



VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Marcel Saarnisto

Impact of Sponsorships in eSports on the Buying Behavior

International Business

2017

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Marcel Saarnisto
Opinnäytetyön nimi	eSportin sponsoroinnin vaikutus ostopäätöksen
Vuosi	2017
Kieli	Englanti
Sivumäärä	68 + 2 liitettä
Ohjaaja	Thomas Sabel

Tarkoitus: Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on arvioida sponsoroinnin merkitystä videopelialalla ja vaikuttaako sponsorointi asiakkaiden tekemiin ostopäätöksiin. Erityisesti on keskitytty tutkimaan sponsorointia eSportissa (e-urheilu) heidän lukuisissa turnauksissaan kuten ESL:ssä (Electronic Sports League), vertaisverkkojakelukanavissa kuten Twitchissa sekä videojakopalvelussa kuten Youtubessa.

Metodologia: Tutkimus on toteutettu kvantitatiivisella tutkimusmetodilla, jossa arvioidaan sponsoroinnin merkitystä ostopäätöksen teossa eSportin toimialalla. Kysely jaettiin kohdeyleisölle (N=375) www.reddit.com -Internetsivulla sekä Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun kautta.

Tulokset: Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että kuluttajat ovat tietoisia sponsoroinnista mutta he eivät anna sen vaikuttaa lopulliseen ostopäätökseen. Tämä tarkoittaa, että kuluttajat tutkivat itse tuotteen saamia arvosteluja ennen kuin he tekevät lopullisen ostopäätöksen.

Omaperäisyys: Viime vuosien aikana tietoisuus eSportin (e-Urheilu), ESL:n (Electronic Sports League) ja Internetissä tapahtuvan vertaisverkkojakelun osalta on kasvanut. Syynä tähän voidaan pitää Internetissä pelattavien pelien sekä online-jakelusivustojen määrän kasvua. Myös eSports-tapahtumien katsojat ovat lisääntyneet joka vuosi, ja tämä johtaa siihen, että potentiaalisia kuluttajiakin on enemmän.

ABSTRACT

Author	Marcel Saarnisto
Title	Impact of Sponsorships in eSports on Buying Behavior
Year	2017
Language	English
Pages	68 + 2 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Thomas Sabel

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the impact of sponsorships in the video-gaming industry on the buying behavior of customers, especially sponsorships in eSports (electronic Sports), in its various championships like the ESL (Electronic Sports League) and in the peer-to-peer internet streaming service called Twitch as well as in the video-sharing service YouTube.

Methodology: This study utilizes a quantitative research method to evaluate the impact of sponsorships on the buying behavior of potential customers in the wide field of eSports. Therefore, a questionnaire was distributed to the target audience (N=375) via the website www.reddit.com as well as in the University of Applied Sciences in Vaasa (VAMK).

Findings: The results of this research indicate that the consumers are aware of sponsorships but do not let themselves get distracted by them, meaning that they still prefer to do their own research and rely on reviews before purchasing a certain product in need.

Originality: For the past years, the awareness of eSports (electronic sports), the ESL (electronic sports league) and peer-to-peer internet streaming is rising, which is driven by the increasing amount of (online competitive) games as well as online streaming services. The numbers of spectators in eSports are increasing yearly. Thus, increasing the amount of potential customers.

Keywords eSports; sponsorships; streaming; buying behavior; video-gaming

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has the purpose to evaluate the impact of sponsorships in the video-gaming industry on the buying behavior of potential customers, especially sponsorships in electronic Sports (later on referred to as eSports) in regard to the Electronic Sports League (later on mentioned as ESL) and its various championships and tournaments.

The number of spectators in eSports events are increasing yearly. According to the article “Major Sponsorship Signifies Continued eSports Growth”, published on the Forbes website (2016), “Worldwide audience growth in eSports is inspirational for the industry.” A research conducted by Newzoo, a market research institution based in Amsterdam, revealed that in 2015 - 115 million people watched eSports, in 2016 the number of spectators increased by 29 million to 144 million. They estimate that by 2019 the spectators will amount to 212 million. This is a great incentive for companies to sponsor this continuously growing industry even more.

Furthermore, the various methods of sponsorship are explained as well as the effectiveness of sponsorships on the buying behavior of potential customers will be investigated. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to the target audience.

This thesis has the aim to give an insight into the wide topic of eSports and its increasing number of players and spectators, as well as championships and tournaments all around the world. Additionally, it describes the emergence and utilization of the internet-streaming service Twitch, the video-sharing service YouTube and Twitch competitor YouTube Gaming.

1.1 Research Problem

The research problem is – simply said – a question that the researcher wants to answer or a certain problem that a researcher wants to solve. It determines what the researcher wants to find out when the research is over. The research problem of this thesis is *does sponsorships (sponsoring) in eSports affect buyers in their decision making?* For solving this issue, the following objectives are set. Firstly, the term consumer and buying behavior as well as sponsoring will be explained with its various types and reasons of why companies engage in sponsorships in the first place. Secondly, describing eSports, the ESL with its numerous championships and sponsors as well as the internet streaming service Twitch and the video-sharing service YouTube. Finally, questionnaires are handed out in order to find out if sponsorships affect the decision making of buyers and to what extent.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into two main parts, the theoretical framework and the empirical framework. The theoretical framework consists of five sections. The first section describes consumers and the buying behavior in general and explains who the consumers are regarding this thesis, the second section is about sponsorships, its objectives as well as providing an overview of sponsorship and patronage. The third section is about eSports, the history of it, the formation of the ESL as well as its products and furthermore providing information on earnings in this specific segment. Additionally, it shows the emergence of the peer-to-peer internet streaming service Twitch and the increasing amount of gaming videos in YouTube and YouTube Gaming, which acts as a direct competitor to Twitch. The fourth section of the theoretical framework is about the development of video-gaming equipment that is also being used in championships and the emergence of companies and new departments, which are specialized in developing innovative gaming-equipment. The fifth and last section provides a general overview of the research methodology.

The empirical framework has the purpose to show if the theory tallies with practical matters. For that purpose, questionnaires were handed out to the target audi-

ence via the website www.reddit.com and in the University of Applied Sciences in Vaasa (VAMK).

1.3 Importance

This research could be of interest for companies engaging in sponsorships in eSports events, since it aims at evaluating the impact of these sponsorships on the buying decision of potential customers, who generally visit or watch these events. Furthermore, companies which are thinking about entering this specific industry could benefit from this study in the matter of acquiring additional information.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework provides information regarding the topic this research is about. Therefore, relevant literature was thoroughly reviewed and the key findings of sponsorships in eSports and its numerous championships and tournaments described. This section is divided into five parts: the consumers and the buying behavior, sponsorships and patronages, the history of eSports, the ESL and its championships and tournaments and the internet streaming service Twitch and the video-sharing service YouTube, the development of gaming equipment of companies which are specialized in this area and finally the research methodology.

3 CONSUMERS AND BUYING BEHAVIOR

This section concentrates on the term consumer as well as buying behavior. It provides a general definition of these terms and explains the factors that influence buying behavior. Furthermore, the different types of buying behavior as well as the purchase process will be discussed.

A consumer, defined by the business dictionary, is “a purchaser of a good or service in retail.”. In other words, every individual who purchases a certain product or service. In this context, it is vital to understand what leads these individuals to the purchase and which factors are involved in the decision making, this process is called consumer buying behavior. The buying behavior, defined by the business dictionary, is a “purchase decision making pattern, that is a complex amalgam (combination) of needs and desires.”. In other words, every individual decides what he/she purchases based on their needs and desires.

The consumer buying behavior can be divided into four types, the *complex buying behavior*, where before the individual purchases a certain high value brand, he/she seeks for information on it, the *variety seeking behavior*, where, as the name implies, the individual prefers variety, hence he/she experiments with different products, the *dissonance buying behavior*, where the individual is highly involved when purchasing an expensive or infrequent product and finally, the *habitual buying behavior*, where, as the name implies, the individual purchases a certain product out of habit. (Shma 2012.)

In conclusion, there are two types of consumer buying behavior where the individual is highly involved in the purchase as well as differentiating between brands and two types where the individual is less involved in the purchase as well as not differentiating between brands. Table 1 provides an illustration of these four types. (Shma 2012.)

Table 1. Types of buying behavior (Shma 2012.)

	High involvement	Low involvement
High differentiation between brands	Complex buying behavior	Variety seeking behavior
Low differentiation between products	Dissonance buying behavior	Habitual buying behavior

Generally, there are four major factors that have an impact on the consumer buying behavior. These factors are of *cultural*, *social*, *personal* or *psychological* origin. They are also the driving factors in developing certain product and brand preferences. *Cultural* factors have a vital role in the buying behavior of individuals, these include the culture itself, sub-cultures such as a nation, religion or racial group and the social class. *Social* factors are divided into reference groups such as opinion leaders, the family and the role and status such as organizations or groups. These factors also affect the buying behavior. *Personal* factors have a great influence on the buying behavior, it is divided into the age and life cycle stage, the occupation, financial or economic situations, the life-style and the personality. Lastly, the *psychological* factors, these are divided into motivation, perception, learning and experience and the attitude and beliefs. (Shethna 2016.)

Finally, when an individual decides to purchase a certain product, he or she goes through a five-stage decision process. These stages are the problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post purchase evaluation. (Flekel 2013.)

In connection to eSports, the consumers are the individuals watching eSports events, following players on YouTube and/or Twitch or simply individuals who spend time on playing computer games.

4 SPONSORING

This section is about the term sponsoring. It provides a brief history of it as well as the development of the definition of the term and its purpose. Furthermore, it will explain the difference between patronage and sponsorship. Lastly, it will show the desired influence of sponsoring on the audience and the objectives of sponsors.

The history of sponsorships can be dated back to the time of the ancient Roman Empire. In this era, gladiators fought in brutal competitions to the death, watched by an enthusiastic audience in huge amphitheaters all around the ancient Mediterranean. Although most gladiators were slaves, they were not treated as such, since they were an expensive investment for their patrons (sponsors) in regard of training, high-energy nutrition as well as exceptional medical treatment. The patrons advertised their gladiators (clients) participating in these competitions in the local community by displaying them on house-fronts or outside the city gates, which can still be observed at Pompeii. The size of these advertisements had a great impact on the awareness of the community towards the sponsor and the competition, the larger the advertisement, the more generous the sponsor and glamorous the competition was perceived to be. In case the gladiator died during the competition, the trainer (lanista) had the opportunity to charge the patron a substantial amount, up to hundred times the cost of a gladiator who survived the battle. On many occasions, the audience demanded a bloodshed of a gladiator which, if allowed by the patron, was perceived as an act of generosity. (Coleman 2011.)

4.1 Definition

One of the first widely spread definitions of sponsoring or sponsorships can be dated back to 1971 and was defined by the Sports Council of the United Kingdom as “(Sponsorship is) a gift or payment in return for some facility or privilege which aims to provide publicity for the donor.” (Walliser 1995: 2.) Although this definition correctly emphasizes the relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored, it is not very precise according to Walliser (1995), since there are some irregularities such as the word “gift” and “in return for” which are contradictory,

whether one gift something or demand something in return, not both. In 1976, a new definition of sponsorship proposed by Francois Rouffiac was that “Sponsorship consists of financial or material support of a team, an athlete or a competition.” (Walliser 1995: 2.) Even though Rouffiac correctly pointed out that the support does not necessarily have to be of financial nature but can rather be material support, Walliser (1995) mentions that the definition only focuses on sports, leaving other areas out. Furthermore, Rouffiac does not take the counter performance of the sportsman into consideration. A more detailed definition of sponsorship proposed in 1979 was, “(1) A commercial organization (sponsor) provides resources for the benefit of a leisure activity (sponsored). (2) The sponsor does so with the expectation of gaining some commercial valuable benefit. (3) The sponsored activity consents to the sponsor company using a facility it has to offer in exchange for the resources it accordingly receives.” (Walliser 1995: 3.) This definition highlights that sponsoring is only accessible for commercial organizations, however non-commercial organizations such as charities can also engage in sponsoring. Additionally, the term “leisure activity” is chosen rather suboptimally in this context, although it is more comprehensive than the term “Sport”, it is rather questionable to declare sponsorships in the socio-economic area such as support of universities, hospitals and so forth as a “leisure activity”. (Walliser 1995: 3.) In the late 1980s, sponsoring was widely recognized as an independent communication instrument with this definition “Sponsoring means the (1) planning, organization, execution and controlling of all activities, (2) which are connected to the provision of financials, materials and/or services through companies (3) to promote individuals and/or organizations in the sporting, cultural and/or social sphere (4) and simultaneously achieve company communication objectives.” (Bruhn 1991: 16.) The most recent and widely accepted definition however is that of the International Chamber of Commerce from 2003, which state that “any commercial agreement by which a sponsor, for the mutual benefit of the sponsor and sponsored party, contractually provides financing or other support in order to establish an association between the sponsor’s image, brands or products and a sponsorship property in return for rights to promote this association and/or for the granting of

certain agreed direct or indirect benefits.” (International Chamber of Commerce 2003.)

In conclusion, sponsorships rely on a relationship, where the sponsored party receives benefits, whether financial or non-financial, of the sponsor, but in return the sponsored party is obligated to promote the name of the sponsor through the inclusion of media -especially print media and television- to increase the reach of the public sphere, which from the sponsors point of view ideally corresponds to the target audience it wants to deliver its message to. (Walliser 1995: 8.)

Figure 1 provides a visual graphic, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the key features of sponsoring.

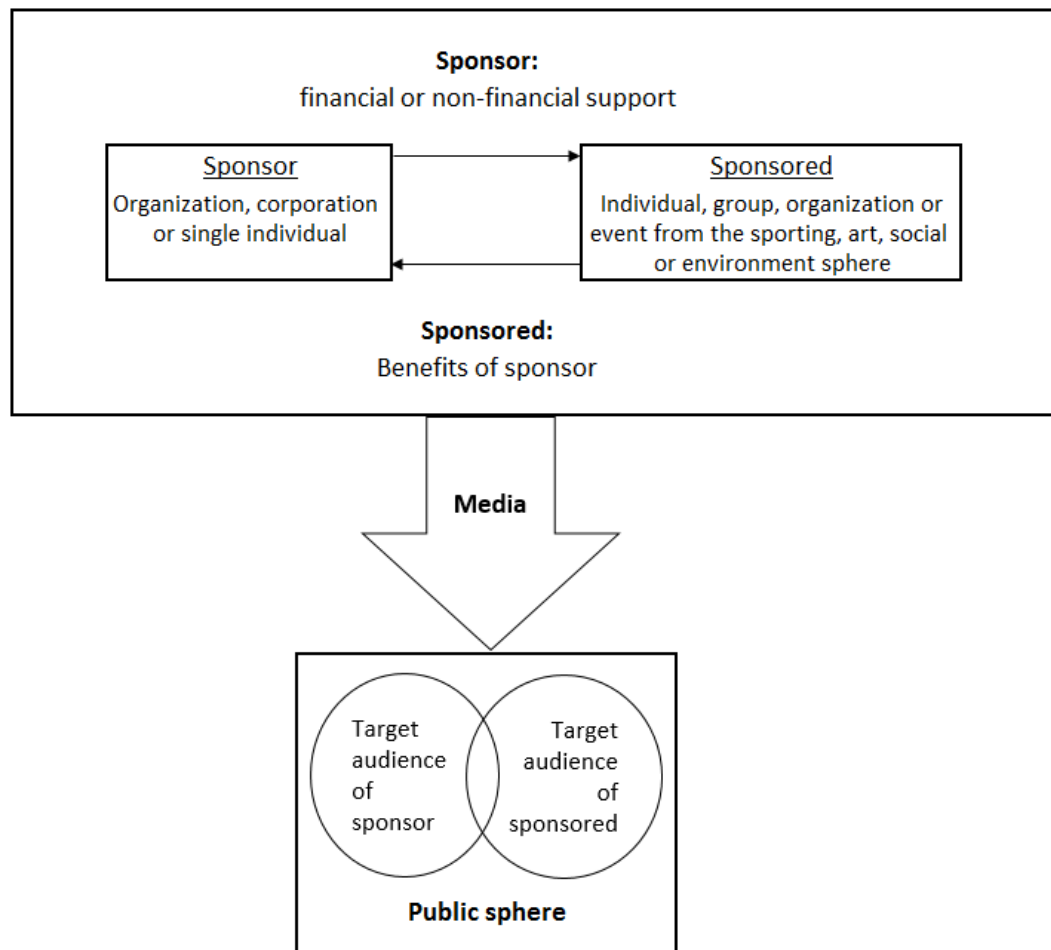


Figure 1. Key features of sponsoring. (Walliser 1995: 7.)

In any case, sponsors of any kind are following specific objectives when engaging in sponsorings, to name a few, these are raising awareness of a brand or a company, enhancing the image of a brand/company, demonstrating a product and increasing the turnover. However, to explain the desired impacts of sponsoring on the target audience, a certain model called the AIDA-model, which still enjoys great popularity since its first introduction in 1925, is being used. (Walliser 1995: 80.)

AIDA is an acronym which stands for *Attention*, *Interest*, *Desire* and *Action* and is divided into three impacts. The first impact in this model is to draw attention on a specific product that the sponsor provides, the second impact is to arouse interest or a desire for the provided product and the third and last impact is to induce the action of the target audience to actually buy the product. Figure 2 below illustrates the AIDA-model and its three impacts.

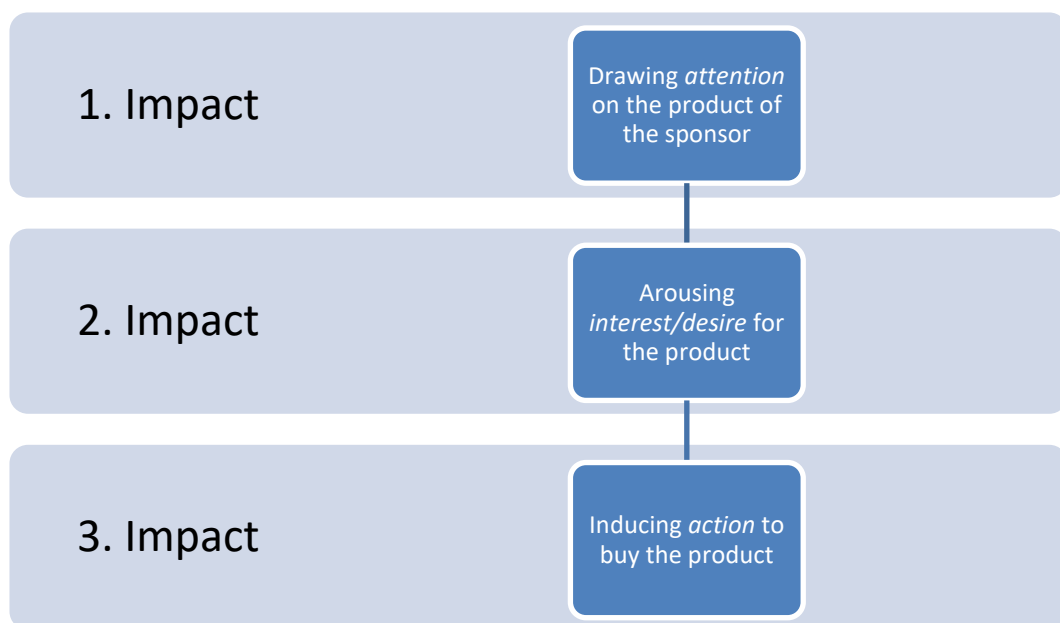


Figure 2. Impacts of sponsoring on the basis of the AIDA-Model (Walliser 1995: 80.)

4.2 Sponsoring Objectives

As mentioned before, sponsors pursue a specific set of objectives. However, the following objectives should not be viewed as a list of all goals of sponsoring, but rather as the most important ones. These objectives are as follows:

1. to increase the awareness of a brand or a company,
2. to enhance the image of a brand or a company,
3. to demonstrate a product,
4. to maintain contacts with the target audience of the company and
5. to increase the turnover.

Increasing the awareness of a brand or a company is one the key objective of sponsoring, sponsors want to be remembered by the audience on a specific event which on a long-term perspective increases the awareness of the brand ort the company and therefore the turnover. (Walliser 1995: 36.)

Enhancing the image of a brand or a company is probably one of the most important objective of sponsoring. The intention of the sponsors is to reflect the image of the sponsored party on itself. Furthermore, in regard of the brand, it contributes to the positioning of it and for companies, it is a suitable instrument to stress a social responsibility and mindset and therefore raising the awareness of a specific target audience. (Walliser 1995: 39.)

Demonstrating a product is utilized by companies which want to proof the quality of their product. However, demonstrating a certain product can only be done if they are directly or indirectly connected to the sponsored activity, for example, sporting equipment or drinks in sport. (Bruhn 1991: 37, Walliser 1995: 39.)

Maintaining contacts with the target audience is another vital objective, the list of contacts of companies include the customer, the public sphere in general, journalists, opinion leaders, other companies, bankers, stakeholders and so forth. Including these contacts in the sponsoring activities enhances the relationship with them and therefore creates the so called “goodwill”, meaning it increases the sympathy towards the sponsor of the target audience. (Walliser 1995: 41.)

Increasing the turnover is an objective, which on a long-term perspective is the aim of every action or instrument utilized by a company. Furthermore, every objective mentioned before can be viewed as an intermediate objective with the aim of turnover and profit maximization. However, sponsoring can also lead to a short-term and direct increase in turnover, for example, the sales volume of Peugeot's Type 205 in Finland, Sweden and Norway after winning the Rallye-championships in the corresponding countries. (Walliser 1995: 42.)

4.3 Patronage versus Sponsorship

Patronage also has a long history, just as sponsoring, it has its roots in ancient Rome, where it is said that Gaius Clinius Maecenas, an advisor to Emperor Augustus, supported the three writers Horaz, Vergil and Properz for altruistic reasons, meaning that he supported them without expecting anything in return. (Walliser 1995: 9.) Travelling to the 20th century, specifically to the year 1975, another example can be found, where Lord Hesketh, a British nobleman, supplied the racing-car driver James Hunt with a Formula-1 race car, which did not have any brand names on it. The only reason was to offer this young talent a chance, which paid out one year later when James Hunt won the Formula-1 world championship.

As a general definition, patronage is "... essentially an altruistic activity carried out with no expectation of return other than the satisfaction of knowing that good is being done..." (Walliser 1995: 9.) However, according to Bruhn (1991), entrepreneurs turned away from patronages at the end of the last century, which paved the way for other forms of support such as sponsoring. (Bruhn 1991.)

The opinions on the differences of patronage and sponsorship varies significantly from author to author, with some stating that there is no difference at all, yet others mention a very distinctive difference. In conclusion, Walliser (1995) agrees with both opinions in a sense that there are indeed differences as well as similarities, which are displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Main differences and similarities of sponsoring and patronage. (Walliser 1995: 11.)

	Sponsoring	Patronage
Differences	Primary interest of company	Primary interest in artistic, sporting and socio-political sphere
	Return service of sponsored specifically defined and mandatory	Return service neither defined nor expected
	Support with advertisement	Discrete, silent support
	Sponsor mentioned and highlighted	Patron not mentioned or at most mentioned roughly
Similarities	Spheres of activity: Sport, art, social and environment	Spheres of activity: Sport, art, social and environment
	Form of support: financial or non-financial	Form of support: financial or non-financial

5 HISTORY

1972 marked the beginning of a growing industry. This was the year when Stanford University held a video game tournament for the game Spacewar, the grand prize – a one-year subscription for the Rolling Stones Magazine. (Good 2012. Eight years after that Atari organized tournaments in several regions in the United States of America for the game Space Invaders, which attracted over 10.000 participants. These specific events established a new major hobby – competitive gaming. (Electronic Games Magazine 1982: 36-37.)

Players in competitive gaming seek to beat records of other players, hence the meaning of competitive. This was the reason for Walter Day to found an organization in the summer of 1981 called Twin Galaxies, which is still actively gathering records of videogames since its foundation. (Brawell 2010.)

Spacewar, Space Invaders, Pong and all the other titles have one factor in common – they are all arcade games with no online capabilities, thus the need to arrange gatherings and events in order to compete with each other. This changed in the 1990s when computer games gained increased online capabilities. With that came the first Internet team game called Netrek - the successor of 1986s Xtrek - which is still actively played. In a 1993 published article in the Wired Magazine, the author Kevin Kelly mentions that he “like(s) to think of Netrek as the first online sports game”. (Kelly 1993.)

More tournaments followed in the 1990s, including the Nintendo World Championships, which toured through thirty cities across the United States and Canada in order to find the best Nintendo players in each of these regions. The finalists met in the Universal Studios Hollywood in California, where they competed for the world champion crown. (Cifaldi 2015.) 4 years later, in 1994, Nintendo held a second World Championships for the SNES (Super Nintendo Entertainment System) called Nintendo PowerFest '94 also known as the Nintendo World Championships II, which was held in the United States with the purpose of finding the greatest gamer across the country. (Cauterize 2013.)

From that point on, eSports started to attract an increasing amount of people and therefore more championships and more possibilities to encounter other players around the world in order to compete with them.

5.1 eSports

When talking about sports, one might think of football, basketball, ice-hockey, boxing or any other traditional sport. Time has changed the perspective on the definition of sports, especially with the growing computer industry, which nowadays offers a variety of games which can be played on an electronic device, whether it is alone or against others in the internet. As mentioned above, eSports was born in 1972 and was growing ever since. So, how exactly can eSports be defined? According to Hamari & Sjöblom (2016), “eSports is a form of sports where the primary aspects of the sport are facilitated by electronic systems; the input of players and teams as well as the output of the eSports system are mediated by human-computer interfaces. In more practical terms, eSports commonly refer to competitive (professional and amateur) video gaming that is often coordinated by different leagues, ladders and tournaments, and where players customarily belong to teams or other ‘sporting’ organizations who are sponsored by various business organizations.”. (Hamari and Sjöblom 2016: 2.)

Following this definition, eSports can indeed be defined as a form of sport, with the difference on how it is facilitated, which in eSports are electronic systems, as the “e” in the term implies.

The rapid growth of eSports resulted in the foundation of the Korean e-Sports Association (KeSPA) in the year 2000, which is a department of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. The KeSPA promotes professionals and amateurs in South Korea as well as hosting the KeSPA Cup, which is a nationwide tournament. (KeSPA Greeting.) The head of KeSPA, Jun Byung-hun is very keen on promoting a better understanding of video gaming, especially among the older generations, which are still very ignorant about it. In an interview, he said that “In Korea, games are the barometer of the generations gap, (because) parents view games as distractions from studying, while children see them as an important part

of their social existence.” (Mozur 2014.) Furthermore, he encouraged many South Korean institutions to treat eSports like real sports by pushing through several initiatives, which most recently led to the admission of two students in a top Korean college, the Chung-Ang University in Seoul, based on their success in eSports. (Mozur 2014.) In this sense, the United States of America even went a step further, where two universities, the Robert Morris University in Pennsylvania and the University of Pikeville in Kentucky offer scholarships to professional League of Legends players. (Tassi 2015.)

While in South Korea, technology companies such as Samsung and CJ Games, one of Korea’s most successful game developers, noticed already a decade ago that sponsoring eSports players is very promising (Mozur 2014), it took Europe longer to notice it. However, in Europe it is not only the technology companies who entered the field of eSports but rather sport clubs. Besiktas Istanbul for instance started this ongoing trend in the beginning of 2015 by entering the eSports segment with the Besiktas e-Sports Club, which parted their way in the beginning of 2016. Nevertheless, many other sport clubs, especially notable football clubs such as VfL Wolfsburg, West Ham United, Schalke 04, Valencia CF, Manchester City, Ajax Amsterdam and Paris Saint-Germain F.C. entered the eSports segments in games such as FIFA 16, League of Legends, Counter Strike: Global Offensive and StarCraft II. (Paspalaris 2016.)

Despite the fact that eSports is continuously growing, the debates on whether it can be classified as a sport are still very controversial among experts. In 2008, the Global Gaming League tried to get video gaming into the China Olympic games arguing that “recognized sports such as golf relied more on hand/eye coordination and skill rather than athletics” (Elsa 2011.) Furthermore, they pointed out the fact that the Olympic committee recognized bridge, chess, bowling and billiards as legitimate sports. (Elsa 2011.) However, others such as the president of the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) John Skipper mentioned that eSports is “not a sport – it’s a competition. Chess is a competition. Checkers is a competition. Mostly, I’m interested in doing real sports.” (Schwartz 2014.) Regarding this controversial topic, the International e-Sports Foundation (IESF),

founded in 2008, is continuously making an effort to “promote e-Sport as a true sport beyond language, race and culture barriers.” (IESF. Introduction) The IESF has 46 member nations all around the world, who officially recognize eSports as a sport. (IESF. Member Nations.)

5.1.1 Games in eSports

There is a variety of games which fall under the “umbrella term” of eSports. This sub-section concentrates on the majority of eSports titles of different genres, which are also being played in the ESL (electronic sports league) in a competitive matter. The genres of eSports are fighting games like Mortal Combat, sport games like the FIFA series and NHL series, first-person shooters (FPS) like the popular Counter-Strike series, Overwatch and Rainbow Six: Siege, real-time strategy (RTS) like StarCraft II which is particularly popular among the Korean gamers and multiplayer online battle arena games (MOBA) like League of Legends (LoL) as well as Dota and Dota 2. In terms of participants and spectatorship MOBA’s are the most popular among all of these genres. (Altay 2015; Gaudiosi 2016.)

5.1.2 Electronic Sports League & Competitions

The Electronic Sports League (ESL), successor of the 1997 founded Deutsche Clanliga, is a company launched in 2000, which organizes championships and competitions in the eSports sector all around the world. (Pencz 2015.) What started as an online gaming league, a gaming magazine and a rental service of computer servers for several competitions has quickly “become the biggest video-game events company in the world”. (Dave 2015.) The company has its headquarters in Cologne, Germany, but has also many offices around the world, for example in Australia, North America and in Europe.

The ESL hosts a variety of competitions all around the world in collaboration with eSports game companies like Blizzard Entertainment (StarCraft II), Valve Corporation (Dota 2 and Counter-Strike series) and Riot Games (League of Legends). The competitions are on both national and international levels. (Gaudiosi 2015; Pencz 2015.). The most famous competitions are as follows:

The Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) are a series of eSports tournaments held internationally, which are sponsored by Intel, HyperX, Kinguin and Acer. The tournaments are held in the games StarCraft II, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends. Since its foundation in 2006 the IEM had one season each year and are currently in its eleventh season holding its finals in Katowice, Poland in March of this year (2017). (Intel Extreme Masters.)

The ESL One is one of the most notable offline tournament for games like Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and Dota 2. (Mira 2015; Drall 2015.) This tournament is frequently sponsored by Valve for its own Counter-Strike: Global Offensive Major Series, which have been held in Katowice, Poland in 2014 and 2015 and in Cologne, Germany in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Furthermore, the ESL One is being sponsored by ASUS, Intel, NVIDIA, HyperX, theScore and paysafecard. (ESL One.)

The ESL Pro Leagues is another product of the ESL which is host for Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Mortal Combat X, Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege and other titles.

The ESL National Championships are -as the name implies- nationally held tournaments, with the oldest existing eSports league being the ESL Meisterschaft in Germany which started in 2002 (Richter 2015.) as well as the ESL UK Premiership, which is "the company's largest tournament since 2010". (Higgins 2015.) Beside these countries, they are being held in numerous other countries all around the world as well. The games being played in these tournaments are from almost every genre like the Counter-Strike series, Rainbow Six: Siege, Dota 2, League of Legends, FIFA, NBA 2K17, Mortal Combat and StarCraft II, just to mention a few.

The StarCraft II World Championships Series (WCS) is a part of the Battle.net World Championships Series (BWCS) which is organized by Blizzard Entertainment, the publisher of this specific game. It starts with national preliminaries in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Oceania (Australia, New Zea-

land). (Hillier 2012.) After these preliminaries, the BWCS crown the world champion.

The ESL Fantasy is an online game, where you are able to create and manage a fantasy team. You can pick official players from World Championships, which are based on their real performance. Furthermore, with this fantasy team you can compete in a global ranking in games like Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Dota 2, League of Legends, StarCraft II and other games. (ESL Fantasy.)

5.1.3 Earnings in eSports

As already mentioned above, eSports and specifically the ESL and its various championships are on the rise. This is especially noticeable when looking at the earnings of teams and single players. This sub-section provides information on these earnings by breaking them into the total prize money per year from 2010 to 2016, the countries divided into North-America, Asia and Europe and the most notable games. Therefore, the website www.esportsearnings.com will act as a reference. However, it is mentioned on the website, that the “list(s) represents the top players (countries, tournaments and teams) in eSports who won the most prize money based on information published on the internet. Sources include news articles, forum posts, live report threads, interviews, official statements, reliable databases, VODs (Video-on-Demands) and other publicly-accessible sources that preserve "historical" information.”. (E-Sports Earnings.)

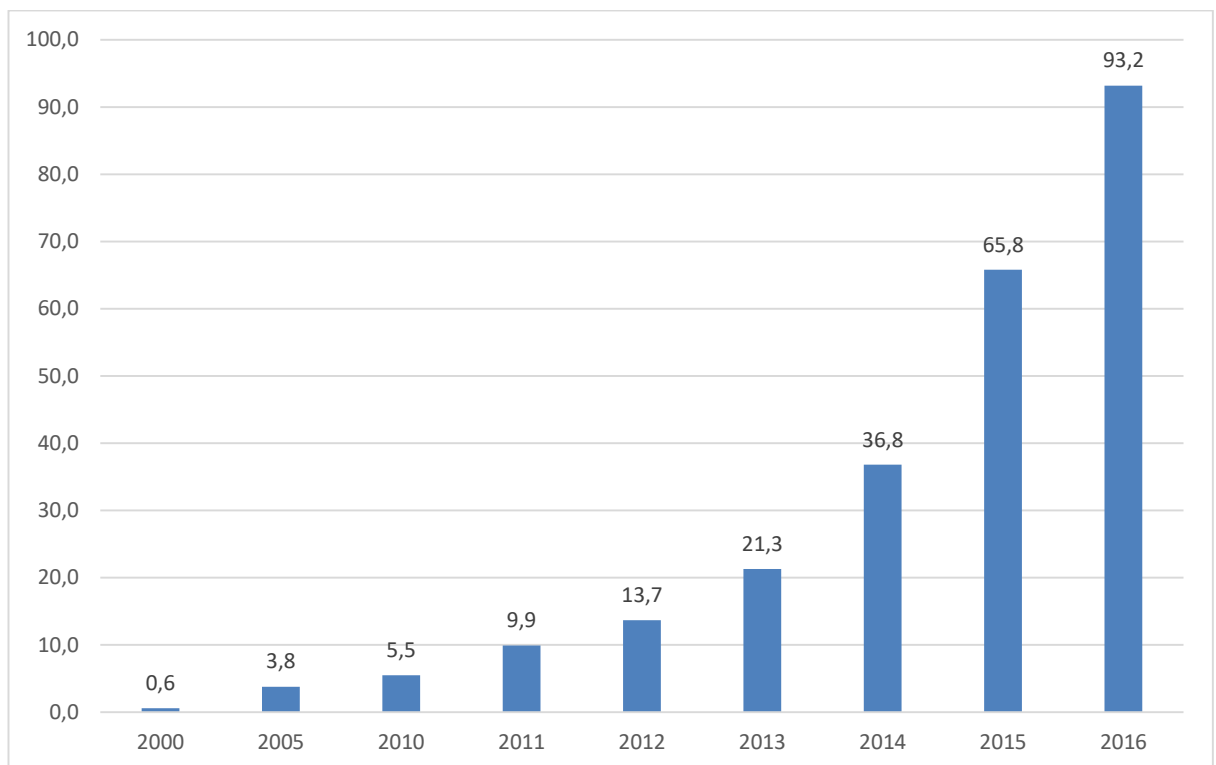


Figure 3. Amount of total prize money in eSports in million \$.

Figure 3 above displays the amount of total prize money in eSports. One can quickly observe the rapid growth in earnings from 2000 to 2005, which amounts to \$3.2 million (533%) in only five years. From 2010 the earnings experienced a constant growth with major steps from 2012 to 2013 of \$7.6 million (55%), which doubled from 2013 to 2014 (\$15.5 million or 72%). The biggest growth in earnings can be seen from 2014 to 2015, which increased by \$28.9 million (78%), closely followed by the growth from 2015 to 2016, which amounts to \$27.4 million (41%). In 2016 the total amount of prize money peaked at \$93.281.089,94.

The following Figures split the countries into three regions, North-America, Asia and Europe. However, not every country of these regions will be included, only those with a substantial development of teams and earnings.

In Figure 4 below, the earnings of the North-American countries United States of America and Canada are being displayed from 2010 to 2016 in regard of the prize money.

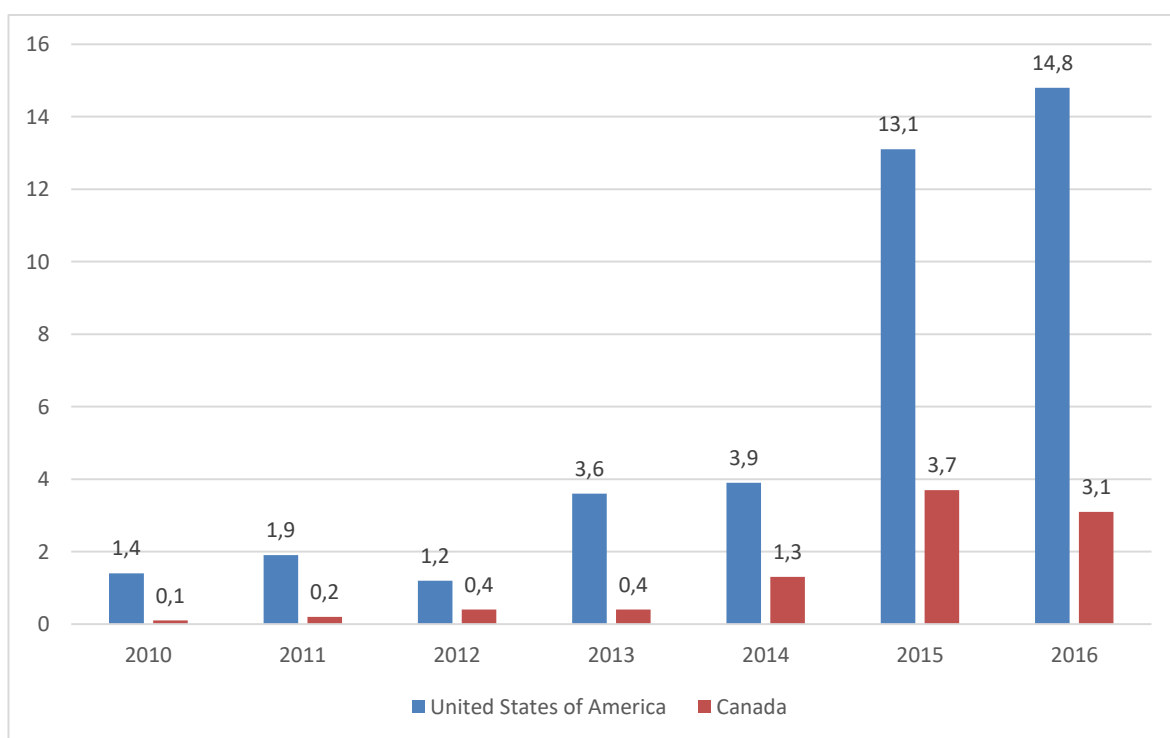


Figure 4. Earnings of North-American countries in million \$.

Figure 5 below displays the earnings of the Asian countries South-Korea as well as China from 2010 to 2016 in regard of the prize money.

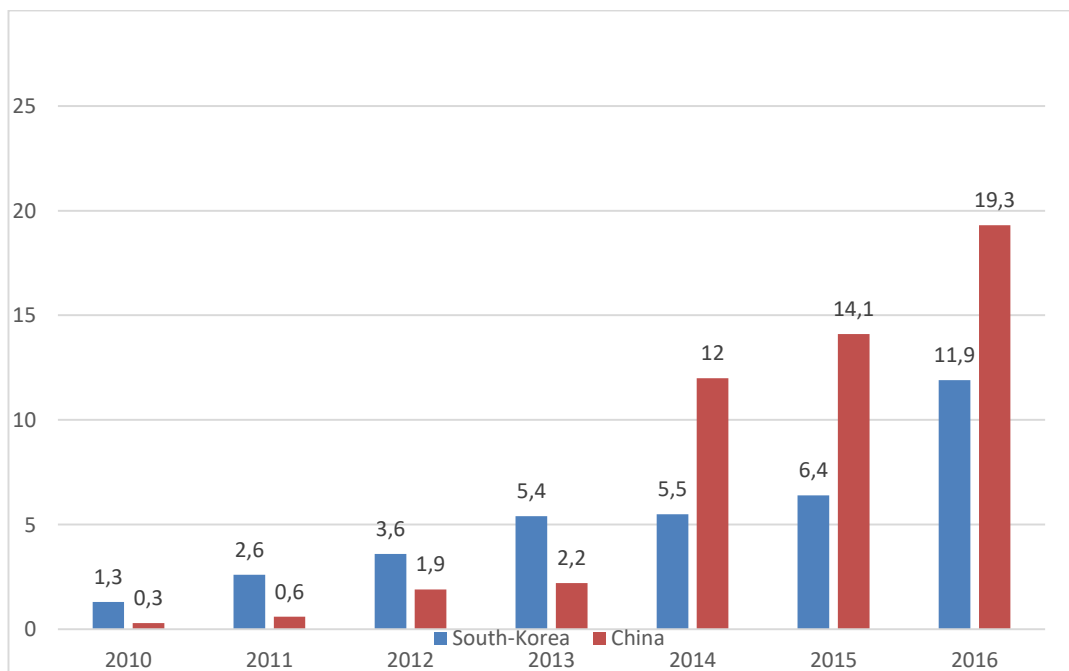


Figure 5. Earnings of Asian countries in million \$.

In Figure 6 below, the European countries Germany, Sweden, France, Denmark and Finland are being displayed in regard of the prize money from the year 2010 to 2016.

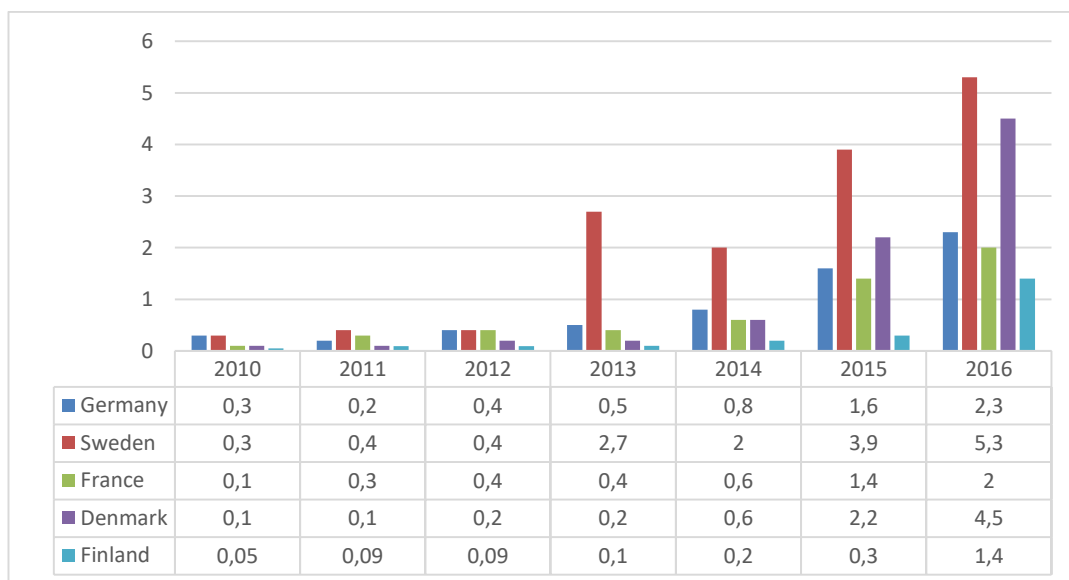


Figure 6. Earnings of European countries in million \$.

Figure 7 below displays the regions taken above, grouped and compared with the total amount of earnings in the corresponding years.

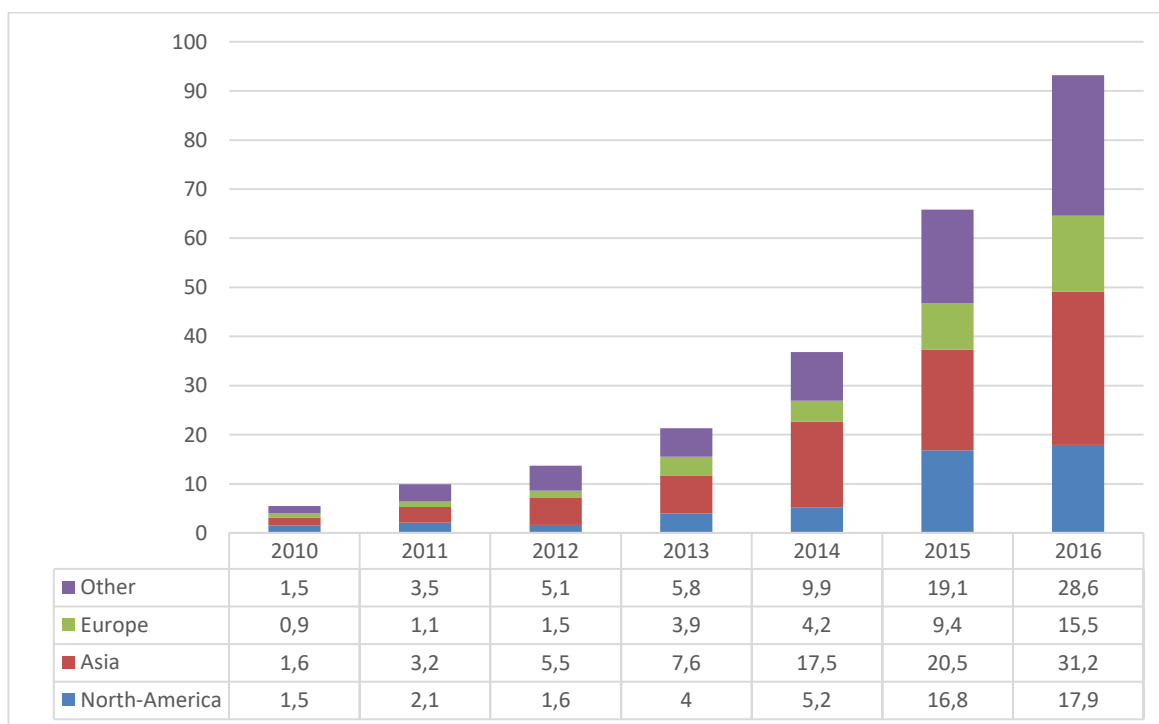


Figure 7. Regions in regard of total earnings.

Figure 8 displays the games played in eSports in a competitive way. As already mentioned above, MOBAs such as League of Legends and Dota 2 are the most popular games among all other genres. However, the Counterstrike Series as well as StarCraft 2 will be taken into account as well. From 2010 to 2012, Counter Strike 1.6 and Counter Strike: Source was played, therefore, in these years they will be combined in one bar. From 2012, Counter Strike: Global Offensive will be added to the bar and from 2013 Counter Strike: Global Offensive replaced both older versions. Dota 2 had its release in 2013 but was played before as a modification for another game, which is why it shows up in 2011 already. When comparing it to Figure 3 above, it can quickly be observed that Dota 2 has the biggest amount of prize money in regard to the total earnings. In 2014 it amounts to 44.94%, in 2015 to 47.09% and in 2016 to 39.90%.

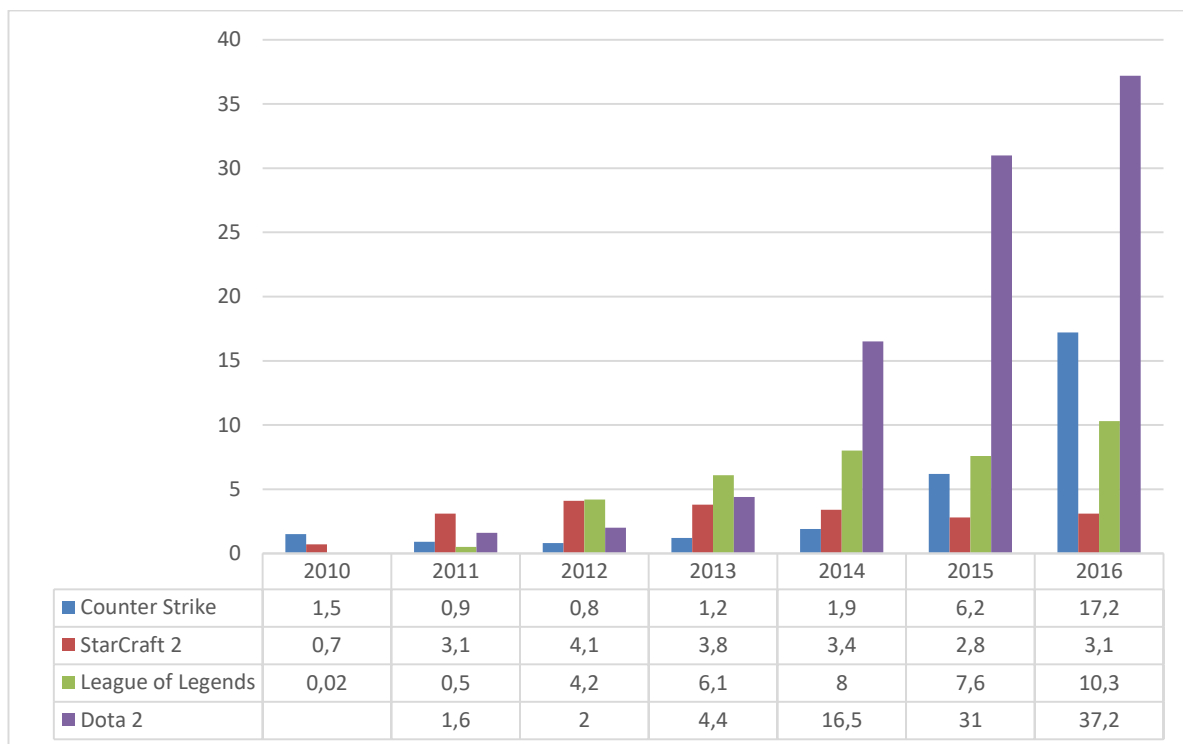


Figure 8. Top earning in Games in million \$.

5.2 Peer-to-peer Internet Streaming

Many are probably familiar with popular streaming websites such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, which offer a huge palette of different movies and series from almost all genres or YouTube, which offers music and user generated content. However, “Streaming as a technical term refers to conveying media content in a way that it is simultaneously consumed by the receiver, as opposed to ‘downloading’ where the received media content is saved for later consumption.”. (Hamari and Sjöblom 2016: 4). Twitch or Hitbox is a peer-to-peer internet streaming service, where the content of the broadcaster is being uploaded and simultaneously distributed to other “peers” in the network, opposed to YouTube where you upload content, which can be accessed by the viewer after the upload process is complete. Twitch has disclosed in a blog entry the architecture of their video system, which includes the following core components from getting the video from the broadcaster to the viewer. For the sake of simplicity, the technical terms are

not being explained in depth, but rather the overall picture of how they utilize their streaming technology should be understood. The video ingest is transmitted over the Real-Time Messaging Protocol (RTMP), which are “virtual channels” operating independently (Encyclopedia.) (pcmag.com), to the transcode system. This transcode system takes the incoming RTMP stream and transcodes it into multiple HTTP Live Streaming (HLS) –adaptive streaming protocol for delivering videos– (Encyclopedia) streams, implemented via a combination of programming languages such as C/C++ and Go. The HLS streams will then be distributed to their geographically disparate points of presences (POPs) -a point at which a line form a long-distance carrier connects to another line- (Encyclopedia.), it guarantees high quality video streams and is mostly written in Go. (Twitch Engineering 2015.)

5.2.1 Twitch

One of the best-known services using streaming technology is Twitch, which was founded in 2011 and quickly became “the world’s leading social video platform and community for gamers, video game culture, and the creative arts.”. (Twitch Social Video for Gamers.) Its main division is video-gaming, where people all around the world watch games, user generated programming, eSports with all the top teams, leagues, players, talk shows and every major event as well as conventions, press conferences and show floor activities. Furthermore, every major video game publisher and developer is featured in Twitch with their own channel, also all the top video game media sites are present to bring live content to their readers. (Twitch Social Video for Gamers.) However, it also established a creative division, where artists can show their creative process, from painting over composing to cooking.

Twitch announced on their website that currently their daily active users amount to 9.7 million, that more than 2 million are unique streamers per month, that approximately 106 minutes are being watched per person per day, that over 2 million are peak concurrent sitewide viewers, which are viewers watching the stream at each second (UStream Support Center.), that the community raised over 46 mil-

lion \$ for charity (Twitch Social Video for Gamers.) and that over 17 thousand are members of their “Partner Program”, which users can apply for on their website in order to receive access to special features such as monetizing their content, giving channel subscription ability for viewers, which in return gain special perks such as an ad-free viewing experience, custom chat badges and emoticons to express emotions during the broadcast, unrestricted access to the broadcasters archive and video-quality as well as access to a subscriber-only chat. Additionally, joining the “Partner Program” gives the broadcasters the opportunity to set different quality options for their viewers to select from, since not every viewer has access to high-speed internet, so in order to watch the broadcast fluently viewers can choose a lower quality which suits their internet speed. Lastly, the broadcaster can delay their broadcasts up to 15 minutes, which ensures fairness during competitive games. (Twitch Partner Program 2017.)

From 2012 to 2013, the minutes watched per month doubled from 6 billion to 12 billion, unique viewers grew from 20 million to 45 million and total videos broadcasted increased by 3 million to 6 million. Furthermore, the number of unique streamers per month increased by 600 thousand amounting to 900 thousand (in 2016, 2 million as mentioned above) and partnered channels expanded from 3386 to more than 5100. (Williams 2014; Eadicicco 2014.)

The average age of this huge audience is 21, 76% are between the age of 18-49. 99% of the audience watch live streams, 25% broadcast their gameplay, 38% watch video highlights and 61% chat with the community, these are the top four activities on twitch. (Williams 2014.)

5.2.2 Amazons Acquisition of Twitch

In 2014, Twitch Interactive, the owner of its subsidiary Twitch, was acquired by Amazon for approximately \$970 million. (Welch 2014.) This deal came quite as a surprise, since according to sources which were familiar with this deal said that YouTube, the subsidiary of Google, reached a preliminary deal to buy Twitch for more than \$1 billion. However, representatives from both YouTube and Twitch declined to comment on this deal. (Spangler 2014; Mahardy 2014; Takahashi

2014; Gibbs 2014.) After the deal with Amazon was closed, Twitch CEO Emmett Shear explained in a statement that "We chose Amazon because they believe in our community, they share our values and long-term vision, and they want to help us get there faster". (Welch 2014) Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos commented on that deal that "Broadcasting and watching gameplay is a global phenomenon and Twitch has built a platform that brings together tens of millions of people who watch billions of minutes of games each month" and further, that "Like Twitch, we obsess over customers and like to think differently, and we look forward to learning from them and helping them move even faster to build new services for the gaming community.". (Welch 2014.)

In 2016, as a result of Amazons acquisition in 2014, Twitch introduced a new service called Twitch Prime, which grants an exclusive set of perks for Amazon Prime members. For more information, the official website of Twitch can be visited. (Statt 2016.)

5.2.3 Sponsorships

There are several companies offering sponsorships for streamers, especially gaming equipment companies such as Logitech G-Series, Razer and SteelSeries. In order to get in contact with companies, websites such as www.hellogamers.com and other similar platforms offer conciliation, where they act as a mediator and establish contacts with companies interested in sponsorships. Companies such as Razer offer a "Supported Streamer Program", which grants its members exclusive features depending on the amount of subscribers on their Twitch or YouTube channel. (Razer Supported Streamer Program.) SteelSeries offers a similar program called the "Affiliate Program", in which members gain affiliate codes which visitors of their channel can use to purchase products with in order for the broadcaster to earn up to 8% commission. (SteelSeries Affiliate Program.) However, to attract as many sponsors as possible, Twitch streamers or "YouTubers" should already have established an existing fan base.

5.2.4 YouTube

YouTube, in comparison to Twitch, uses a video-sharing service, where -opposed- to Twitch the user uploads his videos and does not share it simultaneously.

YouTube was created in February 2005 by former employees of the online payment system service PayPal Chad Hurley, Steve Chan and Jawed Karim. (Hopkins 2006.) YouTube “allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos.” As well as providing “a forum for people to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small.”. (About YouTube.)

By the end of 2005, after receiving a \$3.5m funding by Sequoia Capital, the website had its official launch. At that time, YouTube already gained 8 million views per day. Nearly 2 months after that in 2006, the website reached 15 million viewers per day as well as around 20,000 videos uploaded daily. By July, the site passed 100 million viewers a day and 65,000 videos uploaded daily. In the same year, YouTube signed many deals with several companies such as the three major music labels Sony BMG, Warner and Universal and the television networks CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) and NBC (National Broadcasting Company). Shortly after that, Google acquired YouTube for an outstanding \$1.65 billion. In the years to follow, several other partnerships were formed such as with the NHL (National Hockey League) and EMI (Electric and Musical Industries). In January 2007, it was estimated that YouTube consumed as much bandwidth (on the website www.techterms.com defined as “the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection”) as the entire Internet in the year 2000. In the year of 2010, YouTube introduced their movie rental system, which offers a variety of movies from companies such as Paramount, Disney, Sony and Warner Brothers. (Reuters 2006; Goo 2006; Sorkin & Peters 2006; Telegraph 2010; Dickey 2013; Sawers 2016.) Furthermore, YouTube announced that they have reached 2 billion views per day and that 24 hours of video content is being uploaded every minute. Only five years after its foundation, YouTube is the third most visited website in the internet. (YouTube Official Blog 2010; O’Neill 2010.) This was the reason for

the birth of YouTube Live in 2011, which as a pilot project already streamed numerous popular concerts, sporting events and interviews. However, the initial launch was in April 2011 with the purpose to “integrate live streaming capabilities and discovery tools directly into the YouTube platform for the first time.” (Hamilton & Siegel 2011.) The latest statistics of YouTube reveal that almost 5 billion videos are being watched every day and that they have over 30 million daily visitors. Furthermore, they revealed that 38% of their audience is female and 62% male. The age of these users range from 18 to over 65, the users which are 18-24 amount to 11%, 25-34 amount to 23%, 35-44 amount to 26%, 45-54 amount to 16%, 50-64 amount to 8%, over 65-year-olds amount to 3% and 14% are unknown by their age. (Donchev 2017.)

5.2.5 YouTube Gaming

In 2015, YouTube launched its new video-gaming oriented sub-website called YouTube Gaming as an attempt to compete with Twitch. The reason for this was the increasing audience that video-gaming attracts, as the head of YouTube’s gaming, Ryan Watt said in an interview “Gaming is so big now. We’re doing billions of hours of watch-time a month, with hundreds of millions of users. It’s astonishing.” Video-games are certainly extremely popular among YouTube users already, according to an online-video analytics firm called OpenSlate “the 10 most popular games channels on the service (YouTube) generate more than 2.2 billion monthly video views. (Grubb 2015; Dredge 2015.) YouTube Gaming aims to “keep you connected to the games, players and culture that matter to you, with videos, live streams and the biggest community of gamers on the web – all in one place.” (Joyce 2015.)

5.2.6 Sponsorships

Sponsorships in YouTube works the same way as they do in Twitch, several websites offer conciliation, establishing contacts to companies interested in sponsorships. As mentioned above, it is a great advantage for users interested in being sponsored to already have an existing fan base to attract as many sponsors as possible.

6 DEVELOPMENT OF GAMING EQUIPMENT

In this section, the development of gaming equipment is described and thus the emergence of new departments in existing companies such as Logitech with its Logitech G-Series as well as companies which focused only on gaming equipment as its main product category such as Razer, SteelSeries, Roccat and Corsair.

One of the most important factors which guarantees an advantage over competitors of video-game enthusiasts is the equipment players utilizes, whether they are amateurs or professionals. There are numerous companies which specialized in developing the best gaming equipment with innovations to gain a competitive advantage over other companies. The most notable companies in this industry are the following.

6.1 Logitech International S.A.

Logitech International S.A. is a Swiss based mobile and personal computer peripherals manufacturer founded in 1981, with its European headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland and North-American headquarters in Silicon Valley, California, U.S.A. and offices in China, Taiwan and Japan. They have a variety of products in their portfolio, from mice and keyboards, mobile, smart home gadgets, speakers, video equipment to its own gaming series called G-series. Logitech started with office equipment in 1981, especially with mice, which were an innovative and more intuitive way of interacting with a personal computer back then. (The Logitech Story.) When eSports became more popular, competitors in the industry began to develop and launch products for gaming purposes and Logitech followed with its first gaming group named WingMan in 1999. (Logitech Press Releases 1999.) Fast forwarding to the year 2013, Logitech announced its new product line called G Line or better known as the G-Series, reflecting a new approach to PC Gaming. This new series included six redesigned mice and keyboards as well as two headsets, which were optimized for gaming purposes. (Business Wire 2013.) Logitech G-Series is also a supporter of many eSports teams, with the most notable ones being Cloud9, Team Solomid, Invictus Gaming and mYinsanity. (Logitech Gaming.)

6.2 Razer Inc.

Razer Inc. is an American based computer hardware manufacturer founded in 1998 (back then called kärna). In the same year, kärnas general manager Robert Krakoff consulted Min-Liang Tan, a hardcore gamer, in order to create gaming mice utilizing the high-speed tracking technology it acquired. Only one year after that, they released the world's first gaming mouse the Razer Boomslang. In 2000, Razer engaged in sponsorships in the Cyberathlete Professional League (which closed down in May 2008) and becomes the partner with one of the first professional gamers in the world – Jonathan “Fatal1ty (Fatality)” Wendel. Kärna discontinues business operations in the same year and closes down. 5 years later, Robert Krakoff and Min-Liang Tan establish Razer Inc. in San Diego, California, after acquiring the rights from kärna for the Razer brand. Min introduces Razer's slogan and mission “For Gamers, By Gamers”, which is their slogan from that point on. Furthermore, they released the Razer Diamondback, which becomes one of the most sold gaming products of all time. In the years to follow, Razer sponsored many eSports Teams such as Fnatic, Evil Geniuses, Team Liquid, SK Telecom T1, widely regarded as the best League of Legends team in the world and many more. In 2006, Razer released the Razer DeathAdder, which was the bestselling gaming mouse in the world and to this day, their most iconic product, in 2010 they released their first mechanical gaming keyboard, the Razer BlackWidow, which surpasses its competitors in performance as well as popularity. Nowadays, Razer Inc. expanded to many countries in the world, establishing Research and Development centers in San Francisco, California, in Taipei, Taiwan as well as new headquarters in Singapore and in Shanghai, China. From 2010 to 2014, Razer scores best in the People's Choice Awards for four consecutive years. (About Razer.)

6.3 SteelSeries

SteelSeries is a Danish gaming peripherals manufacturer founded by Jacob-Wolff-Petersen in 2001, with its headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. and offices in Copenhagen, Denmark and Taipei, Taiwan. (We are Steelseries.) Back then they

manufactured high-end mouse pads (e.g. the Icemat), but quickly became a global player in the gaming world, which are nowadays renowned for their high-end gaming gear. (Weverbergh Interview.) The change from high-end mouse pads to high-end gaming gear came in 2008, when SteelSeries acquired Ideazon Inc., a developer and manufacturer of gaming peripherals and technologies. (Business Wire 2008.) On their website, they disclosed that the eSports teams they sponsor such as Evil Geniuses, Vitality, Digital Chaos, Alliance, among others, won \$11,541,938 in total revenue in 2015. (We are SteelSeries; SteelSeries eSports.)

6.4 Roccat

Roccat a German manufacturer of gaming peripherals was founded in 2007 and has its European headquarter in Hamburg, Germany as well as offices for the Asian-Pacific area in Taipei, Taiwan and for the area in North-America in Cerritos, California, U.S.A. (roccat.org/imprint). Although there is not much information on the history of this company, it particularly caught my interest since they use Finnish words for their products such as Kone, Tyon (Työn in Finnish), Kova, Kiro (probably from the word kiroilla) and Savu for their gaming mice. Ryos (Ryös or ryöstö in Finnish), Suora, Isku and Arvo are the names used for their gaming keyboards and Kave (from kaveri in Finnish) for their gaming headset and Syva (Syvä in Finnish) for their in-ear headset. (Lahlou 2015; ROCCAT.) Roccat also has its very own eSports team called TeamROCCAT, which competes in various championships and tournaments in League of Legends and StarCraft II. (TeamROCCAT.)

6.5 Corsair

Corsair, founded in 1994, is one of the world's leading manufacturer and provider of PC components such as power supplies, PC cases and PC and CPU (Central Processing Unit – the “brain” of every PC) cooling solutions. They have their headquarters in Fremont, California, U.S.A. As of 2014, they entered the eSports segment under their Corsair Gaming brand, with which they provide gaming keyboards, mice, headsets and mouse mats. (About Corsair.) They sponsor a variety of eSports teams. Their engagement in sponsorships are in product sponsorship,

providing each player full peripheral equipment, brand support, promoting brands through their social media pages, travel assistance, covering all travel expenses (in some circumstances) to gaming events and competitions, product development, giving the teams the opportunity to give feedback in the development of equipment and in very rare cases cash sponsorship, which are granted after a trial period. (Corsair eSports.)

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides an insight into the research methodology utilized in this thesis. It describes the research methods, the data acquisition and gives a definition of reliability and validity in a research.

7.1 Research Methods

Conducting any form of research requires either to count something and/or talk to people. The research methods are classified into two types, quantitative and qualitative. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 8.) The utilization of both types is called the mixed method.

7.1.1 Quantitative

“Quantitative methods are research techniques that are used to gather quantitative data, data that can be sorted, classified, measured.”. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 11.) The core quantitative methods which are used in social researches are as follows:

Quantitative survey: This is one of the most popular method in order to gather primary data from a rather large number of respondents, which consists of questions being asked of the respondents. It has two areas of utilization, in qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on how the questions are structured and analyzed. While designing the survey, it is vital to understand to whom this survey is addressed, how to select them as well as how to survey them and what kind of questions the survey will consist of. In regard of the population, which is basically the target group of your survey, questions such as,

1. Can the population be counted?
2. Are there language issues?
3. What are the geographical restrictions?

need to be taken into consideration. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 11-12.)

Another vital factor is the sampling. It is broken down into the sample, which is a portion of the population being engaged in the survey and the sampling, which describes the process of identifying who to contact from that particular population. In that sense, questions such as,

1. Who is the respondent?
2. What is the sampling frame?
3. Are response rates likely to be a problem?

need to be taken into consideration. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 12-13.)

The format of the survey depends on the research, there are two distinctive formats being utilized, the cross-sectional survey, which is a survey that is being handed out at a single point of time, for example after an event in a grocery store after checking out and the longitudinal survey, which is a survey that aims at gathering data over a certain period, for example the long-term effect of smoking. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 14.)

The core of the survey are the questions that are being asked of the respondent. According to Macdonald & Headlam (2009), it is of vital importance to write questions as clear and precise as possible as well as relatively short, also “loaded” or “leading” questions should be avoided as well as compound questions, which might confuse the respondent. The main types of utilized questions are closed questions, these consist of multiple choices to answer from which are given by the researcher, ranking scales, these consist of choices which the respondent is required to put in order and sliding scales, which consist of numbers representing a different feeling, for example, “1” strongly disagreeing with the statement and “5” strongly agreeing with it. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 14-15.)

There are many types of surveys that can be conducted by the researcher, such as, postal, telephone as well as email and internet surveys. The choice of the survey type strongly depends on what type of research is being undertaken. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 16.)

Secondary data collation: This method is utilized by reviewing already existing data, in contrast to primary research techniques, where the researcher or investigator gathers the information by him or herself. Secondary data collation rather puts a focus on giving new insights into a specific topic through interpretation. It is particularly useful in the early stages of a specific research, in order to gain background knowledge and thus understanding. There are many different types of secondary information available, but the most frequently used types are official statistics, which is national data, such as the population, employment and unemployment rate and businesses in an area. These data sets are most likely provided by national institutions and other statistics, which offer some kind of numerical data for evaluation purposes, such as project monitoring information of beneficiaries, funding information and service data. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 20.)

According to Macdonald & Headlam (2009), the key principles when collecting and analyzing secondary information are as follows:

1. Thinking about the key issues as well as topics which are being addressed and having a clear idea what kind of information is required, which will ease the process of collecting secondary information,
2. Searching for the information and data sources,
3. After the information has been gathered, it needs to be read as well as analyzed,
4. Collating information into key headings.

Furthermore, it is stressed that all information, which has been gathered from secondary sources are being referred to properly, which gives a clear view on where the information comes from. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 21.)

7.1.2 Qualitative

“Qualitative methods provide results that are usually rich and detailed, offering ideas and concepts to inform your research. Qualitative methods can tell you how people feel and what they think, but cannot tell you how many of the target population feel or think that way as quantitative methods can.” (Macdonald & Headlam

2009: 35.) The most frequently used methods in a qualitative research are as follows:

Social survey/ questionnaire: As in quantitative methods, surveys are filled with questions which are answered by the respondent, it is up to the researcher how to structure and analyze them, in that sense it can be both qualitative and quantitative. The purpose of these surveys is to gather a variety of different types of data. As already discussed above, the population, sampling, format and question-design need to be taken into consideration when designing a survey. For the questions, it is vital to ask open question, since these tend to generate rich qualitative information. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 35-37.)

Just as surveys in quantitative methods, questionnaires in a qualitative method can be carried out via phone, post, email/internet or face-to-face. The best way for gathering qualitative data is face-to-face, however, this requires the interviewer to be completely objective so the respondents are not being influenced. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 37.)

Interviews: For qualitative purposes, in-depth and telephone interviews are the most frequently used methods by researcher to gather primary data. Its primary goal is to gain the perceptions and attitudes of the interviewee towards a certain issue. The key issues that needs to be considered in doing interviews are choosing the right interview style as well as type. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 39-40.)

The interview styles are split into three distinctive styles, which are as follows:

1. Structured – This kind of style follows specific questions, which are being asked systematically. Mostly utilized when the gathered responses are directly compared.
2. Semi-Structured – More frequently used than the structured style, which follows a framework addressing key themes instead of specific questions. This style allows the interviewer to be rather flexible, in the sense that he/she can develop themes and issues immediately as they arise.

3. Unstructured – In contrast to the structured and semi-structured style, the unstructured does not follow any framework or pattern. The researcher asks questions according to the responds of the interviewee. This style is useful when the whole scope of a specific topic needs to be researched.

Some interview types are as follows:

1. Fact Finder: Utilized to obtain additional information and gain in-depth insight on a specific topic. This type usually consists of structured of standardized interview questions.
2. Idea generator: Basically, the opposite of the fact finder. The questions in this type are structured in a way that gives the interviewer the opportunity to be as flexible as possible in order to gain as much information as possible on a specific topic. The results of this type can be used to set a specific framework for the study. This type usually marks the start of a research, where interviewer discovers and explores issues from a certain group or community.
3. Exploratory: Most frequently used by researchers, which are usually conducted with a representative, which plays a strategic role in the research. However, this type requires some prior knowledge about the topic, since this type aims to test hypotheses, make connections between other elements of the research, ensure the strategic fit and progress the findings of the research forward.
4. Experiential: The aim of this type is to draw out feelings, perceptions and experiences of people over a specific period of time, which provides in-depth material about the effect of the research subject on the life of the individual being interviewed.

Discussion groups: This technique originally comes from market research, but found its way into social research. They typically consist of a 6-12 people group, which are invited to join a discussion and share their views on a specific topic. The group can be assembled in a way that it represents specific demographics. Discussion or focus groups are often utilized when in-depth material from a cer-

tain number of people is required for the research. Furthermore, it usually creates a more relaxed atmosphere among the participants when being in a group, rather than sitting in a face-to-face interview. It is also time effective, since the researcher can gather information of many people simultaneously. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 43.) Some practical issues such as,

1. Deciding on whom to take into the groups, seeking for individuals with different views and experiences and
2. Arranging a location, which should be familiar to participants as well as contacting them about the topic, time, place etc.

needs to be taken into consideration. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 44.)

The question-design can be similar to those utilized in an interview, for example fact-finding, idea-generating, exploratory and experiential. However, the individuals themselves are more important than the actual questions being asked in the group. Furthermore, the facilitation of the discussion group is of vital importance, which means that the researcher should initiate the discussion and ask only relevant and open questions in order to achieve an open discussion rather than a question-answer based session, also the researcher should include all members of the group and avoid only a few people to dominate the discussion. However, it is vital that the discussion stays on track and follows the theme. Another important factor is recording the discussion, this helps the researcher to analyze and evaluate the answers given by the group. This can be done by either taking notes or recording the whole session. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 44-46.)

Observation: This method is utilized by many anthropologists and consists of a mix of different techniques. The time of the observation usually ranges between several months to many years, as the researcher can gather more information and data the longer the observation takes. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 50.)

This method is most appropriate when the researcher is trying to uncover observable details such as daily routines, group dynamics such as the interaction in a collective or partnership and more hidden details such as taboo behavior. Some is-

sues that needs to be taken into consideration in observations are that this method should only be utilized in a mixed method approach, that the reliability of the method is rather hard to evaluate, since these observations are impossible to recreate and the observer is most likely changing the behavior of the participants. In terms of validity, these observations are not prejudging issues or events such as questionnaires, hence providing a high level of validity. Finally, a high set of skills are required, since observations tend to last over a long period of time, which the researcher needs to be aware of, in regard to this the researcher needs to be certain of having the required time, resources and skills to carry this observation out from the beginning to the end. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 50-52.)

To summarize both the quantitative and qualitative method, Table 3 displays the key features.

Table 3. Key features of quantitative and qualitative method. (Macdonald & Headlam 2009: 9.)

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Aim	The aim is to count things in an attempt to explain what is observed.	The aim is a complete, detailed description of what is observed.
Purpose	Generalisability, prediction, causal explanations	Contextualisation, interpretation, understanding perspectives
Tools	The researcher uses tools, such as surveys, to collect numerical data.	The researcher is the data gathering instrument.
Data collection	Structured	Unstructured
Output	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics.	Data is in the form of words, pictures or objects.
Sample	Usually a large number of cases representing the population of interest. Randomly selected respondents	Usually a small number of nonrepresentative cases. Respondents selected on their experience.
Objective/Subjective	Objective – seeks precise measurement & analysis	Subjective - individuals' interpretation of events is important
Researcher role	The researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter.	The researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.
Analysis	Statistical	Interpretive

7.1.3 Mixed

The mixed method, as the term implies, is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative elements in a research. It is basically utilized to overcome limitations of choosing a single method. According to Creswell (2013), The decision on choosing the mixed method approach can be explained on three levels:

The general level, meaning that the mixed method is chosen due to its strength of utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The practical level, meaning that it is chosen because it provides a complex approach of new research procedures and is ideal if the researcher has access to quantitative and qualitative data.

The procedural level, meaning that it is a useful strategy in order to gain a better understanding of the research problem.

However, choosing this method requires the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Furthermore, it requires an extensive amount of data and is therefore rather time-intensive to analyze. The pros and cons can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Pros and cons of mixed method. (Researchrundowns.)

Pros	Cons
Can be easy to describe and to report.	Time required.
Can be useful when unexpected results arise from a prior study.	Resolving discrepancies between different types of data.
Can help generalize, to a degree, qualitative data.	Some designs generate unequal evidence.
Helpful in designing and validating an instrument.	Can be difficult to decide when to proceed in sequential designs.
Can position research in a transformative framework.	Little guidance on transformative methods.

7.2 Data Acquisition

Data acquisition is particularly interesting for a researcher, since it is the foundation of the conducted research. It is the main factor for information gain and utilization in the study. There are two types of data acquisition in a research, primary data and secondary data.

7.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data defined by the business dictionary is “data observed or collected directly from first-hand experience.” (Business Dictionary.) This data is primarily gathered by the researchers or investigators, which are trying to solve a specific problem or simply to gain additional knowledge on a specific topic. (Hox & Boei-je 2005: 593.) Some advantages of gathering primary data are that the researcher or investigator can gather data that is specifically contributing to solving a certain problem that is being studied on, that the investigator has no doubt about the gathered data and the possibility to obtain additional data whilst studying upon a specific topic. However, there are also some disadvantages of primary data, these are that the investigator or researcher has to put a lot of effort on gathering the data which is fairly time consuming, that he has to ensure that the gathered data is of high quality, meaning that it is no fake or unnecessary data, which should better be avoided and therefore not included in a research, also the costs of gathering primary data could be significant. (Types of Data: Primary and Secondary Data 2013.) The methods of a primary research are divided into quantitative and qualitative data as displayed in Figure 9 below.

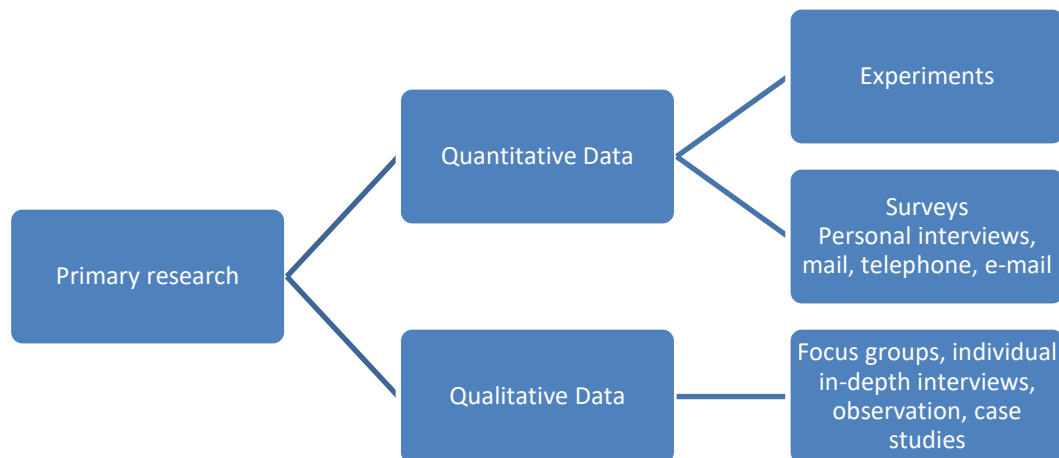


Figure 9. Primary Research Methods. (Kadam, Shaikh, Parab 2013.)

7.2.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is basically primary data which was gathered from a secondary source for another purpose than the study the researcher or investigator is studying on. Furthermore, there are many companies, which provide help in gathering secondary data by designing questionnaires or even distributing them. Some advantages of utilizing secondary data in a research are that the researcher or investigator has the benefit of gathering existing and easily accessible data, hence the researcher does not have to create new data, it is far less expensive than primary data and the researcher or investigator is not directly responsible for the quality of the gathered data. Since primary data comes with advantages and disadvantages, so does secondary data, some disadvantages of secondary data are that the researcher or investigator is unable to decide what has been gathered, for example, specific data that is required for a specific project or research, that the researcher has to be in good faith and rely on the level of quality of the data, that usually the researcher is unable to obtain additional data on a specific topic and secondary data is sometimes not up-to-date, for example a book, which usually takes a long time to complete may describe a specific topic in a way that has changed in the

present. (Type of Data: Primary and Secondary Data 2013, Kadam et al. 2013.)
Figure 10 below illustrates the methods of a secondary research.

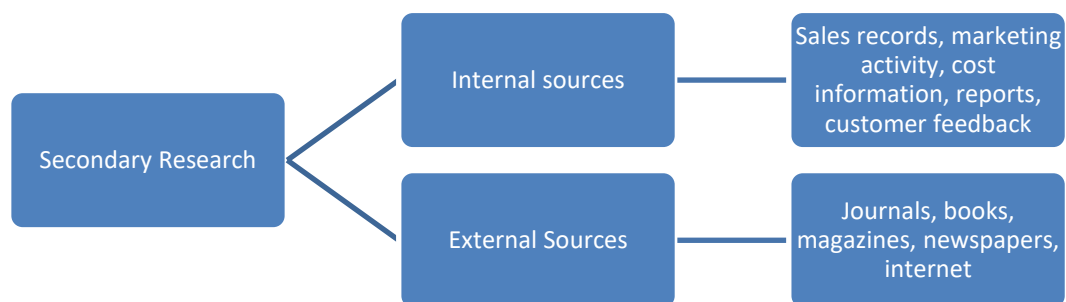


Figure 10. Secondary Research Methods. (Kadam, Shaikh, Parab 2013.)

7.3 Reliability and Validity

The term reliability in a social research sense is defined as “the extent to which measurements are repeatable –when different persons perform the measurements, on different occasions, under different conditions, with supposedly alternative instruments which measure the same thing.” (Drost 2011.) In other words, the essential factor of reliability is consistency, measuring something repeatedly with the same outcome. However, it should be kept in mind, that this does not mean the research is valid. For assessing the reliability in a research, a researcher can utilize two methods, which according to Adams, Khan, Raeside and White (2007: 235-236.) are as follows:

Test-retest Method – This method keeps a focus on repeating the same test with receiving the same score. If the results of these test produce unpredictable results,

it is likely that there are errors in the measurements leading to unreliable results. This method focuses solely on stability over time.

Split-half Method/Equivalent form Method – This method focuses on the internal consistency of the measures. In the split-half method, the researcher may calculate the results from one-half of the scale-items and compare and check it against the other half of the items. In the equivalent form method, the researcher may prepare two different sets of questions which measure the same concept and collect the responses. After that, a correlation between these two sets will determine how reliable that particular concept is measuring, the correlation coefficient should be as close to 1 as possible, resulting in a higher reliability. These methods focus on homogeneity or internal consistency.

The term validity is defined as “the degree to which you are measuring what you are supposed to.” (Adams et al. 2007: 237.) In other words, validity is the accuracy of the measurements utilized in the research. In regard of research methods, there are four distinctive types of validity, these are as follows:

1. Internal Validity, which evaluates the causal relationship between measurements;
2. External Validity, which evaluates the ability to generalize the result of the research to another setting;
3. Construct Validity, which evaluates the relationship between the operationalized concepts in the study to the causal relationship that the researcher is studying on and;
4. Conclusion Validity, which evaluates if there is indeed a relationship between the measurements.

It is said that validity is far more important than reliability, since if a research is not accurately measuring what it is supposed to measure, there simply is no reason to utilize it in a research, even if it measures consistently. (Adams et al. 2007: 237.)

8 EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

The empirical framework consists of questionnaires, which were distributed on the website www.reddit.com as well as in the University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) in Vaasa, Finland. It has the purpose to report on the findings of the research and to what extent it tallies with the theoretical framework explained in the previous sections. For the sake of simplicity, tables and figures are being used to clarify the analysis and to provide a better understanding of the results. Furthermore, it describes the reliability and validity of the empirical framework as well as providing the final conclusion and a further idea to research upon.

8.1 Questionnaire results

The questionnaire, distributed on reddit and in VAMK consists of 17 questions and statements and is divided into five sections. The questionnaire (APPENDIX 1) was designed by utilizing Google Forms.

The first section is about general information of the respondent, specifically the age and gender. The total amount of responses is 375 and the results are as followed. Out of the 375 respondents, 340 are males (90.8%) and 35 females (9.2%). The majority of the respondents were in the age of 23-30 (155 or 41.3%), closely followed by the 17-22-year-olds (153 or 40.8%), merely 51 respondents (13.6%) were over 30 years-old and only 16 (4.3%) under 17. Figure 11 below clarifies the result.

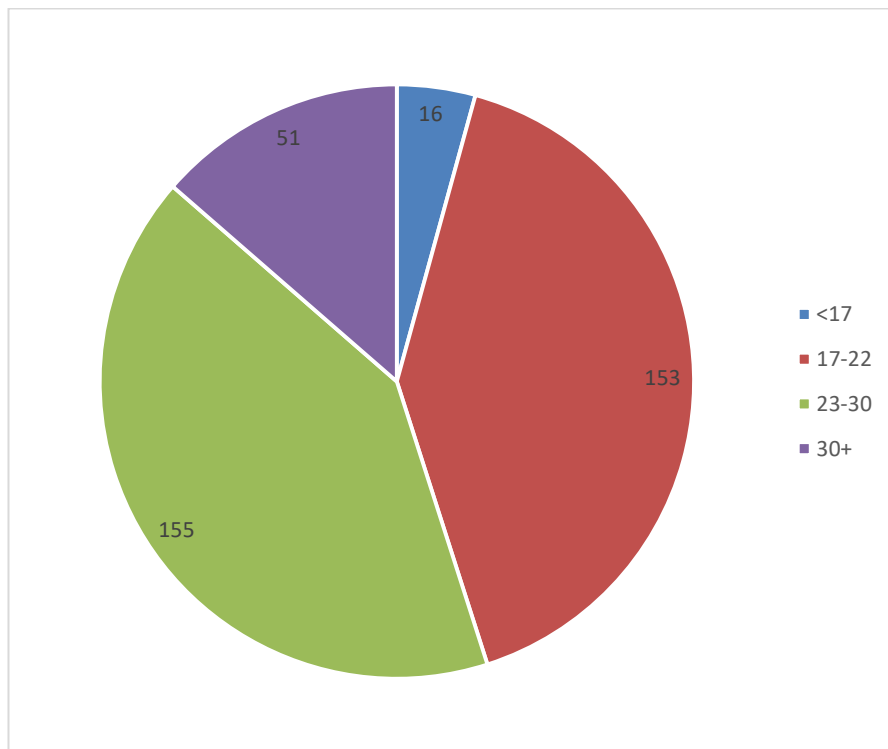


Figure 11. Questionnaire Analysis: Age.

The next section of the questionnaire is about the hours spent on playing computer games, the genre being played as well as what services are being watched and utilized regarding these games. The vast majority of the respondents spend more than 12 hours (152 or 40.4%), followed by 107 respondents (28.6%) which spend 6-12 hours per week. Only 70 respondents (18.7%) spend 1-5 hours per week and 46 (12.3%) less than 1 hour. Figure 12 below provides a visual graphic for the results.

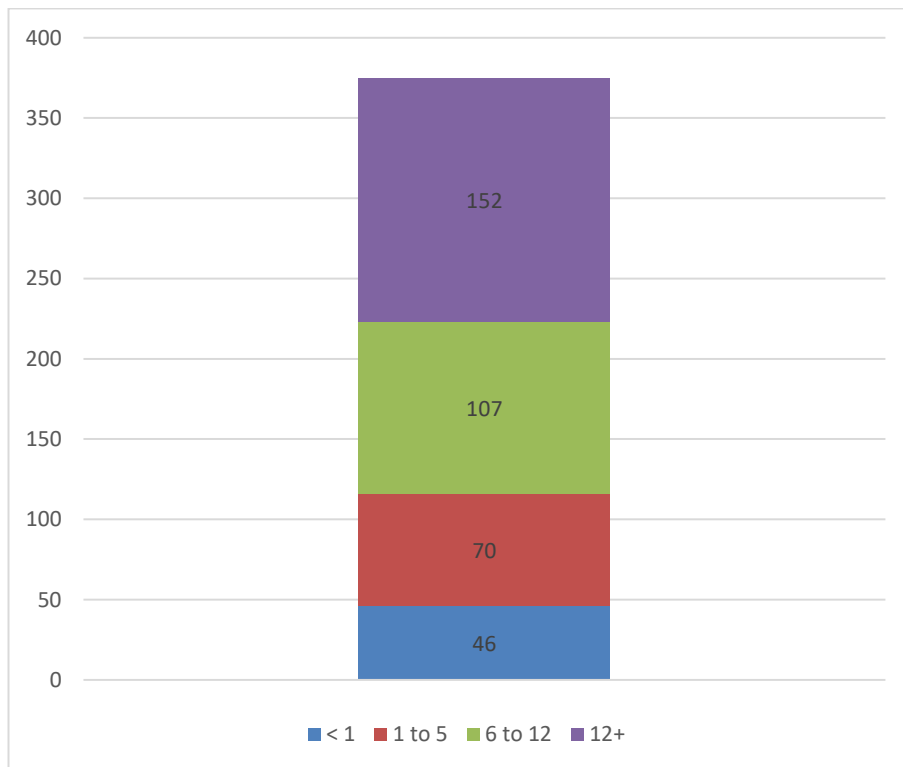


Figure 12. Questionnaire Analysis: Hours spend per week on playing games.

The options for genres in the questionnaire were limited to the most popular ones in eSports, being “Real-Time Strategy”, “First-Person Shooter”, “Sport” and “Multiplayer Online Battle Arena”, however, the option “Other” was also given, in case the individuals play other genres. This question has a multiple-choice option. The majority of choices amounts to 259, which play first-person shooter (FPS), followed by 116 choices for real-time strategy games (RTS), while 109 choices were multiplayer online battle arena games (MOBA) and only 51 sport games. Under the option “Other”, which also received 153 choices included genres such as third-person shooter, roleplaying as well as massive multiplayer online roleplaying games and simulators. However, it has to be mentioned that these genres are not being played in a competitive way for example in any leagues or big championships. Figure 13 below displays the result in a graphic.

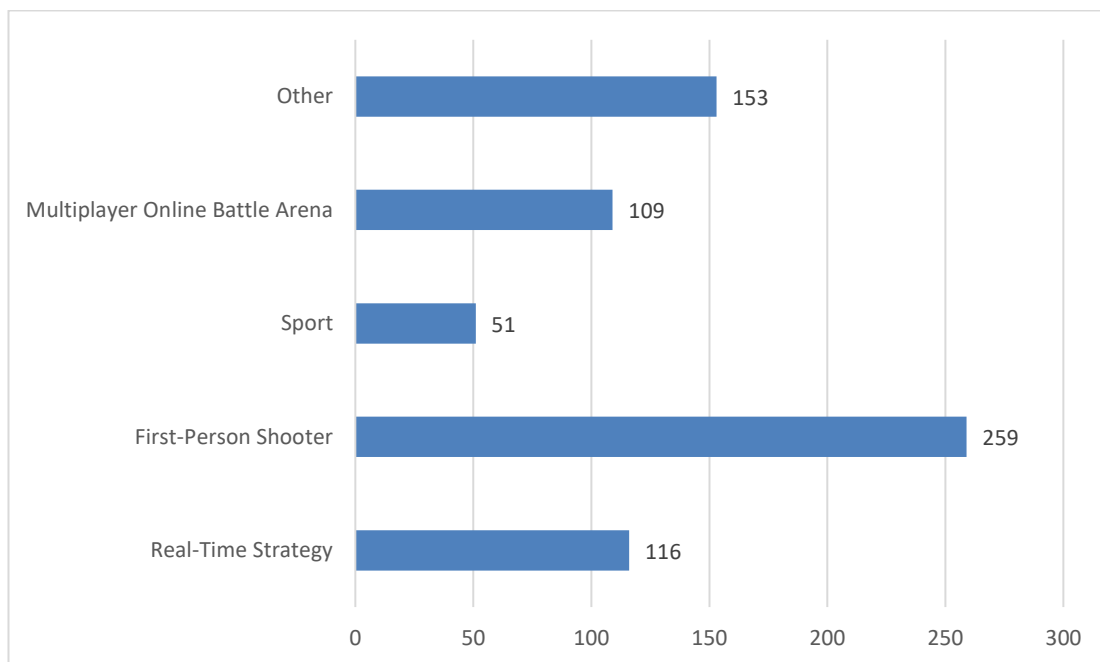


Figure 13. Questionnaire Analysis: Genre of games being played.

Regarding the question of which service is being used in order to watch games, almost half of the respondents, specifically 179 (47.7%) watch YouTube as well as Twitch, 110 (29.3%) watch only YouTube and merely 19 (5.1%) only Twitch, 67 (17.9%) of the total respondents watch neither YouTube nor Twitch. Figure 14 stresses these results in a visual graphic.

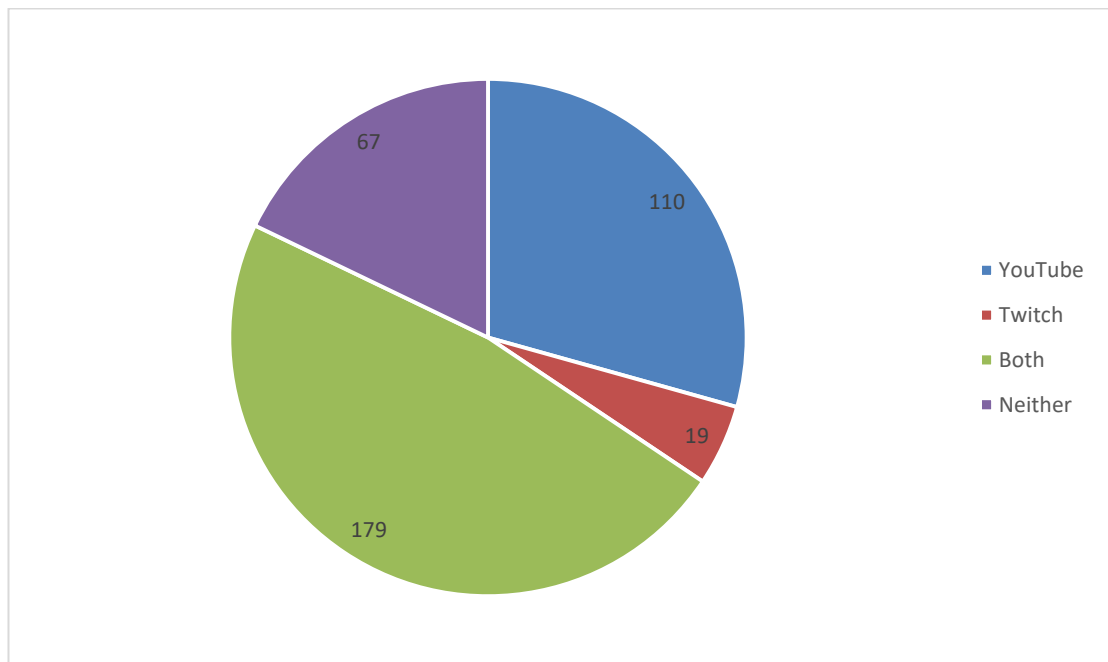


Figure 14. Questionnaire Analysis: Services being used to watch games.

In connection to the prior question, the clear majority amounting to 327 (87.2%) are neither uploading videos on their YouTube channel nor streaming on Twitch. Merely 20 (5.3%) are uploading videos on their YouTube channel, 16 (4.3%) stream on Twitch and 12 (3.2%) do both. Figure 15 displays these results.

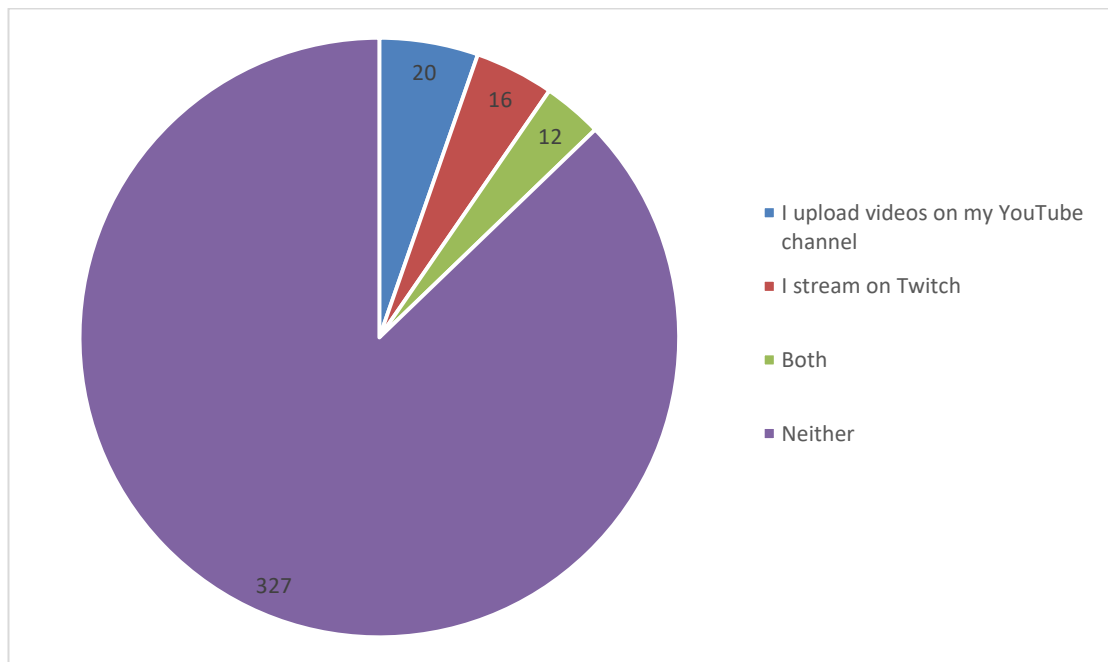


Figure 15. Questionnaire Analysis: Uploading videos or streaming.

The next three questions of the questionnaire are about eSports events, and teams or players. Out of the 375 respondents 227 (60.6%) do not follow any eSports event, while 148 (39.4%) do. The next question only had to be answered in case the respondent answered with “Yes” in the prior question regarding watching any eSports events. Out of the 148 respondents, the majority watch and follow the ESL events, followed by CSGO Majors and the International. Regarding the question of having a favorite team and/or player, 223 respondents (59.7%) have neither, while 53 (14.1%) a favorite team, 38 (10%) a favorite player and 61 (16.2%) both. Figure 16 provides a clear graphic illustration for this result.

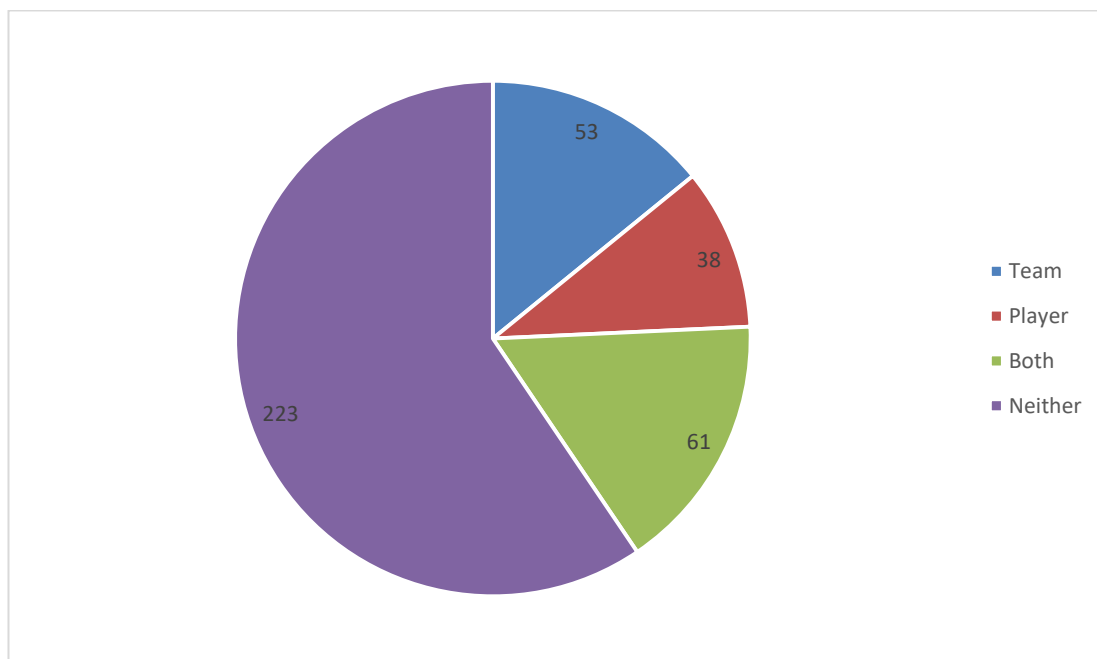


Figure 16. Questionnaire Analysis: Favourite team and/or player.

The fourth section of the questionnaire asks about the favorite brand regarding gaming equipment and why specifically that or these brand(s) as well as the money invested into gaming peripherals (limited to keyboards, mice, headsets and mousepads) and lastly the reason why the equipment was bought. The first two questions of this section have multiple-choices (APPENDIX 1, question 10 and 11.) and offers the most popular alternatives regarding gaming equipment, which are Logitech, Razer, Corsair, Roccat, SteelSeries and an option for other. Logitech received by far the most choices with 184, Razer 79, Corsair 65, Roccat 19, SteelSeries 83 and 57 chose other, such as Mionix or the low-budget brand Mad-Catz. Figure 17 below displays these results.

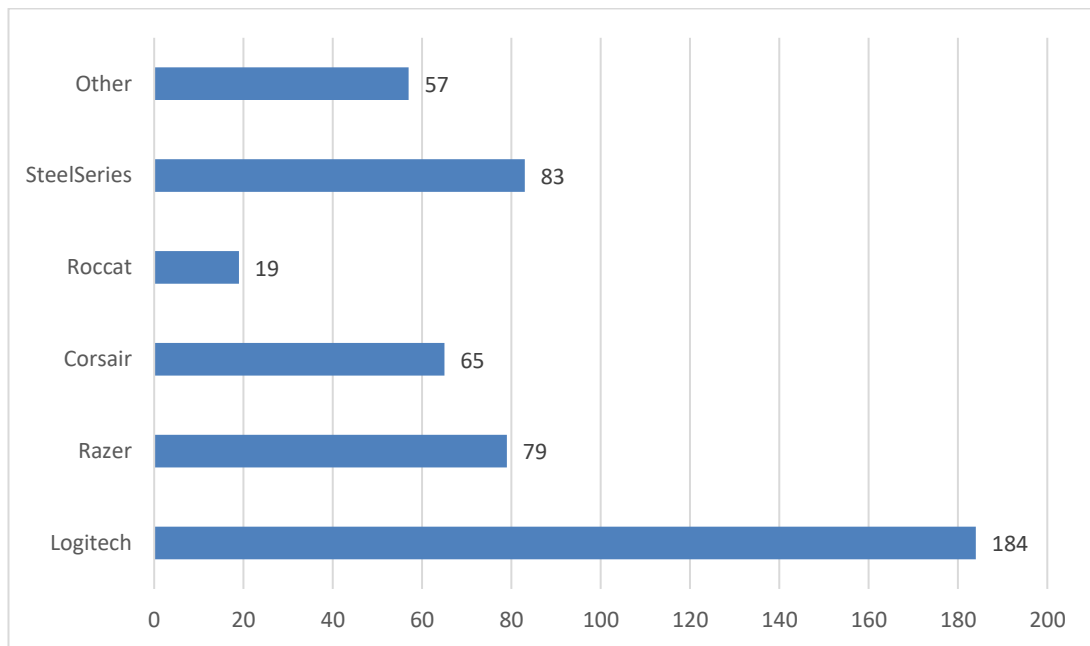


Figure 17. Questionnaire Analysis: Favorite gaming equipment brand.

As for the reason why specifically that or these brand/s (APPENDIX 1, question 11.), the majority with 188 chose “Perfect price/quality ratio” as well as 109 choices for “Appealing design”, 80 choices were given to “Brand loyalty” and 72 for “According to reviews, it is the best”. Only 16 choices were given to the option “It was the cheapest”, 12 to “My favorite team and/or player plays with that brand” and 10 to “Saw an advertisement on an event.” Figure 18 below provides a graphic for this result.

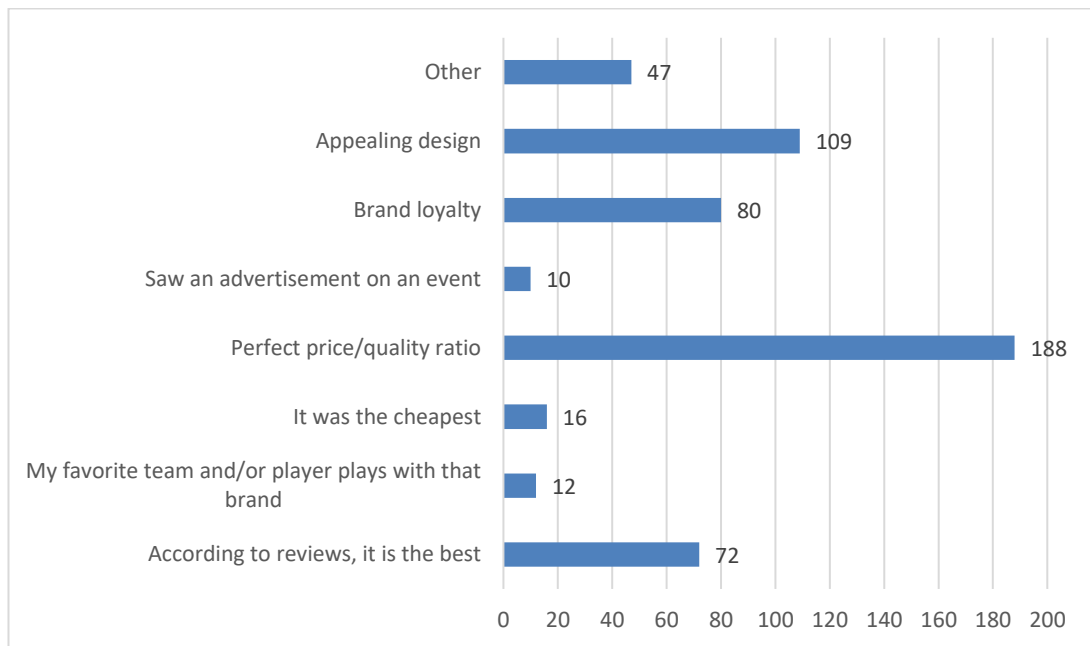


Figure 18. Questionnaire Analysis: Reason for this brand.

The following question regarding the money spend on gaming peripherals in the last three years was answered as follows: 94 (24.9%) respondents spend 100-200, 85 (22.7%) 200-300, 82 (21.9%) 1-100, surprisingly 45 (12%) spend over 400 while 24 (6.4%) spend 300-400, the 45 (12%) left did not buy any equipment in the last three years. Figure 19 below displays these results graphically.

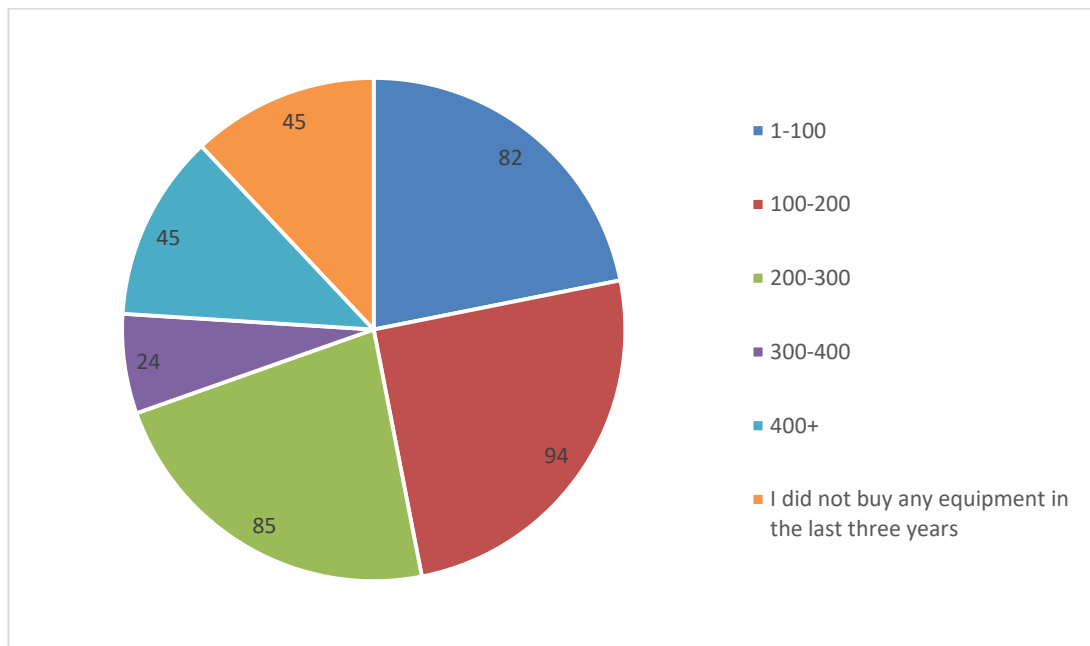


Figure 19. Questionnaire Analysis: Money spend on gaming peripherals in the last three years.

The last question of this section is regarding the reason for the purchase. The majority of choices with 198 were given to “Mine did not work, I needed new equipment”, followed by 125 choices for “Just wanted to have new equipment”, 94 choices for “Did a research on the equipment and bought it according to reviews” and 44 for “Appealing design”. 24 were given to “It was recommended to me”, while only 7 for “Saw and advertisement on an event” and merely 5 for “My favorite team and/or player plays with that equipment” and 26 were given to the option “Other”. Figure 20 below clarifies the result.

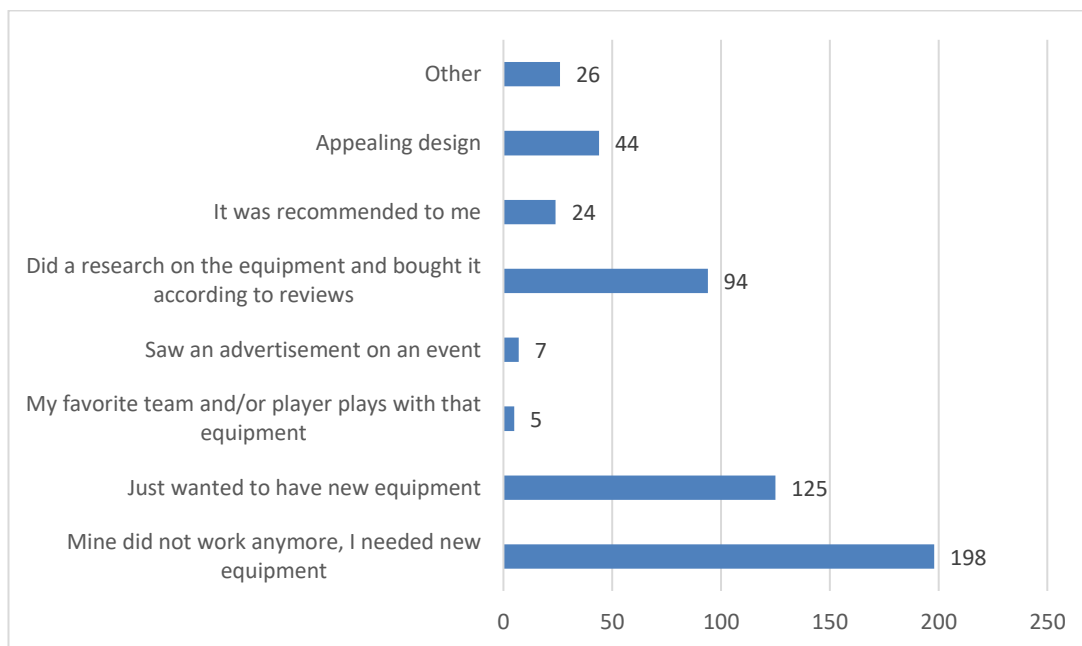


Figure 20. Questionnaire Analysis: Reasons for purchase.

In the last section, statements regarding the factors that had an impact on the buying decision were stated. Alternatives regarding the factors were given as well as a “Other” option. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to scale the degree of agreement regarding statements and lastly, they had the opportunity to write a text regarding the last statement. For the first statement, a multiple-choice option, a significant amount, 299 (87.9%) out of 340 answers chose “Nothing” as an impact on the buying decision, 30 (8.8%) marked “Other” and merely 8 (2.4%) chose “The event”, 10 (2.9%) “The team that won”, 6 (1.8%) “The sponsor of the team” and 7 (2.1%) “The sponsor of the event”. Figure 21 below displays these answers in a bar chart.

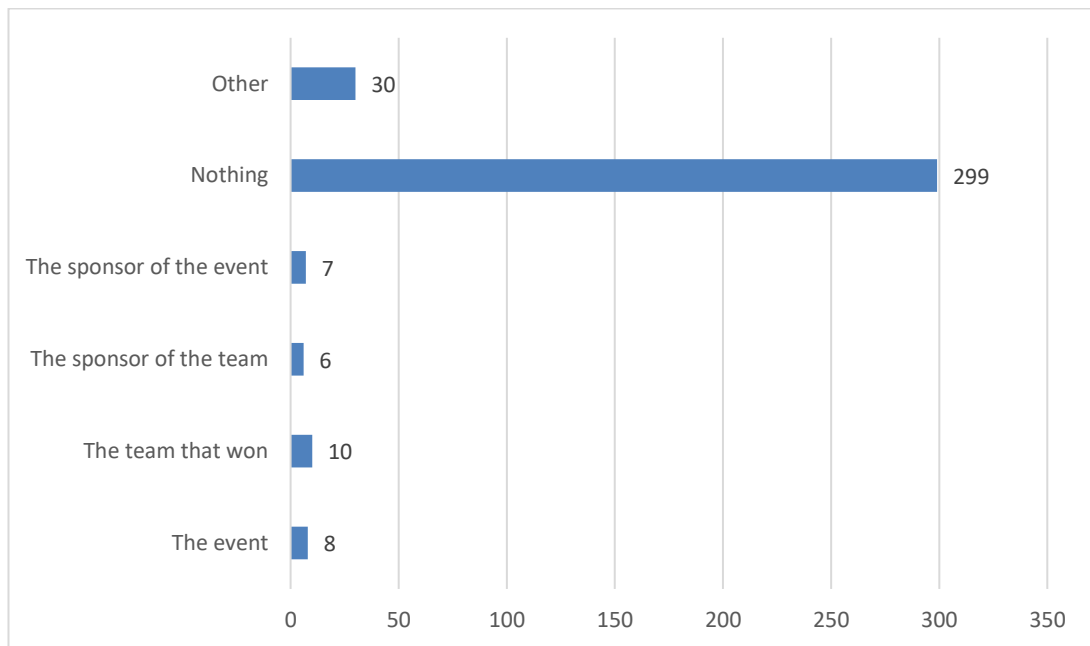


Figure 21. Questionnaire Analysis: Impact on buying decision.

For the following two statements, the respondents scaled their degree of agreement from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. Out of the 358 respondents, 228 (63.7%) strongly disagreed with the first statement (APPENDIX 1, statement 15.), 64 (17.9%) disagreed, 48 (13.4%) were neutral towards this statement, 12 (3.4%) agreed and only 6 (1.7%) strongly agreed. Figure 22 displays these results.

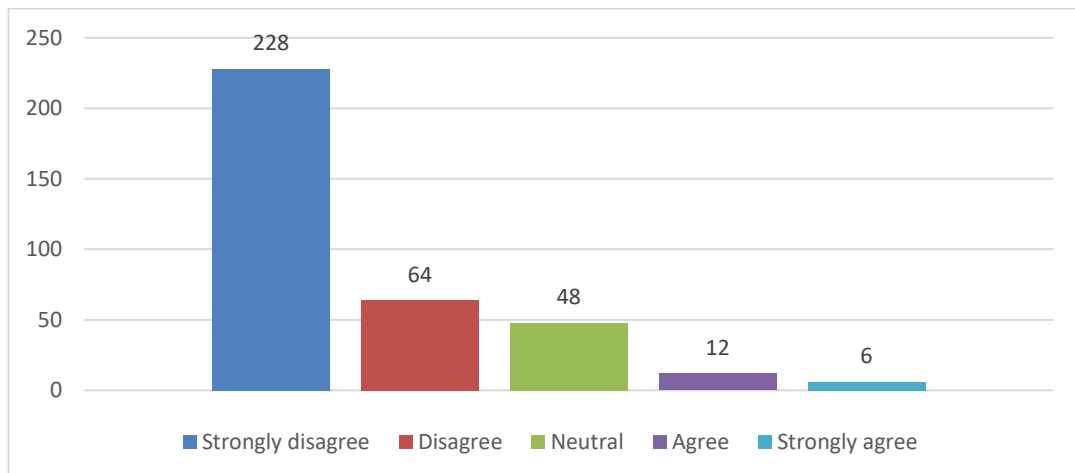


Figure 22. Questionnaire Analysis: APPENDIX 1, statement 15.

The second statement (APPENDIX 1, statement 16.) received similar responses as the first. 249 (63.7%) out of 358 respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 51 (14.2%) disagreed, 39 (10.9%) had a neutral opinion, 13 (3.6%) agreed and, as in the first statement, 6 (1.7%) strongly agreed. Figure 23 below provides a graphic for these results.

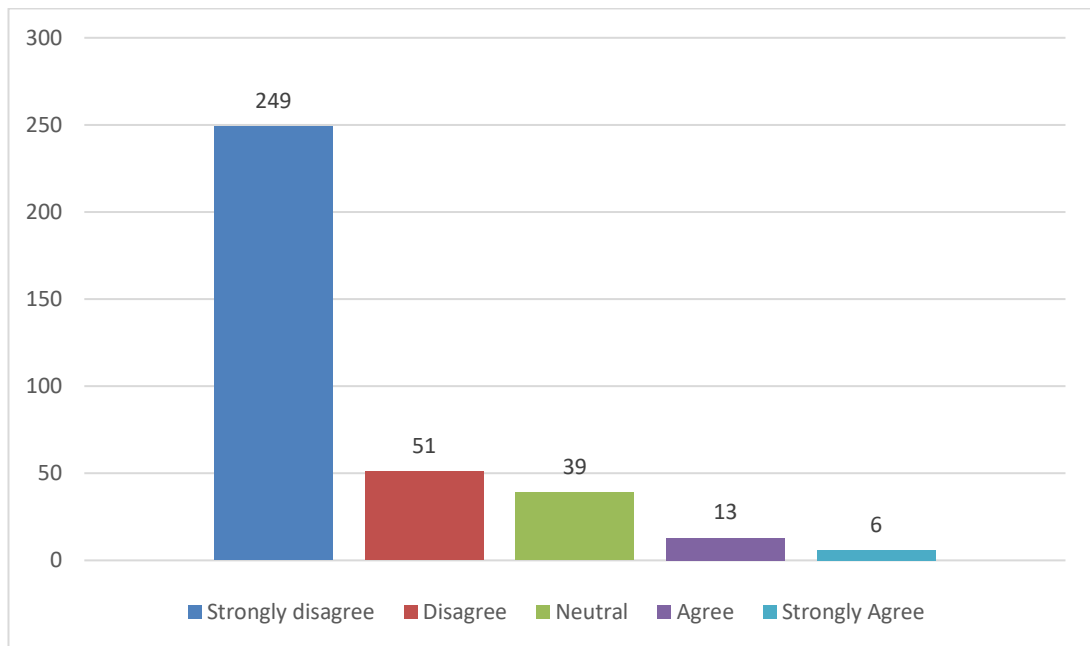


Figure 23. Questionnaire Analysis: APPENDIX 1, statement 16.

The last statement (APPENDIX 1, question 17.) received mixed opinions, out of the 375 respondents, 219 answered to the statement. Although many were of the opinion that sponsors have no impact on the buying decision or at least that they are not affected by it, there were also some sharing another opinion.

One respondent for example was of the opinion that: “Sponsors definitely do have an impact. I often see people asking what mice or other hardware the pro players use, so I'd assume that the people asking are looking for a new mouse/other hardware. If a pro does well using a certain mouse, the fans will buy the same mice because they know for sure that they are getting a good product. I don't think I could think of anything that the sponsors aren't doing that could raise the awareness of their brand.”

However, one stated that: ”I don't believe it's always the case with peripherals, however my choice of monitor is highly influenced by competitive players. Heard a few overwatch pros recommend an Asus 1440p, 144Hz monitor, so the time I went shopping I was focused on getting this exact one. I believe this is primarily the case because higher Hz/resolution monitors seem to have a larger impact on

your in-game performance than a mouse or keyboard. Any mouse will be good for your aim, as long as you can customise the DPI and it's comfortable in your hand(leading to a subjective feeling on mice), however something like monitors or headsets are much of an objective item more likely to be influenced by sponsorships/ competitive gamers.”

Yet another respondent mentioned that: “Probably. Although not personally affected, streamers and popular players / teams / esport events would have a strong impact on the purchases of their viewers, mainly because viewers would want to be as close to their favourite person (streamer, player etc), through the things they use to play games.”

Another respondent relies solely on pre-purchase research and mentioned that: ”For me personally no. I am much more likely to do a lot of research and make sure what I'm buying is perfect for what I need it for, and I don't like to spend a lot of money, so I'll make sure it's reasonably priced as well. I'm also not a believer in the notion that if you buy specific, expensive, gaming equipment it will give you any sort of advantage when playing. I mainly just buy my stuff because it looks nice and has good functionality (extra buttons, comfortable, well made/put together, etc etc)”

One mentioned that sponsors should stress the quality and customer service more in order to raise awareness: ”I feel that sponsors do have an impact on the buying decision in that it generates publicity for their products. That being said I would say it is important, at least to me, for the products to have a good quality. Perhaps if a sponsor were to stress more so the quality of their products as well as the customer services provided, it would become more of a talking point in my interactions with other gamers regarding equipment.”

One of the respondents even noticed that he is affected by sponsorships, he mentioned that: “Sponsorships of certain teams and events will undoubtedly impact purchasing decisions, especially when you consider that a lot of pro-gamers have a strong Twitch following too (and include an overlay of sponsors within the

stream). I've noticeably bought more Monster energy drink over the past 2 years having started watching guys like Summit and TimTheTatMan.”

8.2 Reliability and Validity

As mentioned above, the reliability and validity of a research is of vital importance. Reliability describes the extent to which measurements are repeatable and hence consistent and validity describes the degree to which you are measuring what you are supposed to measure. Both of these were threatened while conducting this research.

The validity of the questionnaires was threatened in its objectivity, since it was designed from the perspective of the findings of the theoretical framework of this particular study and is therefore biased as well as not applicable to other cases. The validity could have been increased by conducting interviews as a qualitative research with companies engaging in sponsorships.

The reliability of the questionnaires was also threatened since it was distributed on an online platform (www.reddit.com) and there are many so-called "internet-trolls", which solely focus on sabotaging others, whether in games or in other fields and in my case the questionnaire. Although only two respondents of the questionnaire "trolled" it, meaning that they answered the questions or statements in a way that did not relate to the question, hence the result of these respondents could not be used in the analysis of the questionnaire. However, since it was distributed on a "sub-reddit" (the topic under which a thread is posted on the website) that is solely for PC gaming, it also increased the reliability, since everybody who is reading threads in this sub-reddit belongs to the PC gaming community which was the target audience of this questionnaire. Furthermore, the community of students of the University of Applied Sciences contributed to the reliability, since they probably go by a philosophy of "help and get help", meaning that they help you with your thesis and you help them with their thesis.

9 CONCLUSION

The field of eSports is undeniably attracting an increasing number of individuals of all ages. Especially due to services such as Twitch or YouTube, where “gamers” of each genre can share their experience in a huge community. In that sense, companies will have a growing number of potential customers year after year.

The theoretical framework showed that due to the increased amount of people interested in eSports, the amount of events increased and therefore the amount of prize money, which was merely 0.6 million \$ in 2000 increased significantly in 2016 to 93.2 million \$. With this rapid increase, it can be assumed that this segment still has a lot of potential and space to grow, especially due to newest technologies in the video-gaming industry, whether it is on consoles or on the computer. Furthermore, universities, mainly in the United States of America, offer scholarships to professional players in the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena game League of Legends. Additionally, foundations such as the Korean e-Sports Association (KeSPA) and the International e-Sports Foundation (IESF) were founded to further promote eSports all around the world to be recognized as a legitimate sport. On this basis, it is safe to assume that in the near future we could watch eSports in a way that the Olympics are broadcasted on national TV.

In conclusion, concerning the research problem of this thesis: *does sponsorships (sponsoring) in eSports affect buyers in their decision making?* On the basis of the distributed questionnaire and its results it can be assumed that although many respondents are aware of the fact that sponsorships have an effect on the buying decision, they will not let themselves get affected by it directly, instead, they choose to do research upon the desired product to be purchased and rely on reviews, which affects their buying decision, hence these consumers can be categorized as the *complex buying behavior type*, meaning that they gain a lot of information on the product in question before doing the actual purchase.

10 FURTHER RESEARCH IDEAS

As a further research idea, the phenomena of streaming or simply uploading videos of games, whether in Twitch or YouTube, as a profession could be researched upon. Streaming enjoys an increasing popularity among individuals of all ages. However, not only streamers in that sense are increasing, also gamers which upload videos on YouTube. These individuals quit their job to create new content for their viewers. Furthermore, they are a new form of raising the awareness among their millions of viewers through their content. As Hamari & Sjöblom (2016) mention, that “content creators such as PewDiePie challenge traditional media corporations, having over 27 million subscribers on YouTube alone in 2014 and over 40 million at the time of writing (to be precise 54.434.371), showing the impact a single individual can have on the media landscape.”

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire distributed on reddit and in VAMK. Questionnaire

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Age

<17 17-22 23-30 30+

3. How many hours per week do you spend on playing games on the computer?

<1 1-5 6-12 12+

4. What kind of games do you play?

Real-Time Strategy First-Person Shooter Sport
Multiplayer Online Battle Arena Other

5. Do you watch YouTube and/or Twitch regarding games?

YouTube Twitch Both Neither

6. Do you upload videos of games and/or do you stream playing games?

I upload videos on my YouTube channel I stream on Twitch
Both Neither

7. Do you follow any eSports events, such as ESL One, IEM, the International etc.?

Yes No

8. If answered 'Yes' above, which event(s) exactly do you follow?

9. Do you have a favorite team and/or player?

Team Player Both Neither

10. Which of the following is your favorite brand regarding gaming equipment?

Logitech Razer Corsair Roccat SteelSeries Other

Appendices

11. Why specifically that/these brand(s)?

According to reviews, it is the best
My favorite team and/or player plays with that brand It was the cheapest
Perfect price/quality ratio Saw an advertisement on an event
Brand loyalty Appealing design Other

12. How much money did you spend on gaming peripherals in the last three years? (keyboard, mice, headset, mousepad)

1-100 100-200 200-300 300-400 400+
I did not buy any equipment in the last three years

13. Why did you buy the equipment?

Mine did not work anymore, I needed new equipment
Just wanted to have new equipment
My favorite team and/or player uses that equipment
Saw an advertisement on an event
Did a research on the equipment and bought it according to reviews
It was recommended to me personally Appealing design Other

14. ... had an impact on my buying decision.

The event The team that won The sponsor of the team
The sponsor of the event Nothing Other

15. The sponsor of an event, a player or a team has a great impact on my buying decision.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

16. If my favorite team or player wins a certain event or championship, I am more likely to buy the equipment that was being used by that particular team or player.

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

17. In your opinion: Do you think sponsors have an impact on the buying decision at all and what advice would you give them in order to raise the awareness of their brand further?