



DNB405

History, Theory and Criticism

VIRTUAL REALITY ADDICTION

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Background

Gaming addiction has become an increasing concern within modern society due in part to the rapid developments in video game technology. Advancements in the digital world has left children and adults facing the negative and sometimes critical consequences of their gaming addictions. The early 1990's saw modern cultures introduction to the wide world web, a network of computer connections which opened new, unimagined, possibilities (Naughton, 2016). Over the years this available technology generated an accelerated series of development, however revealing, a range of unknown and potentially dangerous vulnerabilities (Ringberg, Reihlen & Ryden, 2019). The Internet, it is now known as, has had a monumental impact on the gaming industry, seeing radical innovations in digital mediums. This new world of immersive technology however has seen destructive and addictive behaviours such as tolerances for longer gaming periods, lack of self-control, withdrawal symptoms, deception patterns, mood modifications, job loss and relationship hardships (Saquib et al., 2017). Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), now clinically recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and many other governing bodies, highlights the evident risks of gaming addiction (Kosta & Kuss, 2019).

Virtual reality, once considered technologically advanced, has increasingly become an everyday part of mainstream society. As explained by the *Frontiers in Psychology Journal*, virtual reality is defined as “real-time interactive graphics with 3D models, combined with a display technology that gives the user the immersion in the model world” (Cipresso, Giglioli, Yaya & Riva, 2018, para. 6). Due to the abilities virtual reality technology is capable of, medical professionals are expressing their concerns for the potentially detrimental impacts on society (Zastrow, 2017).

Future predictions determine that virtual reality technology will enable escapism, allowing humans in the real world to abscond responsibility and accountability (Siricharoen, 2019). Kurzweil (Daher, 2016) explains that by 2022 “virtual reality will be totally realistic and compelling, people will spend most of [their] time in virtual environments”. Psychologists have found that the brain has a natural need to escape, regulate or ideally resolve issues which arise (Zastrow, 2017). However, with significant rises in societal stress levels, virtual reality enables users to enter preferably curated views of reality (Siricharoen, 2019). With daily lives increasingly becoming more fast-paced with less time to relax, a greater need and opportunity will arise to target vulnerable people through virtual reality.

There are an increasing number of cases which have shown the detrimental, and sometimes fatal, reality of IGD. Christakis (2010) discusses the death of a 28 year old man who died as a result of his 50+ hour gaming session. The man failed to eat or sleep throughout the duration, as a result of his compulsion to the game. An extremely similar story was seen in a 24 year old man who died after 80 continuous hours of gaming. His cause of death was pulmonary thromboembolism, caused by sitting down for extended periods of time, something doctors are seeing more often (Sublette & Mullan, 2012). These cases, however, are not isolated incidents, with more and more situations resulting in death after prolonged gaming episodes. Which brings cause for concern when dealing with technological innovations rapidly developing around virtual reality and gaming experiences; the future of a virtual reality driven society is on the horizon.

Framing The Approach

Through the analysis of *Speculative Everything* by Anthony Dunn and Fiona Raby, the group utilised various frameworks to guide the design phase (reference speculative design). Dunn and Raby use different cones to represent probable, plausible and possible situations which users may relate to their own reality. These cones represent degrees of relation and understanding for the user. Probable being straight forward, relatable and understood, while possible encourages the user to draw parallels between now and the distant future. When looking into how we wanted the user to feel when using our system, we saw our concept situated between plausible and possible. Dunn and Raby helped us aim for a product which would encourage users to make “links between this world and the suggested one”. Our research process presented strong evidence to suggest that the speed of technological innovation, specifically in the realm of VR, is rapid. This paired with the serious and sometimes fatal reality of Internet Gaming Disorder, equated an opportunity to critically analyse the future of VR and its impact on society.

Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (2013) discusses in chapter 2 of *Speculative Everything* that, “in design, people often struggle to get beyond the concept to appreciate and engage with the ideas”. It was the aim to perpetuate the dangers of a virtual reality future through our satirical video and physical model. With the time constraints of this project we concluded that utilising objects as representations, would allow the user to sympathise with the message further. The intention throughout the process was to ensure the audience would easily comprehend and engage with the message. Satire and juxtaposition was utilised to convey they very real dangers of virtual reality addiction by comically highlighting the reality of an addicted virtual reality user. This method aims to place the viewer in an uncomfortable position while encouraging them to relate to then Polaris contents.

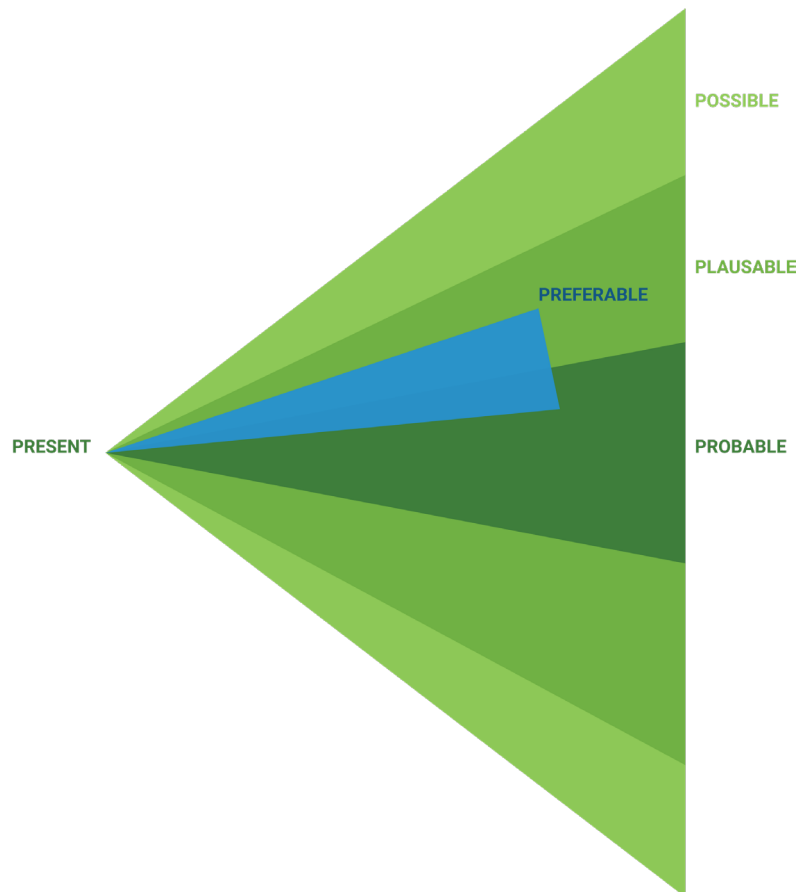


Figure 1: Depicts the three cones, probable, plausible, possible and preferable (Dunne & Raby, 2013)

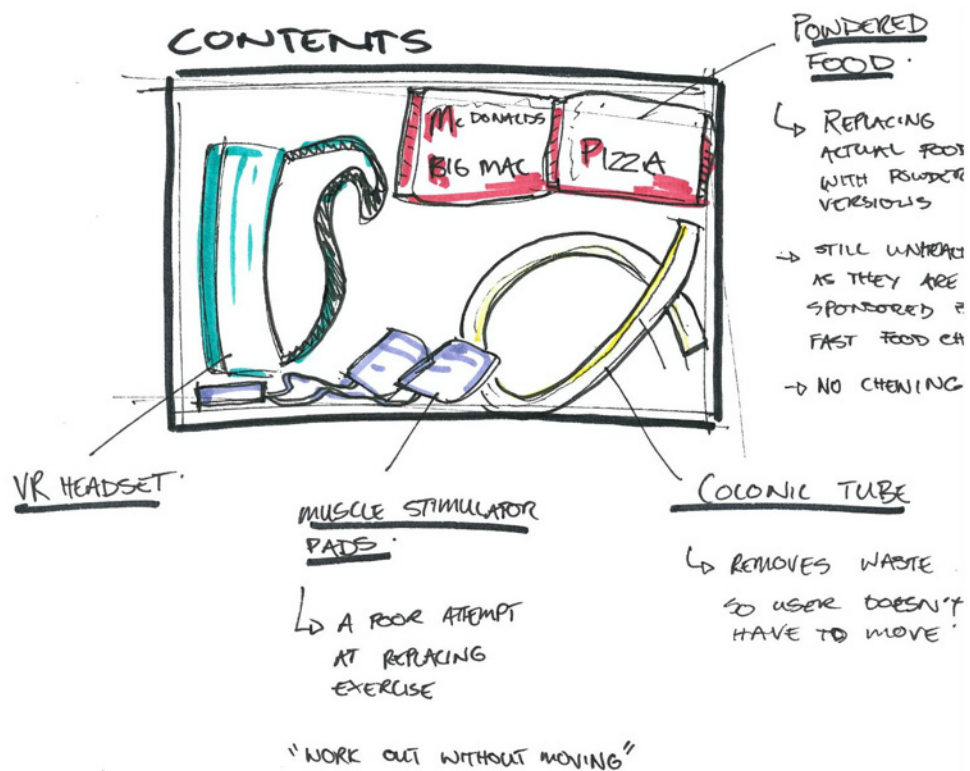


Figure 2: Drawn illustration of the "Polaris Experience" by Corp X, with annotations

The Design Process

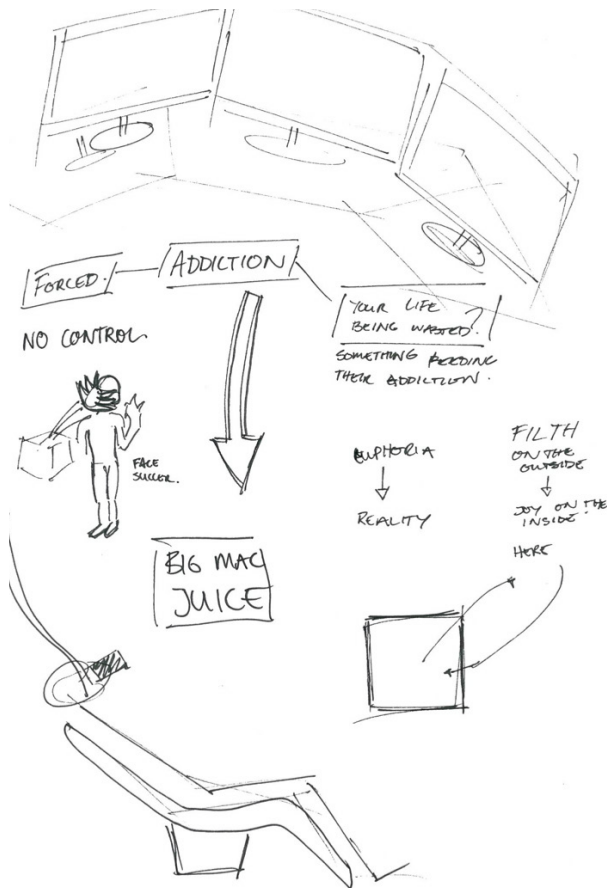


Figure 3: Mind map of VR Addiction

We entertained the thought of a future in which escapism is achieved through staying in VR for an entire week. We combined the current trends of gaming addiction, as discussed by Saquib, et al. (2017), and the development of VR to create an immersive experience. With the idealistic and realistic qualities of the virtual world, the user will become dangerously addicted.

Nutrients, water and waste need to be provided and regulated throughout the duration. Keeping with the future theme, powdered food administered through a tube, a drip for water and a colonic and urine tube ensures the user does not have to move the entire week.

Portraying the unhealthy and disturbing reality of being in VR for long periods of time due to addiction. Weight gain, personal hygiene, cleanliness will be significant themes in this concept. This allows the user to become their ideal person in alternate world. The contrast of euphoria and reality is essential.

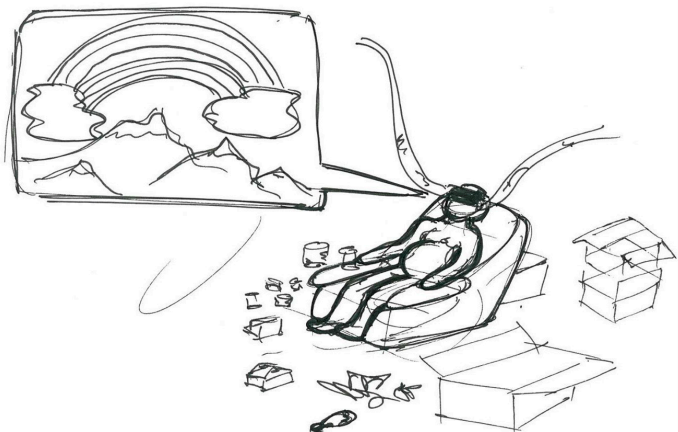


Figure 4: Scene of what VR addiction looks like

Storyboard for Short Video

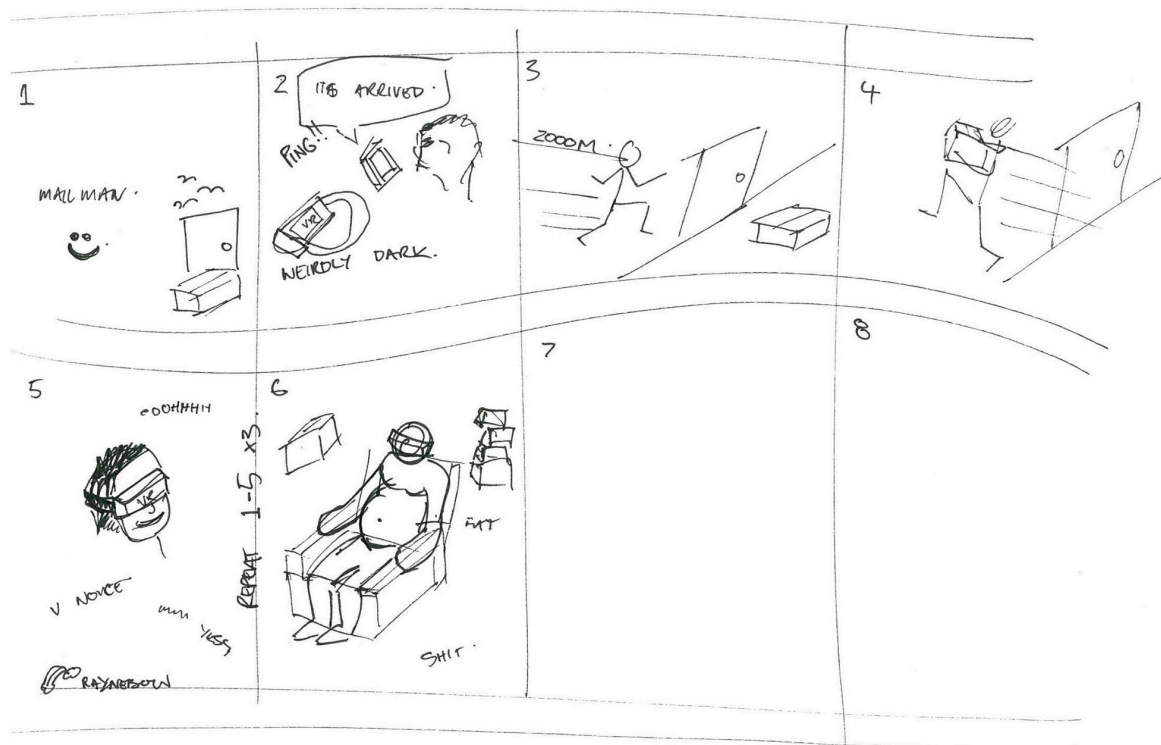


Figure 5: Storyboard of video to present

Selling ideas of an alternate reality to hook users

"Experience another life" was chosen as the tag-line for this project to portray the escapist and ideological appeal to 'customers'.

"If you could restart life, how would you live it?"

**EXPERIENCE
ANOTHER
LIFE**



Figure 6: Poster drawings ideation

Final Design Explanation

Polaris is a weekly delivery service which caters to the needs of virtual reality enthusiasts. The service offers a starter VR headset, a customisable meal plan, electric muscle stimulators and a colonic tube. The Polaris service allows users to stay in VR weeks on end without the need to move from the safety of home. The service responds to the significant rise in dangerous gaming addictions alongside the predictions for future technology advancements.



Figure 6: Image of "Polaris Experience" kit apart of design

Extending the time in which users may remain in VR, the service replaces the need to travel abroad. Polaris allows the user to remain in the comfort of their own home by providing a curated, more desired reality for the user to live in. These themes indicate the increasing concerns and discussions which surround clinically recognised disorders such as IGD. Our design exists in a highly corporate future, abusing consumerism and psychology, disregarding consumer health to make a profit.



Figure 7: Final flyer design printed on gloss A5



Figure 8: Final Video
<https://youtu.be/Vclto74QBXy>

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Experience Another Life

FROM
\$35
a week

Subscribe to the **Polaris Experience** today.
Never have to leave home again!

Receive your
first week **FREE***

*free offer only included with the 1 year commitment plan.
25 hours a week minimum required of use or penalties may apply



Polaris Experience

by Corp X

The Polaris Experience by Corp X brings the world to you! By incorporating advanced patented technology the Polaris headset allows you to experience anything you can dream of. From unexplored ruins to the Mars colonies, the Polaris Experience can take you anywhere so you never have to leave home again.

What's in the box?

Polaris VR Headset

7 day meal plan

*not a suitable replacement for a balanced diet

Muscle Stimulator

*not a suitable replacement for exercise

Waste Dissipator

*Colonic Tube

Warning

Virtual Reality has been proven to be highly addictive. Prolonged use will cause obesity, it will cause loss of sight and it will cause anti-social behaviour.

**PROLONGED USE
WILL CAUSE
LONG-TERM HEALTH
PROBLEMS.**

