indistinguishable. Chaouli challenges this claim by suggesting that it is "...empirically implausible and analytically feeble". He suggests it is an attempt by hypertext advocates to support their arguments that hypertext fiction is better than the

book, can enable power to be redistributed equally amongst readers and authors and that it is capable of "...freeing the reader from domination by the author" (Coover in Chaouli 2005). Chaouli suggests that interactivity "... interferes with the unfolding of literature, particularly with writing that means to lead us into fictional worlds". Chaouli suggests that equality between reader and author is undesirable as the uneven distribution of power and communication is necessary for art to occur. He also suggests that hypertext fiction's requirement that readers actively construct the text prevents them from engaging with and becoming immersed in the narrative. Indeed rather than offering readers more choice Chaouli argues that "...increased interactivity entails diminished freedom while reading" because the reader is forced to use their cognitive resources to create meaning, traditionally provided by the author. Chaouli continues that the link choices offered to readers are in fact the author's choices and that the constraints of the text become apparent through the choices that are not offered.

2.5 Reader Expectations

Moulthrop (1991) suggests that "almost by definition, reading hypertext requires more effort and attention than reading linear writing with good contextual clues. If we expect hypertext to do the work of books, we are inviting difficulties."

Douglas and Hargadon (2000) identify how readers bring to the reading experience a set of schemas which guide their expectations of, approach to and understanding of the reading matter. Such schemas can be adapted to the unexpected whilst reading as long as the "...discovery doesn't threaten to subvert the schema entirely, disorienting us" (Douglas and Hargadon 2000). They suggest that readers lack a set of schemas enabling them to enjoy and understand hypertext fiction. This then makes it difficult to enjoy this genre of fiction without experiencing disorientation. Furthermore, Miall and Dobson (2001) identify the fact that "...hypertext has not been modelled on what is known about the process of reading" and suggest that hypertext is unsuited to literary reading as it distracts readers from engagement and absorption with the narrative itself.

2.6 Reading Hypertext Fiction

So how do readers approach hypertext fiction? How should they approach it? Does it require a different kind of reading as predicted by hypertext fiction theorists?

O'Donnell (1998) suggests that "...it takes several generations to get past the point of depending on the old medium for a way to think about the new and to get to the point of exploiting the new medium artfully in its own right". In addition, Cavallo and Chartier (1997) predicted that digital technology would change the way we read.

Liu (2005) suggests that reading behaviours have changed over the last 10 years and that a digital reading behaviour is developing which involves much less in-depth, concentrated reading and an increase in non-linear reading. However, Carusi (2006) suggests that hypertext and linear literary reading are similar in that they both involve “active and engaged reading”. Carusi also points out that traditional texts do not have to be linear and hypertexts do not have to be non-linear.

Higgason (2004) suggests that hypertext fiction may not be so confusing to the reader if they concentrate on the links and pathways, as opposed to just the text presented in each node. In her close reading of Michael Joyce’s *afternoon, a story* (see bibliography, Joyce 1990), Walker (1999) suggests that a single reading of a hypertext fiction is insufficient to gain understanding. Her initial attempt, which incorporated random clicking, led to her abandonment of the text altogether. Only after taking the default path through the story and numerous re-readings was she able to understand the story. Selig (2000) concurs with the notion that multiple readings are a necessity in his paper describing his own close reading of Stuart Moulthrop’s *Victory Garden* (see bibliography, Moulthrop 1992).

Advocates of hypertext fiction applaud the freedom and choice that it provides the reader. However, as Chaouli (2005) points out “...the reader of hypertext has no choice but to choose and thus to construct his or her own narrative.” Chaouli further suggests that hypertext fictions “...are far more interesting to produce than to read”.

Patterson (2000) suggests it is unsurprising that reading hypertext requires a different strategy than reading printed material because the way we read differs even with different types of printed material. She suggests however that this may be due to reader attitudes rather than differences in the texts themselves. In contrast to hypertext theorists’ claims that hypertext fiction enables readers to become active, Patterson argues that all reading is active but suggests that reading hypertext “...requires the reader to make deliberate decisions about which path to take...”.

Despite claiming hypertext fiction flattens the individual roles of reader and author, Dobson (2007) suggests that hypertext theorists have not examined this claim and have provided no evidence for it. Indeed, Dobson’s review of the literature suggests that reading and writing involve distinct experiential and cognitive processes. Dobson’s study is interesting in that participants were required to play the role of both reader and writer. The participants reported the same disorientation and confusion that readers in other studies have reported but were found to use the same writing strategies which they had themselves disliked as readers. Furthermore the participants were far more enthusiastic and open-minded about writing multidirectional texts than they were reading them.

Rau (2001) points out that not all readers want to be authors – indeed, people often read simply for the pleasure of enjoying someone else’s writing – but this does not make them passive.

Some hypertext theorists have likened reading hypertext fiction as akin to a performance. For example, Douglas (in Dobson 2007) suggests that hypertext fiction is “...a dance choreographed by an absent author”. Similarly, Bolter (in Dobson 2007) likens hypertext fiction to “...scripts or musical scores that readers must enact, or perform”. Interestingly, while participants in Dobson’s study did use the performance metaphor, it was in relation to writing multidirectional texts, rather than reading them.

Hypertext theory tends to suggest the need for an “ideal” reader who “... enjoys recognising and playing with post-modern, stylistic elements in an electronic environment. He is a heavy user, who reads very thoroughly and patiently, focusing also on the design, and prefers hyperfictions that first and foremost break with traditional literary discourse” (Jensen 2001). Perhaps hypertext fiction was never intended to become mainstream and was not aimed at the “average” reader (Jensen 2001).

A number of theorists have attempted to identify reader types in the electronic literature domain (Jensen 2001). For example, Riesman (1950 p259 in Jensen 2001) identifies two extreme reader types in the new media domain:-

- inner-directed readers embrace the nuances of hypertext fiction and are likely to enjoy the experimentation and challenge to their expectations;
- outer-directed readers are said to be bound by the reading conventions and practices they have learned from print and would reject anything that strays too far from their expectations.

This early categorisation of readers emerged before hypertext fiction. However it relates to the reading of new media and it is felt that this includes hypertext fiction. Jensen (2001) references Riesman’s work in this context for example.

Riesman’s view of only two types of reader seems rather simplistic and others (eg Slatin 1990 in Jensen 2001) have attempted a more complex categorisation of reader types, and seem to agree that there is a specific type of reader who would be able to, and want to, enjoy hypertext fiction. Jensen (2001) suggests that the “model reader” according to hypertext theory excludes many readers from enjoying hypertext fiction and makes many available hypertext fictions “... virtually unreadable for many people”. Furthermore, Jensen suggests that “...rather few readers are likely to have the necessary competences for appreciating most contemporary online hyperfictions to their fullest”.

Higgason (1999 in Jensen 2001) argues that "...early hypertext theory overstated the liberatory aspects of hypertext as a way to differentiate it from past media while overlooking ways that hypertexts constrain readers". Jensen (2001) suggests that hypertext fiction provides great freedom to navigate whilst, at the same time, decreasing the reader's freedom to imagine. This is an important possibility as it would hinder immersion. However, Miall (1999 in Jensen 2001) suggests that even this increased freedom is limited by the author when designing the links.

2.7 Hypertext Fiction Today

Bernstein (1999) suggests that issues that once led to disorientation became less of a problem as hypertext readers gained experience. It is strange, and perhaps presumptuous, of him to make such a substantial claim in light of the fact that a decade later hypertext fiction readers are still thin on the ground and are unlikely to be experienced. The experienced readers Bernstein makes reference to are likely to be other critics and academics and therefore his dismissal of the navigation problem was perhaps premature and possibly did not take into account the disorientation that might be experienced by the average reader.

Despite the apparent problems of hypertext fiction, it has developed quite considerably in its 20 year existence. Hayles (2007) identifies the move from early works which were largely textual and emphasised the link for navigation, to the multimedia works now available on the web that "... use a wide variety of navigation schemes and interface metaphors that tend to de-emphasise the link".

In his review paper, Jensen (2001) concluded that hypertext theorists are keen to encourage experimentation and postmodernist literary ideals and are less concerned about alienating readers. In this respect, Jensen suggests that there is perhaps a need for two different kinds of hypertext fiction - those "...aimed at highbrow readers" and others which have a more mainstream appeal. Furthermore, Jensen suggests that the appearance of hypertext fiction on the internet will enable both authors and readers to "...see what seems to work in the medium and what not, and this way the Internet promises to loosen the control of literary theory and let the art form develop more through trial and error". Jensen continues "...it is now important to proceed to developing more widely appealing hyperfictions. [...] it is about time that writers try to attract an audience".

Hypertext theorists are aware that the pure form of the art that they envisioned and created appears to be a thing of the past with a proliferation of works on the internet that dilute the original vision through the use of "multimedia gimmicks" and a "...retreat from

radical visions and a return to major elements of the preceding tradition” (Coover 2000 in Jensen 2001).

Jensen (2001) suggests that hypertext fiction has the potential to become more popular and mainstream as “...hypertext theory and poststructuralism’s hold over authors ... weaken[s] when they realise that more spontaneous hyperfictions are actually more original, creative and surprising because they use the medium to fit their own personal whims”.

2.8 Summary

The main points highlighted by the literature review are:-

- it seems to be accepted that the “average” reader appears not to enjoy hypertext fiction;
- hypertext fiction has no guidelines and conventions for interface design, which perhaps exacerbates reader confusion (Douglas 2000, Gee 2001, Jensen 2001, Pope 2006, Pope 2009a);
- complex or confusing navigation appears to disorientate, confuse and frustrate readers (Burbules 1997, Kendall 1999, Gee 2001, Schneider 2005, Pope 2006, Pope 2009a, Pope 2009b);
- many hypertext fictions do not provide a traditional sense of author-created story closure, which can leave readers with a feeling that the narrative is unfinished (Douglas 1993, Kendall 1999, Pope 2006, Pope 2009a);
- the “interactivity” of hypertext fiction can perhaps distract readers from the story (see section 2.4 for a discussion of the validity of the term “interactivity” in this context) (Kendall 1999, Douglas and Hargadon 2000, Jensen 2001, Marshall 2004, Chaouli 2005, DeStefano and LeFevre 2005, Liu 2005, Schneider 2005, Weal 2005, Mangen 2008, Pope 2006, Pope 2009b);
- the expectations and schemas that readers bring to the reading process do not match the hypertext fiction experience thereby making it difficult for readers to enjoy this type of narrative (Moulthrop 1991, Burbules 1997, Kendall 1999, Douglas and Hargadon 2000, Miall and Dobson 2001, Dobson 2007, Hayles 2007, Pope 2009a);
- there is no consensus about the reading processes involved in tackling hypertext fiction, and, indeed, no agreement as to whether the experience is the same as reading print fiction, is completely different, or requires a new hybrid reading process (Moulthrop 1991, Burbules 1997, O’Donnell 1998, Schilit 1999, Walker 1999, Patterson 2000, Selig 2000, Jensen 2001, Rau 2001, Marshall 2003, Higgason 2004, Chaouli 2005, Liu 2005, Carusi 2006, Dobson 2007);
- despite its existence for more than 20 years, hypertext fiction has not gained a mainstream audience (Jensen 2001, Pope 2006).

The list above suggests that, despite its age, hypertext fiction often leaves readers confused, frustrated and unfulfilled. This genre of fiction places new demands on readers who perhaps do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake the task and enjoy it. In essence the literature appears to suggest that a new approach to reading is

required as well as a need for authors and designers to take readers into account when creating hypertext fiction.

Chapter 3 Research Question, Aims, Contribution to Knowledge and Methods

This section outlines the research question and aims of the research before detailing the contribution to knowledge. The section concludes by describing the research and analysis methods used, the reasoning behind the choice of methods and the details of the research undertaken.

3.1 Research question and aim of research

The literature review (see section 2.4) suggests that, although hailed as a good thing by hypertext theorists, the interaction (used here in its broadest sense as discussed in section 2.4) provided by hypertext fiction is distracting, confusing and frustrating for readers. It is unclear if readers want this kind of interactivity when reading for pleasure. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate the different methods of interaction currently found in hypertext fiction on the internet in an effort to understand if readers want to interact with, or control any part of, the narrative or reading experience and, if so, in what ways. The data gathered (ie the feedback from the readers) will hopefully lead to suggestions on how to best implement interaction in order to increase reader enjoyment and give readers what they want.

In this respect, the study attempted to investigate and answer the following questions:

- Do readers want to interact with or control fiction?
- What forms of interaction are distracting and what forms are welcomed by the reader?
- How should the forms of interaction that potentially enhance reader enjoyment be implemented so that they do enhance reader enjoyment?

In an effort to achieve the research aim the study comprised the following stages:

- Participants spent some time reading and interacting with a selection of hypertext fictions on the internet, each presenting different methods of interaction.
- Participants contributed to an online Facebook discussion group to provide their feedback on their hypertext reading experience and their ideas and opinions with regard to how they would like to interact with hypertext fiction.
- Participants completed a questionnaire designed in relation to the findings and analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the discussion group. The questionnaire was aimed at validating the analysis undertaken and quantifying the qualitative data gathered.

3.2 Contribution to knowledge

This research will hopefully benefit designers of hypertext fiction reading applications by

providing them with some insight into designing such applications with usability and the readers' enjoyment in mind. This will add to existing research in this area and facilitate a move towards more usable applications which assist, rather than impede, the ability of readers to enjoy hypertext fiction.

This research will also hopefully provide useful insights into readers' expectations and desires when approaching hypertext fiction, which should enable authors and application designers to create works and applications that help overcome the difficulties readers have so far reported when reading hypertext fiction. This, in turn, could facilitate entry into the mainstream of this form of digital literature and provide reading enthusiasts with an alternative medium to satisfy their thirst for fiction. Furthermore, increased reader interest in hypertext fiction would also benefit authors by enabling their work to reach a wider audience.

Research into reader response, attitude and opinions could also benefit the academic and theoretical hypertext fiction communities by helping them understand why the original vision of early hypertext fiction theorists appears to have failed to materialise from a reader perspective. Ideas, theories and models abound in this community for the production of ever more complex hypertext fiction structures, but the survival of this medium requires its intended audience to find satisfaction, experience enjoyment and want to read the stories it produces.

Chaouli (2005) suggests that research into the problems with hypertext fiction has a wider application in that it can provide insights into what it is about printed literature that grabs and maintains reader attention.

Rau (2001) suggests that despite the fact that hypertext fiction is a relatively young phenomena, it appears to be highly theorised – perhaps, she suggests, over theorised. In this respect, it appears from the few empirical studies undertaken that the reality does not always bear out the theory. Therefore this study can add to the existing body of research which attempts to investigate the theories put forward. Furthermore, Jensen (2001) suggests "...it is dangerous to base directions for hyperfiction aesthetics on theories about what is fitting for the medium, because hyperfiction then risks becoming too artificial, forced and out of touch with readers".

Table 3.1 summarises the contributions to knowledge and the potential beneficiaries.

| CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE | BENEFICIARY |
|--|---|
| Provide insight into the elements and features that facilitate reader enjoyment | Hypertext fiction application designers |
| Provide information related to reader expectations and desires | Authors |
| Provide the academic community with an insight into the reality of reading hypertext fiction | Academic community |

Table 3.1 Contribution to knowledge and beneficiaries

3.3 Research Design

The research design provides a framework for the study and guides the collection and analysis of the data collected. There are numerous research designs available and the categorisation and labelling of these varies considerably depending on the source of the information. It would therefore be largely impossible to consider all types of research design. In this respect, I will simply consider the three main categories (Ali 1998): exploratory, descriptive and causal. These were chosen in order to explore a range of designs offering the potential for the use of different approaches, methods and results. The characteristics and methods of the three designs (Ali 1998) are summarised in Table 3.2 followed by a brief description of each.

| RESEARCH DESIGN | CHARACTERISTICS | METHODS |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Exploratory | Flexible Versatile Informal structure Small scale Tentative findings Problem unclear | Interviews Focus groups Prototypes Think aloud techniques |
| Descriptive | Tests specific hypotheses More rigid than exploratory Formal structure Large scale Well understood problem | Observation Questionnaires Interviews |
| Causal | Structured Controlled Clearly defined problem | Field experiment Laboratory experiment |

Table 3.2 Characteristics and methods of description, exploratory and causal research designs

Exploratory research is useful at the early stage of research into topics which have not been clearly defined (Philips and Pugh 1987, Webb 1992, Ghauri et al 1995). This type of research is unlikely to provide definitive conclusions; instead it can provide insights, define terms and clarify problems in order that more precise hypotheses can be developed. Essentially, it can “uncover the salient variables” which exist in the environment under investigation (Webb 1992).

Descriptive research often follows exploratory studies and aims to answer "...the five basic W questions: who, what, why, when, where" (Grimes and Schulz 2002). It aims to describe behaviours or phenomena without influencing them in any way and to provide an "accurate and valid representation" (Ali 1998) of variables.

Causal research is used to measure the effect of one variable on another; essentially it aims to establish "cause and effect" relationships through the use of statistical methods (Cui 2005). This approach involves carefully controlled and designed field or laboratory experiments where independent variables are manipulated in order to view the effects on a dependent variable.

Based on these brief descriptions, this research appears to fit best with a combination of the descriptive and exploratory designs. The descriptive element arises from the opinions, ideas, attitudes and feedback of the participants. The exploratory nature of the research is related to the fact that, although interaction in hypertext fiction is seen as an advantage by hypertext theorists, very little, if any, research has focussed solely on reader response to and opinions of such interaction. Therefore the study aims to explore this area and perhaps provide material on which to base further empirical research.

3.4 Research Methods

Qualitative data provides rich, interesting, personal accounts and opinions related to meaning and experience. This can be very time consuming to transcribe and analyse and it is difficult to generalise from findings. In contrast quantitative data can be analysed precisely and fairly easily using various statistical measures but often lacks important contextual data. Some combination of methods are likely to provide a more complete account of research findings and therefore a mixed approach to data gathering has been taken in this research.

The methods identified in Table 3.2 as appropriate for exploratory and descriptive research will now be considered and justification for rejection or selection of the methods given.

3.4.1 Interviews

Rugg and Petre (2004) suggest that "for the early stages of data collection interviews can be useful for getting insights into the topic". There are many decisions to be made if conducting an interview – Table 3.3 lists some these.

| DECISIONS/QUESTIONS |
|--|
| Individual or group interview Face-to-face or online or telephone Structure, semi-structured or unstructured Open or closed questions or both What questions should be asked Where should the interviews be held How will data be recorded |

Table 3.3 Questions/decisions to be made when conducting interviews

Interviews are useful for gaining insight into individual's experiences and can therefore be used to gather rich qualitative data. However for this research the use of interviews has been rejected (see section 3.5 for more detail).

3.4.2 Focus groups

Gathering qualitative data can be time-consuming, expensive and logistically challenging. However I believe these issues can be overcome by the use of a private Facebook group where participants can gather at their own convenience to air their views and comment on those of other participants.

Pope (2006) gathered data using discussion groups but his method is somewhat different to the proposed approach of this study. Pope's method involved physically gathering participants together for face-to-face discussions and was used as a final data gathering exercise to follow up previously identified issues. In contrast participants in this study met virtually and their online discussion forms the primary data for this research.

3.4.3 Prototype

Prototypes could be used in this research to test the effects of various navigation/interaction designs on reader enjoyment. However any prototypes built would be limited by the researcher's ideas for interaction and these would clearly be influenced by the types of interaction already observed whilst investigating this topic. In this respect, it is unlikely that prototypes could be built that would add significantly to the range of interaction types already available. Therefore, it is felt that using this approach would take significant time and effort to, essentially, duplicate work that has already been done by existing authors/designers. Therefore use of a prototype has been rejected.

3.4.4 Think Aloud Technique

Pope (2006) used a think-aloud reporting technique to gather qualitative data. It is felt that this method would not be appropriate for this research as it could distract participants from their interaction with the hypertext fictions, thereby making any results inconclusive as to whether the interaction style itself was distracting or the means of data collection.

3.4.5 Observation

Observation can provide interesting, quantitative data, but would require specialist equipment (eg, video recorder, eye-tracking or logging software). Gardiner (2003) used automated logging to gather information related to reading times, screens visited, mouse activity and links selected. Observation could be too intrusive when studying such a personal task as reading for pleasure and therefore would not be suitable to gather the rich qualitative data required by this research.

3.4.6 Questionnaires

Rugg and Petre (2004) reveal how questionnaires are extremely easy to get wrong – if the wrong questions are asked or questions are poorly designed then the data will be of little value. In this respect, Marshall (1997) identifies some simple guidelines including use of simple language, a logical and consistent journey through the questions and a usable and attractive design which can facilitate a successful questionnaire. For this research it is felt that the risk of asking the wrong questions when gathering the qualitative data would be too high and therefore a questionnaire will not be used for this part of the research. In addition, response rates for questionnaires are often very low and so may not be suitable as the main method of data collection. However questionnaires can be useful for ancillary data collection, to gather relevant facts about the participants themselves or to get feedback on a task based activity that participants have undertaken. In this respect, a questionnaire will be designed based on the analysis of the initial qualitative data gathered in an attempt to corroborate and amplify the qualitative findings.

3.5 Rationale for using online research

The decision to conduct an online group discussion, rather than undertake individual interviews, is a practical one. Interviews would be far more time-consuming to plan and carry out, and lack the convenience and freedom participants have to join the discussion at a time and place that suits them. Interviews also require considerable skills on the part of the researcher, whereas the approach taken in this study required only moderator skills (ie stimulate discussion, manage conflicts etc). Gordon (1999:109) states that “groups have the potential to be positive or negative” – it is an important moderator role to ensure participants have an enjoyable and positive experience.

Gordon (1999:77) suggests that a group discussion provides “...breadth in terms of the range of behaviours and attitudes between individuals attending the group” whereas individual interviews “...provide more detailed information of the attitudes and behaviour of the individual.” Gordon (1999:78) also suggests that group discussion can be less intimidating for participants and allows them to interact in such a way that their views and

opinions can be shared, debated and grown and that individual interviews are often used where the subject is sensitive – this is not an issue for this research.

An advantage of gathering qualitative data using an online discussion group is that the asynchronous nature of the environment will give participants time to gather their thoughts, construct their responses and reflect on these before posting. This eliminates the need for participants to have to think on their feet and react immediately. It is also possible that some participants may find it easier to contribute in this type of environment, as opposed to being face-to-face with others.

James and Busher (2009:14-16) identify a number of pros and cons of conducting research online (see Table 3.4).

| PROS | CONS |
|--|--|
| Cheaper | Asynchronous so researcher may need to work hard to maintain interest and stimulate discussion |
| Ability to gather together participants that might not otherwise be possible | Could take days/weeks to gather data and for participants to respond |
| Potential for richer response due to thinking time | Greater possibility of non-response |
| No need to transcribe data (copy and paste) | No visual or verbal cues |
| Eliminates/reduces research/participant effects | Easier for participants to ignore requests for further information |
| May enable participants to be more open and honest | Participants can hide their identity |
| | More difficult to guarantee confidentiality |

Table 3.4 Pros and cons of online research

There is a suggestion that participation in an online community provides a more natural setting than traditional research environments (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Mann and Stewart 2000 in James and Busher 2009:21). Furthermore, it is suggested that it may be easier for shy participants to take part (Rheingold 1994 in James and Busher 2009:26) and that “...people can’t ‘see’ the boundaries that divide them, so will tend to participate more equally” (Kiesler 1994 in James and Busher 2009:52). However online interactions mean that identity can be ambiguous in that people may not reveal themselves in terms of the views they actually hold. This can be an issue for researchers as they need to accept such views as reality as they have no access to the information usually found in face-to-face meetings (James and Busher 2009:71-72). In addition, James and Busher (2009:73) point out that “... the lack of physical presence makes it difficult to verify misrepresentation and fabrication”. However this may not necessarily be a disadvantage of online research in that “...the ability for participants to mask their identity may lead them to be more active

in voicing or disclosing their opinions” (James and Busher 2009:75).

3.6 Participants

Participants were recruited by approaching already established forums, reading groups and colleagues (see Appendix D – Participant Recruitment). 20 individuals expressed interest in the study and willingness to help but only 12 actually took part in the discussion group. It was perceived as important for this study that volunteers have an interest in fiction in order that they have established views as to what they expect from and enjoy about the reading experience.

Gordon (1999:77) suggests that in the UK the usual number of participants in a group discussion is seven to nine. Rossman and Rallis (1998:134) agree with this, suggesting between seven and ten participants. These numbers are based on discussions where participants are physically in the same place and do not relate to online asynchronous discussions where a number of practical or logistical issues are eliminated. For example an online discussion group negates the issues of venue size, participant availability and the potential inability of all participants to be heard in larger groups. In this respect it was felt that this study would benefit from and could cater for a larger number of participants.

3.7 Selected Hypertext Fictions

The hypertext fictions were chosen from those currently freely available on the internet. Authors were contacted and permission received to use the works in this research. An attempt was made to select works which present a range of interaction styles (see Appendix C – Hypertext fictions used in the research).

3.8 Discussion Group

Participants were asked to take part in a discussion in a private Facebook group in order to gather qualitative data related to their enjoyment of, and experience with, the selected hypertext fictions. This is important as the study aims to understand, rather than predict, participants’ attitude to interaction with hypertext fiction. It was decided to allow the discussion to flow freely with no guidelines as to what should be discussed in order to facilitate a broad discussion and ensure that participants were not discouraged from voicing certain opinions or feelings. This approach is consistent with the funnelling approach used by Schlesinger et al (1992) whereby participants’ interests were initially encouraged before the moderator intervened to focus attention on the research interest. The moderator did not introduce topics for discussion, merely identified and highlighted particular topics that participants had previously raised.

Prior to joining the discussion group, participants were sent an information sheet (see

Appendix E – Participant Information) and instruction sheet (see Appendix F - Participant Instructions) providing information related to the objectives of the research to facilitate useful discussion. The guidelines were not too restrictive so participants were free to make useful or interesting contributions to the discussion. Participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that all opinions were valid and valued. Participants were reminded to act respectfully towards other participants and direct contact with the researcher should be sought in the event of any issues.

3.9 Questionnaire

Subsequent to the online discussion and analysis of the data, a questionnaire was designed and used in an attempt to validate the analysis undertaken and also to quantify the qualitative data gathered. The questionnaire needed to provide quantitative data and therefore used closed questions, some of which used a scale to obtain measurements and enable the data to be quantitatively analysed. The questionnaire was hosted at www.surveymonkey.com which offers free services, including collection of results. A link to the questionnaire was sent to participants via the facebook discussion group.

3.10 Analysis Methodology

Grounded theory is a qualitative analysis research methodology that facilitates the generation of theory from the data and therefore ensures that the theory is relevant to the research undertaken (Glaser and Strauss, 1968:3). In the context of hypertext fiction a grounded theory approach enables a move away from previous theorising based on assumptions which, in reality, have little fit with the empirical findings of research undertaken. Hypertext fiction research and theory has perhaps suffered from what Glaser and Strauss (1968:1f) describe as "...overemphasis ...on the verification of theory, and a resultant de-emphasis on the prior step of discovering what concepts and hypotheses are relevant for the area that one wishes to study...".

"Pure" grounded theory advocates the development of theory from the data alone. In reality, this is very difficult in that the researcher is likely to already be aware of existing theoretical concepts on the subject and would find it very difficult to ignore these during analysis. In this respect, an attempt has been made to identify emergent categories from the data rather than make the data fit existing categories. However it should be borne in mind that my preconceived ideas and the knowledge I have gained from the literature search could have impacted and influenced my analysis.

Thematic analysis as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) was largely followed to analyse and categorise the data. Braun and Clarke suggest that thematic analysis is an ideal

method for new researchers as it provides core skills that can form a firm foundation for branching out into other methods of qualitative analysis and that it “provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data”. However Ryan and Bernard (2000) suggest that, rather than being a method, thematic analysis is a process used within analytic methods such as grounded theory. It is within this second context that I have used thematic analysis.

3.11 Summary

This section began by outlining the research question and the aims of the research. In this respect a number of contributions to knowledge were discussed and authors, designers and academics identified as potential beneficiaries. The focus then turned to an examination of the possible research designs with this research being categorised as a combination of exploratory and descriptive research. Methods and data-gathering techniques appropriate to such designs were discussed and the rationale for selecting certain methods over others was presented. The chapter continued with a full description of the research and all its elements before concluding by outlining the proposed analysis methodology.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Findings

This chapter initially provides details of the data gathered and outlines the steps taken to analyse it. Data extracts are provided as examples and data is presented in a graphical format where appropriate to aid understanding and enhance the written descriptions. The analysis findings are then examined with reference to existing research. Subsequently the questionnaire is described and the results presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

4.1 Analysis

The 12 participants posted a total of 62 messages in 5 discussion topics (relating to the 5 hypertext fictions). Only 4 participants contributed to all 5 topics. Table 4.1 shows how many participants contributed to each of the discussion topics and how many posts each topic received.

| HYPertext FICTION | # PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTING | # POSTS |
|--|-----------------------------|---------|
| <i>The Dionaea House</i> (see bibliography, Heisserer 2004) | 12 | 15 |
| <i>Inanimate Alice</i> (see bibliography, Pullinger and Joseph 2005) | 10 | 17 |
| <i>The Pillow of Jason Pettus</i> (see bibliography, Pettus 2000) | 9 | 11 |
| <i>American Ghosts</i> (see bibliography, Bigelow 2006) | 11 | 11 |
| <i>The Rite of Spring</i> (see bibliography, Brooke 1992) | 5 | 8 |

Table 4.1 Participant contributions and number of posts for each discussion topic

Thematic analysis was used to analyse participant responses using the phases outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) (see Table 4.2):

| PHASE | DESCRIPTION |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Familiarisation with the data |
| 2 | Generating initial codes |
| 3 | Searching for themes |
| 4 | Reviewing themes |
| 5 | Defining and naming themes |
| 6 | Producing the report |

Table 4.2 The 6 phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Data transcription was unnecessary as the data was copied directly from Facebook for use in the analysis phase of the research. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) advice, multiple readings of the data were carried out before any formal coding of the data was

undertaken.

Initially, open coding was applied to all of the data. This involved multiple readings through the data, highlighting interesting points and associating them with concepts. There was no attempt at this stage to create consistent codes – the aim was simply to identify the important or interesting parts of the discussion. This process resulted in 306 level 1 codes with which to move forward to further analysis. Table 4.3 provides an example of level 1 codes applied to a single participant post in *The Dionaea House* discussion topic. The table displays a unique identifier for the post plus colour-coded code/extract associations.

| ID | LEVEL 1 CODE | PARTICIPANT COMMENTS |
|-------|---|--|
| DH1LF | <p>Enjoyed story</p> <p>Reader liked filling gaps/using imagination</p> <p>Liked linearity</p> <p>book comparison – liked clicking on 'next' as similar to turning page</p> <p>frustrated at no length indication</p> <p>book comparison – disliked not being able to put it down and pick it up again easily</p> <p>worried about losing place in story if come back later</p> <p>liked becoming absorbed</p> <p>liked dates acted as orientation device</p> <p>book comparison – accidentally had partial length indication due to dates on messages, which relieved some frustration above</p> | <p>I've just read the Dionaea House story and really liked it. I liked the format of it being messages between people, and it sort of fell somewhere between a story being told in the first and third person, as you felt you knew Mark because you are reading his thoughts and feelings. It made me feel like i knew what Mark w...as thinking and what was happening, but whereas a story usually describes thoughts going around someones head i imagined these for myself-especially when he was in the house sending the text messages. I liked the fact that you clicked 'next' for the next message-it was similar to turning the pages in a book, so i still had the sense of anticipation that you get when you are absorbed in a 'physical' book turning the pages. As i didn't know how long the story would be, i had a slight nigggle at the back of my mind of what if i wanted to stop reading and go and do something? With a physical book you can just put it down and pick it up, so the idea of logging back on to the link and finding where i'd left off was slightly off-putting. As i b...ecame absorbed in the events though i didn't really think about it, and the fact that the title of the story told you the messages were sent over a certain date period, you could sort of work out at what point you were at by reference to the date on the part you were reading-a bit like being able to see how many pages are left in a physical book.</p> |

Table 4.3 Example of level 1 coding

The level 2 axial coding undertaken comprised grouping the level 1 codes into themes. A quantitative measure was assigned to each theme in order to gain some insight into the degree of participant feelings/experience. In this respect, each level 2 theme identified was assigned a number between 1 and 5 relating to the following scale:

1. Much worse/hated

2. Worse/disliked
3. Same/neutral
4. Better/liked
5. Much better/loved

Each measure has two elements: the first element applies if the theme includes a comparison with some other media and the second element applies if the theme relates to the experience of hypertext fiction itself. It was felt that this quantitative measure would be useful in devising hypotheses and questions for the questionnaire.

Figure 4.1 shows the number of level 2 codes assigned to each of the quantitative measures and clearly shows that overall most comments were negative.

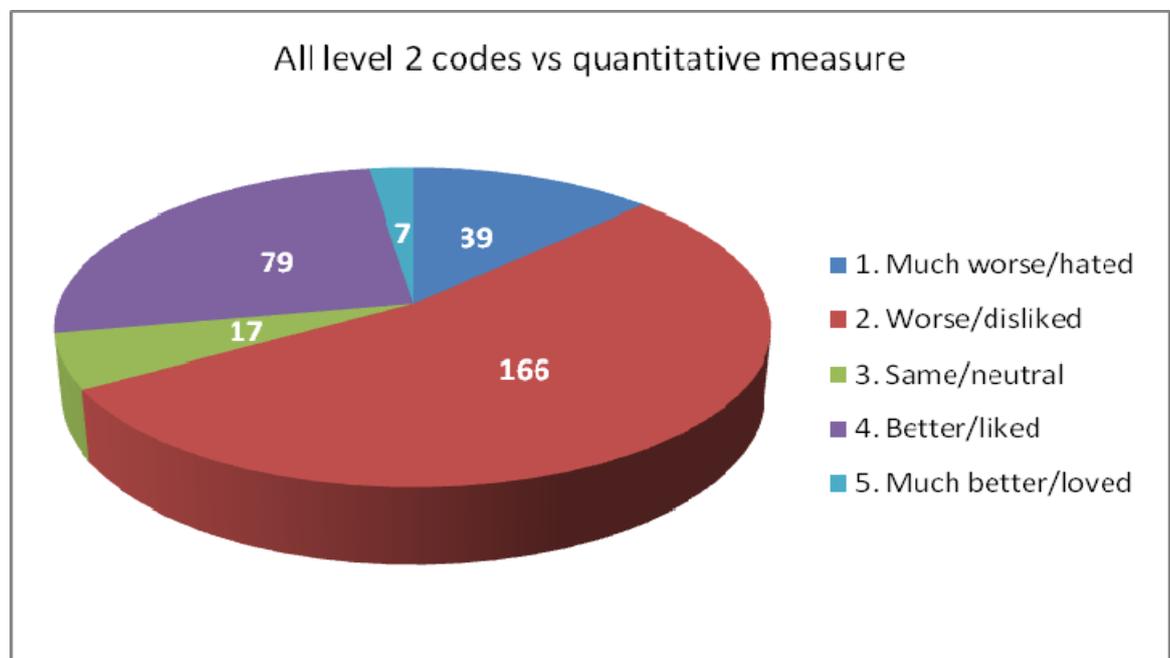


Figure 4.1 Pie chart showing level 2 codes vs. quantitative measure

Figure 4.2 shows how each hypertext fiction fared on the quantitative scale. Again it is clear that each hypertext fiction received more negative than positive codes, except *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* which received more than 50% positive comments. *The Dionaea House* and *Inanimate Alice* received far more comments than the other works. This could be explained by the fact that these were the first two works presented and participants were keen and had the time to participate at this time.

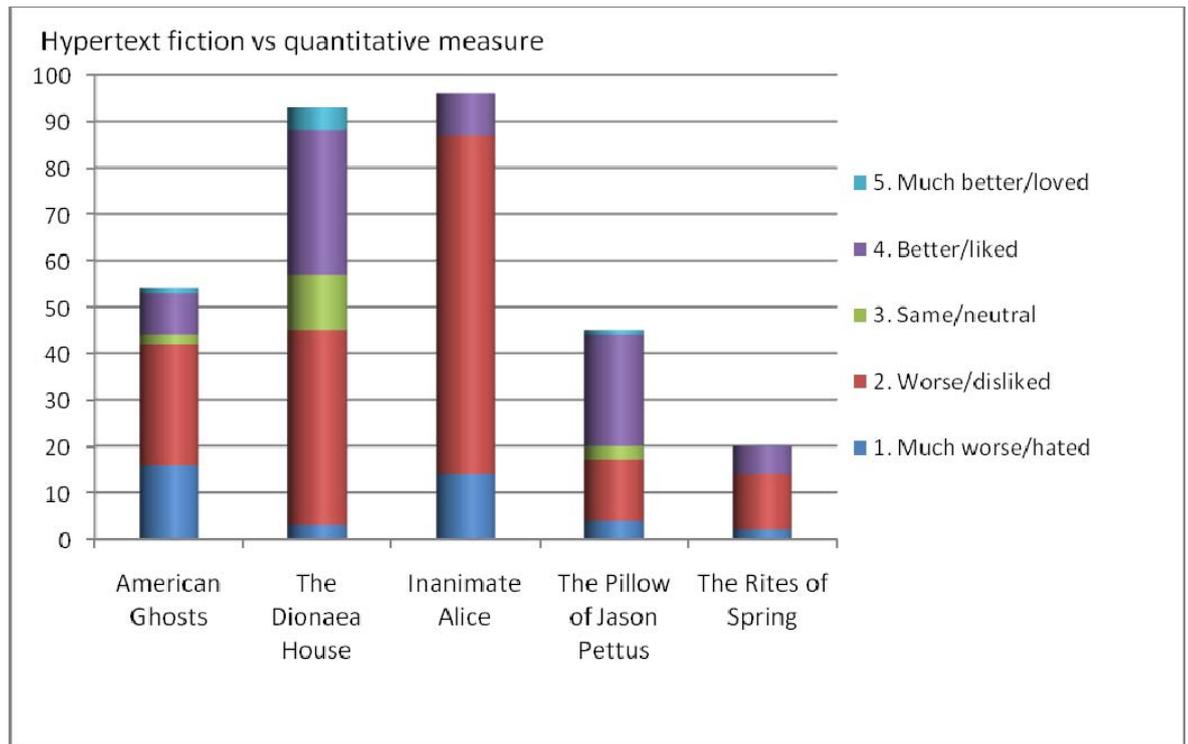


Figure 4.2 Stacked cylinder chart showing hypertext fictions vs. quantitative measure

On completion of the level 2 coding, a further review, grouping and categorisation was undertaken to create level 3 themes. This produced the hierarchy of themes and sub-codes displayed in Table 4.4. An extract from the level 2 and 3 coding can be seen in Table 4.5. Discussion of the themes and sub-codes follows in section 4.2.

| LEVEL 3 THEMES | ASSOCIATED LEVEL 2 CODES |
|------------------------------|---|
| Active participation in head | Distractions Engaging Imagination (allowed) Imagination (prevented) Immersion |
| Anticipation | Page turning |
| Bookmarking | Bookmarking |
| Control | General control Interaction (gaming) Interaction (multimedia) Pace Repetitive content |
| Design | Concept Design Length Length indicator Usability |
| Disorientation | Irrelevant links Orientation device |
| Expectations | Expectations |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Narrative | Closure Plot Writing style |
| Navigation | Interaction (navigation) Links (embedded) Links (hidden) Links (too many) Links (usability) Map Repetitive links |
| Other media comparison | Book comparison Film comparison |
| Overall experience | Overall experience |
| Possible paths | Linearity Multiple paths |
| Possible perspectives | Multiple perspectives Single perspective |

Table 4.4 Hierarchy of level 3 themes and level 2 sub-codes produced from analysis

| LEVEL 1 CODE | RAW TEXT DATA THAT INSPIRED THE LEVEL 1 CODE | LEVEL 2 CODE | LEVEL3 |
|---|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Enjoyed story | I've just read the Dionaea House story and really liked it. I liked the format of it being messages between people, and it sort of fell somewhere between a story being told in the first and third person, as you felt you knew Mark because you are reading his thoughts and feelings. It made me feel like i knew what Mark w...as thinking and what was happening | Overall experience: 5 | Overall experience |
| Reader liked filling gaps/using imagination | but whereas a story usually describes thoughts going around someones head i imagined these for myself- especially when he was in the house sending the text messages | Imagination (allowed): 4 | Active participation in head |
| Liked linearity | I liked the fact that you clicked 'next' for the next message | Click next: 4 | Anticipation |
| book comparison - liked clicking on 'next' as similar to turning page | it was similar to turning the pages in a book, so i still had the sense of anticipation that you get when you are absorbed in a 'physical' book turning the pages | Book comparison: 3 | Other media comparison |
| book comparison - liked clicking on 'next' as similar to turning page | it was similar to turning the pages in a book, so i still had the sense of anticipation that you get when you are absorbed in a 'physical' book turning the pages | Page turning: 4 | Anticipation |

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| frustrated at no length indication | As i didn't know how long the story would be, i had a slight niggle at the back of my mind of what if i wanted to stop reading and go and do something? | Length indicator (none): 2 | Design |
| book comparison - disliked not being able to put it down and pick it up again easily | With a physical book you can just put it down and pick it up | Book comparison: 2 | Other media comparison |
| book comparison - disliked not being able to put it down and pick it up again easily | With a physical book you can just put it down and pick it up | Bookmarking (none): 2 | Bookmarking |
| worried about losing place in story if come back later | so the idea of logging back on to the link and finding where i'd left off was slightly off-putting. | Book comparison: 2 | Other media comparison |
| worried about losing place in story if come back later | so the idea of logging back on to the link and finding where i'd left off was slightly off-putting. | Bookmarking (none): 2 | Bookmarking |
| liked becoming absorbed | As i b...ecame absorbed in the events though i didn't really think about it | Engaging: 4 | Active participation in head |
| liked dates acted as orientation device | and the fact that the title of the story told you the messages were sent over a certain date period, you could sort of work out at what point you were at by reference to the date on the part you were reading | Length indicator (partial): 4 | Design |
| book comparison - accidentally had partial length indication due to dates on messages, which relieved some frustration above | a bit like being able to see how many pages are left in a physical book. | Length indicator (partial):4 | Design |
| book comparison - accidentally had partial length indication due to dates on messages, which relieved some frustration | a bit like being able to see how many pages are left in a physical book. | Book comparison: 3 | Other media comparison |

| | | | |
|-------|--|--|--|
| above | | | |
|-------|--|--|--|

Table 4.5 Example of levels 2 and 3 coding

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Active Participation in Head

Figure 4.3 shows how the 42 comments in this theme were assigned to the quantitative measure and Figure 4.4 shows the split between the level 2 sub-codes. These charts show that the majority of comments for this theme were negative.

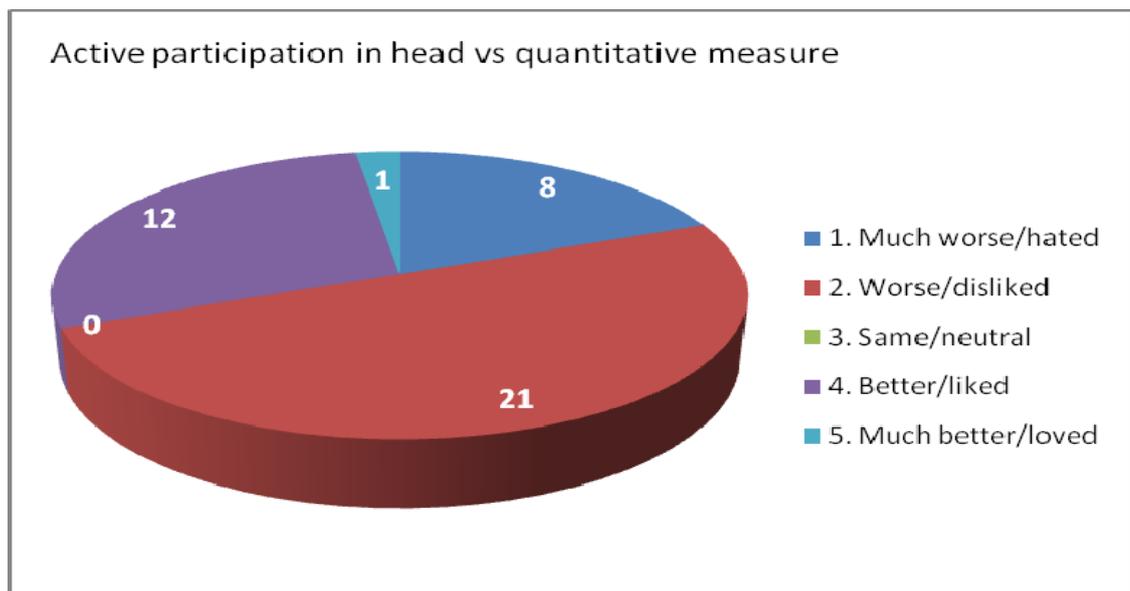


Figure 4.3 Pie chart showing active participation in head theme vs. quantitative measure

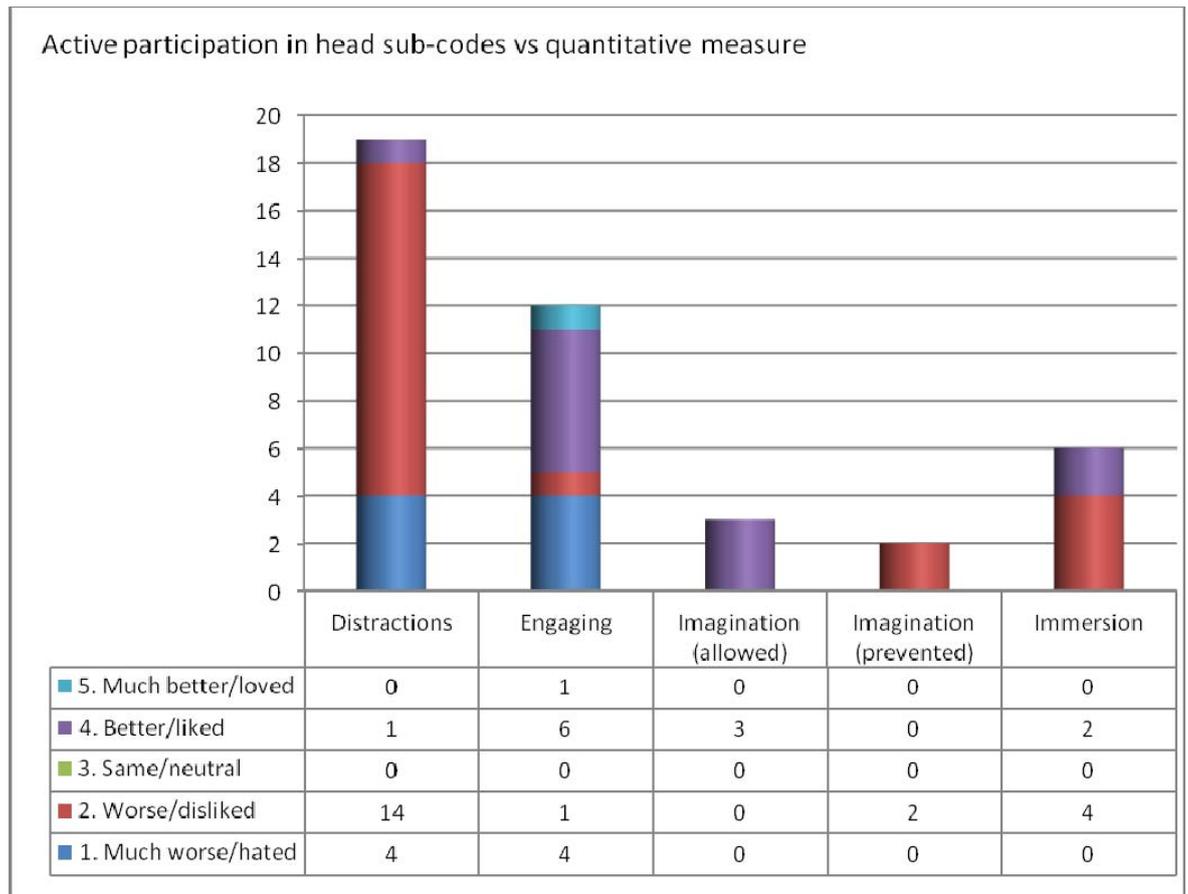


Figure 4.4 Stacked cylinder chart showing active participation in head sub-codes vs. quantitative measure

Readers felt the multimedia and gaming elements were extremely intrusive and prevented absorption in the story and use of imagination. The vast amount of multimedia used in *Inanimate Alice* and *American Ghosts* proved too distracting and gave the readers the impression that there was nothing left to their imagination. This supports Mangen’s (2008) suggestion that phenomenological immersion is not suited to hypertext fiction due to the extra cognitive load it places on readers (see section 2.4). Readers were more complimentary about *The Dionaea House* as the distractions were absent and allowed them to use their imagination and become engaged in the story. It would seem that less is more with regard to combining hypertext fiction and multimedia or gaming.

Existing studies (Liu 2005, Pope 2006) have found multimedia elements to be distracting and my data reinforces these findings. All of the participants who read *Inanimate Alice* and 81% of those who read *American Ghosts* disliked the animations, sound and video, finding them annoying, distracting and intrusive. Many resorted to turning off the sound when reading *Inanimate Alice*. One participant’s frustration is clear: “...I found the pictures, animations and sounds rather distracting. I actually had to turn the volume off, as the mobile phone noises were driving me mad”. Interestingly two participants, who disliked the multimedia in *Inanimate Alice*, also felt that it added to the experience:

“Although i didn't particularly enjoy the sound and pictures accompanying the text, it definitely [sic] added a lot to the atmosphere and description of the story” and “...the background pictures do help the story as does the music”. This suggests that readers are not completely averse to multimedia, just to the way it is presented in *Inanimate Alice* and *American Ghosts*. Other comments support this idea: “...I think pictures and music can be used as illustrations are in printed books but between text and very brief to help portray the imagery the text is conveying “ and “...It's not that they can't work together. If done well it would be a great experience neither book nor game nor film, but something of each. In order for the text, images, animations etc to add to the experience, it needs to be seamless”. It would seem that both *Inanimate Alice* and *American Ghosts* place too much emphasis on multimedia at the expense of the story. Indeed, one participant commented “...Like seasoning on your food it has to be used sparingly though or it can quickly become overpowering“.

In an extension to existing knowledge about the use of multimedia elements my data shows that in some instances, readers actually encourage the use of multimedia. When discussing *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*, two participants felt that their experience would have been enhanced by audio or visual material despite having objected to such features in the other hypertext fictions. This work is much more text heavy than *American Ghosts* and *Inanimate Alice* and the call for multimedia might indicate a desire to be distracted away from so much text. Perhaps the readers were more easily able to “find the story” with *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* and felt able to cognitively tolerate additional material. Neither participant was overly enthralled by the plot of *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* so maybe multimedia would have enhanced their experience. This suggests the story is important to readers and that multimedia elements are best implemented in hypertext fictions where the author has initially paid attention to the story. Multimedia elements should add to the story, not be the whole story or take over the whole experience so that the reader becomes overwhelmed.

Readers found the embedded links used in *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* distracting. One reader remarked “...I also couldn't resist the temptation of clicking the links before the end of the page...”. This is consistent with Marshall's (2004) suggestion that readers have a compulsion to click before they have finished reading (see section 2.4). This essentially prevented readers becoming engaged with the story.

4.2.2 Anticipation

Anticipation was identified as a category but only in relation to *The Dionaea House*. All comments were positive and related to the “page-turning” nature of this work. This piece

was largely linear providing readers with next and previous links which they equated with turning the pages of a physical book – “...[I] found [I] wanted to carry on to next email like you would with pages in a book to find out what happened next”.

4.2.3 Bookmarking

A major frustration for participants was the inability to bookmark. Only 2 of the 10 extracts were positive and both related to *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*, which allowed conventional web bookmarking and enabled identification of previously followed links. Readers felt these features allowed them to return to the story later. The lack of bookmarking facilities left participants feeling that their freedom to read at their own convenience was inhibited. They felt forced to read from beginning to end in one sitting without knowing how long this would take. Participants found it very difficult to resume where they left off and made negative comparisons with traditional books in this respect.

The data suggests that this issue could prevent future encounters with hypertext fiction and therefore it is important for designers and authors to provide bookmarking facilities and to ensure that readers are easily able to identify what they have previously read.

4.2.4 Control

Inanimate Alice received many negative comments related to gaming. Participants disliked the gaming elements in general but were particularly frustrated by the lack of control in terms of being forced to play the games once they were encountered. When given the option to opt out of the games, all participants did so. One reader commented “...the fact that you are forced to take part in games and wait for the next section restricts the readers autonomy and makes it less enjoyable..”. Some readers failed to see this piece as fiction and felt that the gaming elements were inappropriate – “...if I wanted to play games I would go to a games site...”. Others did not completely dismiss the combination of gaming and fiction but felt that it needed to be presented in a more intuitive manner and “...needs to be built in as an integral part of the story otherwise it becomes an irritating distraction”. One reader suggested that for such a partnership to be successful “...its got to be done skilfully and be tightly bound into the context of the story for adults, say helping a sleuth solve the mystery in a murder mystery story”.

The multimedia elements also caused frustration, providing only negative comments, in relation to both *Inanimate Alice* and *American Ghosts*. The interactions were generally seen as pointless and failed to give the readers the control they would have liked - “...I think the difficulties I had with this piece was the lack of choice. You couldn't turn the music off”. Another reader highlighted how the experience was different from reading a traditional book and saw this as affecting the experience in a negative way – “In a ‘normal’

book you can skim bits and the fact that you are forced to ... wait for the next section restricts the reader's autonomy and makes it less enjoyable".

The pace of reading or presentation of text adversely affected reader enjoyment. Readers disliked the lack of control over pace as well as the slow transition of text with *Inanimate Alice* – "...when I read I like to be in control of wen [sic] I turn the page not wait till im [sic] told". Again comparisons with "normal" reading were made: "...This made it unlike a normal reading experience where you can read as fast or slow as you like, which preoccupied and irritated me". A single comment related to pace was positive: "I preferred [*American Ghosts*] to *Inanimate Alice* in that the pace of it was quicker".

The control theme data appears to provide a direct answer to the first research question: do readers want to interact with or control fiction? Readers do want to control fiction and certainly want more control than the hypertext fictions presented allowed them. They were highly frustrated and often felt that control had been completely taken away from them. In an effort to explain the frustration he felt, one reader suggested "...user interaction is about largely giving the reader choice and control. The interaction here generally does neither...".

4.2.5 Design

Participants liked the concepts behind *Inanimate Alice*, *American Ghosts* and *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*. These three hypertext fictions were the least "book-like" and this therefore suggests that readers are not averse to new reading experiences.

Participants disliked some of the visual design aspects of the hypertext fictions which, in some instances, forced them to stop reading – "... I cannot read it, not without straining my eyes". Designers and authors need to consider such issues when designing their work as poor design can alienate readers before they even encounter the story.

It would appear that readers want something quick and concise when reading online, especially if they are forced to read an entire work in one sitting. *American Ghosts* was praised for being short whilst *Inanimate Alice* was thought to be too long.

Consistent with Pope's (2009b) findings, the participants expressed frustration when the hypertext fiction provided no indication of its length. They felt this was an important omission because it is vital they know the size of the undertaking before committing. When discussing *The Dionaea House* one reader commented: "...I didn't enjoy reading it at first and felt trapped wondering how long it was going to go on...". *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* assisted readers in this respect with a "cheat page" which allowed them to assess

its length. Interestingly, although considered extremely useful in determining the length of the piece, one reader remarked that "...It wouldn't have worked nearly so well if the cheat page was more obvious though, as there would then be the temptation to use it as a contents page and follow the links sequentially according to the order on the cheat page". This suggests that a "content-style" length indicator could perhaps take something away from the hypertext fiction experience and is perhaps therefore not the best solution to this problem. Another reader gave up reading *The Rite of Spring* simply because he had no idea how long the reading would last. He suggested "even if I was given an approximate of 1 hours reading that would do". This was the approach taken with *Inanimate Alice*, which received no comments related to the length. Another reader identified a partial length indicator when reading *The Dionaea House*: "...the fact that the title of the story told you the messages were sent over a certain date period, you could sort of work out at what point you were at by reference to the date on the part you were reading..." and this appeared to dampen her frustration. Another reader questioned the need for a length indicator at all suggesting that such a feature might not necessarily work in an online environment and questioned whether knowledge of length would affect one's perception of the story.

Readers reported struggling to use *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*, *The Rite of Spring* and *American Ghosts*. As with the visual design, it is important that authors and designers consider the usability of their work in order for readers to even reach the story. *The Rite of Spring* was felt to be far too complex – "... I did not even get past the first page. The instruction on how to use this hypertext totally put me off. I feel that you should be able to read something without having to research how it works first. For me it should be more user-friendly". Similarly, readers experienced usability issues with *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* – "... I couldn't get it to start it says in awkward yellow writing click on a word... tried clicking on everything".

Repetitive content was found to be an issue with *American Ghosts*. Readers disliked having the spoken word repeated on the screen and often found themselves listening to and reading the same piece of content numerous times.

4.2.6 Disorientation

Disorientation arose through following irrelevant links and through the lack of an orientation device such as a map. Like the participant's in Pope's (2009b) study, my participants praised *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* for providing a map of links and also for providing visual clues in the form of visited link indicators which enabled readers to get their bearings. However, they disliked the fact that links seemed to lead to random

content and that the story "...meandered a bit" which is consistent with Kendall (1999) who suggested this would lead to readers feeling powerless. Similarly, this supports DeStefano and LeFevre's (2005) claim that unrelated links disrupt the reading process.

4.2.7 Expectations

It seems that participants did come to the experience with certain expectations and the impact of such expectations not being met was both positive and negative. For example, one participant was pleasantly surprised to be so impressed by something they had assumed would be better suited to children. Conversely, many participants found the largely linear nature of *The Dionaea House* confounded their expectation that hypertext fiction "... would be more fragmentary and allow for reader exploration" and that "... you could not move away from the course the story had been written, you have to follow the flow and not go on your own journey".

4.2.8 Narrative

Lack of closure has been identified in previous research (Pope 2006, Pope 2009b, Kendall 1999) as an issue which readers find frustrating. These feelings were mirrored by my participants who often felt that the story just faded out, left them with unanswered questions or with a feeling that they had missed something. However, one reader of *American Ghosts* used her own strategy to identify the ending and provide a sense of satisfaction that the reading was complete: "...However I agree that you didn't really know when it was finished, although the way the bits of everyone were put together as a collage for the last segment gave it some finality..." This is consistent with Douglas's (1993) idea that readers must find their own sense of closure.

Participants' opinions differed as to whether or not lack of closure is a feature specific to hypertext fiction. One reader felt that "...this is not specific to hypertext fiction, but is related to the technical ability of the writer - words are words and stories are stories, regardless of the way they are presented. It's up to the writer to resolve plot issues, tie up loose ends and resolve the conflict within the narrative...". In contrast, another reader commented "...I think the unanswered questions are a main problem of the hypertext as it has to be short unlike a novel where the author has as many pages as he/she [sic] desires to elaborate - lack of time space perhaps which makes it a tricky art...".

Attitudes and enjoyment of plot varied between readers for each story. This, I believe, is to be expected as readers all have their own preferences with regard to reading material and I don't feel that hypertext fiction is any different from print fiction in this respect. This can be seen from the differing opinions on *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*: "...[I] found the contents boring" and "...there seemed to be no real thrust in plot" as compared with "...this

is a great piece of narrative fiction” and “...I really liked this as it was more like reading someone’s memories, and therefore each were like mini stories”.

Enjoyment of a particular style of writing is also a subjective matter so is likely to vary amongst any reader or set of readers. When writing style was discussed, it was always in a negative manner, perhaps because participants gave up reading very quickly and therefore only had this to discuss. In contrast, if the writing style was not problematic participants continued reading and perhaps chose to reveal other opinions.

4.2.9 Navigation

The literature identifies navigation as an issue for readers. This did not appear to be a major problem for my participants and this was highlighted by the fact that only 11 of the total comments referred to navigation. All but two of these comments were negative with participants expressing their dislike for repetitive or excessive links.

4.2.10 Other Media Comparison

Moulthrop (1991) identified readers’ expectations as an important factor in facilitating enjoyment of hypertext fiction in that if they expect a book-like experience they will inevitably be disappointed. My data suggests that readers do bring with them expectations related to previous experiences with other media types and that these do indeed lead to frustrations and disappointment. The discussions contained a vast amount of comments comparing the experience with reading a book or watching a film. The hypertext fictions almost always came off worse in such comparisons except where they are considered similar to the other medium. The negative comparisons made relate to bookmarking, control, pace, multimedia elements, gaming elements, length indicators, physicality and convenience.

4.2.11 Overall Experience

The data related to the overall experience shows the most extreme opinions with readers expressing both hate (*Inanimate Alice*) and love (*The Dionaea House*). These opinions appear to be directly related to the interaction necessary to participate in hypertext fiction, rather than to the plot. The hypertext fictions that readers perceived as least like a book (*Inanimate Alice* and *American Ghosts*) were found to be far less enjoyable than those that readers felt were more like a traditional book (*The Dionaea House*).

4.2.12 Possible Paths

The participants enjoyed the non-linear nature of *The Pillow of Jason Pettus*, *American Ghosts* and *The Rite of Spring* and felt that it gave them back some control and allowed them to make decisions about what to read next.

4.2.13 Possible Perspectives

The data shows that the readers enjoyed being able to read stories from multiple perspectives, especially *The Rite of Spring* which allowed them to choose which character relayed the story – “...I do like that you can decide...from who’s aspect you want to read...”. In contrast, some reader’s were disappointed with the single perspective presented in *The Dionaea House*; it appears readers felt they were missing something by only seeing the story from Mark’s perspective. This one-sided story-telling was perhaps exaggerated by the format of the piece since readers were only presented with Mark’s side of an email conversation: “...I didn’t like that, you never saw Eric’s response to these emails...”.

4.3 Hypotheses, Questionnaire and Results

Analysis of the discussion led to the formulation of 11 hypotheses which formed the basis of the questionnaire design (see Table 4.6). The individual questionnaire results can be found at Appendix G – Questionnaire Results. Table 4.7 presents a summary of the questionnaire results. 8 of the 12 participants completed the questionnaire.

| HYPOTHESIS | QUESTIONS AIMED AT TESTING HYPOTHESIS |
|---|--|
| Most participants will not choose to read hypertext fiction again, but those that do will be more likely to read a text-only work | Q1 Q2 |
| Overall participants did not enjoy the experience | Q3 Q4 Q6: Statement 1 |
| Participants prefer hypertext fictions with more text as opposed to multimedia/gaming | Q5 |
| Participants want more control than hypertext fiction offers them | Q6: Statement 2 Q6: Statement 3 Q6: Statement 4 Q6: Statement 5 Q6: Statement 13 Q6: Statement 14 Q6: Statement 17 Q6: Statement 18 |
| Participants find multimedia distracting and feel that it does not add to their enjoyment | Q6: Statement 6 Q6: Statement 7 |
| Participants did not enjoy participating in games | Q6: Statement 8 Q6: Statement 9 |
| Participants feel that hypertext fiction impedes absorption and use of imagination | Q6: Statement 10 Q6: Statement 11 |
| Participants feel that hypertext fiction does not provide readers with satisfying story closure | Q6: Statement 12 |
| Participants felt disorientated when the hypertext fiction lacked some indication of what they had read | Q6: Statement 15 |

| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Participants find embedded links disorientating | Q6: Statement 16 |
| Participants liked the online discussion group and felt more able to voice opinions than if they had met face-to-face | Q6: Statement 20 Q6: Statement 21 |

Table 4.6 Hypotheses identified and questions aimed at testing them

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | | 62.5%(5) | | | | | | | |
| No | | 37.5%(3) | | | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction with text only | | 80%(4) | | | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction which combines text with multimedia and/or gaming elements | | 20%(1) | | | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | | 37.5%(3) | | | | | | | |
| No | | 62.5%(5) | | | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | | | | | |
| Did not find the task enjoyable | | 40%(2) | | | | | | | |
| The task took up too much of my time | | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Other (please specify) | | 60%(3) | | | | | | | |
| | | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ran out of time to read last one due to own hectic uni commitments 2. I had a fault in my phone line and had no internet access 3. I started all 5 – didn't complete one as the content wasn't that interesting, and the author had overdone the links so you were frequently sent back to something you'd already seen multiple times | | | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Inanimate Alice | | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| American Ghosts | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly | | | |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | 12.5%(1) | 37.5%(3) | 12.5%(1) | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | 0 | 50%(4) | 12.5%(1) | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | | | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | 25%(2) | 37.5%(3) | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | 0 | | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | 12.5%(1) | 62.5%(5) | 25%(2) | 0 | 0 | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | 0 | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | | | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | 75%(6) | 0 | 25%(2) | 0 | 0 | | | |
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | 0 | 12.5%(1) | 37.5%(3) | 50%(4) | 0 | | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | 0 | 0 | 12.5%(1) | 50%(4) | 37.5%(3) | | | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | 0 | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | 25%(2) | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my | 0 | 37.5%(3) | 37.5%(3) | 12.5%(1) | 12.5%(1) | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| imagination | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | 37.5%(3) | 25%(2) | 0 |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | 0 | 37.5%(3) | 50%(4) | 12.5%(1) | 0 |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | 12.5%(1) | 62.5%(5) | 12.5%(1) | 12.5%(1) | 0 |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | 12.5%(1) | 87.5%(7) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | 25%(2) | 37.5%(3) | 25%(2) | 12.5%(1) | 0 |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | 0 | 12.5%(1) | 0 | 50%(4) | 37.5%(3) |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | 62.5%(5) | 37.5%(3) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | 0 | 62.5%(5) | 37.5%(3) | 0 | 0 |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | 0 | 12.5%(1) | 62.5%(5) | 25%(2) | 0 |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | 0 | 12.5%(1) | 62.5%(5) | 12.5%(1) | 12.5%(1) |

Table 4.7 Summary of questionnaire results

In contrast to my hypothesis the majority of respondents (62.5%) would read hypertext fiction again although 80% would choose a text-only work as predicted beforehand.

Interestingly only half enjoyed the experience which suggests that one participant would still read hypertext fiction again despite not enjoying their experience with the genre to date.

Question 5 was aimed at finding out which hypertext fiction the participants enjoyed the most with the expectation that *The Dionaea House*, *The Pillow of Jason Pettus* and *The Rite of Spring* would rank as the most enjoyable on the basis that they are largely text-based. Unfortunately, there were some issues with this question, perhaps due to the wording, as only four participants completed this question correctly and so the results from this question cannot be used.

Half of the participants felt that hypertext fiction gives the reader more control than traditional books, whilst over 50% said they preferred the control and freedom provided by traditional books and 75% said they wanted more control. This suggests that the type of control offered by traditional books (ie the freedom to choose when, where and for how long to read) would enhance the reader enjoyment and provide them with the additional control they desire.

In terms of controlling particular areas of the experience, half of the participants were not happy for the pace of their reading to be controlled as in *Inanimate Alice*. This is consistent with the qualitative analysis. Similarly, 75% of participants enjoyed being able to control which character's perspective they read the story from. With regard to controlling the direction of the story only 37.5% reported enjoying this aspect of the experience which suggests that it is not of major importance to readers. Conversely, it appears to be very important for readers to be able to control how much they read in any given sitting: all of the participants agreed that it is essential for them to be able to save their place and return later and 87.5% did not enjoy the lack of knowledge about how long the fiction was.

The questionnaire results show that 75% of participants found the multimedia elements distracting and half of the participants did not feel that they added anything to their experience.

87.5% of participants did not enjoy participating in games and felt that it added nothing to their enjoyment or the story. There was no unanimous agreement to suggest that participants felt that gaming and fiction should never be combined and opinions were spread very evenly on this question. This suggests, as highlighted by the qualitative data, that participants did not enjoy the gaming as presented in *Inanimate Alice* but that, if done correctly and integrated as a seamless part of the story, gaming could be enjoyable.

Half of the participants felt that hypertext fiction did not allow them to become completely absorbed in the story although only 25% felt that they were prevented from using their imagination.

Only three of the participants felt frustration at a lack of closure, three were indifferent and the remaining two did not feel frustration. This suggests that lack of closure was not a major concern for the participants and that it did not greatly affect their enjoyment.

The questionnaire results show that the majority (62.5%) of participants found embedded links distracting and led to them getting lost.

4.4 Discussion of findings

The qualitative analysis revealed a lot of negative feedback which suggested that participants did not enjoy reading hypertext fiction and perhaps would not choose to read it again in the future. However the questionnaire results showed this not to be true. It is felt that the participants did see the potential of hypertext fiction despite not being overly enthusiastic about those presented in this research.

It is extremely difficult to generalise based on this research for two reasons: firstly, reading is very subjective and tastes will vary considerably between readers; secondly, hypertext fictions themselves are also very different. Whilst undertaking this project it became apparent that hypertext fiction comes in many different flavours, as indeed does traditional print fiction. In this respect it is unlikely that a given hypertext fiction will appeal to all of the people all of the time. Some people would be happy to interact with gaming and multimedia elements, whereas others would be happier with more text. Therefore it would be unwise to dictate whether or not these elements should appear. As this research made use of only five hypertext fictions and a handful of participants it is highly probable that the findings are not applicable to all hypertext fictions or all readers. The research can only report with certainty what the participants thought of the hypertext fictions they were presented with. However, it is clear that designers and authors could assist by ensuring such interactive elements are intuitive to use, easy to control and can be skipped if that is the reader's preference.

It is not felt that the themes identified by the qualitative analysis are necessarily characteristics of all hypertext fictions and therefore once again it is difficult to generalise. However, what this research has highlighted is that users do want control in certain aspects of their reading. For example, it is important that users can control the pace of their reading and, indeed, the length of time they read for. In this respect authors and designers should ensure that their design does not dictate pace and that they provide

readers with some indication of how long the reading will take. If this is not possible then readers should be allowed to mark their place and easily return at a later time.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the data gathered, described the analysis undertaken and identified and discussed the findings. Analysis of the data from the discussion group revealed 13 themes (see Table 4.4) which were important to readers and affected their enjoyment. The data and analysis were used to create a number of hypotheses (see Table 4.6) which in turn were used to guide the design of a questionnaire. Much of the discussion data was negative, but the questionnaire results appeared less so revealing that although participants had not necessarily enjoyed their experience with the hypertext fictions presented in this study they would be prepared to read hypertext fiction again. The findings identify a number of areas which authors and designers should consider carefully when creating their works, in order to facilitate reader enjoyment.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

A review of existing literature and research identified numerous problems readers experience with hypertext fiction which ultimately leave them confused and frustrated. Although highly theorised the hypertext fiction domain appeared to be lacking research into reader response and the existing theory often did not match the reality of reader experience. In an attempt to address this mismatch between theory and reality this research aimed to investigate whether or not readers want to interact with or control hypertext fiction and, if so, in what ways. The main findings of the research are:-

- Readers are not averse to hypertext fiction but prefer text-only works.
- Readers found the multimedia and gaming elements distracting and felt they prevented absorption and use of their imagination.
- To be enjoyable multimedia and gaming elements must be seamlessly integrated into the reading, easy to use/control and, if possible, should be optional.
- Readers want more control than hypertext fiction gives, particularly with regard to pace, interaction, reading time, multimedia and gaming.
- Readers found embedded links distracting and irrelevant links disorientating.
- Readers require bookmarking facilities and some indication of the length of the work.
- Hypertext fiction's failure to meet reader expectations with regard to their experiences with other media led to frustration and disappointment.
- Readers enjoyed the control multiple paths and perspectives offered them.
- Interface usability and visual design are important to users, especially when they are poor.

5.1 Project Review

The online discussion group was very convenient and simple to set up and was therefore found to be a useful research tool. However, the schedule and deadlines were left open in order to give participants the flexibility to take part at their own convenience. This openness was perhaps the biggest downfall of this method in that participants appear to have lost interest and drifted away from the group. In addition, it was difficult to stimulate a discussion; participants tended to voice their own opinions, with very little interaction between participants in terms of commenting on each other's posts. Moderator attempts to foster interaction - by highlighting interesting points made and asking for comments - worked to some extent but again the discussion petered out again after participants made minor additional comments. Perhaps more moderation or encouragement could have stimulated further discussion but I was conscious that there is a fine line between encouragement and harassing the participants. It is felt that future research using such online discussion groups would benefit from providing participants with more guidance on

when to post and provide deadlines for completion.

Kitzinger (1994) criticises group studies which he suggests tend not to focus on interaction between participants. I think this criticism is relevant to my research due to the lack of interaction between participants. However my research still elicited individual opinions and it was not the aim of the discussion group to focus on participant interactions because reading is essentially a personal and subjective activity. Therefore the social context was not felt to be as important for this study as individual experiences and opinions. Nonetheless, it was hoped that the discussion between participants might have added richness and quantity to the data collected. As detailed in section 3.5 the decision to use a discussion group was based on practicality and convenience despite the intended focus being on individuals.

Half of the participants did not complete question 5 of the questionnaire correctly which suggests issues related to question design or wording. This is clearly a research failing which could have been avoided by thorough testing and piloting of the questionnaire.

Only three of the respondents completed the task of reading and discussing all five hypertexts. Of those that did not complete the task 40% reported that they stopped the task as they were not enjoying it whilst the others either ran out of time or had internet access problems. The number of participants completing the task could perhaps have been increased by imposing more control on the discussion by setting deadlines. This might have enabled the whole task to be completed more quickly and thereby taking up less of the participants' time. A shorter overall time for completion may also have kept some of those who weren't enjoying the task interested until completion.

With regard to the qualitative analysis, it is difficult to assess how reliable or accurate this is for two reasons. Firstly, although every attempt was made to analyse the data in its own right, it was extremely difficult to ignore the knowledge gained from the literature review and therefore highly probable that this influenced the themes identified. Secondly, as an individual researcher working alone, there was no possibility for verification and validation of the coding by another person. It is felt that such dual coding could have improved the reliability of the analysis and perhaps identified different or additional themes.

5.2 Future Research

The participants in this study were recruited on the basis that they enjoyed reading. It would be interesting to conduct a study without this stipulation to determine whether such participants would react differently to hypertext fiction. Perhaps individuals who do not

read much or dislike reading fiction, would have different expectations and therefore a completely different experience to the participants in this study. Such a study using a comparative group of participants might facilitate findings more suited to generalisation and would therefore be more useful.

Similarly, a younger set of participants, raised in the digital age, would likely have more experience with computing, gaming and multimedia and may therefore have a different experience to my participants and produce different findings.

Enjoyment of fiction is a completely personal and subjective area and therefore it would be interesting to repeat the study as it stands with a different group of participants to see if the findings of this study are still valid.

This study presented participants with a range of diverse hypertext fictions in order to gauge their reaction to different presentations. Another prospective study could therefore use a group of similar hypertext fictions to see if they all get the same reaction. For example, present participants with five hypertext fictions which include gaming elements in an effort to investigate when a combination of gaming and fiction can lead to an enjoyable experience.

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Appendix A: Extended Abstract

A Step Towards Reader Acceptance of Hypertext Fiction: From Annoying Distraction to Enjoyable Experience

Michelle Beatty

Extended Abstract of Open University MSc Dissertation Submitted 25 February 2011

Introduction

Hypertext fiction, which has existed for over 20 years, is a highly theorised and much researched topic yet still appears to be in its infancy with regard to gaining mainstream attention and an interested audience. Extensive reading of the literature reveals that the theory and grand claims of early theorists are simply not borne out by the reality of reader experiences with the genre. In its attempt to provide readers with greater freedom, flexibility and choice, hypertext fiction has, in fact, often left readers confused, frustrated, disorientated and unsatisfied.

A great deal of research has been undertaken but very little focuses on the reader experience, reader enjoyment and usable interfaces. Therefore, the topic of this research was motivated by a desire to investigate what readers actually want. In this respect, the aim of this research centred on finding out if readers want to control or interact with hypertext fiction and, if so, in what ways.

Method

An online Facebook discussion group was used to gather data on the user experience. Participants were asked to read five different hypertext fictions before discussing their thoughts, feelings, opinions and frustrations with other participants in the discussion group. The results from this qualitative data were used as the basis for a questionnaire in an attempt to corroborate the qualitative findings.

Data and Analysis

The data from the discussion group was analysed using the principles of grounded theory and the process of thematic analysis. The following major themes, which were clearly important to participants, were identified:

- Active participation in head
- Anticipation
- Bookmarking
- Control
- Design
- Disorientation
- Expectations
- Narrative
- Navigation
- Other media comparison
- Overall experience
- Possible paths
- Possible perspectives

Based on the analysis of the discussion group data, the following hypotheses were developed and used to guide the questionnaire design:-

-
- Most participants will not choose to read hypertext fiction again, but those that do will be more likely to read a text-only work
 - Overall participants did not enjoy the experience
 - Participants prefer hypertext fictions with more text as opposed to multimedia/gaming
 - Participants want more control than hypertext fiction offers them
 - Participants find multimedia distracting and feel that it does not add to their enjoyment
 - Participants did not enjoy participating in games
 - Participants feel that hypertext fiction impedes absorption and use of imagination
 - Participants feel that hypertext fiction does not provide readers with satisfying story closure
 - Participants felt disorientated when the hypertext fiction lacked some indication of what they had read
 - Participants find embedded links disorientating
 - Participants liked the online discussion group and felt more able to voice opinions than if they had met face-to-face

A large amount of the reader discussion was negative, but interestingly the questionnaire results less so. The majority of participants would choose to read hypertext fiction again but would be more inclined to opt for a text-only work. Having said that, participants were not averse to interacting with multimedia or gaming elements but the major requirement appears to be that this adds to the story and is seamlessly integrated into the reading, rather than monopolising the experience or, indeed, comprising the whole experience.

Participants want to control hypertext fiction, particularly with regard to pace, interaction and reading time. Participants were frustrated at having to wait for the story to move forward automatically and would much prefer to “turn the page” when they are ready. Furthermore, participants resented being forced to interact with the hypertext fiction with regard to multimedia and gaming elements and would much prefer to be given the option to skip such features. In addition, elements such as video need to provide controls for the reader to use in order to interact. With regard to reading time, participants were unhappy at being forced to read everything in one sitting due to a lack of bookmarking facilities.

Lack of closure and troublesome navigation are often mentioned in the literature as major problems for readers. My participants did mention these issues but they do not appear to be the main cause of reader frustrations.

Discussion

The research results show that readers are not averse to reading hypertext fiction but that, as shown by other research, they do find it frustrating, confusing and difficult to use. As reading is very subjective it is not felt that the findings can be generalised to all readers and all hypertext fictions. However, in general it can be said that authors and designers need to take readers into account when creating their work and ensure that the interface is intuitive and easy to use. If interactive multimedia or gaming elements are included, these should be easy to control and, if possible, should be optional. In addition, it is clear that readers are primarily interested in the text and this should not be over-shadowed by multimedia.

It is difficult to estimate the reliability of the qualitative analysis undertaken in this research as there was no opportunity for validation and verification by additional analysts. It is highly possible that different analysts may have found different themes or, indeed, additional themes. In addition, pure grounded theory requires that theory is generated from the data, and only from the data. In this research, it is quite possible that the analysis was influenced by knowledge gained from reading the literature. It was very difficult to ignore such influences when analysing the data.

There are numerous directions future research could take including the use of younger participants, studies using a range of similar highly interactive hypertext fictions and a repeat of this research using a different set of participants. The use of younger participants might very well produce a different set of findings particularly in relation to the enjoyment of and difficulties with multimedia and gaming elements. A younger generation, raised in the computer and digital age, may have very different views on such interactions and, indeed, owing to their, perhaps, increased familiarity and experience with such features may find them less frustrating and easier to use than older participants. Use of a range of similar interactive hypertext fictions could highlight other factors influencing enjoyment other than the frustrations identified in this research. Repeating this research with different participants could be useful in two ways: similar results would enable generalisation of the findings whereas completely different findings would open up other areas for research which could be important in moving hypertext fiction forward as well as ensuring its continued existence.

In conclusion, it is felt that hypertext fiction is a very tricky area in which to impose standards, conventions and guidelines as different readers will find different things enjoyable. In this respect, there may never be an overriding theory that applies in all cases. Suffice to say that regardless of the interface, writing style or plot, authors and designers should aim for a user-friendly, intuitive work which allows readers to easily find the story, and their place in the story.

Appendix B – Facebook Privacy and Abuse FAQ

Details below show the relevant sections from the Facebook FAQ on Group privacy and abuse

What are the group privacy options?

When you create a group, you can completely control its privacy. There are three different access levels:

1. **Open:** For "global" groups, everyone on Facebook can view the group and join. If the group is exclusive to a specific network, only the people in that network can view the group or join it. All content (e.g., photos, videos and discussions) is visible to anyone viewing the group.
2. **Closed:** For "global" groups, everyone on Facebook can see the group, but the administrators must approve all membership requests or personally send invitations. If the group is exclusive to one network, only people in that network can view the group or join it. Only group members can view its Wall, discussion board, and photo or video content. Non-members can view its Info and Recent News. If you are not a member, you will not receive stories about closed groups.
3. **Secret:** These groups cannot be found in searches or be viewed by non-members. The name of the group will not display on the profiles of members. Membership is by invitation only. Non-members will not receive stories about secret groups.

Group administrators can change these options at any time by clicking "Edit Group" below the group photo.

Can people who are in the same group as I am see more of my information?

When someone is in the same group as you, this does not allow them to see any more of your profile information than your privacy settings allow.

What happens when I block a person from a group?

When a person is blocked from a group, they cannot see the group or any stories about it.

How do I block a person from a group?

To block a person from a group, follow the steps below:

1. Go to a group that you administrate.
2. Click the "Edit Members" link.
3. Select "Blocked."
4. Click the "Block People" link.
5. Enter the name of a person you want to block and click "Find."
6. Select the person and click "Block."

What do I do if I see abusive content within a group?

The best way to flag abusive content on the site is to use the "Report" links that appear near the content itself. When a report is submitted, we will review it and take any action warranted by our Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. To submit a report, please take the steps listed below:

-
- Report a photo: Go to the specific photo and click the "Report This Photo" link that appears below the photo.
 - Report a link: View the specific link being shared and click the "Report" link that appears directly underneath it.
 - Report an event: Go to the main event page and click the "Report" link that appears on the bottom left column.
 - Report a video: View the video and click the "Report Video" link that appears in the right column below the video's caption.

We also recommend that you consider blocking the user involved in the report. People you block won't be able to find you in searches, view your profile, or contact you with pokes, Wall posts, or personal messages. You can block people by adding their names to your block list at the bottom of the Privacy Settings page, or by checking "Block this person" when you report them. These people will not be notified when you block them, and any existing ties you have with them will be removed.

For all reports, be sure to follow the instructions carefully when choosing the report category.

What can I do if someone is harassing me within a group discussion?

To report a harassing post within a group discussion, please click on the "**Report**" link that appears directly under the post you are reporting.

We also recommend that you consider blocking the user involved in the report. People you block won't be able to find you in searches, view your profile, or contact you with pokes, Wall posts, or personal messages. You can block people by adding their names to your block list at the bottom of the Privacy page, or by checking "Block this person" when you report them. These people will not be notified when you block them, and any existing ties you have with them will be removed.

Appendix C – Hypertext fictions used in the research

The Dionaea House - <http://www.dionaea-house.com/default.htm> - essentially linear with next, home, prev links – a few embedded links with further information (open in new window)

Inanimate Alice – www.inanimatealice.com – 10 episodes (work in progress, only 1-4 available) – each episode self-contained so reader can choose reading order – linear progression through each episode – uses Flash technology with text, images, sound and interactive game elements

American Ghosts - <http://www.webyarns.com/americanghosts.html> - uses Flash - displays 5 videos including sound - other than choosing which order to view the videos reader has no control - text scrolls at a rather fast pace which reader has no control over – flashing image could be quite annoying/distracting – appears that reader does not have much control over video, eg stop, pause and something else!!!!

The Rite of Spring - <http://www.stewartry-wheelers.org/~simon/bookshelf/hyper/mgi/> - looks quite interesting and quite complex – comes with instructions - think this might confuse readers - but gives them lots of options of where to go next

The Pillow Book of Jason Pettus - <http://www.jasonpettus.com/pillow/index.htm> - pure text with embedded links – has “cheat” link in small text at bottom of page which brings up a table of what appears to be all the links available

Appendix D – Participant Recruitment

Article in staff magazine

“Calling all fans of fiction

Are you interested in reading fiction? Then you may be able to help staff member Michelle Beatty with part of her Masters in Software Development.

Michelle works in the IT department as a Senior Web Developer and is looking for people willing to take part in an experiment. Her research is based on hypertext fiction, where the reader chooses various paths throughout a story, making the reading more interactive.

“This isn’t a reading test, it is simply an experiment focusing on the fiction and its presentation and it is likely to require you to read a hypertext fiction first. Anyone interested can contact me on shelly2bit@aol.com and I can provide you with more details in due course,” said Michelle. “

Post on my facebook status



Figure D.1 Screenshot of facebook post

Posts to various Facebook groups

The Post

“Hi all - i am currently studying for a Masters in Software Development and am planning my research into hyperfiction. I am looking for people interested in reading fiction, who might be interested in helping out with the research. I would be grateful if anyone interested could inbox me and i can provide more details. Thanks Michelle”

The Groups

The Reading Group Center
Legrave Teenage Reading Group
Haverling Reading Group
Reading Group Choices

Posts to various Open University FirstClass forums

The Post

“hi guys
hope you don't mind me posting here. i am currently working on a Masters in Software Development and am planning my research project. i am looking for people who enjoy reading fiction who might be able to help. My research topic is related to hypertext fiction. I don't have full details of the project yet, but would be really grateful if anybody who

might like to help could contact me on shelly2bit@aol.com
many thanks
michelle”

The Groups

OUSA Books
OUSA Books Literature
OUSA Books Reading Group
OUSA Computer Games
OUSA Digital Arts
OUSA EA300
OUSA Technology Room
OUSA Writers

Appendix E – Participant Information

Masters Dissertation Research – Michelle Beatty Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of a student project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me (shelly2bit@aol.com) if there is anything that is not clear, if you have any questions or require further information.

Who will conduct the research?

Michelle Beatty, Open University

Title of the research

The working title of the research is:

A Step Towards Reader Acceptance of Hypertext Fiction: From Annoying Distraction to Enjoyable Experience

What is the aim of the research?

Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypertext_fiction) defines hypertext fiction as follows:

“Hypertext fiction is a genre of electronic literature, characterized by the use of hypertext links which provides a new context for non-linearity in ‘literature’ and reader interaction. The reader typically chooses links to move from one node of text to the next, and in this fashion arranges a story from a deeper pool of potential stories. Its spirit can also be seen in interactive fiction.”

Hypertext fiction has been existence for around 20 years. However, it has still not achieved mainstream popularity and has failed to capture the interest of many readers. The aim of the research is to gain some insight into the reader experience of hypertext fiction by gathering and analysing reader opinions, ideas and feedback.

Why you have been chosen?

You have been invited to participate following requests for volunteers who enjoy reading. There is likely to be 15-20 participants in total. Please be assured that this is not a reading test and there are no right or wrong answers. All contributions you make are valid and greatly appreciated.

What you will be asked to do if you participate

Participants will be asked to read a variety of hypertext fictions which can be found online. Participants who are willing to use facebook will then be asked to take part in a private discussion group to provide their feedback, opinions and ideas and comment on those of other participants.

Participants who do not wish to participate in the facebook discussion group will be asked to provide feedback directly to me via email. This feedback may form the basis of an email conversation, strictly between myself and the participant concerned, where I may ask for further feedback or introduce you to points made by other participants in the facebook discussions.

Following the collection of feedback, participants may be asked to complete a questionnaire.

What happens to the data collected?

The data collected during the research will be analysed by myself and presented, along with my findings, in my Masters Dissertation due for submission in March 2011. All results will be anonymised and it will not be possible to identify individual participant's data.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Because of the nature of online work, confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed. However, participants can be assured that I will not divulge any personal information and will respect each participant's confidentiality and anonymity.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Each volunteer is free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving an explanation and without detriment to yourself. Upon withdrawal, any data provided by you will be destroyed and will not be used in the research.

Appendix F - Participant Instructions

Masters Dissertation Research – Michelle Beatty Participant Instruction Sheet

This document is intended to provide you with all the information you need to undertake the research activities. If there are details which are not clear or you require further information, please contact me (shelly2bit@aol.com). I will be available for questions or issues throughout the course of the research. You can contact me via email or via facebook.

Summary of Research Activities

You will be asked to read a number of hypertext fictions available on online and provide feedback, opinions, thoughts, ideas etc via a private facebook discussion group. If you do not wish to take part in the discussion you can provide feedback to me directly via email. Subsequent to the reading and feedback activities, you may be asked to complete a short questionnaire. Due to the asynchronous nature of the participation in this research, it is envisaged that the research period will be carried out over several/weeks months. Please spend as much time as you can reasonably spare, at your convenience, during this time to contribute the research.

Facebook Discussion Group

The private facebook discussion group can be found at:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=123982124318921#!/group.php?gid=123982124318921&v=wall>

If you have expressed a willingness to join the facebook discussion, you will shortly receive an invitation to join the group, if you have not already done so. If you do not receive an invitation, please let me know. Once you have accepted the invitation, please bookmark the group. As the group is “secret” it will not appear in search results and will not appear on your facebook wall, therefore the bookmark will enable you to find the group for subsequent visits. You should also be able to find the group by selecting “Groups” from your application list on your home page. It would be useful if you could make an initial post to the group wall, perhaps introducing yourself, in order to ensure that the group is working properly and you are able to make posts.

The group has a wall and a discussions area where you can make posts. Please use the discussion area to provide your feedback on the hypertext fictions. You can start your own discussions or join those of others. There is no limit to the number of posts you can make – the more you post the more interesting the discussion and the research is likely to be. **All** opinions, feedback, thoughts and ideas are valid. Please respect other participants at all times. If you feel unhappy, uncomfortable or have concerns at any point during the discussions, please contact me immediately in order that any issues can be resolved.

I will be constantly monitoring the discussion

You may find the following facebook help pages useful:

Viewing and joining a group - <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=825>

Posting content to a group - <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=827>

Security and abuse - <http://www.facebook.com/help/?topic=reportabuse>

Group privacy and abuse - <http://www.facebook.com/help/?page=982>

Reading and Discussion/Feedback

The introduction of hypertext fictions will be staggered throughout the course of the research so that you are not overwhelmed with information and to facilitate the discussion. I will post new hypertext fictions to the facebook discussion group as well as sending details to all participants via email.

The first two hypertext fictions I would like you to read are:

The Dionaea House - <http://www.dionaea-house.com/default.htm>

Inanimate Alice – www.inanimatealice.com

Please take some time to read these two stories and either post to the facebook discussion group or provide your feedback to me via email (shelly2bit@aol.com). **All** feedback is valid and can relate to any aspect of your reading experience and the fiction itself. Please feel free to air all feedback, thoughts, ideas, opinions etc.

Non-facebook participants

The feedback you provide via email may form the basis of an email conversation between you and myself. As you will not have access to the facebook discussion, I may introduce you to interesting aspects of the discussion for your comments/thoughts/further consideration. I may also, with your prior agreement, introduce interesting aspects of your feedback into the facebook discussion. I will not reveal any of your personal information and can send you copies of the post where your feedback is quoted if you require.

Your help with this research is greatly appreciated and I hope that you enjoy your participation.

Appendix G – Questionnaire Results

Participant 1

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction with text only | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 1 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 3 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 4 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 2 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | X | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | | X | | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | X | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | X | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | X | | | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | X | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | X | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | | | X |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | X | | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | X | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | X | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | X | | | |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | X | | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | | X | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | | X | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | X | | | |

Participant 2

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction with text only | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| I started all 5 – didn't complete one as the content wasn't that interesting, and the author had overdone the links so you were frequently sent back to something you'd already seen multiple times | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 1 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 3 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 4 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 3 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 5 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | X | | | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | | X | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | | X | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | X | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | | | X | | |
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | X | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | X | | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | X | | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | X | | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | | X | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | X | |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | X | | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | | X | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | | X | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | X | | |

Participant 3

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| Did not find the task enjoyable | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 4 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 2 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 2 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 2 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | X | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | X | | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | | X | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | X | | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | X | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | | X |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | | X | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i | | X | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| had already read | | | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | X | | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | | X |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | | X | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | | X | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | X | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | X | | |

Participant 4

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| I had a fault in my phone line and had no internet connection | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 2 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 4 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 1 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 3 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | | | X | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | | | X | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | X | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | | X | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | | X | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | X | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | X | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | | | X |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | | | | X |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | X | | | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | X | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | | X | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | | X |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | X | | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | X | | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | X | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | | | X |

Participant 5

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction which combines multimedia and/or gaming elements | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 4 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 2 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 3 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 1 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 5 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | X | | | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | | X | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | X | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | | | X |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | | | X | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | X | | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | X | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | | | X | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | X | | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | X | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | | | X | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | | X |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | X | | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | X | | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | X | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | X | | |

Participant 6

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction with text only | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| Ran out of time to read last one due to own hectic uni schedule | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 1 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 4 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 2 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 3 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | | | X | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | | X | | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | X | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | | X | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | X | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | | X |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | X | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | X | | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | | | X | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | X | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | X | | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | X | |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | X | | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | X | | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | X | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | X | | |

Participant 7

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| Hypertext fiction with text only | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| Yes | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 2 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 3 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 5 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 1 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 4 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | X | | | |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | X | | | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | | X | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | X | | | |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added to my experience | | | | X | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | | X |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | | | | X |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | | X | | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | | X | | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | X | | | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | | X | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | X | | | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | X | |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | | X | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | X | | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | | X | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | X | | |

Participant 8

| | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Would you read hypertext fiction again? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 2. If your answer to question 1 was No, please go to question 3. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 1 was Yes, which type of hypertext fiction would you be most likely to read in future? | | | | | |
| No response | | | | | |
| 3. Did you read all 5 hypertext fictions? | | | | | |
| No | | | | | |
| 4. If your answer to question 3 was Yes, please go to question 5. | | | | | |
| If your answer to question 3 was No, please indicate why you did not read all 5 hypertext fictions. | | | | | |
| Did not find the task enjoyable | | | | | |
| 5. Please rank the 5 hypertext fictions in relation to how much you enjoyed reading them, using the scale 1 to 5 (1 being the most enjoyable and 5 being the least enjoyable), where each number can only be used once. If you did not read a particular hypertext fiction please enter 0. | | | | | |
| The Dionaea House | 3 | | | | |
| Inanimate Alice | 5 | | | | |
| The Pillow of Jason Pettus | 5 | | | | |
| American Ghosts | 4 | | | | |
| The Rite of Spring | 0 | | | | |
| 6. Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following statements. | | | | | |
| | Agree strongly | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Disagree strongly |
| Overall i enjoyed my experience of reading hypertext fiction | | | | | X |
| Hypertext fiction gives the reader much more freedom and control than traditional print-based fiction | | | | | X |
| I prefer the convenience, control and freedom of a traditional book | X | | | | |
| I want much more control than hypertext fiction provides | X | | | | |
| I am happy for the fiction to control the pace of my reading | | | | | X |
| I found the use of multimedia, such as music, animations and video, in hypertext fiction distracting | X | | | | |
| I enjoyed the extra dimension the multimedia elements added | | | | X | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| to my experience | | | | | |
| The use of gaming elements enhanced my enjoyment and added to the story | | | | X | |
| Gaming should never be combined with fiction | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to become completely absorbed in the story | | | | X | |
| Hypertext fiction allowed me to use my imagination | | | X | | |
| Hypertext fiction left me feeling frustrated that the story was incomplete or that i had missed something | X | | | | |
| I liked being able to choose what to read next | | | | X | |
| I liked being able to read a story from the perspective of different characters | | | | X | |
| I got lost when there was no indication of what i had already read | X | | | | |
| I found the links within the story distracting - I clicked randomly without taking in the story | | X | | | |
| I enjoyed not knowing how much longer the story would last | | | | X | |
| It is essential that i can save my place and pick up the story again at some other time | | X | | | |
| I expected hypertext fiction to be more like reading a book | | X | | | |
| The online discussion group enabled me to voice my opinions which i may have found more difficult if i had been face to face with other participants | | X | | | |
| I would have preferred face-to-face discussions with other participants (as opposed to the online discussion group) | | | | X | |