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Dear readers,

the recent years were as turbulent as always in eSports, but it amazes us that eSports is steadily growing into new dimensions. Still, many people in eSports ask the question: Is eSports a “niche” bigger than the movie industry that people tend to forget about regularly? We as community already knew that the answer is a big yes! But now that we get seen on “real” TV and in stadiums such as LANXESS Arena or Staples Center, we, the eSports industry and its fans, can hardly be overlooked anymore. It is fascinating that eSports has so many unique facets and tackles situations in various and novel ways compared to its traditional counterparts (e.g. sports and media).

Still though, a book has remained something prestigious and therefore we are happy to present you the new edition of the eSports Yearbook for the years 2013 and 2014. In this book you will find many perspectives from very different authors on very different topics. There is shoutcasting, sponsorship, marketing, game development, politics and much more.

We are very happy about the eSports Yearbook’s popularity. Although as doctoral candidates our time is scarce (sorry for the delay), we got several positive feedbacks from the research community as well as some referencing in journal articles. Furthermore, the book has found a home in libraries like Stanford, Siegen and so on.

We heartily thank the contributors from all years for their articles and their help. The eSports Yearbook is a book that allows reader to enjoy articles from all kinds of perspectives: from professional players, journalists, scientists and people from all trades in eSports. It is an outlet for any interesting story (so if you have something to share, please contribute). Many people on eSports will thank you for it and especially those students, who are not allowed to quote from the Internet, will be very happy if they can find useful content in this book. We are happy to see that some students, who are currently writing their thesis, are contacting us for help as well as researchers that are interested in the phenomenon eSports.
We will keep collecting your articles and keep this a non-profit project.

Yours,

Julia Hiltscher (Christophers)
&
Tobias M. Scholz

… keep on gaming!
A Short History of eSports

By Julia Hilscher

Professional gamers and league organizers still have to answer the question, what eSports or electronic sports is.

Answering this question has already become a habit – For 10 years I have heard this question – and usually journalists would grab an interview with Candypanda, Griff or Day[9], because eSports is a modern age topic, new and exciting.

New and exciting for their TV stations and newspapers, but not new (very exciting but anything but new) for any event manager at Turtle Entertainment, any accountant at Riot Games, any Graphics Artist at Blizzard, any intern at Electronic Arts, any Game Designer at Ubisoft, any Human Resources Manager at Twitch TV.

eSports has been around for quite some time, so let’s see since when and touch base with the basics of the history of eSports!

**Generation I – The Offline Origins 1972-1989**

It all began with the earliest known video game competition on October 19th 1972. Stanford University famously ran a Spacewar tournament and invited students to an “Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics” whose grand prize was a year’s subscription for the Rolling Stone magazine.

It took 8 years until the next big tournament came up: Atari established competitive gaming as a mainstream hobby when more than 10,000 participants across the US played in the Space Invaders Championship in 1980.

During the 70s and 80s, players and tournaments (for example the Video Game Masters Tournament for Guinness World Records) were featured in popular magazines, including Life and Time.

Between 1982 and 1984, the American eSports show “Starcade” aired 133 episodes, on which contestants would attempt to beat each other’s high scores. It wasn’t eSports like we know it today, since the players did not play against
each other but one after the other, but still it was already about competition and skill. The show was used to showcase brand new arcade games – which is also different from eSports today, where the most balanced and popular games are the most famous eSports titles, not necessarily the newest games. Tournaments were also for the first time featured as part of the plot of various films, including the famous Tron.

**Generation II – The Online Overture 1990-1999**

In 1996, my parents connected our household to the world wide web. In the 1990s, many games would benefit from this increasing internet connectivity, especially PC games. Netrek was the third internet game, but the first team game. Netrek had metaservers to locate open game servers and was the first game to have persistent user information. The first issue of WIRED magazine came out in January 1993 – WIRED credited Netrek as “the first online sports game”.

You couldn’t connect your Super Nintendo Entertainment System to the internet, but there were large eSports tournaments in the 1990s such as the 1990 Nintendo World Championship, which toured across the States and held its finals at the Universal Studios Hollywood. At the Nintendo PowerFest ’94 there were 132 finalists in San Diego, CA. Blockbuster Video’s World Game Championships were held in 1990 and co-hosted by GamePro magazine, but only citizens from the States, Canada, UK, Australia & Chile were eligible to compete. Two of the games played in this tournament were NBA Jam and Virtua Racing.

There were several TV shows around the world where children competed in Nintendo games.

**Rise of global tournaments 2000- 2013**

eSports has gone through tremendous growth, both in viewership and prize money.

The number and scope of tournaments has increased significantly, going from about 10 tournaments in 2000 to 696 in 2012.
Figure 1. Tournament growth, 2000-2012
(http://www.theverge.com/2013/9/30/4719766/twitch-raises-20-million-esports-market-booming)

Today’s largest tournaments were founded during this period, including worldwide events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Prize Pool</th>
<th>Game(s)</th>
<th>1-2 significant events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intel Extreme Masters</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>$605,000</td>
<td>LoL, SC2, Hearthstone</td>
<td>IEM WC Katowice 2014 &amp; 2016</td>
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<td>EMS One</td>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>CS:GO, Dota 2</td>
<td>EMS One Katowice</td>
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<td>Dota 2</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
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<td>CS:GO</td>
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<td>SC2</td>
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<td>WoW</td>
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<td>$10,000,000</td>
<td>Dota 2</td>
<td>The International 2014</td>
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<td>Game(s)</td>
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<td>Riot</td>
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<td>LoL</td>
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<td>Call of Duty</td>
<td>2014 CoD Championship</td>
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<td>OnGameNet The Champions</td>
<td>OGN</td>
<td>$263,000</td>
<td>LoL</td>
<td>Hot6ix The Champions 2014</td>
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<td>Tougeki</td>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>cancelled</td>
<td>Beat’em Ups</td>
<td>Tougeki 2012</td>
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<td>GOMeXP</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>SC2</td>
<td>Hot6ix Cup 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evolution Championship Series</td>
<td>EVO</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Ultra Street Fighter IV, Killer Instinct</td>
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<td>ESWC</td>
<td>Oxent Sas Paris</td>
<td>$5-50,000 per game</td>
<td>SC2, Dota2, Fifa 13, CS:GO, CoD ...</td>
<td>Zénith Paris, Montreal</td>
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<td>Dreamhack</td>
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<td>LoL, Dota2, SC2</td>
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<td>World of Tanks</td>
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<td>HiReZ</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>SMITE</td>
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<td>$200,000</td>
<td>LoL</td>
<td>Premier Winter League Season 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Organiser</td>
<td>Prize Money</td>
<td>Games</td>
<td>Note</td>
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<td>IeSF World Championship</td>
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<td>$100,000</td>
<td>Dota2, SC2, Hearthstone, Ultra Street Fighter, Tekken Tag Tournament</td>
<td>World Championship</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLG Finals</td>
<td>MLG</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>Dota2, CoD</td>
<td>MLG New Orleans 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proleague</td>
<td>KeSPA</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>SC2</td>
<td>2014 Proleague</td>
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Table 1. Current major tournaments

Television coverage became best established in South Korea, with competitions featuring Starcraft and Warcraft regularly televised by dedicated 24-hour cable TV channels Ongamenet and MBCGame.

**THE FUTURE - 2014**

**Television**

eSports on TV is a future topic! Swedish station SVT regularly showed Dreamhack content in the past. For South Koreans, eSports on TV is normality. German TV station “EinsPlus” broadcast the German ESL Pro Series League of Legends Finals on TV. The entire finals (8 hours) were shown and the TV station worked hand in hand with the Electronic Sports league to show the tournament and explain eSports to the new audience. This successful production lets the eSports world hope for an American TV station to broadcast the Intel Extreme Masters. The ESL (who also produce Blizzcon) and companies such as RedBull and CocaCola, which are already deeply involved in pro eSports tournaments, would certainly be up for the next steps in this direction.

**Prize Money**

At the International, the overall prize pool was 14,793,285 USD. Will there be even larger sums at individual tournaments in the future?

(1) http://fortune.com/2015/06/12/red-bull-esports-lab/
(2) http://www.meltdown.bar/berlin
Professionalisation

League of Legends is becoming a Varsity sport. More and more universities hire clan managers and coaches. Training facilities with professional equipment (for example the RedBull eSports lab in Santa Monica¹) and also eSports bars such as the Meltdown Berlin² grow everywhere around the globe. Clan houses are not just a „Korean phenomenon“ anymore.

Julia Hiltscher was born in 1983 in Westerstede, Germany. She established eMAG – an online eSports magazine – with Tobias Scholz in 2004. She has been a working student at the Electronic Sports League (Turtle Entertainment GmbH) since Feb. 2006, achieved her Master of Arts degree in International Comparative Literature and Media, English and German at Bonn University in June 2009 and has been working at ESL since. As Game Head Coordinator she is involved in the development of ESL’s tools and the website. She is supervising the Game Heads who are running tournaments in ESL’s most played eSports titles. She can be contacted at: julia.hiltscher@googlemail.com
The Games, the Audience, and the Performance

By Navneet Randhawa

Introduction

In present day, many individuals across the world play video games. Video games attract players for a variety of reasons, which can range from entertainment purposes to gratifying needs, to playing for the purpose of becoming a top gamer (Olson, Kutner, & Warner, 2008; Fernandez-Vara, 2009). In recent years, organizers and video game companies began hosting competitive gaming tournaments, which in turn have helped propel the formation of eSports. These tournaments draw the attention of live, as well as broadcasted audiences who spectate gaming matches among professional gamers (Wagner, 2006, p. 1). Professional gamers are drawn towards competitive tournaments for the purpose of passion, winning cash prizes, and/or gaining other rewards. With the rise of eSports, it is apparent that the dynamics of the video game industry is changing. This change is positive and demonstrates that there is value and substance in studying video games and eSports as a form of performance. Moreover, this paper will present a background to eSports, a brief overview of the StarCraft II franchise, and demonstrate how eSports and Blizzard Entertainment’s StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm Major League Gaming (MLG) grand finals at Dallas presents video games as an area that should be studied as a performative medium. In analyzing aspects of eSports and the Dallas tournament grand finals, this paper will demonstrate how eSports successfully integrate players as both performers and spectators, while incorporating the importance of live audiences and commentators to the performance as a whole.

Background to eSports

What is unique to eSports is that video games, which are commonly played alone or with a small group of friends, come to be something that are viewed and enjoyed by audiences in the thousands (MLG, 2013e, 0:01:00-0:02:00). Moreover, to define the phenomenon of organized competitive game play, the Online Gamers Association began terming these competitions as “electronic sports” (eSports) in the late nineties (Wagner, 2006, p. 1). Wagner (2006) defines eSports as, “an area of sport activities in which people develop and
train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies” (p. 3). It is evident that eSports borrows from the format of televised sports in regards to the presentation of players, audience members and commentators. Moreover, eSports borrows from the word “sport”, with the addition of “electronic” as a prefix. In the traditional sporting world, athletes meet at tournaments to physically compete against one another while commentators narrate their actions and audiences spectate (in person or through television and online formats) (Duncan & Brummett, 1987, p. 169). Similarly, professional gamers will meet at offline tournaments, where commentators narrate the actions of players, and audiences (viewing online or in person) spectate matches during eSports tournaments. In contrast to traditional sports, the eSports athlete is a professional gamer who, during competitive play, uses a computer, keyboard and mouse in addition to his/her body to maneuver the technology. With eSports, players are both interactors (commanding actions through a mouse and keyboard), and audiences of a performance, as players must decipher commands in a video game and interact suitably (Fernandez-Vara, 2009, p. 6).

“All together, professional gamers, audience members, and commentators present a dynamic understanding to video games as a performative medium.”

In regards to the audience, the audience completes the performance of an eSports match by actively viewing, as well as understanding and internalizing the mechanics of a game (Fernandez-Vara, 2009, p. 7). Building on the importance of audiences, Richard Schechner states that if there is no one available to make sense of an action, then there is no performance (Fernandez-Vara, 2009, p. 2). Schechner’s statement holds true because, for example, if an audience were to become detached from viewing a StarCraft II match, then there would be no performance, as there would be no audience (live or broadcasted) to make sense of the gaming performance. On the other hand, a commentator also spectates a match, but with the purpose of informing audience members who may or may not be familiar with the game, as well as informing those who might have missed an in-game occurrence. Wilshire (1990) states that audiences are a group of observers and judges (p. 170). One can see how eSports commentators act as observers in watching, but also as judges, as they choose what to report on and what in-game occurrences can be overlooked. All together, professional gamers, audience members, and commentators present a dynamic understanding to eSports as a performative
medium. In this aspect, professional gamers can be seen as performers and spectators, while live audiences and commentators are important to the dynamics of the performance as a whole.

**The StarCraft II Franchise**

With the release of Blizzard Entertainment’s StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty in 2010, the eSports world was redefined (Kuhn, 2010). Wings of Liberty was successful in giving the StarCraft II franchise the sensation it desired, as it drew in many players worldwide. The genre of StarCraft II is real-time strategy (RTS), and games within this genre possess a higher learning curve due to tactical considerations and can be ranked as more difficult to play over other genres such as fighting, multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBA), first-person shooters and sporting games (Clipse, 2013). Overall, StarCraft II can be played in various ways – from 1v1 matches to team matches and custom games. Players can play as one of three races: Zerg, Terran or Protoss. Each race has its own specifics and players must choose how they play, what characters they build, what strategies they choose, how to counteract their enemies and when to engage combat. In terms of competitive play, players compete in 1v1 matchups but can select any race of their choosing. The game is relatively balanced with units across all races being of equal strength, but it is ultimately up to professional gamers as to how they play the game.

**MLG Dallas: Where Professional Gamers, Audiences and Commentators Collide**

The expansion follow up to Wings of Liberty, Heart of the Swarm, was released to the public on March 12, 2013. To kick off the 2013 MLG Pro Circuit, Major League Gaming (MLG) hosted a tournament using the new expansion at the Dallas Convention Center in Dallas, Texas from March 15-17, 2013 and invited players to compete for $75,000 in cash prizes (Camber, 2013; RTS Guru, 2013). The set-up of the venue consisted of a lifted stage with two soundproof booths located on opposite sides of the stage for competing gamers to occupy when battling one another. In addition, three projection screens were raised behind the stage for the audience to view. The screens were important to the event because if they were absent, the live audience would not have been able to spectate the performance with the level of engagement a live performance would allow them. Lastly, a commentator’s desk fully equipped with computers, microphones and other equipment was placed to the side of the main stage. Tickets were sold at $6.00 for venue spectators and the tournament was broadcasted for free on the MLG website for online spectators (MLG Pro Shop, 2013). In regards to the spectator demographic, a
In the MLG Dallas grand finals, the two professional gamers who advanced to this round included StarTale’s Lee “Life” Seung Hyun (team red, race: Zerg) and KT Rolster’s Lee “Flash” Young Ho (team blue, race: Terran) (MLG, 2013a, 0:02:30-0:04:48). In regards to player uniforms, Life was dressed in all black, bearing sponsors on his sweater such as Red Bull and StarTale. On the other hand, Flash was dressed in black pants and a white shirt with the KT Rolster logo located on the front of his jersey. In addition to the players, two commentators were present for the grand finals. These commentators were Sean “Day[9]” Plott and Marcus “djWHEAT” Graham (MLG, 2013a, 0:05:11-0:05:30). The job of the commentators consisted of narrating events occurring in the matchups between Life and Flash, while giving their input as to what may happen as the games unfold. Day[9] and djWHEAT were dressed in suits, much like the commentators of sporting matches. The professional attire of both the players and commentators displayed that eSports events draw parallels to traditional sports events, with no details overlooked.

Finally, the audience is important to the performance overall as their presence validates the aura of eSports as a performance. Walter Benjamin (1973) states that artwork, in this case performances, take on an ‘aura’ that can only be experienced in the unique existence of a place where an artwork (performance) takes place (p. 214). In defining the importance of experiencing the Dallas tournament in person, Day[9] stated that, “Fan dreams come true not from casting replays, but from seeing game play of players in person” (MLG, 2013e, 0:02:00-0:03:00), giving weight to the theory of aura as important to the wholeness of a performance. Live audiences are important to eSports tournaments because without them, a tournament would be incomplete and lack the aura they have come to associate with.

### Competing to Win

In order to win the Dallas tournament, Life and Flash had to play a Best of 7 series. However, only six games were played as Life reached a 4-2 win, which crowned him as the winner of MLG Dallas. The prize money for the first placed winner was $25,000 from the $75,000 cash pool (Camber, 2013; RTS Guru, 2013). In his commentary during the opening of Life vs. Flash, Day[9]
stated that, “They are not playing for just the money, they are playing because they want to be the best of the best” (MLG 2013a, 0:02:00-0:02:11). Straight away, participation for monetary gain challenges Caillois (1961) statement that “a characteristic of play creates no wealth or good” (p. 21). It is apparent that while Life and Flash are competing to be the best, monetary incentives are still a driving factor to gaming professionally.

In addition, competing for a monetary gain also challenges one of Schechner’s basic qualities of performance. Schechner states that of his five different types of activities that he constitutes as performance (play, games, sports, theatre, and ritual), a performance should not produce “money or other goods that can be useful outside of it” (Fernandez-Vara, 2009, Schechner, 1966). It is apparent that eSports challenges this rigid notion posed by Schechner, as what players do in a video game heavily affects their monetary gain or loss. As professional gamers, Life and Flash must conduct their game play at the highest strategic level possible in order to receive the maximum amount of monetary return. The rise of eSports shows the potential for Schechner to redefine activities that constitute as performance (to include eSports) as well as extend his definitions of the basic qualities of performance to include aspects of eSports.

”They are not playing for just the money, they are playing because they want to be the best of the best.” - Day[9]

Furthermore, the performance of a player is negotiated between predisposed game play behaviour, as well as elements of improvisation. To join the ranks of worldwide top players, Life and Flash on average play 40 StarCraft II matches a day (MLG, 2013c, 0:03:00-0:03:07). In playing multiple games, each player is able to create numerous strategies, which can then be applied during competitive matches. In the Dallas finals, Life and Flash approached the start of each game with a strategy in mind. However, in game three, when Life noticed Flash using a counter strategy, Life improvised and switched to a different strategy to counter Flash (MLG, 2013c, 0:03:07-0:05:45). This example shows how connected professional gamers are as players and spectators. In playing the game, Life and Flash select options to meet certain goals, but remain embodied, as it is their physical self that puts motions into action, thus showing how players are spectators as well.

Moreover, during the Life vs. Flash series, the live audience expressed a wide range of emotions through the use of their voice, facial expressions and clapping (MLG, 2013d, 0:01:24-0:04:55). These cues from the audience, as well
as ongoing commentary from Day[9] and djWHEAT, are important to the performance as a whole because it allows broadcasted audiences the chance to understand the emotion of a performance as it happens within its performative space. Audiences have the capability to transform spaces, as well as provide a two-way feedback loop while match is in effect. If the live audience and commentators were absent, then competitive matches would have no emotional attraction to its performance.

The Trophy Gaze

It is also important to analyze how an eSports broadcast borrows from televised traditional sports broadcasts. In traditional sports, pleasurable views of a trophy are often incorporated into the broadcast. Similarly, at the start and end of every matchup in the Dallas grand final, the camera focused on the winning trophy, panning in the camera from a top down, or bottom up approach (MLG, 2013b, 0:00:00-0:00:15). Made entirely out of glass, the trophy reflected beams of light, asking audiences to view it with awe. The trophy is positioned in a frame of wanting to be desired. It is apparent that the trophy is symbolic of an ultimate achievement in professional gaming, and therefore displayed in a desirable manner for the purpose of highlighting this achievement.

At the end of game six when Life defeated Flash, he was given the trophy. Hoisting it above his head, the audience cheered and stood up to congratulate him on his victory (MLG, 2013f, 0:21:08-0:23:10). To show his approval and happiness for his victory, Life kissed the trophy numerous times.

Conclusion

The eSports world is experiencing growth. This growth is visible through new expansions to preexisting games, the addition of new titles in various gaming genres, the addition of more competitive tournaments and more. In regards to the academic world of performance studies, the study of eSports tournaments as a performative medium should be included.

It is apparent that audiences gather (in person and online) for the purpose of viewing professional gamers compete in tournaments, which in turn demonstrates how video games are becoming an area of a performative medium. In analyzing video games as a performance, one must consider players as both performers and spectators, as well as consider the importance of live audiences and commentators to the performance as a whole.
The Major League Gaming grand finals in Dallas displayed how one may consider performers (the professional gamers), audiences, and commentators as important contributors towards studying eSports and video games as a form of performance. In analyzing the grand final matches between Life and Flash, the importance of each of these elements was highlighted. Although viewing video games and competitive eSports matches is a new concept to performance studies academia, it is only a matter of time before the rise of eSports launches this promising avenue into everyday performance studies. As a constantly evolving academic field, it will be interesting to see how eSports integrate in the years to come.

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References


2013, The Year eSports Defined Their Place in Brazil

By André Fagundes Pase and Heelary Schultz

What used to be just a casual competition in LAN houses and homes has started to become an actual event in the last few years in Brazil. 2012, and specially 2013, saw events dedicated to electronic sports not only registering bigger attendance numbers, but also bigger media coverage. Furthermore, the League of Legends (LoL) players community has become an important transformation factor in this scenario.

To understand this accelerated growth taking place in Brazil over the last few years it is necessary to understand a little of the local culture in digital gaming. The first videogames came out illegally in Brazil at the end of the seventies, and this particular reality was soon altered in 1983 with the official launch of Atari and Magnavox Odyssey² (in Latin America branded as Odyssey only). Throughout the years, videogames acquired a status of luxury toys, accentuated by the good reception of the Master System at the end of the same decade. Despite the good penetration power of computers and gaming consoles in the country, the stigma of this status lasted more than a decade.

While local multiplayer allowed players to run championships for console-based titles, by the turn of the millennium many young teenagers would make use of these rooms of connected computers to play Counter-Strike, not only access Orkut or Facebook. This particular fever resulted in championships and customized maps, like cs_rio that imitates a slum. The fun began to leave homes and make its way into public places.

Another important factor in the popularization of videogames were the soccer games series Fifa and Pro Evolution Soccer. The player pool was enlarged through the years, turning the second series of those games into one of the “killer apps” for the PlayStation system. After years of regional alterations through pirate versions, Fifa 13 and PES 2013 (launched in September 2012)

(1) Name used in Brazil for some commercial establishment similar to internet cafés that use Local Area Network (LAN) to allow people to play multi-player games, access Internet and other online services.
(2) There’s a version of this map available for Counter Strike 1.6 at http://www.counterzone.com.br/pg-mapas/mapa-cs_rio-para-cs.php. This scenario was published around 2002 for the first version of the game. In 2009, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 was released with a stage like that map.
started to include a bigger number of local teams and players. The Brazilian National Soccer Championship was utilized as a differential pro in the marketing of the Konami series. This, allied to the difficulty of playing pirate games in the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360, contributed largely to the process of turning pirate players into official ones inside the gaming scene. In order to sell these games, championships rose all through the country, some even supported by big retail chains, but without a big eSports league and without recognition by the Brazilian Soccer Organization (CBF, affiliated to Fifa).

As well as the passion for sports, the habit of playing digital games was passed among generations, with parents accompanying their children’s performance in small events and minor conventions. Sadly, there are no official numbers for Brazil yet, but the obvious presence of families with children attending events such as Brazil Game Show indicates a transforming scenario. We can assume in the least that the competitions have overcome all obstacles, such as the expensive structures and problematic internet providers.

**eSports Events in Brazil**

As mentioned before, Brazil has an erratic calendar of events aimed at eSports players. Despite having many championships and the presence of Brazilian players even at the World Cyber Games, the focus in the country is centered around two main events, Campus Party and Brazil Game Show.

The first one derives from an event organized in other countries around the world by the Spanish company Futura Networks. Since 2008, Campus Party gathers in São Paulo young people from all over the country, attracted by lectures and a speedy internet connection – a path to a diversity of downloads and online gaming. The event is focused on spreading knowledge and in 2014 increased its focus on promoting innovation, a fact that led to a more formal presence of companies inside the event. The 2014 Campus Party gathered eight thousand registered participants and was able to attract the famous Intel Extreme Masters Starcraft II championship.

The other event has clearly commercial goals. The sixth edition of the Brazil Game Show (BGS) took about a hundred and fifty thousand people to São Paulo and was marked by the presentation of the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One consoles in Brazil. Created in Rio de Janeiro, it was later moved to São Paulo to attract more players, increasing the area for the exposition each year. Despite all that, for the second consecutive year, the space dedicated to League of Legends attracted a good part of the public. The structure built for the local transmission of the matches was equipped with camera cranes and even nar-
rators and commentators. This is not a big surprise for the players/spectators, but certainly caught the attention of the accompanying parents.

A fact that may further promote eSports events in Brazil is that Major League Gaming announced a partnership with the Brazil-based sports entertainment company Grupo Agula to launch its first international franchise MLG Brasil in 2014. In an interview published by Polygon, the CEO for MLG Brazil, Paulo Castello Branco Filho, said: "as the fourth largest market in the world, we know there is enormous potential in Brazil and an appetite for competition."³

**Riot Games Brazil**

The Brazilian scene has many particularities, but one factor became important in the last few years: The presence of Riot Games and the company’s focus on League of Legends, especially in promoting and advertising championships, offering the public an official competition. Constant events and the promotion of LoL resulted in the loyalty of its fans, who often traded other similar games for this one.

After noticing the growth in the amount of foreign players in their game, Riot Games decided to expand the network of servers dedicated to the more relevant places, accordingly to the origin of the players. Brazil was one of these places and so it was only the next logical step for Riot to localize their game and translate it to Portuguese. Even the company’s canteen started to offer typical food from the country.

The company also opted for adapting the dialogue of some of its characters to the local lingo, not only translating literally everything they said like many other titles have done before. The Brazilian version of LoL counts with lines from popular songs by Brazilian artists. Changes also were made to phrases that could cause confusion or not be understood by the public. An example is the line said by the character Udyr when the command /joke is used; the original line reads “If PETA asks, this fur is fake”. Since the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have little representation in Brazil, the name was removed, leaving the line to something close to “Don’t tell anyone this is real fur”.

With their headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil’s biggest city, Riot Games star-

ted watching the behavior of this particular public in cultural events. As noticed during Brazil Game Show, many people weren’t intending to watch the championship (accompanying their children to this event), but the professional eSports production could attract the attention of all members of the audience. As said before, it is something cultural, Brazilians just love to watch competitions and cheer for players or teams. The result was hoards of spectators standing in front of the League of Legions area as if hypnotized by the championship.

A little prior to the event Riot Games sealed a partnership deal with the Brazilian communication company Grupo Doca Comunicação and along with them developed a series of products to be sold exclusively at the BGS.

In 2013 Riot Games increased their rented space at the Brazil Game Show. In an official interview on the event’s website4 the company’s marketing manager Felipe Gomes, made Riot Games Brazil’s objectives clear:

”Currently, our main goal is to bet everything on the worldwide recognition of the game as a sport. The eSports concept is huge in countries like South Korea and the United States. Our idea is to show how this scene has grown exponentially in Brazil and present to investors and companies what great opportunities our country can offer, like the realization of tournaments and sponsorship of cyberathletes.”

- Felipe Gomes

In agreement with Riot Games’ compromise in showing the country’s potential for eSports, professional player Martin “Espeon” Gonçalves5 has affirmed

(5) Espeon is a Brazilian professional player famous for his participation in championships and his fanpage: https://www.facebook.com/EspeonBot.
in interviews for this paper there were no noticeable differences in competing in Brazil to any other countries.

On being a professional player in Brazil, Espeon explained that nowadays “there are many more people living from eSports today. There wasn’t room enough before for everyone to make a living.” On the search for sponsors, he affirms that in Brazil, like in many other countries, it is necessary to show results, not only in the way of victories but also in the number of viewers. The more viewership a game gets, the easier it becomes to get the attention of sponsors.

In this sense, the opening of the Brazilian League of Legends server also brought many changes, ranking up the spectator numbers of each game with streaming also available in Portuguese. Espeon points out: “sometimes I say something in English and people don’t understand”. This separates older players, who started on the US servers from new players who already started on the Brazilian servers and didn’t have to get used to character names and terms in English.

Another relevant point for the success of professional players in Brazil is that it still demands many sacrifices of aspiring players. As Espeon warns: “you have to enjoy this time as a great professional experience, or you might end up leaving LoL with no academic or professional resume.” The need for full time dedication enforces even more the premise that being an eSport player is a career and not just a weekend pastime.

**Perspectives for the Future**

eSports is not yet fully solidified in Brazil as it is in some other countries, but its growth has been happening at an accelerated rate. Changes in the attitude of the gaming companies started to invest in the country and the Brazilian players have contributed significantly to this event. Riot Games is the most prominent example today, because the game League Of Legends has won great victories. An example of these victories was the recognition of League Championship Series (LCS) as a sports league by the U.S. government. That gave the LCS the same status as the major sports leagues like NBA, NFL, NHL and make the foreign players, including Brazilians, eligible for American athlete visas.

(6) For further info, check http://www.usgamer.net/articles/league-of-legends-championship-players-eligible-for-athlete-visas.
Despite the bad reputation of Brazilian players in international servers, a fact enforced by players requesting credits with wrong English (Gibe Moni Plis, wrong version of give me money please) or often posting their characteristic laugh “HUEHUEHUE”, there is a potential that can be stimulated in Brazil. The plurality of championships based on soccer and first-person shooters had not helped to fully promote the scene due to the lack of unified events, making it difficult for the people to understand the strength of this competitive culture.

The presence of Riot Games in the national scene changed this in a simple but effective way: the company that created the game recognized its audience. This creates an interesting relationship because the consumer (even in a free-to-play game like League of Legends) realizes this and begins to play this game more - and not its competitor. Despite of the strong base of Defense of the Ancients 2 (DotA 2) players in the country, including a significant site in Portuguese, discussions about LoL are more frequent in social and networking events. Unfortunately, there aren’t official statistics to prove it, an issue that spans the whole Brazilian gaming culture.

Other companies already used this approach, like Sony and Microsoft, but a free game became the perfect match for a country where piracy is the common mode to acquire media. But Riot Games seems to have better understood some peculiarities, like paying attention to players and helping to promote official competitions or offering merchandise during events. Twitch.TV also helped this phenomenon, with players switching from global streams to others in Portuguese. If the TV or traditional media don’t pay attention to it, a large part of their audiences will find the channels of their favourite eSports players on Twitch – where anyone can stream their eSports games and anyone can watch any time.

If the competitive gaming network before was marked by Counter-Strike and soccer series in the past, it is now by League of Legends. The same mechanisms that promote football or other sports popularized MOBAs in Brazil to an extraordinary extent.

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“Mom, I Want to Be a Caster”

By Ana Negueruela

The title of this article might sound silly and raise lots of questions for some, but others will simply share my dream of becoming a pro eSports caster. What is an eSports caster really? What is their job?

For many the answer is easy: "Talking about what happens in a videogame. It's a simple job, anyone can do it, you just have to play a lot and that's all!" Ah, If only that were true.

It’s hard to dispute that 2013 was a great year for eSports. If, three years ago, someone had said to us “Hey, I’ve come from the future and eSports is now a thriving business!” we probably would have laughed at them. This is something that we could not have imagined. Who would have thought that the finals for a videogame tournament could fill the Staples Center of Los Angeles? Or that people would queue just to get a photo with a gamer like Innovation? That only happens in South Korea! We never imagined eSports would grow so much in only 2-3 years. It was the dream we all had, of course, but it was just that... a dream.

"Being caster is not an easy job; you have to devote many hours to a specific game if you want to be the best. You have to play it well, and of course understand it better than everyone else."

The dream is real, now. eSports has grown and will continue to grow because of the passionate people who work hard for it. The kind of people that when others look at them like they are crazy for thinking that something like this could be possible, they keep their heads high and never surrender. So, people already thought you were crazy because you believed that crowds of fans wanted to see a videogame competition. Now imagine the reaction you get when you tell them that there is also a desire for commentary like in traditional sports. And that you want to be a commentator yourself! It will surely be one of disbelief.
Parents are usually the hardest to convince, and when you go to your mother and tell her ”Mom, I want to be a caster” it’s met with much skepticism. You’re told you have to study, because ”You need to make something of your life” or “It’s just a game, you can’t make a career out of it”. So, in your free time, you cast games. You’ll be awake in the dead of night, trying not to make too much noise and wake your parents or else be grounded for a month. You cast clanwars where you only had 8 viewers because it was the only way to cast something. You stay up watching ”Proleague” to learn how to be a better caster, even though it’s in Korean because, until recently, there wasn’t an English cast.

Gradually, you gain experience and viewers. During all this, however, your grades slip a bit, and your parents take away your computer or at least the internet. So what do you do?

You study harder, get good grades and socialize. You don’t stay locked up at home so your mother doesn’t think you will become like those ”hikomonkeys” (hikikomori) shut ins she has seen on the news that only stay on the computer. You get good grades, go out with friends and then, if you can, work on your casting as time allows.

So the road to being a good caster is a hard one. There will be many long hours and a lot of patience required. All of this without knowing if you can even make a career out of it, but it’s a risk that must be taken. After all, the world is in the hands of those who have the courage to dream and run the risk of living their dreams.

Being caster is not an easy job; you have to devote many hours to a specific game if you want to be the best. You have to play it well, and of course understand it better than everyone else. You have to know the players, know their style, their ”master plays”, why they do one thing or another and know their move almost before they do. Your mind has to be quick, your tongue quicker. On top of all that, you have to project good self-esteem and display confidence to the viewers. They need to think you are the only who knows what’s going to happen in the match. If you don’t do this, you can tell your job goodbye because you won’t be grabbing anyone’s attention as a caster. Your casting style has to be one that makes people want to listen to you, and only you. You have to make them interested in you and the games you’re commenting. Days before a match you want people saying things like ”I can’t WAIT to watch Parting vs. Bomber because THAT guy is casting!” because if no one is talking about you, you’re nobody. And if you’re nobody, little by little you’ll be running out of work.
A caster has to have the right tone of voice; they need to make a simple move seem like something big. They have to share their love and knowledge of the game with the viewers, and keep everyone on the edge of their seat until the last second of the game. A caster not only needs to have a good image, a good voice and deep knowledge: They need passion, yes sir, passion for what they do, and they need to be able to pass that passion on to others.

You must always have a smile for your audience and be able to talk to people and about people who you might not always get along with. You have to know how to analyze the game and establish good relationships with other top analyzers. You must have a good rapport with any co-caster. Nothing kills a broadcast faster than two people that obviously can’t stand to be working with each other.

Your job depends on the viewers, the fans, thinking you are the best because they will drop you in a second if you ever give them a reason to. Therefore, you have to be the best caster and be liked by everyone, which is by no means an easy task.

Go and smile at that person who just said that you have no idea what you’re talking about, that you’re not worth anything at all and he wishes you were not there. It’s really hard to keep a level head and stay focused when all you want to do is punch them.

If you are sick, if you have a bad day or your girlfriend of many years has left you for a guy who seems like he literally came out of the “Action Man” factory, the viewers do not care. You must cast with a smile and be at your best at all times. If not, expect to deal with lots of negative feedback. On top of everything else, you have to know how to advertise and spread your image. You need to be your own community manager and public relations manager, because as much as we joke with phrases like “eSports dirty money” a caster does not earn enough to hire someone to be their manager. To sum it all up: While learning about a game that is constantly changing with patches, you must commentate without mistakes, project a good image, take constant care of your voice, know the life and style of the players, be your own community manager all while smiling as if you were the happiest person on the face of the earth.

People underestimate casters, not just anyone can be one. You have to have the talent for it, and the desire to work hard.
And let’s not forget; in large part thanks to the job of casters, eSports has come far in the “mainstream” world. Now, even people like my dad can enjoy watching a StarCraft match even if they have never played the game.
“Bizarre” – that’s probably the word that came to the mind of the people at Ubisoft when the Nadeo team came to them with the concept of creating a brand new eSports game from scratch, but they still went ahead with it anyway. Now as 2013 comes to a close, and after the release of the full version of Shootmania Storm last April, we can say that the reactions have been pretty mixed. Nadeo did accomplish to go forward with their project and complete it, but the impact of Shootmania was surely bigger in their dream vision.

How to describe Shootmania? Well, I’d say it’s a decent game, on which the developers have done tremendous work in trying to improve, but one that simply lacked personality and commercial power in the end. But still, judging would surely be a harsh thing to do. eSports finally got a game developer that dared to take on the impossible task of designing and marketing a game for competitive gaming. While CPL’s Severity is probably sitting on a CD in a former staff’s drawer, Nadeo actually managed to complete their project and deliver on their promise by bringing their vision to reality. Props to them on that, but the adventure didn’t come without problems.

A Questionable Concept and Marketing Plan

Just like its game concept, Shootmania’s marketing plan was far from the norm. They decided to flip the pyramid and publicize the game from the way up instead – pro-gamers would get their hands on it first, and the public would watch them play the intriguing title with the desire of playing it themselves. This marketing plan came from a logic that has often been used in eSports over the years – the pro-players will play it, so everybody will want to play it. Good on paper… but good in reality?

As far as I’m concerned, I wasn’t part of the pro-gamers who got to play in the lucrative first Shootmania tournaments, but despite that I can admit I was actually looking forward to trying out the game. However, this “pro-gamers first” mentality actually ended up having the opposite effect on me – I felt like the game was being forced down my throat and my excitement for Shootmania gradually diminished. Can you recall that feeling you had when you
opened up that brand new game you pre-ordered for release day? Well, that’s what was missing for me with Shootmania. I ended up playing quite a lot, but I felt like Nadeo never let the gamers appreciate the game naturally before telling people it was awesome for competition. Sometimes it’s harder to like something when you’re told that you should like it. I saw video after video on YouTube with the Nadeo guys and the pro-players saying “how awesome it was”, but I just couldn’t play.

Now before anyone thinks of bashing it some more, I should go ahead and say that Shootmania is a good game. Just like Trackmania, it’s a game where “one last try” takes an entirely new meaning, as you can go on for hours on end trying to top everybody on your server. The game feels just like a sport, it’s simple and straightforward, it’s non-violent… it’s got a few things to brag about, but it just lacks that adrenaline factor in my opinion. Like many Quakers out there, I really question the movement aspect of Shootmania… Sliding? How does sliding or gliding through the environment give me adrenaline? Last time I heard, FPS players wanted to bounce off walls and blast rockets in each others’ faces… not peacefully glide on grassy hills and angled castle walls. If anybody got the gliding thing right in a FPS game it was Tribes: Ascend, and they did this on Battlefield-sized maps and gave the player serious speed and air. (I know it’s called sprinting in Shootmania, but it does feel like gliding). Shootmania added a ton of innovative things in our often too-repetitive first-person genre, but at the same time it seems like they took away the very first layer that got us to enjoy these games in the first place – the speed, the action, and yes, even the weapons.

”I feel cheated in a way. This progression of things isn’t natural for any community. The little gamer child in me who just wants to compete and have fun feels manipulated. Make a good game and let the community judge afterwards.”

So to me the Shootmania concept was good, but it’s just that I think they forgot to address their competition – why the people could go play other FPS games instead of theirs. The eSports players are also casual gamers. They’re looking for action, adrenaline and yes, sometimes blood too. I surely don’t think adding blood to Shootmania would solve the problem, but a little more impact and satisfaction on my shots wouldn’t hurt. All Shootmania makes
me want to do is to launch Quake 3 and watch people bounce off my rockets again. When I dreamt about my ideal eSports game, I sure wasn’t thinking about laser tag.

In a way this can be a lesson for Nadeo on how to create buzz for their eSports games if they keep going for that market – they need to build off the elements of the previous eSports classic like Quake, and their marketing can’t be done from top to bottom. You can’t just organize eSports tournaments and expect people to follow. That didn’t work with Painkiller and I don’t see why it should’ve worked with Shootmania. You need to let gamers create buzz about games by themselves, especially in this era of social media. Let them share what they like about the game and make them feel like they’re the ones who discovered it. Sometimes when I enjoy Shootmania I feel like I’ve fallen for some marketing trap. I sort of feel like I would’ve liked to have found about this game by myself, like from a recommendation of a friend perhaps. It seems like I would’ve forgiven a lot of Shootmania’s flaws if I had heard of the game that way. Instead I saw a $100 000 Shootmania tournament, and shortly afterwards a mention that says “But the game is still in beta!” excusing the game’s weaknesses… I feel cheated in a way. This progression of things isn’t natural for any community. The little gamer child in me who just wants to compete and have fun feels manipulated. Make a good game and let the community judge afterwards. Finally, I’m not too sure about the presentation of those promotional “pro-gaming” themed tournaments either. How is seeing a half-happy player raise a check for a game I can’t even get my hands on is supposed to make me feel?

Marc-André Messier is a former professional gamer from Canada known as "4 Glory" who played in a variety of games. He notably placed 2nd at the 2007 CPL World Tour Finals for F.E.A.R. and played with top North American Call of Duty 2 team eGe. He is now working on an original book project called the Game Changer Project, which aims to give competitive gamers motivation and true tools to improve their performance in video games.
The final of the EMS One in Katowice: Definitely a milestone for the CS:GO scene. The Polish superstars Virtus.pro faced off against worldclass team Ninjas in Pyjamas in front of a phenomenal audience. Nearly 250,000 viewers via live streams and 11,500 spectators on site have been following the final of the EMS One Katowice in 2014. We are now looking back to the gigantic final in form of with a small match recap.

The long way of Virtus.pro first clash on de_mirage

Let’s begin with the first map of the grand final, which was played on de_mirage. The Polish team Virtus.pro started on the less favoured T side, but managed to win the all important pistol round. Taking down four opponents with the USPS pistol only, the third round was won by Jarosław ‘pasha’ Jarząbkowski himself. The fourth and first fullyequiped round went to Ninjas in Pyjamas, as we witnessed a successful retake of bombsite B from the Swedish team. Paweł ‘byali’ Bieliński scored the fifth round with three phenomenal frags. The seventh round was won flawlessly by the Polish pride against the eco-rounded Ninjas in Pyjamas. Unfortunately for Virtus.pro, the Swedish giants won the next round effortlessly. Virtus.pro won the ninth round in a 3on1 situation against Richard ‘Xizt’ Landström. Wiktor ‘TaZ’ Wojtas and pasha secured the tenth round with two kills each. The eleventh round was close for the Polish team, but luckily byali managed to hit three frags against NiP and won the round for his team. Counterstrikelegend Patrik ‘f0rest’ Lindberg and Adam ‘friberg’ Friberg won a vital 2on2 situation during the twelfth round. Good overall performance by the former ingame leader of NiP Xizt during the next round, but unfortunately he was unable to win it. Another strong retake of bombsite A came from the Swedish team, as friberg managed to score three kills to win the fourteenth round in a 2on2 situation. The youngster byali won the last round of the first half for Virtus.pro with four additional kills in the scoreboard.

Filip ‘NEO’ Kubski won the pistol round for Virtus.pro in style with three beautiful frags. Xizt managed to win the next round by successfully defending bombsite A on a Glock save round with four stunning kills as a bonus. Ninjas in Pyjamas perfectly won one more round versus the ecorounded Polish team. In the next round Janusz ‘Snax’ Pogorzelski went absolutely insane, as he managed to sneak behind the Swedish players and score three instant kills with
only one clip of the M4A1S. VP’s hero pasha also won an AWP duel against f0rest, giving his team the upper hand to win the round easily. Afterwards, the Swedish giants managed to secure one more round in a tight 2on2 situation. Following this, we yet saw another incredible action from pasha, as he completely wiped out three players to set the score on map point. TaZ and snax won the last round for VP and, hence, the first map with an impressive score.

Virtus.pro leads 10 second map de_inferno

After a short break, the second map started in the thrilled Katowice arena. The second map was de_inferno, where the Polish pride started on the slightly more favoured CT side. Once again Virtus.pro managed to secure the pistol round, as the Polish team executed a well coordinated strategy, which in result left Xizt in a 1on4 situation loss in the end. The Polish pride bounced back, winning the second round remarkably. Three brilliant AWP frags by pasha won the first gun round for his team. Virtus.pro’s byali scored four frags with FAMAS in order to win the fifth round for his team flawlessly. Subsequently, NiP won the sixth round, thanks be to friberg who managed to win an important 3on1 situation against amongst others superstar NEO, scoring three extra kills for the scoreboard. Christopher ‘GeT_RiGhT’ Alesund then successfully infiltrated bombsite B and won the seventh round with three kills. Perfect and massive grenades usage from the Polish team scored them the eighth round. Thereafter, pasha shot down three targets in the back in order to win the tenth round. However, Ninjas in Pyjamas somehow managed to secure the eleventh round. A strong round by Virtus.pro followed, as the Polish squad left Xizt alone in a dangerous 3on1 situation. The out of control pasha jumped in, securing four awesome frags with his AWP, winning another round for Virtus.pro. Ninjas in Pyjamas won the last round of the first half, thanks be to Robin ‘Fifflaren’ Johansson and f0rest’s excellent plays.

”When Virtus.pro congratulated NiP the whole crowd shouted “NiP, NiP, NiP”.”

The second half seemed to be more suitable for the Swedish team, but again it finished earlier then we all expected. Xizt and friberg clutched a close 2on2 situation and won the pistol round for NiP. Four FAMAS frags from friberg kept his team in lead for a few more rounds during the second half. The Swedish giants solved another dangerous 2on2 situation in order to win the first gun round, in which four important kills were executed by f0rest. Unfortunately for the Swedes, the legendary Polish player NEO delivered the next round for Virtus.pro, as we witnessed him brilliantly scoring three frags. Another
solid round was executed by NEO, who once again took down three enemies. Meanwhile, the fan’s chanting became louder and louder. It seemed like NEO was back in business, as he once again executed for the Polish team, scoring two important entry kills on bombsite B. Xizt though won a unbelievable round for Ninjas in Pyjamas, as he quickly shot down three targets with only a pistol in hands. Unfortunately, that clutch was simply not enough for the Swedish giants to overcome the onfire Virtus.pro, as we witnessed snax and pasha winning the last round of the second map. Virtus Pro just had the sixth player behind their backs with the emotional audience cheering them on.

When the match was finished and the ceremony started, something unbelievable happened a gesture, which I have never seen before anywhere in the world. When Virtus.pro congratulated NiP the whole crowd shouted “NiP, NiP, NiP”. For me personally, a sign of the highest fairness and respect, which I could only experience live in eSports. But what does that mean to the CS:GO scene?

**A summary of event for the CS:GO scene.**

Currently, Counter Strike: Global Offensive is becoming huge but the road is still very far to go. According to statistics, we hit a new record of over 160,000 concurrent players during EMS One and we also devoured the DreamHack Winter viewer record of 146,000. A total of 237,000 people tuned in to the main stream during the grand final, with 7,000 more people viewing the Chinese stream and an estimated 7,000 people onsite rooting for Virtus.pro and NiP. Those numbers are massive, and hopefully will lead to other organizers, such as the Intel Extreme Masters, starting to take CounterStrike more seriously. Overall the crew behind CS:GO is doing a very good job at the moment, which included talks with many of players in Katowice and asking for feedback for upcoming updates. This is the path to go.

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Chasing Champions –
An eSports Travelogue

By Matt Demers

Hell is being trapped in a window seat on a fifteen hour flight to Korea with a full bladder and the stereotypical Canadian need to be polite. My legs crumple into the seat in front of me, two sleeping Korean men prevent me from the freedom of the aisle.

The last five days had been hectic: I received a press pass to cover the OnGameNet OLYMPUS Champions Winter grand final in Seoul, South Korea, spent the time in between frantically preparing to leave my time zone for the first time. Despite writing about competitive League of Legends for six months at this point, Champions Winter was my first live tournament; after watching numerous American and European events from my Toronto bedroom via stream, I couldn’t help but feel a bit nauseous from my nerves. Or maybe that was the in-flight beverages.

For many eSports fans, Korea is the holy grail of professional gaming. Although it has piqued considerable interest both stateside and in Europe, Asian fans have been able to enjoy their favorite players compete for salaries, prizes and superstardom for almost a decade. OnGameNet – often abbreviated OGN – has hosted several seasons of StarCraft and branched into League of Legends after its swell in popularity, going so far to furnish a studio that enabled fans to watch competitors free of charge. While OGN’s live show operated on a first-come, first-serve basis, offered a notable departure with the introduction of paid tickets: OGN felt it wasn’t fair that fans who had paying jobs would be unable to line up for the hours needed to secure space.

The venue, Hanyang University’s gymnasium, was built to house volleyball during Seoul’s hosting of the summer Olympics in 1988. Two days after my arrival, the gym was converted to allow 8,000 eSports fans watch two powerhouse teams – NaJin Sword and Azubu Frost – compete for an ₩80,000,000 (~$73,556 USD) grand prize. This was a culmination of a season beginning in November, with Champions Spring and Summer to follow in 2013; like many other conventional sports, teams experience a regular season of group play before seeding into a playoff for the grand prize.
Up until recently, League of Legends eSports has followed a different format in America, largely due to the lack of infrastructure in place to support the same level of play. Pointed earned at tournaments held at conventions like Major League Gaming or Penny Arcade eXpo, determined a leaderboard, with the line between a professional, financially stable athlete and an amateur clearly drawn. While this has changed recently with the introduction of Riot Games’ League Championship series – offering salaries to players and weekly, organized league play to spectate – Korea has been doing it much longer, and constructed enough of a business in the process to sustain eSports as both a viable hobby and a career path to hopefuls who want to compete.

Until the LCS, players unable to win tournaments to sustain their career needed to split time between playing and earning a living. Sadly, this led to the creation of teams with the ability to practice dominating those without, stagnating competition in the process. In Seoul and other parts of Asia, players live together in team houses, have enough money to sustain themselves and have a social status nearing that of sex symbols. The existence of these highly competitive teams account for the dominance of Asian countries at these tournaments.

Travelling to Korea was a unique experience in and of itself; Not only did I not speak a word of Korean, aside from the occasional family vacation to Florida and solo jaunt to New York City, I’d never really left home. Like an amateur, I failed to get my International roaming package working after emerging from the Seoul subway from the airport. I was at the right stop, but I was stuck in the misting rain with no idea where to go, and no tools to help get me there. Despite my technological disconnect, I noticed that Seoul is an extremely modern city. The subways have signage in both English and Hangul, making travelling extremely easy for foreigners other services also seem geared towards travelers, including a mapping service that helps you find your station and calculate your fares, printing out a rechargeable card. There is full cell-phone reception and wireless internet on the subway, but I was unable to use it: a Korean mobile number is usually needed to access free options or the possibility of purchasing.

This emphasis on mobility reflects a general acceptance of technology as a facet of everyday life. While my grandmother can barely use a prepaid flip-phone back home, there were numerous elderly playing games on touch-screens – and as I was informed later, often with each other. This worked to my advantage, as after I found some friendly Wi-Fi (ironically at one of the only Canadian restaurants in Seoul), I contacted my host for the weekend.
Christopher “Montecristo” Mykles (that’s him, on the left) has been working in eSports for nearly a decade, managing a Warcraft III team and commentating on League of Legends. Currently, he works for OGN as an English-speaking commentator for their broadcasts, and along with William “Chobra” Cho, was my connections to the inner workings of the broadcast. I worked with both men in the past on a volunteer basis for a community news site; their involvement in the scene landed them jobs in Korea as OGN expanded their audience worldwide. Cho is an extremely valuable asset in eSports due to his ability to speak both English and Korean fluently; due to his status as Press Coordinator for the event and my inability to speak the language, I largely relied on him for translations.

However, with a day still to go between my arrival and the tournament, Mykles and I spent time preparing for the upcoming event. While maintaining a physical presence in Seoul, he continued to commentate for an online stream in the United States, powering through the time difference; while lacking the spectacle of an offline event, playing and commentating online is often how players and personalities gain experience. While performance well could lead to invitations to live play, English-speaking audiences are only starting to see a regular League format with the production values of “real” sports.

Mykles and Cho’s apartment was located in Itaewon, one of the more international-friendly areas in Seoul. Between mandatory Korean barbeque, we picked up Caribbean chicken and odd takes on hamburgers, and fried, sugared pastries identical to the ones my Ukranian grandmother used to make for me. The mash up of cultures let me ease my way into my new surroundings while still having recognizable elements to latch on to, though hearing a cover band butcher a Nickelback song triggered a large amount of Canadian shame.

”... English-speaking audiences are only starting to see a regular League format with the production values of “real” sports.”

On the day of the tournament, those training wheels slowly came off. Despite a fairly Western-style brunch after meeting up with Mykles’ broadcast partner, stepping outside the Hanyang subway station all three of us were aware of how conspicuously foreign we looked. It was clear that fans had been congregating across the university grounds long before we got there.; we attracted our share of looks while walking to the gymnasium, and while we were able to enter, there was a little bit of waiting to be done while getting verification that we could enter.
Business infrastructure is not the only type that’s important to the Korean model of eSports; a large advantage that companies like OGN enjoy is the ease of transit for residents of Seoul. This venue, for instance had a station within a five minutes’ walk, and the OGN studio held similar advantages. For younger fans that may not have their own cars, public transit is key to minimizing investment for a night eSports. Like many sports fans in the United States can attest, it’s infinitely easier to attend a stadium/arena game without having to navigate through gridlock traffic or pay for costly parking.

The American system also works very differently in terms of frequency and spectacle; though Riot Games have their own studio in Los Angeles for League broadcasts, it currently does not host an audience. Instead, “convention” events like MLG or PAX are larger, flashier, and attendance can come with a greater degree of planning. Especially when considering travel, food and accommodations, those not living in within common cities (Los Angeles, Dallas, Raleigh, Boston) have a considerable investment to make; a tournament will often play out in its entirety over the course of a weekend, pairing League of Legends with other games to maximize the usage of a large venue. If there was any start to the spectacle of Champions Winter, it was that I was not used to seeing so much production value solely for one game.

In Korea, the passion for this one game was enthralling, as the pockets of excited fans waiting reminded me of tailgating parties I had seen back in the West. While an afternoon of going downtown to grab a baseball or hockey game seemed commonplace for those of us living near large cities, the fact that this was for video games – a hobby still struggling to find acceptance in adult audiences – was a bit surreal. After all, there was no reason why it shouldn’t be treated similarly, but I simply could not imagine telling my parents, friends, or co-workers that I was going to be sitting at home and watching a gaming tournament for most of the weekend.

Attempts in the past drew skepticism and even a little teasing; letting my parents know that I would be leaving the country for what I thought was a logical extension of sports journalism perplexed them. For all the progress that video games have made to invade mainstream audiences, the hobby still has trouble divorcing itself from the stigma it suffered for a long time prior – however, some of the most apt comparisons between the “nerd” and “jock” stereotypes point out that the latter just happen to be as passionate about baseball stats as eSports fans are about kill:death ratios.

In Korea, eSports have the benefit of seeing a more widespread audience, and
therefore a better chance to normalize as part of everyday life. OnGameNet and other companies form partnerships with TV stations, allowing them to broadcast their matches as if they were any other sport. When Riot Games’ Season Two World Championship occurred this past October, the 1,154,000 unique viewer figures were considered amazing – that is, until we found out that an additional 2,402,225 people watched the event through Korean and Chinese televisions. By normalizing the act of watching eSports, OGN’s first ticketed event was a resounding success: all 8,000 tickets for today’s tournament, priced at less than twenty dollars US, sold out in less than an hour.

While waiting for our staff and press passes, I was introduced to some familiar faces from that same World Championship; Azubu Frost, the team that eventually took second place and half a million dollars in prize money, wandered in behind us and sat down on some couches. I was caught off-guard, as my only experience with professional League of Legends players up to this point had been voice interviews through Skype and broadcast cameras at tournaments. It was hard not to be star-struck, as this was the team that steam-rolled the top American squad on their way to victory. However, the feeling subsided extremely quickly as I was introduced and shook their hands. Some seemed put off by me, perhaps by my choice to wear a suit. Meeting them in person faded the view of them as unstoppable juggernauts and replaced it with the realization that these guys were, at their core, gamers. They just happened to be waiting to play the biggest game of their lives.

Eventually Frost was ushered out of the room and I was left tethered to Cho, who had taken on a jack of all trades role for Champions Winter. Translating, co-ordinating press and speaking on the English broadcast, we stayed with him as he ran a few errands. This paid off, though, when we stepped inside the Hanyang gym and got to see the stage.

In order to give the spectators an adequate view of the game, OGN rigged multiple projector towers along the back wall of the ground floor, shining images up onto the main screen. As the production staff went through a dry run of the lights, sound and pre-show pageantry, it was evident at how much work had been put into the establishing of a storyline for this season’s conclusion. There were recaps of the previous Spring and Summer tournaments, video packages of the teams facing off on superimposed backgrounds, and head-to-head introductions for players along with their counterpart on the opposing side. It felt like the Super Bowl, only with less pyrotechnics, combining a flash of showmanship with the competitive spirit of the championship.
Eventually, I received a press badge that gave me access to the backstage of the facility and the multiple levels of seating above the ground floor. Different utility rooms were set up in the building’s classrooms, such as locker rooms for each team and a wardrobe and makeup room. This is where I caught up with Mykles, immersed in conversation with NaJin Sword’s Yoon “MakNoN” Ha-woon; MakNoN is a favourite among foreigners due to his aggressive play, trash talk and workable grasp of the English language.

Surrounded by both teams and support staff, it was in this room where introductions were made and the naturalization between “players on a pedestal” and “normal people” were completed. Though the mood was light and sociable, I could see the determination etched into the player’s faces. For Azubu Frost, Champions Winter was a chance to become multiple-time OGN champions, and NaJin Sword was poised to usurp the throne.

“Sports can inspire positive emotions, like joy, pride and camaraderie; I want gamers to be able to feel them in such an intense way, just as I had. And with eSports’ momentum building at an immense rate, this may happen sooner, rather than later.”

Within the hour, the venue’s doors opened and people began flooding in. This process was exactly the same any other sporting event, with some of the crowd writing signs on their cellphones in hopes of being caught by the numerous boom cameras sweeping the gym. Some fans reveled in the attention of seeing themselves on-screen, while others (usually ladies) hid their faces; I found out this was partly a holdover from earlier days of eSports, where students skipping school to watch matches didn’t want to be identified.

Eventually, the crowd settled, the lights dimmed, and the production began. The light show that I witnessed earlier sprang to life, this time with a cheering crowd to give the presentation a fuller effect. Naturally, the point of all this was to hype the crowd, and it worked marvelously; you could hear random shouts of players’ names, gasps of amazement when they appeared on the screen, and the din of pure, unadulterated passion. I got to experience this from all angles while running around to get photos, and by the time I was able to slow down and watch the match itself, Azubu Frost was already down two
games in a best-of-five series, facing elimination.

Leaning against a production box near one of the projection towers, I put down my camera. It was ironic that it had taken me this long to actually witness a game I enjoyed watching, because I was preoccupied with capturing others, instead. Finally settled in, the experience felt truly different from anything prior in my gaming career.

In that moment, it felt like instead of being just one person in a random spot in the crowd, I was absorbed into the game as part of a miraculous wave. Every fan in that gym was invested into the game, and when something happened during the match, the entire air changed. It would often start slow, as the most experienced eyes would catch a player out of position, or two other moving to flank him. The noise grew louder as more people caught on, swelling like the ocean before a wave’s crest; either the gambit would dissipate harmlessly, or a team would gain the advantage to thunderous applause and cheering.

It’s a pity that both teams sat in sound-proof booths on-stage: I can imagine no greater reward for a successful play.

NaJin Sword toppled Azubu Frost in that game, sweeping the match and seizing the prize money in a shower of confetti and champagne. MakNooN netted himself a check for match MVP, breaking down in tears as his team clutched the Champions Winter Cup. The closing ceremonies were emotional not only for the victors, but for the rest of the league teams in attendance; it was a nod to a successful season, not only for the players, but for OGN as well. It was around this time that I figured out where I had felt like this before.

As a proud Canadian, I know that one of the few occasions we rally around sports is the Winter Olympic Games, where our hockey team are perennial favorites. People pause normal NHL team allegiances in favor of supporting the greater cause, where the pride of the entire country seems on the line; there was a similar feeling here despite the lack of national pride. It was every bit as intense as the Super Bowl, game seven of the World Series or the final of the World Cup; after all, it should.

This tournament was markedly different from what I had experienced because it was less of a “gaming occasion” and more of fully-developed sports event. Every person in attendance was there to watch League of Legends because he or she was deeply passionate about the teams playing and the game itself. Instead of splitting their attention between a convention around them or other games being played at the same time, they were able to invest their
excitement fully towards the task at hand. Both the players and OGN were rewarded for their commitment to quality with fans that left happy, carrying the growth of eSports with them.

After requisite celebration and tying up loose ends, I was back on a plane to Toronto the next day; it was sadly a quick trip, and I would’ve loved to spend a bit more time around Seoul. Since my trip, I’ve been enjoying Riot Games’ League Championship Series on a weekly basis, but have been chasing the same level of hype that I experienced in Korea. My sleep schedule has sadly led me to miss most of Champions Spring, which will be culminating this coming weekend; neither NaJin Sword nor Azubu Frost (now named CJ Entus Frost) will be returning. It’s been nearly five months since the conclusion of Champions Winter, and that can be an eternity in an eSports fan’s memory. More teams will rise, others will fall, and the best can build legacies.

While waiting on the plane in my empty row – no fidgeting this time – the passion surrounding the championship left me hopeful that someday I could experience a tournament like that on my native soil. Something sparked inside me, as I wanted nothing more to play, watch, feel the game. Sports can inspire positive emotions, like joy, pride and camaraderie; I want gamers to be able to feel them in such an intense way, just as I had.

And with eSports’ momentum building at an immense rate, this may happen sooner, rather than later.

Matt Demers is a 23 year old writer who hopes to make a living out of his passions. He writes about gaming, League of Legends, comic books and other nerdy things. You can follow him on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. If you’d like to read or watch more in-depth eSports coverage, consider donating to help with associated costs.
We go back to the 22nd October 2013 when KILLERFISH eSport e.V. as being one of the most successful German console clans decides to support a brandnew movement in electronic sports. Because since that date KF also present their organization in the upcoming female CoD scene on Microsoft’s Xbox 360.

It all started with the 24-year-old female national CoD player Sarah ‘MisSy’ Bufé. After she had been in several organizations during her esport career she also tried to found some female teams. Sadly it always miscarried for a variety of reasons. That’s why in the summer of last year she decided to change the parameters and risk a restart – with the support of a reputable org, with a roster out of dedicated girls and with the ambitious aim to enter the competitive CoD scene.

When this idea manifested itself Sarah went to KILLERFISH’s CEO Dennis ‘Tunix’ Schmidt and presented her plan. They had a few serious discussions until Dennis was convinced and told Sarah to start recruiting.

”KILLERFISH eSports e.V. will define multigaming in the future not only through playful presence on different platforms and games but also by two sexes within these. For a long time we were looking for a team that can strengthen us in female-range but no matter whether PC or console we weren’t able to find the right team so far.”

- Dennis ‘Tunix’ Schmidt

Then it was Sarah’s turn to make some difficult decisions. As already mentioned, she had to accept the failure of various female projects she began with. And the whole female scene had to do so, too.
It seemed like the female teams were always started with the wrong attitude. Sarah realized that it was not all about high-skilled players but also about sympathies. So she began her search for female gamers fitting to her imaginations of the perfect team.

Of course she tried to choose free agents for her team but whereas there isn’t a large choice of ambitious, dedicated female gamers united with their passion to esport she also contacted clan members.

Everyone who knows Sarah won’t be surprised that at first she thought of Kiara ‘Giggles’ Hufnagel to be the second player in her lineup. These 2 girls have know each other for a long time and have already played together on various occasions. For example in their ‘Für die Königin’ 2on2 team on consoles.net or since its establishment in the female CoD national team of Germany where Kiara acts as the captain.

Besides her playing abilities and her experience Kiara also stood out in a positive manner in a different context. At Uprising eSports e.V. she was a part of the editorial staff where she constantly did a great job. So she is definitely a real enrichment for KILLERFISH in many ways.

Consoles Sports League admin Jana ‘Evolet’ Möglich then was the third girl the future team captain recruited. With the inexorable promotion of the launch of the female section she recently made a major contribution to the female gaming movement at consoles. Her pathways also crossed with Sarah’s and Kiara’s on many occasions. Especially as the team manager of the earlier mentioned female national team she got to know these girls very well.

Although Sarah has made a name for herself in the community she had a hard job persuading her first two recruits. As Kiara playing a key role in Uprising eSport e.V. and feeling comfortable there for years and Jana who was one year without any org which is in fact a very long time in esport. That’s also why both were pretty sceptical towards Sarah’s idea of building a completely new female team. But after a few talks in the end Sarah ‘MisSy’ Bufé was successful so that 3 of the 4 roster places were already taken.

It wasn’t long before Sarah chose the fourth female gamer to complete the lineup. And again her search rooted in the national team. Cathy Konopatzki, nickname ‘Biene’, also proved her skills in national matches against Austria. After some minor problems in the beginning she finally transformed to a good team worker. So she was the perfect candidate to fill the left place in the team.
and did not hesitate with her commitment.

Actually the KILLERFISH eSport e.V. female team was complete. But unfortunately there were some inactivities within the team because of educational reasons. The girls couldn’t train like they wanted to thus Sarah quickly decided to get a fifth lady for her team.

Another reason was that German national female player number three Lena ‘Luna’ Jeanne left the first German female clan ‘ViVAciouS Ladies’ and was a free agent from then on. Lena is well-known in the scene as probably the best German female competitive gamer. Her plan was to end with espord – really! In the ‘ViVA’ she acted in leading positions nearly since the very beginning. She grew with her responsibility but lastly it became a too high load. Sarah contacted her at the very right moment. With the offer of a simple player role in a competitive female team she definitely hit the right spot with Lena.

That’s how Lena, Sarah, Kiara, Jana and Cathy became the KILLERFISH ladies. 5 months have passed since Sarah united these girls. And they really represented KILLERFISH optimally in the female scene since then.

"In these five girls we had a good feeling from the very beginning because they are absolutely ambitious and talented players. In addition they are active in a title which already enjoys a lot of attention in our organization. We want to work together for a stronger female-field at European level. At the same time our team shall position at its top and become a worthy representative for Germany. We give the girls the opportunity and hope that they know how to use.”

- Dennis ‘Tunix’ Schmidt

The launch of the Consoles Sports League Female Section in November 2013 provided the perfect opportunity for the girls to prove themselves. The section hosted 7 female cups on Xbox with different game modes and team sizes.
There was 1on1 up to 4on4 in search and destroy as well as random gen where girls from Spain, Italy, England and Germany competed. Every tournament had at least 4 participating teams and 11 at peak times. The girls around Sarah were facing 13 other organizations. However they were able to demonstrate their dominance in various disciplines and won every single female cup they joined and even brought home the gold AND the silver medal in the ‘2on2 Catfight S&D Cup’.

The KILLERFISH female team is unbeaten up to now in the European female scene. With their success the girls attract the attention of the whole community.

"I am very grateful that my girls have taken this step with me. The team has performed very well until now. In the beginning things were going slowly but currently you can clearly see the improvement in team play. Every player can rely on the other so I would say it was definitely worth it to train 2-3 hours every day."

- Sarah 'MisSy' Bufé

I am confident that we will continue to dominate the European female scene. However we won’t rest on the laurels of our team’s initial successes. We will continue to train hard to perhaps even establish ourselves in the general competitive scene. Above all the German female gamers follow their example and currently more and more female teams are formed. Some of them even have the ambition to play competitively.

Thus momentarily we can observe important changes in the female consoles gaming scene and we can absolutely expect a lot from these 5 unique esport personalities!

Major league admin of the consoles.net female section Jana 'KF Evolet' Möglich. Since 2007 active in esports and passionately supporting the progression of female gaming in the consoles scene. Currently she’s playing in the female team of the German pro console organization KILLERFISH eSport e.V.
Marketing and Sponsorship in eSports

By Dominik Härig

Computer games have made remarkable developments since their beginnings: As part of contemporary discussion it is examined, which cultural value they have, how they foster learning\(^1\) for pupils and students. In addition eSport has emerged, with events taking place even in international scale sport stadiums.\(^2\)

In this context I’ll leapfrog to discuss any justification of computer games and instead fully concentrate on „marketing and sponsorship in eSports“\(^3\). At first I’ll take the perspective of potential sponsors and comment on commercial aspects, then I analyse Red Bull’s commitment to eSport, wrapping up with conclusions and considerations of possible prospects.

However, two further limitations are needed before I can start my analysis:
1. It should be noted that this article was inspired by the Red Bull Battle-grounds New York 2013. This means, eSports and competitive gaming in this article are predominantly represented by the real-time-strategy game „Starcraft II Heart of the Swarm“. Nevertheless there will also be references to other titles and genres.
2. This article refers solely to the western society, since eSport has a different status in Asia.\(^3\)

Commercial aspects

eSport represent a new market opportunity on its own, which ultimately expands the value chain of computer games. Business opportunities cover the entire aspects of event marketing, including entry fees and merchandise for visitors and participants on one hand and on the other hand by commercials in Streams and Video on Demand for the remote community. Sponsorship by vendors from telecommunication, gaming hardware and peripherals does not come as a surprise since their target customers are precisely met.

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(2) See: Intel Extreme Masters 2014 in Katowice; ESL One Frankfurt 2014
Vendors from other segments still seem to be reluctant to engage in the eSport context. The reasons probably include:

1. Computer games in general and eSport in particular are to be understood as a relatively young medium, which means that adaption of marketing approaches still needs time.
2. eSports reach is perceived to be too low. Thus becoming an eSports Sponsor doesn’t appear desirable.
3. The potential sponsor believes his brand or product can’t be adequately represented.

What can be done to improve this situation? Computer games are part of our modern society. This is shown by Jim’s studies and other research. This means that not only teenagers play computer games or are interested in them. Representation of computer games or certain features of computer games (e.g. the concept of avatars) found their place in traditional mass media. This relates especially to cinema. Now there can be found game-based movies (e.g. Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life, Doom), movies based on gaming (Gamer, Ender’s Game), movies playing with the concept of avatars (e.g. Surrogates, Avatar), movies concentrating on immersion (e.g. eXistenZ, Strange Days) and finally movies which are like Games (Sucker Punch, Doom).

In this context it is helpful to be aware that Starcraft and its sequel titles are on the market since 1998. That’s 16 years. This continuity is an important factor. This definitely helped to build up Starcraft as a known brand. It furthermore creates connection options for passive gamers. For players who do not really play anymore, but are definitely in for watching an exciting game of Starcraft. Especially in this group I have the feeling that a lot of potential remains untapped. As a casual player, I myself will hardly be confronted with eSports content, if I do not actively search for it. Once the contact is established, an almost inexhaustible supply of content opens up. Pro-active marketing could trigger more interest and make it easier to get there. As a result the addressable target group is extended.

This directly improves attractiveness for potential sponsors: marketing targets like extending brand awareness in general, linking with successful players or clans and finally cashing in on market share improvements are facilitated.

Even better, if sponsors are not only presented to in-site-attendants but are also visible to the remote community attending via web.

While the structures of eSports leagues and the different tournaments already provide a professional setting, in which players can compete, it should be noted that in the field of marketing eSport still has untapped potential. It is noticeable that there is little opportunity for professional players to place their sponsors in the game. Here are the publishers in demand. One way to deal with this would be, for example, to set up special (paid) accounts for professional players that allow players to upload logos of their sponsors. The fear that gameplay will be affected could be counteracted by adding the option "Display Opponents advertisement".

"... Red Bulls involvement in eSport should help eSports further positive development."

Naturally sports games have an advantage to first person shooter and real time strategy games when you look at representing sponsors or the ability to place advertisements. However, I just recently came across a positive example for displaying sponsorship in Starcraft. I watched the monthly ShoutCraft Invitational tournament, which is hosted by John “Totalbiscuit” Bain and noticed the following. Players have the opportunity to present their sponsors in the initial phase of the game in the area of their Main as shown in the linked game6. This means immediate screen time and thus direct advertising, because at the beginning of each game a large part of the action takes place in this area. This is more than a large-scale banner anywhere on the map. This is, in my opinion, so far the most compelling approach to advertising in Starcraft. I will not be surprised to see other events follow - and wish the best to secure and extend attractive tournaments along with this trend.

Red Bull and eSports

I have already mentioned that the eSports Event Red Bull Battle Grounds 2013 has prompted me to write this article. Some might say: Red Bull sponsored an eSports event. What is the big deal? It is only one aspect of their marketing strategy. However, I attach great importance to this and will detail why: When I think of Red Bull, I immediatly think of this global company’s creative commercials and their sponsorship of trend and extreme sports besides their own events, such as the „Red Bull Flugtag“7. So when I watched this tournament,
I thought to myself that eSports have taken the next step towards a broader public. eSport can only benefit from the experiences of Red Bull in the field of event management and marketing, because Red Bull has frequently had a good sense to take advantage of emerging sports or subcultures.

Also I’m generally a fan of eSports and I am happy when I can watch exciting games. My heart is still beating, if I for example think of the third game between [Acer]Scarlett and Bomber in the group stage at Red Bull Battlegrounds 2013. My point is, this Austrian company is the first company that has originally nothing to do with computers and telecommunications, which decided to organise a big event with the corresponding prize money.8

My take: Red Bull has recognized market relevance of eSports and invested at an early stage. Perhaps the commercial perspective is considering the relative spending power that eSports fans possess. In my opinion, Red Bull’s commitment can serve as a signal to other companies whether sponsorship of entire events or at least teams of players can turn out to be attractive to them.

**Conclusion and outlook**

New perspectives for eSports are emerging on the one hand through growing scale of live-events and followers and on the other through Red Bulls example expanding the reach to eSports. eSport-events slowly are growing up but can still increase reach. Decades of active or once-active gamers are proving a broad base that should be properly approached and triggered to join the eSport events, either visiting or online. This should result in increased apeal to potential sponsors.

In addition developers can contribute, by providing technical solutions to integrate sponsordisplay in the actual game framework. Sharing the results from best practices and learning from positive examples such as the Shoutcraft tournament and Red Bulls involvement in eSport should help eSports further positive development.

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The Future of Electronic Sports in High Schools

By Kate Kanne

Electronic sports, more commonly called eSports, (competitive games played online such as League of Legends or StarCraft) are becoming increasingly popular in today’s society. In high schools where students are encouraged to excel both in the class room and in extracurricular activities, these games could be a future supplement to today’s physical based sports that exclude non athletic teens. Some examples of popular eSports that have professional level competitions today include, Defense of the Ancients 2, Warcraft 3, League of Legends, and StarCraft. These single and multiplayer games offer many of the same strategy and team building components valued in today’s popular physical sports. Recent studies have begun to disprove the concerns about social isolationism and the benefits of having coach mentors and even the cognitive advantages of gaming. By offering these eSports to high school students as extracurricular options schools could increase their student involvement and improve social experience.

On October 19th 1972, forty-one years ago, the very first esport competition took place on the campus of Stanford University. The game was called Spacewar!, and first prize was a year’s subscription to the magazine, Rolling Stone. “Someone got the idea to convene the ”Intergalactic Spacewar Olympics” in 1972, at Stanford’s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. Contestants fought it out on the lab’s only PDP-10 computer” (Good). This small tournament was the beginning of video games as a form of competition. The first video game competition on a large scale was held by Atari in 1981. As written about in the “Electronic Games Magazine” from March 1982, The Space Invaders Championship had more than 10,000 participants that came from all over the United States. It is thought that this event established competitive gaming as a mainstream hobby.

Through the 1990’s as internet connectivity became increasingly available, gaming moved online and the tournaments became more inclusive. In 1997 the first major gaming league formed, the Cyberathlete Professional League, creating the start of professional esports, and offering $15,000 in prize money. It was during this time that the release of real-time strategy also known as RTS hit, called “StarCraft: Brood War.” This joined the already popular first person shooter games like “Quake” that had previously dominated the market
in professional gaming. In his article, “Esports, A Brief History” Edwards discusses the new opportunities opened by the introduction of strategy based games.

While shooters focus on twitch skills and fast reflexes, RTS games also require careful thought and long-term planning and have been compared to a modern version of chess. With its asymmetrically balanced races, each with their own unique troops and abilities, “StarCraft” offered nearly limitless strategic potential and became one of the driving forces of the eSports world, though it would not reach the height of its popularity until after the year 2000.

For the past forty years video games have been evolving from monotonous simple tasks to complicated intellectually challenging games that can be compared to, and in some ways found superior to, sports.

The “flow experience”, traditionally found in athletic sports, has now been discovered to also be true in esports. By offering the proper balance of challenge and success, it allows the gamers to reach a “mesmerized” state, allowing them to relax while still being mentally stimulated. By constantly shifting the level of challenge, eSports can maintain a level of flow for the players by either increasing or decreasing the difficulty. This ability to cater to the needs of human experience is unlike anything offered in physical sports. This allows the players to feel accomplished and generally reach a state of mental well-being (Hoffman).

One of the benefits of playing on a team sport in high school is having the role model of a coach to help improve the student as both a player and person. By implementing eSports as an extra-curricular, schools could hire coaches to both help their students and monitor them to ensure the best possible results. In a preliminary study of using coaching devices for esports, coaches can log in with their students and take screen shots or videos of segments to use as visual aids when covering the material later with the gamer. The eSports coach acts in the same way traditional coaches, helping players overcome their personal obstacles through motivation and encouragement (Zhai).

These eSport coaches are considered necessary, according to Laxmisha Rai and Gao Yan in their article “Future Perspectives on Next Generation eSports Infrastructure and Exploring Their Benefits” they state that, usually, eSports put a higher demand on the players’ abilities than common computer games, not only superb coordination capacity between hands and eyes, rapid response capacity and skilful handling capacity of mouse and keyboard, but also complex strategic and tactical thinking ability.
These skills are vital in today’s market for technologically savvy employees expected to spend hours on a computer every day. The more traditionally valued traits of strategic and tactical thinking are becoming increasingly important for a market that is in constant need of innovators and problem solvers.

There are still however some concerns about eSports, chiefly that they are inactive, causing concern for the health of the players. This however is being combated with new innovations in robotics and real time sensors. Scientists predict that the future of eSports may be much closer to actual sports in its physical demands. Some of the ideas they are working on currently are explained by Rai and Yan in their statement, “By placing virtual objects at physical locations or by enhancing physical locations with information presented in the virtual world, pervasive games expand the use of both the physical and the virtual in game design.” This is just one of many directions that video games may go in order to integrate the computer game experience with the physical world. Another study suggests live action role playing, otherwise known as LARPing, could be combined with massively multiplayer online games, also called MMOs, to create a physical dimension to the virtual world (Seay). These new innovations connecting the virtual and physical worlds could create games that will someday be included with other physical sports as viable options for exercise in teenagers and adults.

"There are still however some concerns about eSports, chiefly that they are inactive, causing concern for the health of the players. This however is being combated with new innovations in robotics and real time sensors."

Social isolation is another concern often raised when discussing online gaming. However, according to a study done by Aaron Delwiche, using MMOs such as second life as a tool for teaching in the classroom and reported in his paper “Massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) in the new media classroom”, students who were asked to use the gaming technology outside of the classroom setting were very unlikely to play on their own time. This may have been because they viewed the time spent as “homework”, but was more often because they craved the social interaction. When Delwiche set up a time outside of class when students could play at the same time, the results were far more positive. Students were willing to put in the time outside of class
because it was viewed as a social activity instead of an isolated assignment.

"The possible future of eSports is very exciting. As a growing part of society today it is important to recognize its validity as an extracurricular activity for high-school students. Organizations like the High School Star League are working toward the goal of offering these games to high school students."

In another study A. Fleming Seay explores the various motivations behind online gaming. Reasons included benefits such as escapism and achievement. However, among the motivations a group of people he called “relationship players” existed. They were players who were drawn to the gaming world as a way of social interaction to meet new people and form friendships, discussing issues in their real lives and forming meaningful relationships outside of game play. This study proves that the social interaction gained by playing these online games creates constant opportunities to meet and connect with thousands of other players from far outside their physical lives. These games connect people on a global level and fulfill a basic need for human interaction. Since 2008 the International eSports Federation, known as the IeSF, according to their website, has grown from nine countries to forty-two and holds international tournaments year round in all of the major eSports. Their ambition is to transcend the barriers of language, race, and culture and to standardize the eSports to create a fair competition. The IeSF is simply one of many both national and international federations trying to legitimize eSports and create a new pastime accepted globally.

The possible future of eSports is very exciting. As a growing part of society today it is important to recognize its validity as an extracurricular activity for high-school students. Organizations like the High School Star League are working toward the goal of offering these games to high school students. As it says in their mission statement “The High School Star League’ strives towards providing high school students with as team-orientated, competitive, fun, and rewarding of an experience that playing traditional sports for a high school does.” They hope to gain a place of respect alongside the other sports offered in high schools today and gain the support of their schools and com-
The High School Star League is not alone in its mission of promoting high school eSports. Several other eSport groups have been founded in the past couple of years offering tournaments for teams from high schools. Twenty-eight teams competed in their first League of Legends tournament in the San Francisco area this fall, competing for prizes and a possible future as professional gamers (Information and Background). In another part of the country, “The Texas eSports Association” or TeSPA has been promoting eSports in high schools and universities since 2010. They currently work towards legitimizing eSports by encouraging the establishment of local chapters and organize events nationwide (Whatley).

Today, eSports may still be considered a subculture, but the gaming community is growing and becoming a more commonly accepted part of the American and international culture. With national and international professional gamers being supported by a large fan base and sponsors, high schools and universities seem to be the next logical step. With new studies showing the social and intellectual benefits of gaming and the potential for eSport coaches to be positive mentors for these students, eSports are no longer being viewed as simply a meaningless pastime. The movement to include eSports in schools is clearly present through the efforts of groups nationwide and this means the legitimization of eSports as an extracurricular activity is a distinct possibility.
References


Mentoring in eSports

By Tobias M. Scholz and Anna Feldhaus

Introduction

ESports is still a young niche and industrial environment; this is the reason why it is still highly fluctuating. Furthermore it is a field that is difficult to define. ESports is rooted in the video games field, however, competitive gaming has many similarities to professional sports, therefore it is difficult to put a label on eSports. It’s no wonder that eSports sometimes has a radical and novel approach to certain aspects. ESports is often called competitive gaming and therefore it is natural to compare it with competitive sports. You would expect amongst other things elements like professional teams, coaches, mentors, training camps, scouting, fans and sponsoring. Although many of these elements exist relatively similar, there are aspects like coaching or mentoring that are scarce in eSports and often are completely different to their counterparts in sports.

In the first eSports Yearbook Fields (2009) introduced the concept of coaching, at that time it was something novel to eSports. Today there are several coaches within eSports but still are slightly different than their counterpart in the real world. Only few coaches are well known in the scene and even fewer are known for their game-deciding decisions.

From that coaching perspective we want to look closer to one special relationship between coach and player. This relationship goes vastly beyond and evolved into a mentoring-relationship. Lim »BoxeR« Yo Hwan was one of the most successful Starcraft player in the world. In the time between 2010 and 2013 he was coach of the teams SlayerS and SK Telecom T1. Although he did a terrific job as coach, his greatest success was to discover talents and foster his players to careers on international champion level. One unique relationship was with Mun »MMA« Seong Won, which was described as a mentoring-relationship (Team Liquid, n.d.). And typically for eSports this mentoring process has some major differences to the classical mentoring literature.

In this paper we want to research the case of mentoring between BoxeR and MMA. By that we want to identify what mentoring in eSports is. Furthermore we contribute to the discussion of mentoring that currently is in the need of a deconstruction in order to reconstruct it in a contemporary form. ESports is tackling mentoring in a unique form, because it is an emergent process and most mentoring relationships are not labeled as that. The objective of
the paper is to point out on the example of Lim »BoxeR« Yo Hwan and Mun »MMA« Seong Won a mentoring relationship which had to organize and manage itself in order to reach success in ESports. We will look at an exemplary mentoring relationship that reveals the potential of mentoring within eSports.

**Theoretical Background**

ESports ("competitive gaming") is a major segment in the video game industry and expanded into pop-culture in recent years. Furthermore it also attracted interests of professional gaming platforms (e.g. ESPN) or big companies (e.g. Red Bull). It is accredited as an official sport in South Korea, China and several other countries.

"Electronic sports (eSports) is a term for organized video game competitions, especially between professionals. Related terms include competitive gaming, professional gaming, and cybersport. The most common video game genres associated with electronic sports are real-time strategy, fighting, first-person shooter, and multiplayer online battle arena. Tournaments such as the World Cyber Games, the Evolution Championship Series, and the Intel Extreme Masters provide both live broadcasts of the competition, and cash prizes to competitors."

- *eSports definition from Wikipedia*

One definition for eSports originates from Wagner (2006:3): “eSports is an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies.” Another definition is: “Passion, training, reflex, intelligence and teamwork … if it’s not sport it really has its taste” (Arnaud, 2010:11). Similar to any other competitive sport there is a big part about acquiring and training new talents. Especially due to the fact that there are no talent management structures and
there is no strict barrier between amateur and professional gamer.

"Because the border between amateurs and new rising pro talent is not as clear as in traditional sports, many regular players can also find themselves playing against emerging pros. This connection, between everyday leisure and fandom, between amateur and pro players, helps build strong affective attachments."

- Taylor, 2012

Without such borders and without explicit structures players progress on their own. This means that the talent market is mostly self-regulated and self-organized. Players succeed on the basis of their talent, their dedication but also their luck. In recent years, however, the aspect of talent management is developing/is becoming more and more (e.g. SK-Gaming talent team in Warcraft III). The goal is to identify talent in the vast amount of potential players, but also identify those people that are capable of dealing with a professional career in eSports. Such career is time consuming and requires high discipline. Coaching and talent teams are capable to train those players but shape them towards real pro-gamer there is more necessary.

One method to get more control into the talent market is mentoring. Mentoring is a close relationship between a mentor and a mentee. The mentor is more experienced and navigates the younger mentee in the adult world (Kram, 1985: 2). The four mentoring phases are based on the seminal work of Kram (1985).

1.) Starting with the initiation phase, where mentor and mentee meet each other and exchange their expectations of the mentoring relationship. According to Kram this phase has a period of six months to a year.

2.) Based on the achievements of the first phase the cultivation phase starts. The mentor is starting to coach, to protect and to sponsor the mentee. On the other hand the mentee starts to benefit on the relationship, which can be identified on the career functions. The further the cultivation phase is forging
ahead, the stronger the interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee is becoming. In the period of two to five years the maximum range of functions by mentoring is reached.

3.) In order to move forward the mentee has to separate from the mentor. The process of separation can last between six months up to two years. Especially the mentor is having a hard time. A midlife crisis rises because of the decrease of mentoring functions provided by the mentor.

4.) The last phase starts when mentor and mentee realizes that the mentoring relationship is becoming a less central part of their lives. Kram defines this phase as a redefinition, means the close mentoring relationship is turning to a developmental relationship. Mentor and mentee are having a friendship on an informal level (Kram, 1985: 49–63).

Kram established the four phases of mentoring 30 years ago. Nevertheless her work is still an essential element in fields of mentoring research.

**Mentoring relationship BoxeR and MMA**

The mentoring relationship of BoxeR and MMA is slightly different of what the literature of mentoring is describing, e.g. Kram, 1985. First, it emerged from a normal coaching relationship towards an intensive mentoring relationship. Second, it reveals an abrupt as well as rough decoupling phase. Third, it also shows the long-term success of the mentoring relationship, even though in short-term it seemed to be failing.

In 2010, BoxeR started a new Starcraft II Team with the name SlayerS and MMA was one of the first recruits in this new-formed team. Boxer knew MMA from their time at SK Telecom 1, but interestingly MMA was just a talent that did not have the chance to “shine”. In the beginning of the SlayerS time MMA developed his skills and become more and more successful. Still though, most of the times he succeeded in team-leagues. His first major individual success was in 2011 by winning the GSL Super Tournament. Over the time the special relationship between BoxeR and MMA emerged and MMA was nicknamed the “heir of the emperor” (emperor was another nickname of BoxeR).

"I can’t express who BoxeR-hyung is to us. At times he is like our father, like a pillar, and in another way he’s like a friend... you
can’t describe him with mere words. He has been a player for such a long time so he knows exactly how we feel. He takes care of us very thoroughly when we’re having trouble, when we need something, all the miscellaneous things related to the game, and our mental health, and because he manages us so well, he is a source of enormous strength.”

- Milkis, 2011

This short snippet of an interview of MMA reveals the work of BoxeR as a mentor, however it seems to be more general. But if you go further in this interview the special relationship is strengthened by MMA and his perception of BoxeR.

”BoxeR-hyung once told me that he wanted to produce an eSports player that will bring the world together as one. I want to become this player.”

- Milkis, 2011

MMA wanted to reach the goals of BoxeR. He wanted to become that special player. However, that didn’t mean to adopt the same play style as BoxeR but searched for the fitting strategies. MMA became well known for a more biological play style.

In 2011 both players attended the MLG Anaheim tournament together and faced each other, although MMA beat BoxeR it seemed to be more than just any normal game and MMA reflected on that game as following:

”I think it’ll be difficult to describe that emotion with words. It was really impor-
tant, both for me and BoxeR-hyung. I didn’t feel good even though I had won. But after the game had ended, I had tears in my eyes as BoxeR-hyung put the emotions of the loss aside and took me backstage and started telling about my opponent MVP’s style and the strategies MVP had used against him. I wouldn’t have been able to do that if I was in his place. So I went into the final match even more determined and resolved than normal.”

- Lish 2011

In October 2012, SlayerS disbanded due to a variety of problems, although it is still not clear what lead to the dissolution. This led to a relatively abrupt decoupling between BoxeR and MMA. BoxeR joined SK Telekom 1 as coach and retired as player. MMA joined the “foreign” Team Acer. This meant that he had to play on his own without the help of his mentor but also meant that he now played in a European team for the first time. In addition he moved in 2013 to Europe. Understandably his results were not that good as we can see in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Price Money</th>
<th>Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/01/2011 – 05/05/2012</td>
<td>$165,395,18 (~$10,337 per month)</td>
<td>Mentoring Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/05/2012 – 28/07/2013</td>
<td>$20,140,96 (~$1,438 per month)</td>
<td>Separation and Recovery Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/07/2013 – 30/12/2014</td>
<td>$188,157,05 (~$11,759 per month)</td>
<td>Post-Mentoring Phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Progress of the Career of MMA
(price money from esportsearnings.com)
Most mentoring literature would state that the mentoring process was a failure, however, in the context of eSports it was a great success. MMA stayed in the game and did not quit. He recovered from those massive changes and regained his skills and became a more complete player than before. Sure there are also coaches and players in Team Acer that helped him in the phase but the shadow of BoxeR’s mentoring can be still seen.

Discussion

Although this is just a small glimpse on the mentoring relationship between two gamers, it reveals several aspects that are interesting to discuss. BoxeR chose MMA to become part of his team; he already saw talent within the gamer. However, they never labeled their relationship as mentoring, but it emerged towards a mentoring relationship. Such self-selection is a process that worked already several times. For example Dennis “Take” Gehlen and Daniel “XLord” Spenst and maybe is more similar to the apprenticeship in the craftsmanship.

Similar to the apprenticeship people are finding each other on their own and the mentoring process is more implicit and emergent than in modern mentoring literature (Brockbank & McGill, 2012; Wilson & Elman, 1990: 90). But nevertheless the example of eSports demonstrates that the natural form of mentoring has to get more flexible, especially in the process of matching between mentor and mentee. The process of mentoring should not be initiated by the organization or community, which is different from most mentoring relationships. It is more a finding of future mentor respectively a finding of future mentee for oneself. The process of mentoring starts with the personal initiative not with the expectations (Kram 1985: 45, 51-53; Höher 2014: 125).

In general it can be said that the market of pro-gamer in eSports is highly self-organized. Good players will find teams and win price money. Bad players will stay on an amateur level. Furthermore players that are in a down slope will have problems to compete on a professional level. There is no safety net and players are risking their future for a short career in eSports. Especially pro-gamer only play in their twenties, because their reflexes deteriorate in their thirties. This is why in eSports the focus is not the training or the knowledge, but skills to cope with the pro-gamer-life or soft-skills. Such mentoring is making a player better in all aspects of life.

At the first sight it seems that relationship in eSports has some resemblance to the phase of cultivation in mentoring. The mentee is interacting with the mentor, which also supports the emotional bond between both. Taking a closer look, the goal of mentoring in eSports characterized by experience the pro-
gamer-life and the necessity of soft skills. These elements make the mentoring relationship even closer than in organization, which just have a demand on career support, psychological support and role modeling (Chun, Sosik, & Yun, 2012: 1073)

Mentoring will give player a skill set that makes such careers more controllable. They become more capable of dealing with the life as a pro-gamer. In addition they get a sense of determination to stick with their career, even though there are problems. MMA showed that he knew what he can and stick with the game. But on the contrary such mentoring process can reveal if somebody is not shaped for such a demanding career as pro-gamer. Mentoring in eSports does not have the demand of success. It is more an opportunity for future pro-gamer to see what kind of life there are going to choose. Furthermore they are starting to think about a plan B. This is one of the learning effects of mentoring in eSports. On the one hand the short time of careers is a possibility for the mentee to see and adopt different survival strategies from mentor gamer. On the other hand the mentee should be aware that the success is essentially based on them.

That mentoring does not automatically include success for the mentee is shown in the separation phase between MMA and BoxeR, too. Against the data of Kram (1985) the mentor is not facing the midlife crisis, it is the mentee. The separation is a practice test for the mentee to overcome failure (Alexy, Schaller, & Wüthrich, 2014). MMA stayed in the community of eSports and become a better player. In the context of MMA the redefinition phase is characterized by overcoming the failure.

If we match the timeline of phases between our example and the phases of Kram (1985), we can see that the distance of time is different. According to Kram (1985) each phase can last from six months to two/five years. The whole mentoring relationship between BoxeR and MMA can be restricted of two years. This makes mentoring in eSports even more dynamic than in organizations.

Conclusion

ESports is still a young sport and due to it dynamics, it tackles old-established structures and system with a new and fresh ways. Even though the concept of mentoring is not widely spread in eSports, it is something that is unconsciously widespread in the scene. Players find each other and assume a mentor-mentee-relationship. Such self-organization helps player to improve their talent, but also filter those players that are capable of performing as pro-
gamer. It becomes evident that talent is not sufficient and discipline plus right mind-set is essential.

The presented case showed that talent was never the problem of MMA. However, due to several changes in his career path, he had many obstacles to overcome. The success of the mentoring can be seen that he overcomes those obstacles. Mentoring in eSports is not primarily for training talent but shape players to become more complete and by that make their career more controllable.

On the other hand this case also showed that mentoring can work without any control of the community or organization. But still the effect of mentoring is visible by the price money. On the basis of this case new findings from mentoring are made. Mentoring is not about the protection of the mentee, it is also a part of learning from failure.

Nevertheless mentoring in eSports has development potentials for the eSports community and the mentoring research. In the future it will be interesting to see how the obvious mutual influence is working for mentoring and eSports.

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"eSports is something that we have not seen before. In many ways competitive gaming seems, at least at first glance, to resemble traditional sports. But to think that a new phenomenon like eSports can be described in terms of the old is to misunderstand it entirely."

- Joost van Dreunen, 2015
Behind the Voice: The Craft of the eSports Commentator

By Matt Demers

For many gaming fans, the concept of watching players compete isn’t foreign. Since the improvement of streaming infrastructure through services like Twitch.tv and the ability to watch recorded matches through YouTube, eSports broadcasts have taken giant leaps in quality; Riot Games’ League of Legends World Championship recently sold out the Staples Center in Los Angeles, bringing production values akin to TV sports networks.

Besides the players watching, though, there are often numerous voices behind them: as an eSports commentator, Erik Lonnquist often has the best seat in the house.

As a fan of StarCraft growing up in Minnesota, Lonnquist’s first foray StarCraft II allowed him to expand his work with the game’s community substantially. After well-received YouTube videos and gigs for Stateside tournaments, the 30-year-old was invited to the game’s Mecca: South Korea.

“As far as the eSports side of things goes, it was the most natural thing in the world to want to be [in Korea]. In StarCraft, at least, as everybody knows, all the best players are in Korea. I mean, without question, the highest-level games are going to be [there],” Lonnquist said.

“To be a caster for a Korean tournament is where you’re going to make the most money, get the most exposure, get to cast the best players... it’s like a dream job for any StarCraft caster to be out here.”

Along with his partner, Christopher “MonteCristo” Mykles, Lonnquist works for OnGameNet as the English voice behind their StarCraft II and League of Legends leagues. Working in front of an audience multiple times a week, they broadcast matches to fans all over the world. OnGameNet (or OGN) realized the potential for eSports broadcasts tailored towards an English-speaking audience, even though the time difference results in many events happening when North America is sleeping. The duo have called many a spectacular moment, including one of the most iconic moments in OGN’s summer season, seen below.
Lonnquist and Mykles have contributed numerous mash-up names to summarize strategies. For example, a team choosing to partner the characters LeBlanc and Urgot together became “LeBlurgot”, while the synergy of the skills “Curse of the Sad Mummy” and “Bullet Time” morphed into “Curse of the Sad Bullet Time”. These short hands eventually escaped Asia and have entered the lexicons of players and commentators worldwide. In Korea, they contribute to a growing industry of professional eSports, partly fostered by the development companies themselves – both League of Legends’ Riot Games and StarCraft II’s Blizzard Entertainment have taken great strides to consolidating tournaments into a grand league structure.

"It’s a commentator’s job to relay this data through an inviting, easy-to-digest delivery, fostering knowledge and allowing players to become passionate at the same time."

In February 2013, Lonnquist and his partner discuss League of Legends over pancakes on their way to Hanyang University. In a few short hours, they would join the Korean commentators on stage to OLYMPUS Champions Winter, a culmination of a months-long league that would net the winning team ₩80,000,000 (a little under $75,000 USD). Part of Lonnquist’s job as the English gateway into the match is preparing a list of beats he wants to hit; both commentators compare notes and decide what they can use to fill time, and how to play off of each other.

“For me, with League of Legends, I do play by play, so for me that’s not necessarily hard statistics and things like that – it’s good to kind of have a general sense of those things for my role, but for me it’s more about finding little anecdotes about the players.”

“Like ‘Oh, this guy used to play StarCraft’, or ‘this guy has a grandma that comes to the matches’ or something. I try to connect to the players personally to learn more about them and find out nicknames they have in the Korean scene.”

Part of Lonnquist’s job involves playing both StarCraft II and League of Legends largely to get inside the head of a player. Especially during lulls in games, the ability to convey what a player might need to do in order to defend an attack or regain lost ground is invaluable, and it’s the experience of playing the games themselves that allows commentators to do so.
“In order to build excitement in your broadcast, you need to be able to feel some of the same tension yourself that the players do playing the game. And you can only realize that that tension is there if you’ve been in similar situations.”

While your average Bronze-level StarCraft II or League of Legends player may have a grasp on the key concept of units and skills, there is a vast wealth of knowledge that comes from knowing how they interact with others. This goes double for fighting games, where a favorable matchup between characters can mean the difference between a slow uphill battle or an easy ticket to the next round of the tournament.

This knowledge usually comes from pure experience. A player that has played through a strategy hundreds of times will be able to analyze it on more than a base level; instead of blindly following a unit build list, item order or bread-and-butter combination, they will be able to tell you why it works, and be able to modify it on the fly without decreasing its effectiveness. They are professional players for a reason, often devoting years to their craft. The Evolution Championship Series, the fighting game community’s crowd jewel tournament, ran Super Street Fighter II - originally released in 1993 - until 2010 as a testament to the game’s longevity, and included pros who had played the game since its earliest days.

Though numerous resources online help players understand the game on a deeper level, they are often intimidating to get into. Sites like Shoryuken.com (fighting games), Team Liquid (StarCraft and League of Legends) and various subreddits serve as both a community base and a vast repository of information, but a fan’s initiative to dive in can be inconsistent. Like a hockey fan whose eyes may glaze over at an explanation of a neutral zone trap or a football fan who falls asleep while reading about a Nickel formation, eSports fans may have trouble delving into things like fighter frame data, or finding efficient items through formulas.

It’s a commentator’s job to relay this data through an inviting, easy-to-digest delivery, fostering knowledge and allowing players to become passionate at the same time. Like a traditional sports broadcast, they often commentate the games live, playing off the natural peaks and valleys of matches to build hype and keep the viewer from closing the stream.

Lonnquist’s audience has ranged subscribers on YouTube to thousands of people in a packed venue, but the pressure has not affected him. He describes
himself as never having a problem with speaking in front of an audience, and despite his growth from indie streamer to full-time personality, he doesn’t get nervous.

“Maybe something’s broken in my brain, but the biggest crowd I’m in front of, the happier I am.” “Whenever I’m out here, everyone assumes you’re a schoolteacher or military,” Lonnquist said. “In Korea, they’ve heard of StarCraft and they know about eSports. They’re surprised that you’re doing it, but they’re not surprised the job exists.”

When it comes placing himself in the player’s shoes, Sean “Day[9]” Plott can step up. Arguable the best caster in the StarCraft community, Plott’s resume is impressive: he regularly qualified for World Cyber Games events between 2004 and 2006, taking home their Pan-American Championship in 2007. Since then, he has built a brand around his online series The Day[9] Daily, where he analyzes high-level replays and breaks them down for the amateur audience.

He also provides commentary duties for StarCraft tournaments, like those held by Major League Gaming or Activision Blizzard, providing analysis through a down-to-earth, welcoming style. His personality is extremely infectious, mixing a genuine love for the game with an unending reserve of enthusiasm and positivity. The tagline of his web site reads “Be a Better Gamer,” and after listening to Plott regularly, it’s something that viewers can start to believe themselves.

“As time has gone on I’ve realized what the skill sets are for being a caster proper – you know, the shouting, during the live match, and getting all excited about that sort of thing – and how different and unique a skill it is with what I started with, [the Day[9] Daily],” Plott said.

“The commentator for StarCraft kind of has a unique position where the game that’s being played might not be immediately transparent as to what’s going on. And even when you’ve figured out the what of what’s going on, a lot of the whys and the points of tension especially are where there’s big gaps.”

“In [American] football, you look at the score, and you say ‘Well, that team’s down 3 to 21,” said Plott, who added that this representation of the progress of the game makes it easier for fans to get an understanding. By knowing the basic rules of the game, the spectator can deduct what the other team needs to equalize.
In competitive StarCraft, the actions needed to close that gap, or even knowing which player is ahead, may not be as obvious. In both StarCraft and League of Legends, this is compounded by the lengths of matches, as they can take anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour to resolve. Players are not always in direct combat with an opponent, so a commentator must need to be able to fill the time with an understanding of larger, broader concepts and strategy while still being able to call minute, intense action when it happens.

"Nonstandard play can throw the unprepared for a loop, but someone who embraces the fluid nature of the game can decipher it to others."

Plott says knowing how to find a balance is integral to the broadcast’s success. He also insists there’s three hurdles that a successful commentator needs to overcome: personality, playing the game itself, and understanding the craft of the broadcast. In regards to the first point, viewers can often tell when an enthusiasm is forced or faked to make a certain moment special. It falls to the skill of the commentator to be able to convey a genuine enthusiasm for the game that they’re viewing.

“You have to learn to resist all pressure and learn to indulge in how you feel at that very moment,” Plott said. “Every day I’ve felt not funny and I’ve tried to force funny, it’s been bad. And any day that I’m feeling really funny and try to chill down, it’s been bad.”

To the second and third points, the expertise at which the personality can draw from often comes from practicing both the action of commentating and by playing the game. Nonstandard play can throw the unprepared for a loop, but someone who embraces the fluid nature of the game can decipher it to others.

In a tournament setting, understanding the player’s mindset is key, as there are often many players watching who are performing at an amateur level. Despite the commentator having experience in analyzing a competitor’s strategy, being able to distill it down to key talking points is essential to keeping someone engaged. Viewers who are having fun and learning are likely to come back to watch next time, and those repeat fans form the foundation of eSports’ – or any sport’s – growth.
“There is just so much to consider and so much awareness that you have to have, and so much information coming at you, that you have to be very careful to sort through it properly,” Plott said. “Your goal always as a caster in a tournament setting is to convey the story and to convey the excitement.”

Plott likens the difference between a player and a commentator like that of a stage actor against an improviser. While players have a concrete idea of their strategy going into the match, a caster is guided by the match with little preparation beforehand.

The best example of this improvisation is in the fighting game community. The blistering pace of their players makes large amounts of expository dialogue useless, since by the time that the commentator has finished the sentence, the match might be over. Fighting games broadcasts can also be extremely different from real-time strategy or DotA-like games in that they’re mostly live, can feature many different commentators rotating positions, and will often feature active competitors taking up the mantle.

There is no better example of this than Mike Ross. Ross is no stranger to deciphering a round of fighting to the casual viewer, having worked at the now-defunct IGN Pro League as a commentator and founding the Cross-CounterTV YouTube channel. He still routinely competes in tournaments, sometimes enduring the heckling of being a “fraud” if he loses.

Largely avoiding the eSports label, the fighting game community generally keep to themselves and prefer community-run tournaments and events as opposed to larger affairs. Ross was part of an initiative to bring Capcom fighting games exclusively to the IGN ProLeague brand before that organization dissolved due the IGN’s sale. Ross, however, remains a gamer and community figure, and brings a genuine perspective to broadcasts. While other, more technical commentators exist, Ross’ expertise comes from being a player first. “I remember sitting on a stool at the arcade machine and my leg was shaking so much I could barely sit, but I held my ground and still played fairly well. So when I’m commentating and I see these new guys go against these great players, I can almost put myself in their shoes,” Ross said. “And I can put myself in the shoes of the top player, too, because now I know what it’s like.”

“IT’s the craziest thing in the world to me when I’m sitting down and playing and I hear somebody’s friend whisper ‘Dude, you’re playing against Mike Ross.’”

Ross’ commentary is often loose and informal, throwing in nuggets on insight into players’ choices while, in part, reacting to the game as a fan himself. A common thread in these commentators is that they are genuinely excited to be
witnessing the game in front of them, and the ability to be genuine is important to their audience: like anyone who hates being pandered to, eSports fans will know when enthusiasm is faked, and the ability to present a compelling story from start to finish is important. The most exciting comebacks in eSports capture their audience not only due to the crazy action in front of them, but the commentator’s ability to give fans hope that not all is lost.

Part of the mood of that fighting game player is using that hype to your advantage. The live crowd builds to peaks and valleys; you can often hear them in concert with the commentators, bringing a sense of crowd interaction, even when watching over a stream. It’s up to the voice behind the microphone to decide whether to gear the broadcast to the hardcore or casual audience, but Ross believes that it can depend on the timing.

"Like offline sports, it’s this balance that broadcasters are going to have to strike in order to satisfy both the hardcore users and the ones that still need to develop their passion for the game."

“If we throw a big major and we’re in the final set, or whatever, I have to assume that once it becomes the top 8, that these are people that are just tuning in – a lot of people skip the stuff beforehand because that really doesn’t matter,” Ross explains.

“Once you get down to the final games, that’s when you have to get your energy reset and you have to start over, because this is it. You’re pretty much starting fresh, and that’s when you have to get everybody’s attention, briefly explain everything that’s going on. Even people that have heard it a million times, they’ll be able to tolerate it as long as you don’t treat everybody like an idiot.”

Like offline sports, it’s this balance that broadcasters are going to have to strike in order to satisfy both the hardcore users and the ones that still need to develop their passion for the game. With weekly events like Riot Games’ League Championship Series and Blizzard’s StarCraft World Championship series, many commentators are getting the practice that they need to hone their craft while keeping up with new developments in the scene.
The community is also doing their fair share to drive improvement, as easily-accessible, free streaming tools and spectator slots allow anyone to try their hand at publishing their own product. While Plott, Ross and Lonnquist are all professionals now, there are many other passionate people looking to climb the ladder as they did; their hope lies in their respective games’ eSports scene and their ability to mature as more opportunity comes with more fans.

For now, North America and Europe are undergoing a massive growth spurt in terms on infrastructure that enables athletes to grow and broadcasts to start making money. As potential advertisers realize the mass of eyeballs at hand – the LCS alone brings in 100,000+ concurrent viewers, four times a week – investments will hopefully allow for better production values, better salaries, and perhaps more importantly, more acceptance among the general public. Lonnquist explains that, one day, he’d like to see fans of eSports be able to explain their excitement over watching competitive gaming to their co-workers or friends without embarrassment.

“First and foremost, I see myself and my role being just to entertain people and help people have as much fun watching video game competitions as I do,” he said. “I think all the really successful casters, one of the reasons they’re successful, is that they know how to convey that enjoyment.”

Matt Demers is a Toronto writer who hopes to make a living out of his passions. You can follow him on Twitter, Twitch.tv, YouTube and Facebook. If you’d like to read or watch more in-depth eSports coverage, consider donating to help with associated costs.
Farewell Message Cloud

By Carlo “ClouD” Giannacco

Even though right now is the weirdest time to do something like this I decided I will quit being a progamer and leave eSports and gaming alltogether. This might sound weird to some people since I’ve been playing really well towards the end of Wings of Liberty and HotS looks like a more balanced and fun game to play. It means much to take such a big decision and even though I’m really busy at the moment I feel I owe the amazing TeamLiquid community an explanation and a final thread.

I started playing online 10 years ago. My first competitive game was Warcraft 3, I started playing it during a really tough moment of my life and this made me embrace the game and the competition with a strong passion. I played for three months and within that short period I became one of the best players of my own country. Even though Warcraft 3 was a new game I found out that this older game, Starcraft, thrilled me way too much, and I couldn’t help but leaving that promising WC3 gaming scene to join an older one, just for the sake of my own personal entertainment, without considering the practical pros and cons of it (this sums pretty much almost every choice I make). Starcraft was so appealing because it required to be fast, smart, confident at the best of your own human ability and it felt I was constantly pushing myself to keep winning against better, faster and smarter players.

I played Starcraft for years after that. It was tough as it’s the hardest online game ever made and I LOVED it more than anything else. I couldn’t wait to come home from school to play Starcraft, and the fact I showed so much talent right from the start made me feel special, which is the best feeling in the world for a teenager. I could also connect and interact with people sharing my same passion around the world, and since at the time gamers weren’t considered any cool that made me discover a whole new world of precious friends. Over the years I’ve been very happy with Starcraft. School was going ok but I didn’t care. The people I knew in real life didn’t really understand what I was doing. Now that I am able to think back I realize that what was making me feel so good about Starcraft was the fact I could set very high and difficult goals for myself without having to deal with any shit that comes along any real life goal (social status, owned money and luck), and reaching them with my own abilities just felt amazing. The first time I qualified for World Cyber Games and went to Singapore I was 18 and it was one of the best experiences of my life. During the qualifier the experienced italian players that saw me playing said that I was so fast that they couldn’t understand what was going
on my screen and that made me really proud. The trip to Singapore itself was so special I can’t even describe it here, because it would take another full blog. Some years later I was able to reach the top of a ladder dominated by pro korean players (who, at the time, were way better than how good they are right now at SC2) and that felt way too good. I realized I could compete with some of the best players in the whole world in the game I loved so much and afterwards I got invited to join Templars of Twilight, the best international Starcraft team ever existed. Both these experiences gave me chills and heart bumps and a sense of realization I never felt before, it was a game yet it made me happy. It was the main course, while school, work and everything else was just like a less tasty side dish.

"It takes an incredible amount of dedication to be a progamer and it’s not something you can do without passion."

There are many more things to say and describe but these were pretty much the feeling I had playing Starcraft. I wasn’t getting any money from it, only sponsored travels to play tournaments like WCG and Blizzcon in Europe, Asia and America, but it made me feel really good. Improving constantly, finding out that you have a great talent for something and having people recognize you for that, realizing that you are special and you can apply the same passion to other things in life are all things I got from Starcraft at the time and it felt like all my life that wasn’t revolved around it was just in black and white. The game is so appealing because it’s not between the person and a computer or another human being, you just try to beat yourself over and over, and when you do it feels great and you want more of it.

Eventually I stopped playing Starcraft for a short period of time and I waited for Starcraft 2 to come out. I was studying and then working and I felt I had to start sustaining myself and I couldn’t play a game the same way. Yet when I was offered to move to Germany and be a progamer with a salary, traveling every week or two to some place I’ve never seen before to compete made me quit everything else I was doing at the time just to focus on gaming once more. I knew this wouldn’t last too long for me but I wanted to live this experience to the fullest and grow as much as I could from it. That’s exactly what happened and I’m really proud of myself for having done such a choice.

There was a problem in this though. For someone like me who likes the competition and the challenge Starcraft 2 was not really the right game. It’s a way easier game than Starcraft, attaining progamer skills didn’t take a third of
the effort as it used to take before and the luck factor was a huge thing to consider. Honestly to me, used to such a competitive game as Starcraft, it felt more like playing poker rather than a real time strategy game. I still played it, won a good amount of money and did reasonably well within the international progaming community, but I never really liked the game and I forced myself to do it only because of the invaluable life experience it was providing me. I tried really hard to like it so I could reach the very top once again but I couldn’t really force my feelings and I knew I wouldn’t go on for many years and take it as a real job. It takes an incredible amount of dedication to be a progamer and it’s not something you can do without passion.

"During these 10 years I experienced and said many things, I’ve started from being a complete newbie and became a world class player, I’ve been a fanboy and then someone who doesn’t understand fans, I’ve said in public what I thought as bluntly as I could and I also learned the importance of being delicate in many situations.”

Recently, about a month ago, I was playing HotS beta. I switched to Protoss and it was going really well, but then a random question popped into my head. I would have to play 30 to 40 games for the next 2 years every day to be as good as I want to be, is it really worth it? I am soon 26, I had a lot of fun and great life experiences from eSports, what else can I get from it? The answer is not much. I know very well within myself I could stand above any non korean progamer if I put enough dedication into it, but what kept me from doing so in Starcraft2 was the fact I don’t enjoy playing this game at all. I also have really high expectations from myself in my life and absolute confidence in my abilities to succeed in anything I decide to do and the best thing for me right now is start something else and make it blossom with what I learned from my invaluable gaming experience. I am going to move on and leave electronic sports behind. It was absolutely amazing and I want to remember it that way.

I would like to say something important to the people who belong to this great community, with the hope some of you can take this as an advice and example for yourself. During these 10 years I experienced and said many things, I’ve started from being a complete newbie and became a world class player, I’ve
been a fanboy and then someone who doesn’t understand fans, I’ve said in public what I thought as bluntly as I could and I also learned the importance of being delicate in many situations. Being able to see things in all these different perspectives made me understand that people are all very similar and they all want the same things. And in fact even if there’s someone we disrespect, if we were born from his parents and experiences the same things he did we would do exactly the same things as he/she does. This is why I don’t think we shouldn’t praise or condemn anyone, but rather try to promote a positive attitude towards what’s good for everyone, and enjoy what we have while trying to make it better.

It’s easy to get caught in the flow of what people think and their judgement and I ask the people here to think a bit more carefully before judging someone you don’t know, because he/she is a person acting on own impulses and expectations like everybody else.

That’s all I have to say. I want to send a big hug to the TeamLiquid community for all the friends, emotions and support it gave me. I will keep sticking around because it always felt like a big family. TL has been my favorite place to visit on the internet and it will still be for a long time.

”Being able to see things in all these different perspectives made me understand that people are all very similar and they all want the same things. [...] This is why I don’t think we shouldn’t praise or condemn anyone, but rather try to promote a positive attitude towards what’s good for everyone, and enjoy what we have while trying to make it better.”

Goodbye everyone, it was a fantastic ride, I wish you good luck and to have fun in life as much as I did so far.

Originaly posted by Carlo "ClouD" Giannacco on TeamLiquid.net (http://www.teamliquid.net/blogs/403663-progaming-no-more).
The video game industry with its growing influence on our values, life styles, and attitudes is receiving more and more attention. The annual growth rates from 2007 to 2011 will be forecasted with 9.4 percent, and global spending on video games is expected to surpass spending in the music industry (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2008). Gaming is becoming an essential part of the life-culture of the current work-force (Beck and Wade 2004) and thereby is changing the current business models for media (McKelvie and Picard 2008). Research indicates that online gaming and game leadership gives us an insight into future organizations (Reeves and Malone 2007). It is possible to prepare and utilize this information in order for the management of these organizations. These reveal that the impact of media management will rise throughout from the passive influence to an active influence on leadership, motivation and team building. However additional to that leadership becomes more relevant for media management (Dal Zotto 2005).

However, already are many points comparable to the current situation of companies. Game leadership will give tomorrow’s leader a new set of tools to motivate and coordinate employees quickly (DeMarco, Lesser et al. 2007). It already has influence on the leadership of today and few of these people are using their skills from gaming in the companies in order to achieve their work tasks and be motivated and enthusiastic (Brown and Thomas 2006). This arises the question "Could real work ever be as much fun?" (Reeves and Malone 2007).

The new generation of leader will be part of the gamer generation and thereby seeks quick feedback; the chance to trial and error and especially failure is necessary to learn. Based on a setting of rules (Silverman and Simon 2009), game leadership needs fun as much as it needs competition (Beck and Wade 2004).

However, leadership today faces many problems. Probably the most important one is the status of the employees in the company. Especially in the recession the method of choice for the companies was to lay off employees (Gennard 2009). We also see as stated in the theory of darwiportunisman increase
of pure darwinistic systems in the workplace which go along with an increase of opportunistic behavior of the employees (Kingsbury 2009). Therefore the employees are in every business the essential part in the company. That is the reason why American law firms are hiring high-potentials and allowing them to take a sabbatical year (Kingsbury 2009). The employees don’t see how necessary they are for the company and this leads to motivation problems.

**Methodology**

In order to solve these problems we have to look out of the box. Sports were always an interesting way learning from (Wooden 1997). Thus it is mostly focusing on the performance principle and motivates only through the success at the end. Gaming however is tackling the motivation problem from a different ankle and tries to establish a permanent motivation. We will look into their potential through two gaming cases in order to introduce the gaming world and additional their similarities and differences in the field of leadership and motivation. However, this will lead us to several points from which we can learn from gaming and game leadership.

"*Game leadership will give tomorrow’s leader a new set of tools to motivate and coordinate employees quickly.*"

The paper is structured as follows: First, a review about leadership and how to manage people. Second, we will present the ways how gamer handle leadership in two games. On the one hand World of Warcraft, currently the most successful Massive Multiplayer Online Game with over 11 million subscriptions (Blizzard 2008) with a special interest on guild structure and guild leadership. On the other hand Counter-Strike a First Person Shooter with teams of five and comparable to sport teams without a coach. Through these cases we will identify differences to the leadership in a company and we will point out these differences in a short overview. Third, we conclude with a discussion of potential theoretical and practical contributions of our work.

**Leadership in Theory**

In order to get a comparative analysis between leadership and game leadership it is necessary to describe how leadership looks in the theory and what is essential for successful leadership. In this paper we use the thirteen practices for managing people from Pfeffer (2005), we will see what important points a modern leader has to consider in order to lead.
First of all and the most important is “Employment Security”. A signal for the workforce that the company is planning with them long-term, even in rough times. “Selective Hiring” is complementary to the security, as careful choosing of the right people for the right job leads to an increase of production (Schmidt and Hunter 1983). Additional “Information Sharing” is essential and is the step from individual knowledge to collective knowledge which improves the group construct (Wilson, Goodman et al. 2007). Thus leads to “Participation and Empowerment” and encourages the employees to improve their work processes and make decisions on their own leading to an intrinsic motivation (Seibert, Silver et al. 2004). Following up to this lower level of authority, a modern leader has to allow “Self-Managed Teams”, however the freedom and discretion (Cohen and Ledford 1994) plus organizing and structuring work and goals (Hackman 1987) need a high amount of trust and can increase the complexity of a team (Langfred 2007). Furthermore the leader needs to give the employee the chance for ”Training and Skill Development”. This yields directly to ”Cross-Qualification and Cross-Training” which leads to an increase of knowledge based on information sharing and improves the skills and the job dimensions of the employees (Campbell 1999). But these principles are shortened, if there are symbolic barriers, important is ”Symbolic Egalitarianism” or flat hierarchies and more democracy in organizations (Harrison and Freeman 2004). The final principle is ”Promotion from Within” and the employees performance will increase, if there is a chance to level up in the company (Dessler 1999).

To complete the picture, however not relevant for this paper, the remaining principles are: High Wages, Employee Ownership and Wage Compression. These practices are about payment and ownership and the main fact of gaming is the lack of money and assets; therefore the “motivation beyond money” (Katzenbach 2006) is the important practice for a comparison between game leadership and team leadership. However the incentive pay is in different ways and currencies included in gaming and hence included into the list of applicable practices.

Analysis

Following up two gaming cases will be presented and analyzed by their potential to influence on leadership. Thereby we will present the game leadership methods the player often intuitive learned and trained. These methods will be compared to the principles we presented before. World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike were picked as both games are successful and additional they are key players in game design and media management. These games are
involved into the gaming for long term, a novelty in a business of short-term success and the short media attention of games in general.

**Case 1: World of Warcraft**

Due to the fact of 11.5 million subscribers (Blizzard 2008) and with an average playtime of 683 minutes per week (Nielsen 2009) World of Warcraft is a good case to present game leadership. To begin with the leader comparable to a CEO or manager is in World of Warcraft the guild leader and the company is called guild (Rezvani 2008). In World of Warcraft leading a guild means to handle the recruitment of new members, building up a training system, planning the group strategies and conflict-management. Additional the guild leader has to resolve skirmish conflicts as there is no incentive payment system or contract which holds members at the guild (Brown and Thomas 2006). What can we learn from this guild leader and his/her handling of members and environment? First of all, the game developer did implement some interesting stuff, so the gamers don’t quit on World of Warcraft.

World of Warcraft follows eight principles for training and motivation of employees or on this case guild member (Hagel and Brown 2009): Beginning with the fact, that World of Warcraft is so structured that the start is easy and not overwhelming. The player becomes acquainted with the new world and gets a sense of accomplishment. However the game itself helps hereby with tools normal companies don’t have. With the system of experience points and levels, the player knows his/her approximate status compared to others. Adventitious with the new achievement system, the player gets an exact and detailed monitor to compromise. Furthermore World of Warcraft has implemented a system of "keep raising the bar" which allows the player to learn and develop skills with the time. Thus maybe can lead to boredom but not to frustration as the next achievement or the next skill to learn is always in sight for the player. Based on that the player is motivated to learn new things and invest time and effort into this target of raising his/her bar.

Another interesting finding is the high amount of intrinsic motivation in the guilds. In the game players need to collaborate in groups or so called raids in order to achieve the next achievement. These groups of up to 25 people have to work together over a period of time and therefore relationships and trust develop (Williams, Ducheneaut et al. 2006). If a guild leader leads the guild over a long period, the player don’t want to fail as they don’t want to disappoint the rest. A unique way of knowledge exchange is in World of Warcraft generating of new tacit knowledge. Throughout the relationships in the guild this knowledge will be shared through practice and yields innovation. Howe-
ver, additional to that World of Warcraft has a huge quantity of online forums where players can pull the knowledge they need. Accessory this knowledge comes from the players and leads to a high amount of tacit knowledge through guilds and still a great deal of knowledge exchange crossing the guild lines. In World of Warcraft most of the time the player is working in groups and these are not always led by a guild leader, players are selecting the fitting people for the groups themselves and lead it on their own. This encourages teams to participate in the company and become accountable and rewarded for their self-managed teams.

An important tool, which is necessary in the work of guild leadership are frequent performance feedback, even though there are up to 24 other participants, everyone can lead to a failure. Above all this is the only way players can improve their skills and improve the performance of the guild and discover performance gaps. Beyond that the main difference in World of Warcraft is the lack of payment, however the main target of the gamer is ”not to be rewarded, but to improve” (Brown and Thomas 2008). Thereby the game created an environment that encourages players to innovate, learn and tinker. Beside the point of selective hiring, every principle of Pfeffer (2005) is covered by the guild leader. It seems that through the game environment the guild leader has to lead in the right way. Hence selective hiring, this is a difficult task for the guild leader, as he/she has to rely on the avatar and has to trust them until the trust is broken (Rezvani 2008). However it is encouraging for further research to see this high amount of correlation between those two lists of principles.

Case 2: Counter-Strike

The second case is Counter-Strike a First Person Shooter with over 10 million sold copies (Remo 2008). This game is the backbone for the professional gaming scene and will be played in the mode Five versus Five. It was released in 1999 and will be in the version Counter-Strike 1.6 and Counter-Strike Source. Most of the time Counter-Strike is played online, however in this paper we will look into the professional teams of Counter-Strike. These teams are playing on tournaments offline against other teams from all over the world. They are preparing for these tournaments in so called boot camps, comparable to training camps in other sports. Afterwards in the tournament the teams have to play at their best, as the level of performance is high. Accessory milliseconds can decide about the victory.

Hence this interesting field of focused and time limited battles with a high amount of preparation, Counter-Strike has not be researched in the acade-
mic field, therefore I will put forward a couple of theories for discussion and research. First of all important in Counter-Strike is the fact that everybody knows his/her place in the tactics this leads to a high amount of intrinsic trust. It is essential to follow these tactics and set of rules at the moment of a game or the team will loose, however there is still space for pure talent to balance bad tactics.

Another important factor is the team building. History showed that teams are highly fluctuating, until they are successful and fit on a personal level. Cause for that can be the lack of substitutes; only few teams are playing with substitutes. In a time of crisis it is not possible to give someone a time out and this personal crisis can evolve into a team crisis. Another reason is the non-existence of a coach in this game, only manager who can only assure that the player fulfil their contract, train and appear at the games.

In context of leadership Counter-Strike is a self-managed team with leaders in their field of excellence. The player with the knowledge to read a game, will do this in the game, however the enthusiastic player will be responsible for the motivation of the other team-members. Counter-Strike is an example of a modern organization with specialized employees who are working in teams for one fast-paced project. In this situation the employees have to adapt fast, build a team and screen for the fitting leader in this situation.

Important in this new environment leadership is not permanent and therefore Counter-Strike gives another skill: “Good Leaders Are Also Good Followers.” (Reeves and Malone 2007). However current research is debating about the topic, Counter-Strike showed that team composition could contain more than one person with leading skills, as long as the positions are clear. Sometimes it is even beneficial as the person with leading skills has some other skills, which are limited through the leading.

Comparison to Pfeffer’s Leadership Theory

After presenting the two cases, we saw that many principles of leadership are somehow included into game leadership. However many of them came through intrinsic motivation it is obvious that these games tackle the leadership which is researched in theory (Pfeffer 2005). Hence some things are not comparable.

The results indicate that employment security is in both games implemented. In Counter-Strike and World of Warcraft you will always find a team to play. For the game it is even necessary that you find teams easily, without it you
will quit playing and especially in World of Warcraft, this would mean less money for the developer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>World of Warcraft</strong></th>
<th><strong>Counter-Strike</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Security</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective Hiring</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive Pay</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Sharing</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Managed Teams</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Skill</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Qualification and</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion from Within</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Wages</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Ownership</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Compression</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparison of leadership (Pfeffer 2005) in theory and game leadership

Similar case is at the selective hiring, with the vast amount of potentials, it is easily accomplished to get new people. Hence it is rather difficult to simply screen the player, as the leader has to rely on an Avatar, stats and the gut feeling. In World of Warcraft leads this to a traineeship for every new member and in Counter-Strike it depends on testing over and over the new member. Again this principle is criticized in the current research of leadership theory. With more opportunities to get interesting vitae, the manager has to rely on their gut feeling about a potential employee. This leads eventually to a trial an error method of hiring. As stated in employment security, Counter-Strike and World of Warcraft depend on this method, in order to find the right mix for their team.
If we are looking at the incentive pay, we have to drop the pay, in order to get comparable results. World of Warcraft is a great example for incentives, with their easy entry and their raising bar. The gamer will always see the next level and will know how good he/she is compared to others. Thus Counter-Strike tries to motivate the player with a similar easy entry and a game-design, which is simple and strict. The player has an incentive to be innovative and creative in order to get an advantage over the other teams.

Both games are depending on information sharing. In World of Warcraft it evolved into an intensive usage of modern media channels. There are Internet forums with all necessary information’s, there are books, videos and radio-casts. Databases were filled with every tiny bit of intelligence for the game. This is a great example for modern media management and user-generated content. On the other hand Counter-Strike, the information is shared more over the sport-way, by watching how the other play and implement their styles into your game play.

Interesting is the participation and empowerment in the games as they are the basis of every game. Without the participation and empowerment the player will fail and will be discouraged and quit. Hence with interaction and stating own ideas he/she will become an essential part of the game and will be motivated to participate. World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike reward this empowerment additional to the positive feedback of teammates.

Another important insight into leadership gives the self-managed teams. In Counter-Strikes these teams are essential, as the teams have to assess their chances, their tactics and their positions in every game. Without coaching teams have to challenge these tasks on there own and learn it. On the contrary in World of Warcraft, these self-managed teams are in general temporary and accessory the players have learned some skills from their guild leader, however they are still in situations where the guild leader is not available and they have to handle the team on their own.

Through the method of the raising bar both games motivate to train and increase the skills of the player. In Counter-Strike and in World of Warcraft there are always chances to become better, however in World of Warcraft these targets can be identified more easily as in Counter-Strike you need to train to hold your current level of skill.

Cross-Qualification and Cross-Training are in both games in different ways possible. On the one hand World of Warcraft offers a set of classes from
which everybody can choose. The player learns through the team play with these classes and additional the player has the chance to play these different classes as well and, if necessary, reeducate.

On the other hand in Counter-Strike every character is similar, however in the game they have to handle different situations. Over time it crystallizes in which situations of the game the player is good, hence he/she has to learn the other situations as well. First to know what can happen and second what the teammates are doing.

"The gamer needs space to risk new ideas and thereby fail at this as well."

An interesting field is the symbolic egalitarianism. We have to look here at the Avatars and the rankings in these games. In Counter-Strike there are no possibility to customize their Avatars in the game and beside the name, the player has no chance to show his/her rank in the game. However in World of Warcraft the player has to choose which race, gender, hairstyle and earrings or tattoos he/she wears. Additional in the guild ranks are assigned by the guild leader and the player can achieve extra titles that stand directly before the name of Avatar.

Counter-Strike defines itself through fluctuating teams and no necessity of addition team members beside the five players; therefore a promotion from within is not possible. On the other side World of Warcraft is a perfect example for promotion from within, in general players stick to their guild over a longer period. In this period they get the chance to foster in the guild, strengthen relationships and learn to lead and fail in small self-managed teams. Over time high potential will be discovered and will be promoted within the guild. Finally we have to look into high wages, employee ownership and wage compression, all three of them are about money and assets. This is per se not covered in Counter-Strike and World of Warcraft, as the gamer is paying for playing the game. In Counter-Strike this is a one-time transaction, however in World of Warcraft he/she has to pay the game and additional a monthly fee.

Moving Beyond Pfeffer’s Leadership Theory

We stated earlier that games give insights into future organizations (Reeves and Malone 2007) and after the comparison it is time to look into, what we can learn from game leadership. What are the field’s games like World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike handle better than current companies?
The first principle we can learn from gaming is that future organizations have to bring the fun back into work (Rezvani 2008). Fun is a necessity for games in general, however the fun leads gamer to learn and combine the tools in the game world for new knowledge that helps the gamer to succeed in the game (Brown and Thomas 2008). Especially World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike are games with fun over a long period, however the fun is different, for World of Warcraft the player can have fun in every bit of this world e.g. at the campfire. On the contrary Counter-Strike with the limited world, fun is always about playing. It can be stated that in World of Warcraft the player is always training the interpersonal skills, in Counter-Strike it is mainly the skills to work under pressure. The gamer plays because it is enjoyable and thereby he/she is learning intrinsically.

Following up one essential part of the game design is keep raising the bar (Hagel and Brown 2009). The game environment is constructed that way that the player is challenged. Every time a target is reached the player sees the next achievement. This next level motivates the player to invest time and thereby learning new skills in the game (Hagel and Brown 2009). If we look at Counter-Strike, the principle cannot be applied. In this field the game is more comparable to a sport, the player only sees his/her achievement over a long time of training and sees it even more, if the player has to pause. Similar to sports, after an injury the player feels the aggravation in skills. However this is applicable to World of Warcraft the degree is less. In World of Warcraft the player gets feedback through the game when there is improvement. Be it through a new level, new achievements, new titles or new skills, every time the player knows what he/she achieved and gets directly a feedback, additional the player also learns what is next. This principle of keep raising the bar, is a perfect motivation for the gamer as well as for an employee, if the implementation of such a feedback system or just the feeling of level up in a company could succeed, it would motivate the employee massively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>World of Warcraft</th>
<th>Counter-Strike</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring Fun Back</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep Raising the Bar</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Not covered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living on the Edge</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial and Error</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation beyond Money</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
<td>Implemented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Additional Principles of Game Leadership
Gamers are adventurer and scientists; they try to live on the edge of a game. Facing a problem, even though there is a solution known, gamers always search for other ways. Ways that are more innovative and challenges them even more. Everything what is possible in this game world can be used to solve the next challenge, even the easiest task will be done in new ways to make it new (Brown and Thomas 2008). Interesting is in this case Counter-Strike with it’s limited world, every new innovative way makes it harder to come up with new responses to a problem. Still after ten years the game style changes and new ways are implemented. Ideas come up that needs perfect realization and can be target for victory or defeat. World of Warcraft even rewards innovative ways to handle a problem, this could be simply solving a problem with less people than necessary or hard as allowing situations to happen that complicates a problem intensively. The gamer makes willingly the game more difficult, only to achieve something new and conquer something only few conquers. This makes him/her proud and motivates for new ideas, even motivates other players to try the same idea or new ideas.

"Gamers are adventurer and scientists; they try to live on the edge of a game."

Living on the edge implies that there is space for trial and error (Reeves and Malone 2007). The gamer needs space to risk new ideas and thereby fail at this as well. He/she needs the opportunity to get a new chance after failure, in order to avert frustration and thereby game quitting. In World of Warcraft the gamer and the guild have the chance to try as much innovative ideas for a problem as it takes to solve it. In this game there is always the chance to try again and again with only mild consequences on their game skill. On the other side Counter-Strike at high competition level punishes failure extreme hard and probably will lead to defeat, but it success can also lead easily to victory. However both games are so different, the player can learn essential skills from them, in World of Warcraft persistence even in a period of failure and in Counter-Strike risk assessment.

Another important skill-set for leaders are the chance to play in groups and lead groups without payment. Without any financial rewards it is important to find other ways to "motivate beyond money" (Katzenbach 2006). Game leaders have to check the happiness of the team-members, solve problems, handle disputes and tinker the team. Without the potential the Game Leader has to work on the edge (Brown and Thomas 2008). In Counter-Strike is this principle even harder, as the player faces frequently team changes and has therefore short periods to motivate the team members and keep them hap-
The team has to work on the short period, however if the team fits well, this develops to a long-term assignment of motivation. In contrary World of Warcraft, teams or guilds exist over a long time, with only small fluctuation; the player has time to get to know the team members. However if somebody compromises the team-chemistry, it is up to the leader to solve the problem or let this troublemaker go as it affects the whole guild. The player gets through both games skills to read the team and their happiness, additional to problem-solving and tinkering difficulties.

These are five principles of game leadership, which can be found in Counter-Strike and World of Warcraft, but there can be found more. Especially if we look into other games with different game settings and scan them for game leadership.

**Limitations**

Comparing sports and games with companies is difficult as there are differences that cannot be overcome easily, since sports and games are both first of all for fun (Bolton and Houlihan 2009). However they become professional, it was and mostly is fun to play. This is one limitation of this paper; another is that the cases of World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike are not fully researched. Many observations have be done in World of Warcraft, but no scientific survey, in the case of Counter-Strike even observations are available. Hence these games can only give insights how to handle leadership, it is necessary to research in detail game leadership.

**Contributions**

Gaming is already a big part of the modern world and it has many facets. However, it lacks in the field of research, especially in the field of business efforts. It is important to research this field furthermore and get useful constructs out. Constructs which can be used for the modern leadership, motivation and training. If and when it is possible to get similar motivation in a company as in a game, the effect will be beneficial throughout the company.

Summarized, this paper presented insights into the team-management of two of the most popular video games currently. However World of Warcraft was researched a little, none research was made for Counter-Strike, therefore this part was theoretical. Based on the principles of Pfeffer (2005), this paper indicates similarities in leadership and game leadership and some interesting differences. The different ways to motivate the employees in game and companies will be a promising field of research and useful tools for modern leadership.
Conclusion
This paper gives an insight into game leadership and compares it to the leadership in companies. With this comparison it is possible to get a view of modern leadership in companies, due to the fact, that modern companies will be in a fast-paced, (mostly) virtual, intensive real environment (DeMarco, Lesser et al. 2007).

Both cases seem to give a good insight into the leadership theory and yet World of Warcraft and Counter-Strike are handling these principles in different ways. This implicates that there are several ways to achieve the theory of leadership in practice and in game leadership. However the difference of these cases is important and reflects, similar to sports, that every game has to be researched on their own. It is clear that leadership in Football differs to sailing and also World of Warcraft differs to Counter-Strike.

In a nutshell, games display many similarities with the leadership theory and with further research, it should be possible to use these games for management and additional for game development and media management.

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References


The Perception of eSports - Mainstream Culture, Real Sport and Marketisation

By Tilo Franke

It is not news that the video gaming is booming across the globe: the industry is set to exceed 82 billion US Dollar worldwide by 2017 (Gaudiosi 2012) and has already taken over music and video as preferred form of entertainment in the US and the UK (Cheng 2007; Martin 2014). With almost two thirds of Americans now playing video games and the average age of a gamer placing them right at the tail end of the coveted Generation Y, the sector is demanding – and getting – increasing attention (ESA 2014). Following these developments, the industry is now shifting towards a more recent development: eSports. Professional gaming has only really taken off in the last five years, however its mass and speed are already impressive. Prize money for tournaments can reach several million dollars and sell out major sports venues; the phenomenon seems to emulate and surpass major sports (Wingfield 2014). Over 71 million people accumulated over 2.4 billion hours of watched eSports content online last year (SuperData 2014; Dewey 2014).

"eSports is now a major element in today’s youth culture and even beyond this it permeates the older generations on the back of increased computer gaming habits.”

eSports bears a structural resemblance to traditional sports, especially regarding events like the Major League Gaming (MLG) and Intel Extreme Masters (IEM) series and their similar claim to fame (Adamus 2012; Hebbel-Seeger 2012); most notable is the comparison to boxing and its many parallel titles (Salice 2010). The majority of matches take place online and culminate in big final events with live audiences, often with sponsorships from the industry, similar to traditional sports events (Burk 2013; Adamus 2012; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010).
The discussion around the “sportiness of eSports” (Witkowski 2010) is one that is prevalent throughout related academia. The basis for this discourse are the undeniable similarities to traditional sports (Hutchins 2008; Ray and Yan 2009; Scholz 2012; Burk 2013), including comparisons to the early days of traditional sports (Taylor 2012). Structural parallels to the Olympic Games in traditional sports contribute to the discussion as well (Seo 2013).

Within eSports, advertising and marketing potential is abundant, on websites, during live streams or at live events (Weiss and Schiele 2013). It is however important that interested companies can see a definite benefit in their investment, as well as projected ROI – for player, team and event sponsorships alike (Hutchins 2008; Taylor 2012). Says Matt Wolf, head of gaming at Coca-Cola “eSports is at a point now where the company feels like it’s time to move into the industry. There are several signs that show that this is real, it’s sustainable, and the growth is astronomical” (Blum and Fisher 2014).

Despite its economic boom and deep roots in the gaming culture, the field of eSports has received little academic attention (Griffiths and Davies 2003; Wagner 2006; Crawford and Gosling 2009; Scholz 2012; Faust et al. 2013; Weiss and Schiele 2013). Hutchins (2008) shows that current research does not suffice to keep up with the evolution of organized competitive gaming and the increased publicity that the actors of this milieu receive.

This study was conducted in 2014 as partial requirement for the award of the Master of Arts (MA) Advertising and Marketing Communications at Bournemouth University; it investigates the still new phenomenon of eSports academically and attempts to break the mould to provide a fertile ground for future research in this area. This study has been edited for this publication, including slight changes to graphs and tables.

**Literature Review**

*Background, emergence and definition*

The roots the eSports phenomenon reach to the arcades of the 1980s and the LAN parties of the 1990s (Taylor et al. 2009; Lee and Schoenstedt 2011; Faust et al. 2013). The launch of the Internet, the technological advances of the early 1990s and the first heavily multiplayer focused games of the mid and late 1990s, mark the origin of eSports (Wagner 2006; Rai and Yan 2009; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Adamus 2012; Burk 2013). The origin of the terminology – eSports – dates back to the late 1990s; in 1997, the – now essentially defunct – Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL) was created in
the likeness of the traditional sports entertainment league of the United States (Wagner 2006). Two years later, a press release first introduced the term eSports in comparing it to established sports (Wagner 2007); in the same year, an attempt was made to make competitive gaming an official sport, but failed (Wagner 2007; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Hartmann and Klimmt (2006 cited by Seo 2013) determined that the increasing familiarity of consumers with and the popularity of computer games are vital to the developmental process. There is not one generally accepted definition of eSports (Wagner 2006; Scholz 2012), however most common is the synonymous use with the terms ‘competitive gaming’ and ‘professional gaming’ (Wagner 2006; Rai and Yan 2009; Hebbel-Seeger 2012; Scholz 2012). Another definition that is used throughout existing research was coined by Wagner (2007 cited by Seo 2013) in saying that eSports is “an area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies”. Faust et al. (2013) add the element of tournaments and the goal of financial reward to the terminology, whereas others introduce the necessity of technological interfaces and the style of playing computer games to the definition (Dongshen et al. 2011; Adamus 2012); finally, the so called narrow definition connects the relation to traditional sport to the other elements by including a focus on hand-eye coordination and knowledge of strategy and tactics (Müller-Lietzkow 2006).

Today, eSports is part of the video games entertainment sector and exceeds both the music and film sectors in terms of revenue (Burk 2013); an entire culture has developed in its wake (Crawford and Gosling 2009). It is now a major element in today’s youth culture and even beyond this it permeates the older generations on the back of increased computer gaming habits (Wagner 2006; Williams et al. 2008; Adamus 2012; Weiss and Schiele 2013). According to Hutchins (2008), the growth of video gaming and eSports are a representation of our society’s and culture’s development; supporting this is the perspective of eSports as logical development of today’s media and communication laden society (Lash 2002 cited by Hutchins 2008; Wagner 2007). The ease of access and preferred method of broadcasting – online video streams – support the thesis of a varied audience (Scholz 2012). Whether or not eSports has made it to the accepted mainstream of activities yet is still a matter of debate, with some arguing against it (Burk 2013) and some fully embracing it (Williams et al. 2008). The negative notions that cling to video gaming as a whole influence the development of eSports as well (Williams et al. 2008; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). The media have portrayed gaming in general negatively in recent years, compared to sports as the more virtuous choice (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Studies show however that the created stereotype of the unhealthy gamer with little social engagement appears to
be false and inaccurate (Griffiths and Davies 2003; Jansz and Martens 2005; Williams et al. 2008). Especially eSports players emerged as an active segment with only 5% not exercising at all (Hebbel-Seeger 2012). The term eSports may then also be seen as a means to cast aside the negative connotations with simple gaming (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Seo 2013).

The eSports sector is still growing and moving into a more established position, with increasingly stable structures and sponsorships (O’Beirne 2011). To continue this growth and evolution, eSports requires increased visibility across a general public (Salice 2010).

**Industry, players and structure**

Teams in eSports are most often attached to one organisation with subgroups for different games, similar to traditional sports (Adamus 2012; Weiss and Schiele 2013). Many professional teams take the role of actual employers, with monthly remuneration for their players (Adamus 2012). Most competitors in the scene view themselves simply as gamers (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010), however Consalvo (cited by Taylor 2012) puts forward the notion that this is not a usable category anymore, due to the widespread nature of games. In looking for characterisation beyond the broad label, Weiss and Schiele (2013) offer that eSports players differ from regular gamers in that they compete for money and prestige. Additionally, “competitors do not play the game, they play with the game”, turning the game into something akin to the ball in traditional team sports (Wagner 2007). The competitive nature requires complex collaboration (Seo 2013) and sophisticated understanding, whereas simple gaming is purely hedonistic (Szablewicz 2011). It is this aspect of differentiation – paired with the borrowed form of competition – that lead to the discussion of professional gamers as athletes (Hutchins 2008).

"**eSports is unlike traditional sport and resides somewhere between sport, media and computer gaming. Its relationship with traditional sport is one marked by an either-or-approach, where eSports is portrayed as a “counterculture”.”**

A majority of eSports players see the phenomenon as a mainstream sport; however, they do not associate themselves completely with traditional sports...
This dichotomy in perception is also found in the fact that most eSports players do not view themselves in the light of Wagner’s definition (Adamus 2012). In a cultural framework put forth by Kline (cited by Rambusch et al. 2007), players fill multiple roles beyond their obvious denomination, as they are also users of a software and consumers of a product (Figure 1); different roles naturally come with different perspectives and could help to explain the perception discrepancy. The central role of players – or gamers – in the development and evolution of eSports is mirrored in the value co-creation network put forth by Seo (2013), in which players and communities take the central position of the network (Figure 2). It is important to understand the players’ significance within the eSports phenomenon, based on these frameworks; this is made even clearer when realising that the evolution and increasing regulation of eSports may sometimes be against the ideas and ideals of the players themselves (Rambusch et al. 2007), which could lead to tension.

Figure 1: Cultural forces in player experience (Kline cited by Rambusch et al. 2007)
In South Korea, ahead of Western culture regarding video game integration into everyday life, more than 430 professional gamers pursue a career in eSports as their job (Seo 2013). The creation of the Korean eSports Association (KeSPA) in 2000 served as a booster for similar institutions in other countries (Seo 2013). eSports in South Africa is included in the Association for Mind Sports, which also houses games like chess; this is a notable arrangement, as it is an already existing institution with ties to the National Olympic Committee (NOC) taking in eSports (Salice 2010). First global steps were made by creating the International eSports Federation (IeSF) in 2008 (Thiborg 2009).

These institutions – and other eSports communities, even developers themselves – function as institutionalising entities for the different eSports disciplines, to provide a basis for congruent competition (Thiborg 2009 cited by Seo 2013). This seemingly harmonic picture is not entirely accurate, however; Messier (2011) notes that there are many individual “camps” in eSports, where members of that group are solely concerned with the game or cause they follow and do not move as coherently as the national and interna-

Figure 2: The experiential value network of eSports consumption (Seo 2013)
tional federations or associations suggest. This issue has been discussed by other scholars in similar fashion, pointing out the need for a global consen-
sus and independent, autonomous administration to ensure standards and rule sets (Ray and Yan 2009; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010).

Above the inner workings of the eSports industry, the discussion around eSports as ‘real’ sport is being held. Following Salice (2010), the different eSports organisations have to decide if they want to be attached to traditional sports or the cultural sphere; as an example, the KeSPA is supported by the department of culture (Salice 2010). From an academic perspective, eSports have already been accepted in a sport study context (Coakley 2007).

**eSports and ‘real’ sport – co-op or versus?**

The most comprehensive discussion of eSports and its relationship to traditional sports in a context of sports sciences pits eSports against a model by Allan Guttmann (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010, Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Guttmann’s model of sport](image)

According to the initial discussion, eSports can be regarded as sport, whereas a closer examination of Guttmann’s work seems to show that eSports is still on its way to a fully-fledged sport – albeit at a high speed (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). A problem for this determination might be the lack of a unified definition of sport itself (Witkowski 2010; Adamus 2012), as even frameworks like the Guttmann characteristics can change (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Wagner (2007) and Hutchins (2008) discuss an inclusion of eSports in the normal terminology of sport, based on the variety of already accepted activities and the very general character of the definition of traditional sport. Subsequently, even academic approaches from sport studies could be used for eSports (Wagner 2007).
"The interchangeable use of eSports and competitive gaming is problematic: one terminology is aligned to the sports world, the other has a definite link to the gaming culture."

The motivations, perceived pleasures and work elements in eSports games – such as training, tactics, strategy, teamwork and even aggression – bear a close resemblance to traditional sports (Hutchins 2008; Taylor 2012). Building on this is the cultural approach to investigate sports: it sees sports as a purely social construct and connects the development of sports to the civilisation process of society (Thiborg 2009; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). From this observation flows the idea that eSports could be understood as more civilised than traditional sports, based on the ongoing process of society’s development (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Supporting this angle are the changing values of society and their effect on what is defined as sport (Wagner 2007).

eSports players are frequently referred to as athletes, often by themselves (Taylor 2009; Taylor 2012). They may relate this to athletic achievements, however, there are those who prefer to remain anchored in the geek subculture – there is a certain undecidedness how to situate eSports (Taylor 2012). Within the scene, the perception as sport seems to be prevalent (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010), however, Hutchins (2008) posits that eSports is unlike traditional sport and resides somewhere between sport, media and computer gaming. Adding to these conflicting viewpoints are the results of a conference to determine how eSports relate to athletic sports in 2008, which ended without answering this question (Witkowski 2010). The relationship of eSports and traditional sport is one marked by an either-or-approach, where eSports is portrayed as a “counterculture” (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Going even further, the interconnection between the two is characterised as competition, especially in the context of viewers and sponsors (Hebbel-Seeger 2012).

As Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) point out, the interchangeable use of eSports and competitive gaming is problematic: one terminology is aligned to the sports world, the other has a definite link to the gaming culture. Other scholars equate the eSports phenomenon to an art form (Comerford 2012), draw comparisons to professional chess (Faust et al. 2013) or conclude that it has no link to traditional sports at all (Hebbel-Seeger 2012). However, within the context of academia, there is no one common consensus that transcends a sizeable number of studies so far. A possible bridge or middle ground can be found in the – still in its infancy – integration of motor-control input to
transfer sports into a virtual environment (Ray and Yan 2009; Hebbel-Seeger 2012), with examples of available technology being the Wii and Kinect solutions.

One of the main reasons eSports is not fully accepted in a sports context is the aspect of physicality (Hebbel-Seeger 2012); despite the aforementioned variety of activities already accepted as sports, eSports is not accepted as a socially beneficial activity and thus its legitimacy cannot compete with traditional sports (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). The argument however is shifting with the realisation that both the fine-motor skills and the aspect of muscle memory transcend the typical hand-eye-coordination argument and even other established sports (Wagner 2007; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Hebbel-Seeger 2012). Another aspect hindering the legitimisation of current eSports is the necessary longevity and stability of the game; it is a balance that developers have to aim for when considering releasing a new iteration of a game versus keeping the older eSports ecosystem around their titles intact (O’Beirne 2011; Burk 2013).

Even though a number of countries consider eSports as part of the general sports sphere (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Hebbel-Seeger 2012), its public legitimisation is uncertain, as gaming itself is still not widely accepted as wholesome leisure activity (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). Internationally, the Olympic organisations do not recognise eSports, an example being Germany – while the neighbouring Denmark embraces the phenomenon (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Hebbel-Seeger 2012). A sign for a growing acceptance of eSports as official sport can be found in the increased media coverage and broadcasting of the competitions, from the United States to Europe and Australia (Hutchins 2008; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010); an eSports player even carried the Olympic Torch in 2008 (Szablewicz 2011).

Despite the academic discussion about the merits of eSports as a ‘real’ sport, it is ultimately the people – viewers, fans, families – that will decide what they accept as sport (Coakley 2007). Drawing on George Dickie, Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) offer a similar perspective in saying that “sports is what the sports ‘world’ […] consider as sport”. Already, eSports has had considerable success as a spectator sport, with the mentioned broadcast coverage, as well as online streams on several platforms like Twitch or MLG.tv (Wagner 2007; Lee and Schoenstedt 2011).
Marketisation of eSports

There are few – if any – studies that investigate the phenomenon of eSports from a marketing perspective, even though it is already rife with potential marketing opportunities; more than 3.6 million users were registered with the Electronic Sports League (ESL) in 2012 – just for the European region (Seo 2013). While some literature argues that the market relevance of eSports is yet to be determined (Burk 2013), others portray it as a high-growth segment with a multitude of touch-points between the involved actors (Seo 2013). In comparison, traditional sport is intricately linked to both commercialisation and globalisation (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). eSports is often seen as an experiment for the marketing departments of many companies, whereas the link between marketing and traditional sport organisations is long established (Taylor 2012). A probable reason for this discrepancy is the already discussed legitimacy of eSports: increased acceptance leads to higher marketability (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010).

The value of eSports is created by a network of different stakeholders, from players to the independent institutions (Seo 2013) and it is through their joint effort that eSports reaches a considerable audience (Taylor et al. 2009; Seo 2013). Comparing eSports consumption behaviour to that of traditional sports, Lee and Schoenstedt (2011) found that the most overlap existed in viewership and internet use specific to the consumption; the least similarities were found in terms of game attendance and readership – however the authors specifically refer to print media, regardless of the digital nature of eSports. Some games even now exceed traditional sports in terms of online audience and game participation (Blum and Fisher 2014). The consumption of eSports has two main hubs, one being the live streams via broadband Internet, and the other being a special form of LAN live events ((Hutchins 2008; Taylor et al. 2009; Adamus 2012). Both forms borrow heavily from the established structures of sport coverage (Hutchins 2008; Taylor et al. 2009).

An advantage of streaming is the increased accessibility for a larger number of – often amateur – players (Kow and Young 2013), compared to having to visit an event. Moving these streams to broadcast television is still an unresolved challenge, as the games do not have a fixed length as opposed to most traditional sports (Onofrio 2011; Taylor 2012. eSports television has been scarce and largely limited to experiential approaches or the most forward countries, however the millions of live stream viewers even exceed television audiences at times (Blum and Fisher 2014).
"eSports is often seen as experimental for marketing departments, as many are not literate in terms of eSports. It requires solid preparation to begin a partnership, whereas the link between marketing and traditional sport is long established."

What makes eSports so valuable for marketing is the level of involvement of consumers – the players – with the product (Seo 2013); the audience is heavily engaged with the game and it is the experience of watching or following eSports that is sought after (Seo 2013; Lee and Schoenstedt 2011). Players identify with the particular eSport they follow and it serves as vehicle for escape, entertainment and excitement (Lee and Schoenstedt 2011). The high engagement has been recognised for the gaming industry as a whole and as the coverage of eSports increases, companies begin to see the sponsorship and advertising opportunities (Lee and Schoenstedt 2011). eSports players can garner a following that compares to athletes in the big leagues of traditional sports (Wagner 2006) and thus increase the reach of potential marketing opportunities. The online traffic from specific eSports events comes close to competing with landmark events like the Oscars or the Super Bowl, according to Erik Marin, General Manager of Reddit (Blum and Fisher 2014).

eSports are a potential tool for gaming and sports companies alike, to either draw in more customers for the games (Comerford 2012), to build their audience (Weiss and Schiele 2013) and also to adapt a traditional sport into the virtual world – increasing the market and marketability (Hebbel-Seeger 2012). The video games industry could lean sharply towards the creation of eSports titles to satisfy their consumers’ tastes in the future (Seo 2013). The aforementioned experimental marketing treatment of eSports is already turning into an image similar to the world of traditional sports, with most teams now having sponsors and even sometimes adopting companies’ names in their team name (Blum and Fisher 2014). However, companies – most notably outside of the gaming sphere – are often not literate in the terms of eSports; it requires solid preparation to begin a partnership in such a case (Taylor 2012). Most sponsoring brands are hardware or software manufacturers, and only few high street or lifestyle brands have signed similar deals (Taylor 2012). According to Blum and Fisher (2014), the most high-profile name in eSports sponsoring or partnerships so far is Coca-Cola, having signed on for the name rights of League Of Legends’ amateur circuit.
Existing research and the issue of obsolescence

Wagner (2006) suggests that the lack of research may be a consequence of the focus on first person shooting (FPS) games and the almost inevitable discussion of game ethics that follows this genre. Other scholars have expressed similar sentiments, pointing to the tendency of researchers to focus on the negative effects of gaming (Cole and Griffiths 2007; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010). However, Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) have also pointed out that the research has only produced inconclusive results in this aspect, with some studies confirming negative effects and others not showing any.

Many scholars have investigated gaming culture, however often with a focus on sociological aspects (Adamus 2012). Most researchers put their focus on games with persistent environments – such as MMORPGs – and multiplayer games – such as FPS (Reeves et al. 2009; Adamus 2012). The continued need for research into the area of eSports has been identified by numerous scholars (Burk 2013; Crawford and Gosling 2009; Lee and Schoenstedt 2011); Burk (2013) also states, however, that the “social and commercial significance [of eSports] remains to be seen.” Dercon (2001 cited by Hutchins 2008) already identified that the speed and acceleration of the gaming field is a tough issue to tackle for researchers; Schut (2006 cited by Hutchins 2008) echoes this sentiment in saying that the speed of publication is out-scaled by the speed of development. To further underpin this argument, a look at the eSports landscape from Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) – listing FPS, real-time strategy (RTS) and sports games as the most popular genres – can be contrasted against the current reality that multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games grew exponentially over the last years, with the frontrunner of that genre now being the most played video game of all time, with over 2 billion hours of gameplay each month (Blum and Fisher 2014).

Gaps in literature and research opportunities

Most of the existing academic studies have not accounted for the current realities of the eSports landscape, such as changes in genres, conduct and perception.

Within the existing body of eSports research, Scholz (2012) details a comprehensive list of previous efforts, including: professionalization, comparison of eSports with sports, spectators at tournaments, communities in general and commercialisation; notably absent in academic research are up-to-date studies on the marketing aspect of eSports or its consumption (Seo 2013).
Furthermore, Adamus (2012) mentions one study focusing on sponsorship in comparison to the Olympic Games. The attitude of the eSports sphere to the sponsorship entry of sector-foreign companies is currently not researched, as well as the acceptance among the audience (Hein 2012).

Finally, scholars have pointed out that there is a definite need for player-focused research, to investigate their needs, opinions and activities, as they are among the main actors of and for the eSports phenomenon (Rambusch et al. 2007; Hussain and Griffith 2009; Hein 2012).

**Methodology**

**Research Objective 1:**
To examine the attitudes of gamers regarding eSports as part of mainstream culture.

**Research Objective 2:**
To investigate the perceptions of gamers of eSports as ‘real’ sport.

**Research Objective 3:**
To determine the mindsets of gamers concerning the marketisation of eSports.

**Research Approach**

Previous research into gaming has seen use of both – quantitative and qualitative – approaches (Hussain and Griffiths 2009). In keeping with the call for more player-centric research (Rambusch et al. 2007; Hussain and Griffith 2009; Hein 2012), this study requires primary research across a wide range of participants to reliably draw conclusions from the data. The research approach and corresponding methods should be based on the research objectives and should result in a method-objective fit (Punch 2005).

The chosen approach for this research attempts to account for all of the mentioned criteria: method-objective fit, measurable results and generalisability. It is thus that this research was conducted with a quantitative approach, relying on numerical data and statistical analysis to measure and test theories, rather than attempt to generate new theory (Neumann 2007; Bryman 2008; Denicolo and Becker 2012). This deductive approach fits with the investigation of attitudes and perception, as both are already long established in the theory (Bryman 2008). It aims at producing objective findings (Daymon and Holloway 2011).
Research Design

Taking the selected research objectives, as well as the framework and time constraints of this study into account, a cross-sectional design was chosen. This means the gathering of a large amount of quantitative data (Bryman 2008) at one time. It is also the least expensive approach and thus catered to both the time constraints and the minimal budget of this project (Neumann 2007). The cross-sectional approach cannot – by its very nature – account for ongoing processes or measure change (Neumann 2007) and is generally not suited to examine the relationship of cause and effect (Bryman 2008); however, this study is investigating perceptions and attitudes, as opposed to changes or relationships in these concepts and a single phase of data collection is therefore appropriate (Neumann 2007).

Data Collection Methods

The data collection was done using a self-completion questionnaire; there has been some concern about a lack of motivation in regard to online surveys, however research has shown that self-selection means participants will generally be motivated (Cole and Griffiths 2007). The survey was created through the online platform SurveyGizmo, using their subscription-based service.

Sample and Survey Distribution

The research population needed to fulfill the psychographic requirement of being a gamer and sample selection was done without taking demographic considerations into account. The technique used to generate the research sample was based on multi-stage cluster-sampling, as well as self-selection: the questionnaire was distributed to a number of gaming communities, as explained below, and then followed a self-selection procedure to gain participants. Demographics did not factor into the sample selection and the participation was entirely voluntary. The full survey was presented to the target sample by posting a survey link to 32 gaming and eSports related communities on the social media website Reddit. As mentioned above, it is among the main hubs for community traffic (Martin cited by Blum and Fisher 2014).
Data Analysis

The upgraded subscription package of the SurveyGizmo platform offered access to a statistical toolbox similar to that of the IBM SPSS 22 software. It was used for the descriptive analysis as set out by the research design and paired with frequency to make sense of the data; frequency provides in visual representations as graphs or charts of the data and makes the results thus more accessible (Saunders et al. 2009).

Research Quality

Reliability means the extent to which any research will yield comparable results each time it is conducted and irrespective of who conducts it (Denicolo and Becker 2012, Bell and Waters 2014). Reliability also means the replicability of a study by other researchers (Neumann 2007). To ensure the reliability of research, it was important to base the measures on the theoretical concepts; thus, the survey was constructed according to the research objectives. To gather an accurate reflection of the participants input, the employed measures of Likert scales allowed for varying degrees of responses. Furthermore, multiple aspects per research objective were tested in the survey in order to provide an accurate perspective.

Validity means the capacity of research instruments to measure what they are intended to measure – or in other words how well a concept is addressed by the employed measures; this is called internal validity (Denicolo and Becker 2012; Bell and Waters 2014). It also refers to how well the findings represent social reality; this is called external validity (Neumann 2007). The fit between question types – Likert scales – and research concept – perception and attitude – has been tried and tested throughout previous studies (Bryman 2008). Furthermore all relevant and related literature was taken into account to provide an informed background for the research setup.

Research Findings and Discussion

After closing the survey and finishing the data collection, the first step in analysing the findings was to distribute the raw data to the appropriate research objectives. The data was then interpreted through descriptive analysis and – where possible – put in relation to the applicable findings from previous academia (Daymon and Holloway 2011). The following section discusses the resulting findings categorized under each respective research objective. The presented findings are edited for publishing and only selected graphs and diagrams are included; the full results are available from the author.
"The findings point towards a semantic conflict: It seems like it is very clear what eSports is and is not, however there seems to be some issues with the general understanding of what is actually sport."

RO1: To examine the attitudes of gamers regarding eSports as part of mainstream culture.

A large majority (93.15%) of the survey sample are actively following one or more eSports disciplines, re-establishing the notion of eSports as a major phenomenon (Wagner 2006; Weiss and Schiele 2013; Williams et al. 2008; Adamus 2012). The highest awareness across the current games is achieved by League Of Legends (87.96%), Dota 2 (77.60%), Counter-Strike (75.54%) and Star Craft II (73.40%). This mirrors Seo’s (2013) ranking (Table 1), however it also shows a difference hierarchy in game genres, as MOBA games are first, followed by an FPS title and only then the RTS title Star Craft II. The relative consistency seems to alleviate the stability concerns expressed by O’Beirne (2011) and Burk (2013).

Only a minority of the participants (18.51%) has already watched any eSports on broadcast television; this is most likely caused by the discussed scarcity of eSports television (Blum and Fisher 2014). This could be substantiated by the fact that a large part of the sample (64.35%) would be interested in eSports broadcasts (Figure 4). This trend supports the very recent, tentative steps by some networks – ESPN in the US and einsplus in Germany – to start covering eSports. Almost a third (32.25%) of respondents have been part of a live eSports audience before and the largest part (83.93%) expressed their desire to attend live competition (Figure 5). The higher number for live events compared to television could still be a residual sign for the LAN party roots of the eSports scene.
Figure 4: Interest in eSports on television

Figure 5: Interest to attend live eSports competition
Adding to the tendency of live events, the majority of surveyed gamers (69.45%) hold that there should be an Olympic-styled event for eSports as well (Figure 6). These findings show the desire of gamers to consume eSports through different channels than just online streams; the findings support the already significant success of eSports as spectator sport (Wagner 2007; Lee and Schoenstedt 2011; Blum and Fisher 2014).

Despite the heavy saturation of eSports throughout the gaming culture, the predominant perception seems to be that – when compared to traditional sports – eSports is not accepted by the general public (86.57%). Inversely, most participants (73.55%) believe that the increasing popularity of eSports will positively influence the gaming discourse in the media. This supports the concept of the term eSports being able to offset negative connotations in regard to gaming (Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Seo 2013). Just under two thirds of respondents (64.17%) do not think that increased popularity negatively influences the integrity of eSports; the numbers are even more pronounced for expected negative influence on eSports culture, with 77.04% of participants being confident about not seeing any adverse effects. The high confidence of gamers seem to ward off the notion of potential tension when regulations and developments go against the wishes of players (Rambusch et al. 2007).
"Over half of all respondents prefer for the organisational role in eSports to be filled by independent organisations, supporting the concept of a global consensus."

The data show that there is an overall tendency toward more standardisation and organisation for the eSports industry, with a high affirmation for national (57.34%) or global (59.32%) organisations, while roughly a quarter remains neutral (24.73% and 26.12% respectively); it is worth noting that the weighting leans slightly more to global institutions (Strongly Agree: 18.16% vs. 21.81%). Just over half of all respondents (53.08%) prefer for the organisational role in eSports to be filled by independent organisations (Figure 7), while just under a quarter of participants (22.59%) show no preference.

Figure 7: Preference in organisational body
Gamers show a clear preference for a more structured and organised eSports industry, building on the process of institutionalising (Thiborg 2009; Seo 2013). The findings directly contradict the view of individual “camps” in eSports, and instead supports the concept of a global consensus (Ray and Yan 2009; Jonasson and Thiborg 2010; Messier 2011). Slightly running against this seeming desire for more regulation is the fact that only just over a third (38.33%) of gamers support the idea of introducing doping tests for eSports competitions.

Gamers do not seem to see eSports as accepted by the general public, however their own preferences, media habits and actions seem to suggest that it is in fact on its way to becoming a part of mainstream culture. Two considerations are important to be made here: firstly, the perception of the gamers could depend heavily on which game they follow; if a game is well known and featured prominently in the media, their perception of what is and is not mainstream would likely be influenced by that. Secondly, the difference between perceived acceptance and actual activities could also signal a process where the thought trails the actions and will catch up eventually.

RO2: To investigate the perceptions of gamers of eSports as ‘real’ sport.

The large majority (95.05%) of participants agree with placing eSports within the context of gaming culture; contrary to that, less than a quarter (22.53%) agree on eSports belonging to the general sports culture; more than half (52.46%) of all respondents would also situate eSports in its own, separate culture. The indecisiveness in regard to the allegiance of eSports is not reflected in these findings; however they rather confirm the preference of the gaming label (Taylor 2012); they also appear to contradict Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) in saying that the scene is typically viewing eSports as sport. The closest fit with existing literature is found with Hutchins (2008) who situates eSports as its own culture. Overall these findings show some of the same dichotomy in player perception that was found with Jonasson and Thiborg (2010). The research shows that most participants (93.64%) view eSports as modern when compared to traditional sports. The overwhelming perception of eSports as modern could be linked to the perspective of eSports as a development of the media culture (Wagner 2007; Hutchins 2008), however this one indicator is insufficient for a definite argument. Only a fifth of all respondents (20.59%) considers eSports to be similar to traditional sports in terms of athleticism, however almost half (45.28%) agree with the notion of eSports players being athletes (Figure 8).
These findings also seem to cater to the perceptual dichotomy of Jonasson and Thiborg (2010), however another explanation is applicable as well; while ‘being athletic’ could be directly linked to the ‘sportiness’ aspect, the term ‘athlete’ can be interpreted simply as ‘competitor’ and thus lead to the divide in the presented results. This underlines the difficulty of definition, found in previous studies and even conferences. More than half of the participants consider ‘eSports athlete’ to be a worthwhile career and only a minority (17.20%) is opposed to that view. These numbers are surprisingly high (and low, respectively), considering that regular player wages have not been around for a long time (Adamus 2012). Thus, considering the current situation of player contracts and monetisation of professional play, this number is likely to rise. Presented with four most notable definitions of eSports and asked to indicate their agreement with them, participants ranked Wagner’s (2007) definition the lowest (58.59%), which is surprising considering how prominently it is featured in current eSports academia; The next ranked definition is by Dong-sheng et al. (2011) and scores at just over two thirds agreement (67.43%); the second highest agreement among the participants are found for Rai and Yan’s (2009) definition (80.05%), only exceeded by Hebbel-Seeger’s (2012) attempt (86.86%) (Figure 9). It is interesting to note here that both low scoring definitions liken eSports to the traditional sports sphere, at least in wording, while the high scoring definitions are based on competitive gaming and

Figure 8: Seeing eSports players as athletes

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media use; however, even the sports-related definitions achieve high agreement scores and can by no means be conclusively discarded.

"Less than a quarter of respondents agree on eSports belonging to the general sports culture, while more than half would situate eSports in its own, separate culture."

Just under half of all participants (46.16%) also take an active part in the eSports sphere by playing games competitively and almost two thirds (62.67%) indicate that they prefer playing a game over simply watching it (Figure 10). There is an almost even divide between those who regularly watch traditional sports (42.39%) and those who do not (43.74%) between the participants; conversely, the gross of respondents (86.16%) watch eSports regularly; While more than half (56.79%) of all surveyed gamers have a favourite team or player in traditional sports, this number is much higher for eSports (82.15%). These numbers further reinforce eSports as widely spread spectator sport. Furthermore, the attachment to teams or players, paired with

Figure 9: Definitions of eSport
the potential for celebrity status signify a space for both potential sponsors and personal branding (Wagner 2006).

Asked for their overall preference between traditional sports and eSports, a significant majority (78.65%) of the participants indicated they would prefer eSports; even when disregarding the weak preference indication, this number is still almost two thirds (62.21%). Typically, this large of a gap would have been interpreted to mean that gamers are indeed less active and affine to sport in the past, however this stereotypical perspective has already been debunked in previous research (Griffiths and Davies 2003; Jansz and Martens 2005; Williams et al. 2008). Rather this high level of engagement, paired with the average viewing time for eSports of 2.2 hours (SuperData 2014), signals an enormous potential and abundant market opportunities.

The results of this study do not offer a definite conclusion on whether gamers view eSports as ‘real’ sport. There is a clear delineation between the two worlds, however some of the findings point to the difficulty that had already foiled attempts at finding an answer before as mentioned by Witkowski (2010): the findings seem to point towards a semantic conflict. It seems like it is very clear what eSports is and is not, however there seems to be some issues with the general understanding of what is actually sport. Irrespective of its perception as ‘real’ sport, eSports scores surprisingly high for prefere-
rence across the gamer sample. Paired with the perceived disconnect from the sports culture, this could support the theory of Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) of eSports as counterculture to traditional sports.

**RO3: To determine the mindsets of gamers concerning the marketisation of eSports.**

"A significant majority considers eSports to be more interesting to watch, more exciting and more engaging when compared to traditional sport. Paired with the average viewing time for eSports, this signals an enormous potential and abundant market opportunities."

For this research objective, it was not always possible to establish links with existing literature, owed to the fact that not much academic work was been done in this respect. The findings however have been interlinked, analysed and interpreted to present as complete a picture as possible. The attitudes of the surveyed gamers regarding the need for new games to be ready for eSports and have fully developed eSports modes or features are very close; slightly more gamers (42.04%) believe games should be released with these features, while a slight minority (34.85%) does not put emphasis on them (Figure 11). However, a more pronounced majority (64.61%) say they are more likely to play a game if it is designed for competitive play (Figure 12).

The use of eSports to support the business model of a game is certainly not new – in fact the current market leader League Of Legends is actually a free-to-play title (Blum and Fisher 2014); however the strong preference for eSports-readiness can help to set the tone for future multiplayer game development. Just about a fifth of all participants (20.76%) have paid to attend a live eSports event and the gross of respondents (80.91%) finds events to be more appealing if eSports is involved. Combined with the overall desire to be part of a live audience – as discussed above – this can be interpreted as dormant marketisation potential. While Lee and Schoenstedt (2011) found the least similarities between eSports and sports in terms of game attendance, the live competitions appear to be attractive elements of live events, confirming the very recent developments in attendance numbers (Blum and Fisher 2014).
Figure 11: New games should be eSports-ready

Figure 12: Likelihood of play if a game is eSports-ready
Event sponsorship seems to have limited impact on the willingness of gamers to pay for an event: less than a quarter (22.40%) indicate an affiliation with an IT brand would increase their likelihood of paying for a visit and even less (15.87%) could be swayed by non-IT brands. Similar to events, just around a fifth of respondents (18.16%) have paid for premium eSports content through broadcast or online sources; however, looking at the present, there are less people (8.29%) who pay. This drop in premium viewership is all the more interesting when looking at a few key performance indicators of spectator sports in regards to eSports: a significant majority of the gamers considers eSports to be more interesting to watch (80.75%), more exciting (78.38%) and more engaging (73.59%) when compared to traditional sport. A possible explanation could be the ongoing development of the eSports sphere (O’Beirne 2011). Alternatively, the recency of its professionalisation and commercial development could cause slight instabilities (Blum and Fisher 2014). As with any growing phenomenon, it could also merely be a case of more content being freely available as time passes. Looking a future potential, there is still a third (33.40%) of participants who could see themselves paying for premium content (Figure 13). Here, too, the impact of sponsorship on buy rates seems questionable: only slight minorities would pay for premium content due to an affiliation with an IT brand (14.16%) or a non-IT brand (10.09%). eSports seems to have to rely on its own appeal – the level of competition, the players and the other actors, commentators, hosts and analysts – to draw crowds and eyeballs, not on the potential big name partnerships.

While the benefit of sponsorship for eSports organisers appears to be minimal, the positive effects for brands are significant: across the surveyed gamers, a brand’s appeal increases, if it is sponsoring a team or player (65.23%), a live event (65.15%), a broadcast or stream (58.71%). Considering the literacy issues mentioned by Taylor (2012) when it comes to eSports, these numbers are a good demonstration to interested companies why an investment in eSports is a lucrative option for their brand. A more mutually beneficial way of partnering could be found in digital advertising: more than two thirds (67.95%) of respondents are willing to accept commercial breaks during eSports broadcasts or streams (Figure 14). Well over half (58.64%) are willing to tolerate ongoing advertising in the forms of banners or overlays (Figure 15). These findings have to be approached with caution, as the format of potential advertising is very likely to have a direct impact on its acceptance; if a commercial were to cut into the actual broadcast, as opposed to being aired during game breaks, it could lead to rejection of either the advertised brand or the concept of advertising breaks altogether. Similarly, if ongoing banner advertising was to obscure vision of vital elements to the game, it would negatively impact its perception and acceptance.
Albeit not as prominent as the brand appeal increase, another – maybe more direct – measure of sponsorship efforts still looks significant: participants indicated that they are more likely to buy a brand that is sponsoring an eSports team or player (50.12%), a live event (45.27%), a broadcast or stream (41.81%). Seeing how teams and players score highest for both increased brand appeal and likelihood to purchase, it is fitting that a large majority (70.54%) views eSports players or athletes as celebrities.

Endorsement deals from the world of traditional sports could be a real possibility for eSports. Similar to how academic approaches from the sports world could be transferred to eSports, best practices in endorsement and sponsorship could be borrowed for the athletes and teams. It is worth noting that almost half (47.54%) of all respondents also view eSports players as role models and believe they should be held to a higher standard (50.66%). For companies looking to enter the eSports sphere as sponsors, this is a good sign, as it could go towards avoiding celebrity fallout for endorsement deals.

Figure 13: Willingness to pay for premium content in the future

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Figure 14: Acceptance of commercial breaks

Figure 15: Acceptance of continuous advertising (banners, etc.)
Only about a third (36.65%) of surveyed gamers have bought eSports merchandise in the past, however almost two thirds (63.39%) would want more of it to be universally available. With eSports merchandise being in such high demand, developers and organisers are potentially passing up on both better monetisation of the eSports product and a convenient brand building tool as well.

Compared to the other research objectives, the findings of this part are much more clear-cut, albeit somewhat surprising. Especially the low impact of sponsoring brands on the willingness of customers to pay for an event or a service seems – contrasted against the other numbers – somewhat out of place. Testing the same instances for traditional sports across a similar sample could bring clarity to the question whether this is related to eSports or the sponsoring attitude of gamers in general. The existing opportunities for advertising and marketing show that even for sector-foreign brands there are openings to make their entrance into the eSports sphere and benefit from it.

**Conclusion**

"What makes eSports so valuable for marketing is the level of involvement of consumers with the product. The traffic from specific eSports events comes close to competing with landmark events like the Oscars or the Super Bowl."

This research project aimed to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of gamers toward eSports and regarding three research themes: mainstream culture, sports character and marketisation. To this end, a cross-sectional research design was chosen to reach as large a sample population as possible. The following paragraphs present the most salient findings according the three research objectives, before summarising the limitations of this study and finally offering recommendations for future research.

The first objective of this study examined the attitudes of gamers regarding eSports as part of mainstream culture. While gamers do not believe that eSports is accepted by the general public, they display a high demand for mainstream oriented consumption of eSports via broadcast media. This study
is in line with previous literature about the suitability of eSports as an excellent and engaging spectator sport. Gamers generally appear to favour a global organisation of eSports with more structure and official, international institutions, similar to traditional sports. Overall, gamers do not see eSports as accepted by the mainstream, however their mainstream usage patterns place eSports very close to, if not in it. Further research could explore why this perceptual dichotomy exists and try to find a cross-sectional view of society as a whole instead of specific subgroups.

The second objective of this study investigated the perceptions of gamers of eSports as ‘real’ sport. For the majority of gamers, eSports still belongs to the gaming culture; however, almost a quarter would still attribute it to the general sports culture. About half of all gamers also see eSports in its own cultural space. When looking for a definition of eSports, the four most salient attempts from previous literature all resulted in approval numbers over 50%, with the sports-related elaborations scoring the lowest. However, due to the still high ratings, these results are not entirely conclusive and require more research. Another indicator for the problem to be of semantic nature was found in the apparent difference in use between ‘being athletic’ and being ‘an athlete’. The question of the sportiness of eSports could not be answered without a trace of doubt. However, the results seem to lean towards a sports character, without being actually considered a sport. Naturally, as eSports develops, this might change. For the time being, the approach taken by Jonasson and Thiborg (2010) appears a good middle ground: based on Huizinga’s work Homo Ludens, they argue that sports can be seen as accepted form of playing; following this argument and the findings of this study, eSports could then be positioned as ‘accepted gaming’. Regardless of the nature of eSports, gamers prefer it largely to traditional sports, follow it more closely and are more engaged when watching.

The third research objective was to determine the mindsets of gamers concerning the marketisation of eSports. Overall, gamers seem to have a positive attitude toward eSports as a part of a business model for new games – and for live events as well: the majority of gamers wants to see eSports when visiting an event. While eSports appears as a drawing factor for live events, the same did not emerge for external sponsors of eSports events and broadcasts: only a minority of gamers would be more inclined to pay for an event or premium content if it was sponsored by an external brand. However, the reverse relationship seems to offer more benefits, as a brand’s appeal increases for gamers, if it enters the eSports scene as a sponsor. Gamers appear to be favourable toward advertising in eSports, with reasonably high approval
ratings for both commercial breaks and banner advertising during streams or broadcasts. Lastly, the characterisation of eSports players as celebrities, paired with an increased likelihood to buy sponsoring brands opens the door for potential endorsement deals; this is support by a general demand from gamers for more readily available eSports merchandise.

Recommendations

Since this research project was the first of its kind in the field of eSports, researchers should find it fertile ground for future studies. A repeat study with the inclusion of demographic qualifiers could be beneficial for regional or national snapshots of the eSports scene. Similarly, a substitution of the psychographic requirement could be beneficial to allow for the study to be repeated with members of the general public or – more specific – marketing managers of prospective sponsors.

This research provided some results that were not entirely conclusive, such as the culture fit or the definition of eSports within the context of traditional sports. Specialised studies to target these issues would be adding value to the existing body of academia. And finally it would be useful to conduct this research from a qualitative perspective, generating consumer insights and examining the motivations of gamers, to deepen the understanding of the forces at work in the eSports sector.

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