



The rise of digital advertising in eSports: A case study on Twitch

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ABSTRACT

According to Edery and Mollick (2008), the increasing effectivity of human connection through digital interaction, trending entertainment and advertising being combined has greatly benefitted brands which have integrated such combinations into their digital advertising. Therefore, this study explores the benefits and value of the rise of digital advertising on Twitch in eSports content as the current digital shift has been of great power for brands towards enhancing brand equity through innovative digital advertising. This research also aims to explore how brands utilise innovativeness and creativity in digital advertising within Twitch with eSports content to increase and enhance brand equity.

Twitch is deemed to be an impactful livestreaming platform which integrates advanced technology, live entertainment, real-time interaction, and competitive online gaming (Carter and Egliston, 2018). Thus, expanding the horizon for brands to increase creativity and innovation within advertising by integrating growing platforms and trends as such to increase brand equity, grow consumer markets and support eSports teams and players. Due to offline games being restrictive of real-time interaction with brands' advertisements, and overall internet access, the advertisements within offline gaming had lacked impactful creativity and measurable impact, which is counteracted by eSports through eSports being online, in real-time and with live interaction between players, teams and audiences when streamed on platforms such as Twitch.

This research proposal consists of the interpretivism paradigm with a qualitative approach and methodology within which a questionnaire was formulated to obtain insight into the experiences, opinions and perceptions of Generation Z gamers who utilise Twitch for eSports. This paradigm and methodological approach were undertaken to understand and explore the value in innovative brand advertising on Twitch in eSports, the growth of brands and enhancement of brand equity thereof.

Findings derived depicted that an extensive amount of value is added to brands exploring new technological platforms, such as Twitch, sponsorships, and interactive advertisements as well as the effectivity of brand partnerships with endorsements. This successfully contributed to the research aim and question as findings support the

notion that brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content provides value to the growth of brands and enhancement of brand equity. Findings also included respondents deeming adverts on Twitch in eSports to be more interactive and effective in engagement whereas offline videogames restricted the reach of brands in the interactive aspect and enabling audiences to be able learn more in real time with effective engagement.

This research's key contribution aims towards understanding how brands digital advertising opportunities on Twitch in eSports enhance brand equity, resonance, and shape perceptions of consumer markets. This research findings also contribute towards how digital brand advertisements have a significant impact on shaping consumer perceptions on Twitch during live streams of eSports and persuasion to learn more about brands, understand the value communicated and build meaningful brand relationships which in turn enhances brand equity.

Keywords: eSports, Twitch, advertising, brand equity, digital advertising, Generation Z, live streaming

DECLARATION

I, Ashmita Singh, hereby declare that the research report submitted for the qualification BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature.

Signature

29 November 2021

Date

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Edery and Mollick (2008), video games represent the essence of what drives individuals to think, how to cooperate and what can be achieved by active engagement. By exploring the transformation of the digital shift in current markets whereby having a digital factor in business-consumer interaction has become vital, eSports is the competitive online gaming broadcasted on the internet which is found to become a new channel for brands to combine advertising, consumer interaction and entertainment (Edery and Mollick, 2008). Thus, as the popularity of eSports gains momentum in the entertainment and gaming industry by creating new and creative means for brand advertising, brands are able to convey creative value through digital advertising and reach growing markets (Ender, 2020). In order for companies to interact with consumers through eSports by advertising, interactive platforms such as Twitch is effectively used as a broadcast medium (Long, Drabicky and Rhodes, 2018). Twitch uses display media, logos, brand sponsorships and partnerships with eSports streamers on Twitch which are visible during the streaming of gameplay to an audience (Long *et al.*, 2018).

Ender (2020) posits that in the late nineties and early 2000s era, video games had displayed banner advertisements and logos within games, however, technology in that era was restrictive with brand interactions. There was a lack of digital means for brands to target and interact with their audiences and to collect data on how effective the advertising was previously (Ender, 2020). Placing a website link or a 'learn more' option in video games in the late nineties and the early 2000s era was not possible whereas brands are able to do so in current times with the digital shift and the use of the internet (Ender, 2020). Therefore, suggesting that in order to combat the restrictive nature of traditional eSports advertising, digital advertising channels such as Twitch is used by brands to take on a dynamic and innovative way of reaching audiences for effective brand communication in eSports with means of measuring the impact on brand equity thereafter.

1.1. Rationale

The topic of this research study is the innovative opportunities for brand advertising in Twitch with eSports content as this research aims to explore how brands utilise innovativeness and creativity in digital advertising within Twitch with eSports content to increase and enhance brand equity. As internet and digital interactions during video games were highly restricted in the past due to technology not being as advanced as recent times, the eSports industry was limited as video games were not competitive online at that time therefore limiting the innovation behind digital advertising's ability to reach mass audiences simultaneously over online platforms (Ender, 2020). This prompts the step forward towards brands having the means and ability to now reach audiences in eSports unlike before during offline video games.

With the rise of eSports, notable means of extending brand awareness with its growing audiences and virtual advertising opportunities have been created (Gawrysiak, Burton, Jenny, and Williams, 2020). This enables brands to associate with high-ranking teams or players which creates further brand visibility to the mass audiences through live streaming on Twitch. By exploring these aspects of digital advertising in this space, the researcher aims to deeply understand how the rise of digital advertising in new markets with the eSports community, can contribute towards shaping consumers perceptions towards brands to persuade brand resonance, loyalty, create awareness and meaningful brand relationships through the depiction and evidence of brands supporting the eSports teams and players who are supported by the Twitch community.

Live streaming on Twitch in eSports has become a new way of digitally communicating to large audiences and to associate brands with eSports teams and players. The focus is shifted on Twitch to explore how brands create brand awareness and enhance brand equity through digital advertising on Twitch in eSports for eSports audiences. Twitch live streaming with audiences provide authentic content and connectivity which enables streamers to convey brand information to audiences allowing brands to earn a competitive advantage through valuable association (Ender, 2020). Thus, by brands using digital advertising on Twitch with eSports, this research aims to analyse and

understand how brands depict the evidence of support to the teams and players affiliated with the brands- through the digital advertising on the Twitch platform and how it benefits both the brand and the affiliated eSports teams/players. This research is relevant through exploring the benefits in digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports as it provides brands with opportunities to improve brand equity by using new technological advertising trends.

1.2. Problem statement

Ender (2020) posits that the lack of creativity and ability in advertising in video games restricted brands from creating a meaningful and measurable impact on consumers brand equity levels. The reach of brands to large numbers of consumers in real time through digital advertising in video games were restricted as technological reach and interaction was not as advanced as current times (Ender, 2020). Therefore, the previous lack of creativity and innovation suggests that brands and companies utilise new channels during the current technological shift to maintain consumers interests by keeping in line with new trends. The rise of eSports utilising live streaming platforms such as Twitch increases the visibility and equity of the brands for a greater impact on target markets. This is through the Twitch platform enabling interaction with audiences during gameplay or content broadcasts (Burton and Gawrysiak, 2017). Thus, allowing brands to attempt to counteract the lack of innovation and creativity of previous digital advertising in video games by utilising the Twitch platform and eSports.

1.3. Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand the innovativeness and effectiveness of digital brand advertising within eSports streams on Twitch and the influence thereof on the viewers brand equity. Brand equity is the concept in which consumers can evaluate a brand and shape perceptions towards the brand and its value offered which thereafter either creates or strengthens consumer brand relationships (Keller, 2001). With the rise of eSports, brands can associate with high ranking and professional eSports gamers on the Twitch platform to enhance brand equity to the various audiences (Long *et al.*, 2018). This provides a human connection

between brands and audiences to enhance the relationships and value strength between the consumers and brands, thus creating brand equity.

1.4. Research goal and question

Goal: To explore the value in innovative brand advertising opportunities on Twitch with eSports content

Question: How does brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content provide value to the growth of brands and enhancement of brand equity?

1.5. Research objectives

- 1.5.1 To obtain valuable insight on the efficiency of brands using Twitch and live streamers to enhance brand equity and visibility through digital brand advertising
- 1.5.2 To obtain insight on how effective brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content shapes consumer perceptions and enhances brand equity

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical foundation

Keller's brand equity model consists of four levels and six quadrants which depict levels for brands to reach to create and achieve brand equity which is effectively the intangible value offered and positive relationship between consumers and brands (Keller, 2013). eSports is professional and competitive online gaming with spectators on the internet which has become a trend through the rise in popularity during the digital shift of interactive entertainment online (Lehnert, Walz, and Christianson, 2020). Therefore, eSports has become a medium of opportunities for brands to integrate branding, promotion of products of services and brand equity enhancement (Lehnert *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, in this research, it is through the medium of eSports and Twitch that the exploration of how brands may be able to effectively strengthen and enhance brand equity by creating meaningful relationships and positively shaping consumers brand perceptions. Thus, the theoretical foundation of this research study consists of Keller's brand equity model.

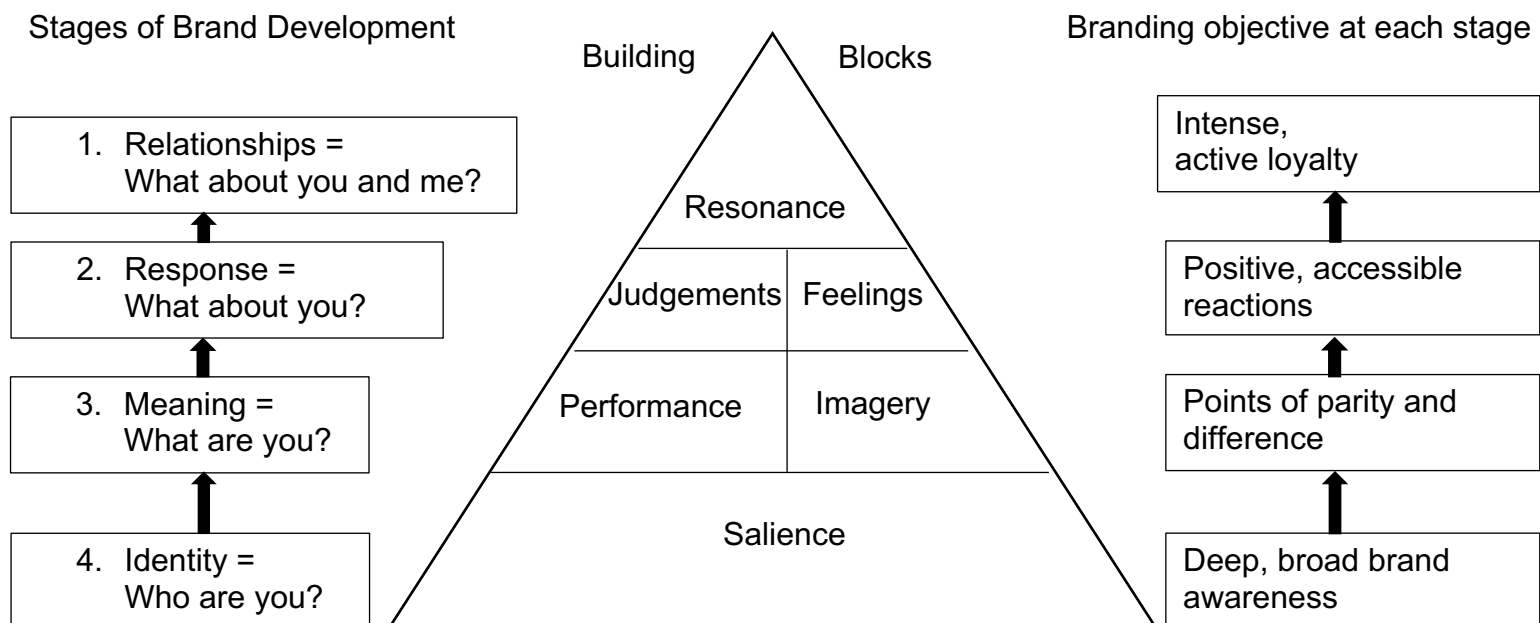


Figure 2.1.1: Keller's Brand Equity Model. 2013. *Customer-Based Brand Equity model pyramid.* (Keller, 2013)

Keller's brand equity model is depicted as a pyramid structure in which four levels and six quadrants are included to create brand equity. Firstly, salience links to brand identity whereby the aim is to create brand awareness and how consumers perceive the brand (Keller, 2013). eSports players are effective in creating an emotional connection with viewers on live streams as a human connection is created to promote brand sponsors on camera which in turn build brand affinity and equity as the brand is then associated to a player who is supported by multiple fans (Singer and Chi, 2019). This suggests that the salience level is used by Twitch streamers playing eSports to identify with and share a sense familiarity with the audience and develop brand awareness through interaction and human connection by then communicating the brand to the audience during the gameplay stream.



Figure 2.1.2: Adidas. 2019. *Adidas Ninja Collection*. (Adidas, 2019)

Secondly, the level of brand meaning is divided between imagery and performance of which the imagery is the associated images of the brand in the consumers eyes whereas performance is the brand's reliability experienced by the consumers (Keller, 2013). By linking the right associations to the brand image in consumers perspectives, a stronger brand connection is created with the consumers as visual impressions and meaningful images remain in consumers memories (Keller, 2013). Therefore, the advert in Figure 2, the Twitch streamer and eSports gamer Tyler Blevins, also known

as “Ninja”, depicts his collaboration with Adidas, creating a strong visual image of the product and brand association with Blevins (Ninja).

Through Blevins depicting association with the Adidas brand with a special edition pair of Adidas sneakers with Blevins eSports gaming names, the audience is likely to perceive Adidas as a valuable brand. This links to Adidas’ points of parity as the brand attempts to enhance the consumer loyalty to Adidas by maintaining support and promotion of Blevins as “Ninja” in eSports and Twitch, therefore Blevins’ audience is likely to support, create or maintain brand loyalty to Adidas.



Figure 2.1.3: Wicked Good Gaming. 2019. *Ninja Officially Announces Shoe with Adidas.* (Wicked Good Gaming, 2019).

Thirdly, the level of brand responses is where brands analyse and identify consumers judgements and feelings towards the brand after purchase or during brand interaction (Keller, 2013). Figure 3 depicts Tyler Blevins (Ninja) endorsing his partnership with Adidas during a live stream by showing the product to the viewers and gaining feedback (Wicked Good Gaming, 2019). This type of endorsement during a live stream suggests that through personally endorsing a product created through a strong brand partnership between the streamer and Adidas, the streamer can shape consumer judgements and influence consumers feelings towards the product. Thus, suggesting

that the comments provided as feedback by the audience during the live stream will assist in the analysing of the audience members' feelings and judgements towards the new Adidas endorsement in partnership with Blevins. Therefore, the comment section is a method of analysing responses to the brand endorsement.

Lastly, the final level of Keller's brand equity model is brand resonance which refers to the brand-consumer relationship and its nature thereof (Keller, 2013). Resonance reflects the intensity of the relationship with a brand in which brands strive to maintain at a strong level to create brand loyalty (Keller, 2013). In Figure 3, as Blevins endorses his Adidas sneaker collaboration on a live stream, brand resonance can be created through engaging with his loyal fanbase on the topic of his partnership with Adidas and the product created for the partnership's endorsement. This may effectively prompt Blevins fanbase to support and feel a consumer attachment to Adidas as the brand supports Blevins whom the fans feel a sense of loyalty towards.

2.2. Literature review

2.2.1.Brands digital advertising in eSports on Twitch

According to Kim, Nauright and Suveatwatanakul (2020), the rise of eSports competitive online gaming has emerged as one of the most popular trends since the year 2016 due to its growing popularity as a recognised competitive sport in which technology, fun and entertainment has been combined. eSports is competitive online gaming which is professionally played by individuals or teams with spectators on the internet using broadcasting platforms (Lehnert, Walz, and Christianson, 2020).

Therefore, through the growth of eSports, interactive live streams have also been trending as a new form of interactive and online entertainment in which brands can participate in through digital advertising (Chen and Lin, 2018). Live streams are also described as a socially engaging and interactive way of watching an online game being played whilst the gamer visibly and verbally interacts with the audience through the live stream (Chen and Lin, 2018). The live streaming occurs on the broadcasting platform of Twitch which enables streamer to develop an interactional flow with the

audience (Chen and Lin, 2018). The real time audio and video interaction is possible through the Twitch streamer being visible on a small window on the screen being shared during gameplay (Chen and Lin, 2018). As eSports caters for a spectator form of entertainment through live-streaming platforms, Twitch is one of the large-scale eSports streaming platforms used to virtually engage with worldwide audiences (Wulf, Schneider and Beckert, 2018).

Hwang, Ballouli, So and Heere (2017) suggest that in-game advertising in offline video games included banner advertisements, logos and virtual billboards which had effectively reached gamers points of view during gameplay. However, in-game advertising in video games did not yield efficient brand equity results even though brand awareness and recognition was achieved as the brand in-game advertising was deemed to be a component of the game rather than an effort to associate brands with the video games (Hwang *et al.*, 2017).

The current digital transition and technological era has introduced new ways of enhancing brand awareness and advertising trends (Gawrysiak, Burton, Jenny, and Williams, 2020). Historically, video games have been a component for extending brand awareness and advertising in gaming, however, eSports now offers a more unique and innovative way of integrated digital advertising through the use of the internet (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). It is imperative for brands to adopt new creative and innovative ways of advertising to enhance brand equity and brand resonance with growing audiences on popular digital platforms (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020).

The brand advertising opportunities on Twitch with eSports streamers increase the popularity and the reach of brands (Chen and Lin, 2018). Ways to integrate brands on Twitch is through digital advert placements as well as partnering with Twitch streamers with sponsorships or as brand ambassadors in the eSports community (Long, Drabicky and Rhodes, 2018). Advertising on Twitch includes display media, logos, sponsorships of brands for the streamer, adverts which directs users to brand websites, product endorsements and visible merchandise being worn by streamers during gameplay (Long *et al.*, 2018).

According to Carter and Egliston (2018), the dominance of the popularity of the eSports streamers reinforces the content experience on Twitch as the higher the fanbase amount, the larger the impact on the audience perception towards the streamer's association with brands. Brand sponsors effectively increase marketing capabilities through associating with and sponsoring famous eSports streamers as the brand reach is increased through connecting with eSports streamers fan following (Singer and Chi, 2019).

The Coca-Cola brand had partnered with Riot Games as sponsors of the Riot Games eSports game- League of Legends world championship (Malvone, 2020). The League of Legends world championship was broadcasted live by multiple platforms including Twitch throughout the United States of America, Canada, and Europe (Malvone, 2020). Sponsorships in large, organised eSports events drive sponsorship revenues (Malvone, 2020). Through digital interactive engagement of display media and consistent logo visibility enabled Coca-Cola to increase brand recognition by actively associating with the trend of eSports through the partnership with Riot Games (Malvone, 2020).

Between the years 2016 and 2017, approximately six hundred sponsorship deals were successfully made in the eSports industry (Long *et al.*, 2018). Sponsorship deals included in-game digitalized advertisements for aims of brand resonance through display media and live event sponsorship deals which were broadcasted on Twitch (Long *et al.*, 2018). Through the live event sponsorships, brand sponsors were able to provide a digital experience in the online eSports gaming culture and strategically integrated brands into the eSports industry through experiential brand interaction as the events were broadcasted live on Twitch with streamer interactions (Long *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.2.Brand equity

Keller (2013) posits that by enhancing brand equity, brands are able to actively maintain brand resonance with consumers through maintaining a meaningful brand relationship in which consumers are more willing to consistently engage with brands

and maintain brand loyalty. According to Hwang *et al.* (2017), brands digital advertising in games broadcasted continuously expose brands to the gamers and viewers as the digital placement of logos for example, cannot be removed from the screen or during gameplay. Therefore, Hwang *et al.* (2017) and Long *et al.* (2018) posit that placing brands digital advertising in a consistent view within the Twitch stream is an advantage of consistent brand visibility allowing for the audience to create a simple human connection to the brand as to who the brand is and the advertisement's offering in the advertisement thereof.

Carter and Egliston (2018), and Gawrysiak *et al.* (2020) suggest that eSports broadcasted on Twitch offers a unique viewer experience through the use of interactive advertising. Gawrysiak *et al.* (2020), Carter and Egliston (2018) posit that the innovative creativity within the digital advertising connects the viewers to the brands and streamer allowing for a human connection to shape brand perceptions, make judgements to be in real time and choose whether to respond to the advertisement. Brands digital advertising in eSports on Twitch assist viewers to associate brands to the supported eSports team or player which in turn helps viewers to process the brands value through association and respond in real time to the advertisement (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020).

Brand advertising in traditional video games restricted real time responses from gamers as there was a lack of direct links to access an option to learn more about a brand (Hwang *et al.*, 2017). Website links, targeted advertisements and learn more options were unavailable in traditional video games as opposed to the current digital era of advanced technology and the internet advantages existent in eSports and Twitch (Hwang *et al.*, 2017). Multiple companies have been entering the eSports industry to extend and enhance brand equity through digital advertising and brand sponsorships (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020).

Consumers seek to relate to content online and brands aim to create relatable content through advertising, creating a correlation between digital advertising and brand equity (King and de la Hera, 2020). Online streamers are the source of relatable content information through entertainment which enhances the relationship between the brands and consumers through digital advertisements (King and de la Hera, 2020).

The eSports Arena is an American company which has built eSports arenas in Las Vegas, California, and Orange County to host eSports events and has partnered with NBC, Red Bull, General Mills and Microsoft to integrate branded experiences in each eSports event for the online viewers (Long *et al.*, 2018).

The branded experiences in eSports increase brands' resonance and equity through matching images of logos, visible sponsorships, and display media with strongly supported eSports events allowing for viewers to recognise a consistent link between brands sponsors, eSports games and eSports streamers (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). TwitchCon is an event hosted by Twitch to bring together the gaming community of streamers and viewers to watch, learn and play eSports games in eSports event arenas (Long *et al.*, 2018). The TwitchCon events provide the eSports gaming community with an intimate and brand meaningful set up through planned game nights and streaming parties which provide brands with more experiential brand interaction (Long *et al.*, 2018).

The eSports partnership between the Turtle Wax brand which sells automobile products and the OpTic Gaming eSports team which plays the games of League of Legends and Call Of Duty, has integrated the gaming and car care enthusiasts' community by introducing Turtle Wax to the eSports industry (Long *et al.*, 2018). The background of OpTic Gaming live streams was decorated by Turtle Wax to integrate both brands for visible brand association during live streaming (Turtle Wax, 2016). The partnership between Turtle Wax and the OpTic Gaming team aimed to strategically increase brand equity through connecting with car enthusiasts in eSports in an authentic manner which resonates with the fans of both Turtle Wax and OpTic Gaming (Turtle Wax, 2016). Brands which strategically advertise within eSports on interactive platforms position the brands in an easily visible and relatable manner which enables viewers to recognise brands and form an imagery and identity connection with the brands (Long *et al.*, 2018).

According to Malvone (2020), the most influential streamer Tyler Blevins, known as "Ninja", in the eSports industry, was sponsored by Adidas to endorse Adidas sports products in the virtual world of eSports through live streams during gameplay. Adidas initiated the sponsorship with Blevins as Blevins maintained a following of over

fourteen million Twitch followers, thus associating with a famous Twitch streamer benefitted both Adidas and Blevins with the increase of market and brand visibility (Malvone, 2020). The partnership between Adidas and Blevins lead to Adidas integrating products into the virtual world of eSports by placing Adidas products into eSports which enhances brand equity through creatively endorsing the Adidas brand within an eSports game (Malvone, 2020). Blevins' fanbase effectively brought brand sponsorships to Blevins as brands desired to initiate endorsement deals in exchange for connecting the brands to the streamer's large fanbase for the benefits of extending brand awareness and growing brand equity on trending platforms such as eSports and Twitch (Malvone, 2020).

2.2.3. Conclusion

Long *et al.* (2018), Carter and Egliston (2018), and Gawrysiak *et al.* (2020) concur that digital advertising in eSports on Twitch construct a strengthened connection between brands and consumers by enhancing brand equity through investing in sponsorships and partnerships with eSports teams and players. Long *et al.* (2018), Carter and Egliston (2018), and Gawrysiak *et al.* (2020) also suggest that the strengthened digital connection extends brands' presence into the eSports industry, effectively shaping positive brand perceptions and brand resonance. eSports has revolutionized the traditional video games advertising methods by integrating creativity, technology, and the internet to allow brands to advertise within eSports with a consistent online presence through Twitch (Long *et al.*, 2018).

King and de la Hera (2020) posits that live streamers act as the interactional link to correlate brands content and consumers desire to relate to brands. Brand resonance and brand equity can be effectively achieved through digitally displaying brands logos, visuals or advertisements on Twitch during eSports streams which can be clicked on to simultaneously access brand websites in a new window (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, challenging traditional video games' lack of innovative creativity in brand advertising of banner advertisements and offline gaming (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020).

2.3. Conceptualisation

eSports:	eSports is the activity of playing competitive online video games by professional individuals or teams on the internet (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). eSports is played in organised competitive events which are broadcasted live for spectators on the internet using broadcasting platforms (Lehnert <i>et al.</i>, 2020). This is the main concept within this research study as the focus is on eSports content being streamed and/or played on Twitch. As well as exploring how various brands utilise the new trend of eSports broadcasted on Twitch in order to increase brand equity by advertising with eSports gamers and effectively resonating with the audiences.
Twitch:	Twitch is a worldwide leading live streaming platform on which gamers utilise to live stream eSports content in real time, engage with the audience watching and build international fanbases (Twitch, 2021). This concept describes the main platform in which the research aims to focus on and to gain insight on how various brands may effectively utilise Twitch with eSports streamers for effective brand advertising and to enhance brand equity thereafter.

Live stream:	A live stream is a visual and audio combined broadcast of an event through the use of the internet (Merriam-Webster, 2021). This concept links to this research as the main function of the Twitch platform is the live streams as the entertainment factor and is used by Twitch live streamers for broadcasting content such as eSports as the streamers simultaneously play and stream online competitive games. This research study will explore how live streams on Twitch with eSports content convey value to the audiences through digital brand advertising with human connection and interaction.
Digital advertising:	Digital advertising or advertisements consists of all types of business communication aimed at promoting or raising awareness of products, services, or brand communication through the use of the internet and digital channels (Stokes, 2011). Digital advertising examples include pop-up advertisements, display media, banner advertisements, and click through target adverts which are interactive digital advertisements enabling the user to click on an advert or link to be directed to the brand website (Stokes, 2011). This research study explores digital advertising through its trending innovation of how brand awareness and brand equity is being enhanced with online presence through Twitch and eSports.

Brand equity:	Brand equity is the intangible value created by brands for target markets by relating a product or service with recognizable and memorable images, reliability experience and brand loyalty (Hayes, 2021). Brand equity is the incentives provided by the brand for consumers to desire to maintain a brand relationship, consumer loyalty and brand resonance (Hayes, 2021). This concept links to this research by analysing current literature on how digital advertising on Twitch in eSports can enhance brand equity through Twitch streamer-viewer engagement and extend brand awareness and resonance in the eSports industry. Brand equity will be explored by using Keller's brand equity model in this research study to define how brands are able to use each level to reach and connect with consumers by advertising on Twitch with eSports content to identify with the consumers, shape perceptions, prompt a response and ultimately create a brand relationship.
Brand resonance:	Brand resonance describes the strength of consumers relationships with brands, how do consumers engage with brand, what the brand means to consumers and how does the brand create brand loyalty amongst consumers (Keller, 2013). This research aims to explore how brands can enhance brand resonance by integrating with the trend of digital advertising within eSports on Twitch. This concept aims to

	be defined in this research as to how brands integrate digital innovation with advertising on an increasingly trending platform of Twitch and eSports content to effectively reach a growing audience and benefit brands by enhancing brand resonance.
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3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research paradigm

The methodological position of interpretivism emphasizes the gaining of in-depth knowledge with qualitative methods to study data, findings and understand the value within context thereof (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2013). This research will analyse the topic of digital advertising within eSports on Twitch through the interpretivism paradigm. The interpretivist comprehension of this topic will enable the researcher to efficiently understand and gain deeper insight into the value offered by this digital trend of advertising within eSports live streamed on Twitch.

Therefore, the focus of this research is placed on how brands utilise eSports and Twitch live streams to reach new and growing audiences to enhance brand equity and increase brand equity through integrating digital factors into brand advertising in order to integrate the digital trend with the brand during the current digital shift. In order to effectively comprehend phenomena, value within findings is supported in interpretivism and the qualitative research will assist the researcher in understanding the respondents' perceptions thereof through in-depth questionnaires (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2013).

Therefore, the value of digital advertising in eSports on Twitch is sought after through analysing how brand equity is enhanced amongst the audience on the Twitch live stream during eSports gameplay. Twitch is a platform in which a bridge between gamers and audiences is built to combine the interaction and entertainment factor of eSports (Gawrysiak, Burton, Jenny, and Williams, 2020). This research aims to understand how brands can enhance brand equity through utilising an integrative platform like Twitch with eSports content. Valuable insight is aimed to be gained on how brands may create deeper impressions on consumers through imagery and human connection to the brand by using Twitch's options of display media, logos and brand sponsorships which effectively contribute to brand equity. Thus, by utilising this paradigm, it will allow the research to be enhanced through in-depth understanding being obtained with examples and insight derived from data collection.

The methodological paradigm in this research aims to gain in-depth insight through using questionnaires with qualitative questions for lengthy responses from respondents. By collecting insight on the mentioned aspects, the researcher aims to interpret the value derived thereof to understand how the growth of the eSports industry and Twitch can maintain the effectiveness of being able to integrate entertainment and provide a continuous digital factor to brand equity.

3.2. Research design

This research consists of the interpretivism paradigm in which the researcher aims to gain in-depth understanding to determine the value offered by the new trend of advertising in Twitch and its benefits. The interpretivist paradigm will enable the researcher to understand the findings by analysing how respondents of this research study perceive and describe experiences. The methodological position of interpretivism allows for the researcher to explore and understand the phenomenon through qualitative methods of research. As this research study is exploring digital advertising on Twitch with eSports, the case study will be on the Twitch platform.

This research will conform to an exploratory and qualitative design in interpretivism as the researcher intends to analyse the data collected from in-depth and open-ended questionnaires with qualitative questions to understand how digital brand advertising on Twitch is beneficial to both the brands and the affiliated eSports teams or players as well as the perceptions of Twitch users on how brand advertising in eSports may enhance brand equity, increase brand resonance and awareness. This will be done by gaining knowledge through gathering insight from respondents who watch or stream eSports content on Twitch which may then be analysed into understanding Twitch consumer perceptions towards brands and effects of digital brand advertising on this platform. The users' perceptions may be shaped through the digital advertising methods used by brands on Twitch in eSports with audience interaction through Twitch live streamers (Chen and Lin, 2018).

The qualitative methodology with a qualitative approach allows for the understanding of human behaviour and interaction to construct an understanding of perspectives and

experiences (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2013). Thus, a qualitative approach with questionnaires will be used in this study to actively seek to understand and gather insight on the respondents' perceptions and experiences related to the topic.

3.3. Population

Parameters: Young adults aged 18-25 in South Africa who form part of the Generation Z population, and who utilise Twitch for watching or streaming eSports. The Generation Z population consists of individuals who are born between the late 1990s and the early 2000s and whom are also technologically driven, pragmatic and socially responsible (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Target population: The Gen Z gaming community engaging on Twitch for eSports content and has knowledge about eSports content and brands' digital adverts, partnerships or sponsorships with players or teams.

Accessible population: Gen Z gaming individuals who reside in Durban, South Africa who utilise Twitch for streaming or watching eSports gameplay. These individuals are to describe the effect and usage of Twitch to assist the researcher in exploring knowledge pertaining to the research.

3.4. Sampling

Non-probability sampling was used as this research study is qualitative and consists of purposive sampling as a specific group who share similar characteristics are needed to gain relevant information and convenience sampling for ease of accessibility to the population. Non-probability sampling is utilised when access to an entire population is highly limited (Pascoe, 2013). Therefore, the focus is shifted by accessing enough of the sample population to obtain enough of the saturated data in the findings to effectively assist the research.

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling is utilised when the researcher specifically selects elements to be included in the characteristics of the sample (Pascoe, 2013).

Purposive sampling was utilised as the researcher aimed to gain in-depth knowledge from a group of individuals who share characteristics of streaming and watching eSports games on Twitch. Convenience sampling is used when researchers have access or contact of some form to access a sample (Pascoe, 2013). Convenience sampling was utilised as the researcher has access the gaming community within the Durban area which would then enable the researcher to forward the questionnaire to individuals of this community. This sampling method was used as the researcher required specific types of individuals from a specific population which is the Gen Z gaming community, individuals aged between 18 and 25 residing in Durban which allowed for accessibility and relevance to the study.

Sample size: This study had aimed to utilise a sample size between 15-20 respondents to obtain ample saturated data from the accessible population who share similar characteristics of belonging to the Generation Z and eSports gaming community who utilise Twitch. This sample size was also motivated by the accessibility of gaming individuals who had fit the population parameters required for this study.

Accessed sample size and population: A total of 17 responses were received from 17 respondents, aged between 18 to 25 years old, belonging to the Gen Z generation and the gaming community in Durban. This enabled for the researcher to uphold purposive and convenience sampling methods as well as obtain relevant data by accessing the desired and accessible population.

3.5. Data-collection method

To maintain the purpose of this study and obtain useful data, the researcher made use of a qualitative questionnaire which consisted of open-ended questions and a limited amount of close ended questions to determine demographics. Questionnaires are deemed suitable to research studies when seeking to obtain valuable data which can be analysed for greater understanding (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2013). Google forms is a free online tool which enables individuals to draw up questions and select the types of response formats, thereafter, send and safely collect and store responses

online (Melo, 2018). The researcher utilised the Google forms tool as it is online, free, and simple to use and send to multiple respondents simultaneously. The Google forms questionnaire link was then sent to the sample population, responses were then collected and stored safely in a comprehensive layout.

The questionnaire began with a brief introduction to explain the research, process and how the respondents will be protected. This included an introduction of the researcher; the type of research being conducted and the topic. A brief explanation of what the research requires from the respondents was then followed by a brief clarification to what digital brand advertising entailed and lastly assurance for the respondents that anonymity will be maintained throughout. The questionnaire is designed with a total of twelve questions as the researcher aimed at designing a relatively quick questionnaire to save the respondents' and researchers time as well as to obtain an ample amount of data which allowed for in-depth analysis after collection.

The questionnaire began with four closed-ended questions to determine if the respondents fit the parameters such as age and location and whether the respondents had knowledge of and utilised the Twitch platform such as question three and four providing a choice of "yes or no" questions. Thereafter, followed by eight questions as the questions required respondents to briefly elaborate to obtain in-depth data. Question five, six and eight aimed at determining the engagement and persuasion levels and experiences of viewing digital brand advertisements on Twitch in eSports.

Question seven and ten aimed at obtaining insight on opinions about the brand advertising types and a comparison of interactive versus non-interactive brand advertising to gain data to answer the research objectives and overall goal. Question nine aimed to determine whether brand advertisements on Twitch were effective in shaping consumer perceptions and having persuasive effects on consumers' buying behaviours which links directly to the research objective of obtaining insight on brand advertising effectivity, consumer perception and brand equity. Whereas question eleven and twelve aimed at collecting data on the perceptions and experiences on the efficiency and awareness aspects of digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports.

The flow of the questions was in a coherent manner as it had begun with closed ended questions, thereafter, followed by open-ended questions which aimed to have a

progressive flow and clear link to the topic in each aspect and links to the research objectives and question. Respondents were encouraged to respond in own their own words as the open-ended questions aimed at obtaining respondents' feedback with elaboration on experiences, perceptions, and opinions on digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports.

3.5.1.Application of data-collection method

Firstly, by following protocol, the ethical clearance form was completed, and an ethics checklist as well to detail how the research data collection was to be conducted with details regarding the research study, paradigm, design, population, and sample. These two forms were then sent to the research supervisor and the campus post-graduate research coordinator to obtain permission for research data collection to commence. Thereafter obtaining permission and clearance for both forms, the researcher then focused on refining the questionnaire in a manner which would best obtain relevant information and using a simple layout and tool such as Google forms.

As the questions were designed in a manner which linked to the research question and objectives to obtain relevant information, a pre-test was informally performed by a group of 6 respondents between 18 and 25 years old. This pre-test allowed for the researcher to refine and reword certain questions after determining if all questions were clearly understandable and not ambiguous. Certain questions were then refined in simple language for clear understanding and in a straightforward manner aiming to obtain lengthy responses where necessary.

The final questionnaire was then proofread, and checked for grammar, spelling, and comprehensiveness to ensure that the respondents do not face difficulties whilst responding to the questions or having the questionnaire take up too much of the respondents' time. The questionnaire was then laid out on Google forms, the first four questions were given yes/no and short response formats whereas the last eight questions were given long response formats. Thereafter, the questions and layout were checked for errors and the flow of the questionnaire was made sure to be correct questions before sharing. The questionnaire's Google forms link was then shared to

respondents via WhatsApp, the link then opened to the questionnaire which allowed for the respondents to each have access to their own copy and submit accordingly. By using Google Forms, all responses may be collected in an organised and cost-effective manner (Melo, 2018).

The questionnaire was sent out on the 3rd of August 2021 and an adequate number of responses were successfully received by the 5th of August 2021. The time frame in which the questionnaire was shared, and responses were received was time efficient for both the respondents and researcher as data was collected within three days and the questionnaire consisted of only 12 questions in total to complete. There were seventeen responses in total which was deemed sufficient by the researcher for data saturation. All responses and respondents remained anonymous throughout the process and will remain so for ethical considerations.

The responses were then collected and stored in a safe and orderly section of the google form which only the researcher had access to. Which then allowed the researcher to have access to digital copies, be able to download and access it to sort the data with content analysis and into themes. This also allowed the researcher to analyse and organise the data during analysis to understand the effectivity of the brand advertising and association with the Twitch platform in eSports content and its impact on audiences with regards to brand equity and resonance thereafter.

3.6. Data analysis method

The researcher had made use of the qualitative data analysis method of content analysis to reinforce the confirmability and consistency of the data supporting the research objectives, question, and findings. Therefore, the data collected was analysed through an inductive approach with qualitative content analysis through using the eight steps to create a meaningful understanding of the findings to assist the understanding of the overall phenomena and derived themes thereof.

Qualitative content analysis is used to explore and identify recurring and evident themes and patterns within the data collected (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The

inductive approach will allow the researcher to place data into themes to develop an integrated analysis of the findings (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). Therefore, by using content analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire responses, it allowed for the researcher to place data into themes after analysing the responses collected. This effectively assisted the interpreting of data with relevant information of the benefits of digital advertising as perceived by the respondents, the platform used, benefits stated and overall respondents' opinions of whether the two examples of themes were found which are brand equity and awareness.

The questionnaire consisted of four quantitative questions and eight qualitative questions. The quantitative questions were placed in bar graphs and pie charts for clear understanding and grouping of data. The qualitative questions were analysed using the eight steps which allowed for the researcher to place the data into themes thereafter. All text conveys potential meanings and messages which allows the researcher to understand different perspectives (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). Therefore, after conducting a deep reading of the questionnaire's responses in the questionnaires, the eight-step process was followed, and themes were derived. The themes derived were then found to be linked to the literature and research objectives which enhances the strength of the research study. As the literature and research objectives focus on Twitch, brand advertising, awareness and brand equity, the themes and relevance of the data were aimed to link to these themes.

3.6.1. Application of data analysis

Upon sharing the questionnaire and receiving responses thereafter, the respondents accessed had consisted of individuals between the ages of 19 to 25 years old and fit the parameters of the research, including the location of in and around Durban. The researcher had then downloaded the responses from the online safe space to a PDF with each response able to be viewed separately for further analysis. Anonymity was ensured throughout the process and no identifiable information of the respondents may be traced back to them.

A total of 17 responses were received and were analysed through qualitative content analysis to place data into themes and obtain in-depth understanding of the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of the respondents regarding digital brand advertising on Twitch and brand equity thereof. The data was analysed using the eight steps of content analysis. The eight steps of content analysis include preparing the data, defining the coding unit to be analysed, developing categories, a conceptual framework, testing the coding, then coding the text, assessing the consistency of coding followed by interpretation of the data concluded and lastly reporting the methods (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). Bar graphs and pie charts were used to present the closed-ended questions' responses for clear presentation and simple understanding. As the quantitative questions asked for demographics and one-word responses, these two chart types were suitable to depict the data. The qualitative question's responses were analysed through content analysis with eight steps allowing for deriving of themes and concluding the findings to support the research study, literature, and objectives.

Step one of the qualitative data analysis with eight steps is preparing the data by organizing it and transcribing the data to understand the data better and recognise key aspects to derive codes (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher first downloaded the responses with individual views of each response to organise and detect similar words used in each response. For example, the words "effective", "appealing", "brands support" and "awareness" are similar words used in majority of the data collected which makes it important codes to analyse. Step two entails defining the coding unit or concept which will allow the researcher to organise the data into groups which can be examined to derive themes or concepts from (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). When deriving themes from the data collected, each of the questions' responses were grouped per question to organise the data and not mix up responses during the analysis. For example, the themes "brand equity" and "brand awareness" were found and grouped for organisation as brand equity is a key focus and links directly to the research objectives. This allowed for the researcher to determine and understand the similarity and information gathered per qualitative question. The themes allowed for the researcher to link the relevant information to the research.

Furthermore, step three is developing a conceptual framework within which the coding of data can be assisted and defined for clear understanding (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher created a conceptual framework by deriving the most common or underlying themes and defining it to clearly link the themes to the research study. For example, “brand equity” is a key theme derived and directly linked to the research study. Step four includes testing the coding scheme on a sample text to test the clarity and consistency of the definitions on a sample of the collected data (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher tested the coding by analysing how well the defined codes explained the data collected and linked back to the objectives to ensure consistency. Step five entailed coding all text by highlighting relevant words and information (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher completed this step through thematic coding by highlighting and typing in a list, the key themes and useful information obtained in the data.

Moreover, step six is the assessing of coding consistency to recheck the coding’s relevance and consistency (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher completed this step through double-checking that the codes and themes were relevant and useful to the research study, objectives and assisting in answering the main question. Step seven included interpreting the data and presenting the meanings of the themes derived to look for further meaning, clearly show the link between the themes and the research study and explain the links found (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher had completed this step through a word cloud with definitions to link the themes to the study. A main theme “brand equity” was evident throughout the data analysis and evidence of the link between the respondents’ responses positive of brand equity being enhanced through the advertising on Twitch and the answering of the research objectives of obtaining insight on the efficiency and effectivity of digital brand advertising enhancing brand equity.

Lastly, step eight is reporting the methods and findings (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2013). The researcher completed this step by reporting the process applied in the coding, analysis, and interpretation to clearly show the links, findings and relevance between the data and the research topic, study, question, and objectives. For example, the theme of “brand equity” was supported by the fact that some respondents described digital brand advertising as useful in enhancing brand equity. This also

supports the research objective of obtaining useful insight to brand advertising on Twitch having the ability to shape consumer perceptions and enhance brand equity.

3.7. Trustworthiness

Credibility: Refers to the accuracy of the interpreted data from respondents (Koonin, 2013). The credibility of this research study will be enforced through the researcher introducing the topic and reason for the research as well as what is required of the respondents before deciding to begin the questionnaire, this will also include the research purpose within the brief explanation. Questions in the questionnaire were constructed to be simple to understand to allow for participants to clearly convey their perceptions and opinions in the responses. This was effective as most of the respondents were able to clearly comprehend the question and provided in-depth responses which in turn allowed for in-depth data to be collected and analysed with accuracy as respondents had understood the study's research, topic, and purpose through the introduction of the questionnaire being placed before the questions had begun.

Transferability: Is the ability of the research findings to be applied to similar situations in order to determine similar results (Koonin, 2013). As the questionnaire is qualitative with open-ended questions asking for experiences, feelings towards and opinions, the findings are likely to be transferable to similar research or situations involving Twitch, eSports, and digital advertising thereof.

Dependability: Refers to the quality of the integration process of the data collection method, analysis and theory generated thereafter (Koonin, 2013). This research study is greatly dependable through the consistent integration of themes and aims to further the dependable consistency through having formulated the questionnaire in a clear and directly relatable manner to the main research question and objectives. The questionnaire was formulated to support the theory and topic as well as to integrate the findings in an insightful manner.

Confirmability: Refers to how well the data collected supports the research findings and interpretations of the data itself (Koonin, 2013). The researcher had described this aspect in detail through explaining the research and process pertaining this study and its findings to be consistent in similar conclusions.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Presentation and interpretation of findings

The presentation of the findings will include presenting the characteristics of the respondents and suitability to this research followed by the codes and themes derived from the responses within the interpretations of the findings to link and conclude the research to the topic, problem, objectives, theoretical framework, and literature review. Question 1 to 4 are quantitative in nature for demographics and question 5 to 12 are qualitative in nature for interpretation.

The results and findings in the quantitative questions 1 to 4 are presented in bar graph and pie chart formats for simple understanding and to breakdown the demographics. These results depict that the sample population accessed during the primary research consisted of 17 respondents. As question 5 to 12 are qualitative, the presentation of findings and codes will be through word clouds. Thereafter, the findings will be discussed in context to the research literature, theoretical framework, question, and objectives followed by the conclusion.

Question 1:

How old are you?

17 responses

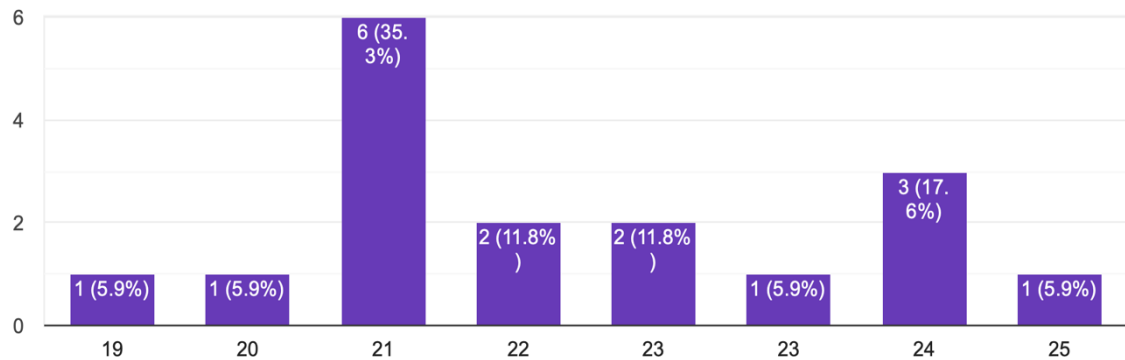


Figure 4.1.1: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 1 results*. (Unpublished, 2021).

This research pertained mainly to the Generation Z gaming community in which the age group between 18 to 25 years old therefore it was imperative that respondents in the sample group fell within these age brackets for the researcher to obtain the most relevant and useful data. The Generation Z community is deemed the most technology driven and evident in gaming communities in current times (Matt, 2021). The findings depict that the sample population accessed included respondents from the age group required.

Question 2:

Where do you currently reside?

17 responses

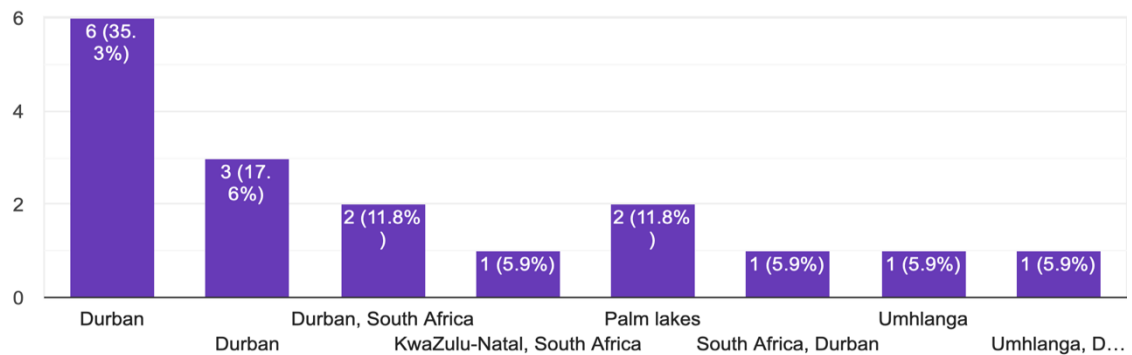


Figure 4.1.2: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 2 results*. (Unpublished, 2021).

For ease of accessibility and supporting the convenience sampling method, the researcher aimed to access respondents residing within Durban, Kwa-Zulu-Natal. The findings depict that 100% of the sample group resided within Durban.

Question 3:

Do you stream eSports gameplay or watch eSports on Twitch?
17 responses

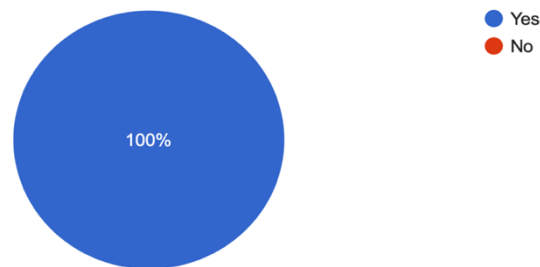


Figure 4.1.3: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 3 results*. (Unpublished, 2021).

Question 3 aimed to determine whether or not the respondents streamed or watched eSports on Twitch to have the necessary and relevant background on the research topic. Findings derived were that 100% of the respondents had watched or streamed eSports on Twitch, making the respondents suitable to the research and supporting the purposive sampling aspect as respondents were selected from the local gaming community. eSports is a medium for brands to integrate branding, promotions and enhance brand equity (Lehnert, Walz, and Christianson, 2020). Thus, it was interpreted that respondents had background knowledge through watching or streaming eSports.

Question 4: Research topic relevance

Have you seen brand advertisements on Twitch whilst watching/streaming eSports?

17 responses

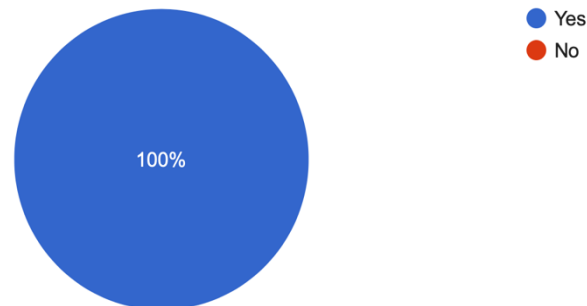


Figure 4.1.4: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 4 results*. (Unpublished, 2021).

The main topic focus of this research study is digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports as the research objectives include obtaining valuable insight on the efficiency of brands using Twitch and live streamers to enhance brand equity and visibility through digital brand advertising and insight on how effective brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content shapes consumer perceptions and enhances brand equity. Therefore, it is imperative that the respondents have seen brand advertisements on Twitch in eSports content to have knowledge of the types of advertising and its impact on the respondents thereof.

As brand meaning is derived from between imagery and performance of advertising, by linking the right associations with appealing and relevant imagery to the viewers, brands are able to create meaningful brand images and reliable performance experiences (Keller, 2013). Therefore, as 100% of the respondents responded with “yes”, thus, it was an indication and finding that by seeing advertisements previously on Twitch in eSports, respondents did have relevant and useful background knowledge linking to the topic of the research.

Question 5: Do you feel persuaded to click on the brand website link or learn more option when you see a brand advertisement on Twitch? If yes, what persuades you to do so?



Figure 4.1.5: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 5 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

According to Gawrysiak, Burton, Jenny, and Williams (2020), the current transition into a more technological driven era has enhanced brand awareness and innovativeness in advertising trends through eSports. As found within the results of question 5, very few respondents had responded negatively to being persuaded to click to learn more about the brand advertisement however, the codes derived were the main phrases evident in the positive responses describing why the respondents felt persuaded to click on the link or to learn more about the advertisement. The words “strategic” and “persuaded” provide an indication that the technological integration of brand advertising and the digital space allows brand to strategically place advertisements on Twitch to persuade the eSports gaming community. This also suggests that advertisements may be “appealing” to the eSports communities in a way that traditional media is unable to do- as Twitch is an online platform with real-time engagement.

Thus, majority of the responses lead to the finding that the brands’ strategic placements and persuasion with appeal and creativity specifically target eSports communities. Another finding was that respondents felt persuaded to learn more if

there was a “competition”, innovative creativity, or high level of interest in the brand advertisement. Brands reinforce brand equity and resonance by adopting creative and innovative ways of advertising on increasingly popular digital platforms (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). This reinforces the research objective of obtaining insight on the efficiency of brands’ digital advertising in enhancing brand visibility as most responses suggest that these advertisements were indeed persuasive, creative and strategic in nature.

Question 6: Do you feel engaged and entertained by the adverts run on Twitch channels during eSports streams?

Sometimes Interactive
Eye-catching
Interesting
Effective
Engagement
Product-dependent

Figure 4.1.6: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 6 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

The above codes derived display the overall main words used to describe the feelings of the respondents towards advertisements run on Twitch during eSports streams. The words “interactive”, “engagement” and “effective” support the notion that brand resonance is enhanced during these adverts on Twitch in eSports as it is created through having an interactive brand-consumer relationship with effectivity and meaningful engagement. This finding supports the building of brand resonance and equity through Keller’s brand equity model discussed in the literature.

Brand resonance is the final level of the model which refers to how brands aim to maintain brand-consumer relationships to improve brand loyalty (Keller, 2013). Thus,

as majority of the respondents positively respond to the question and elaborate by describing the advertisements to be interesting and eye-catching, it suggests that the creativity and engagement of the advertisements are mostly well-received and entertaining whereas some respondents did suggest feeling engaged and entertained sometimes and if products were interesting.

Question 7: What is your opinion on brand advertising in eSports on Twitch as opposed to advertising in non-interactive offline video games?



Figure 4.1.7: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 7 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

Ender (2020) posits that digital advertising in the current technological era with internet support enables brands to maintain measurable enhancements of brand equity through new online channels whereas offline videogames lacked creativity and interactivity. Therefore, the research problem describes this lack of creativity and innovation in non-interactive offline videogames as compared to interactive eSports with measurable engagement and meaningful impact within digital brand advertising on Twitch.

Findings include respondents deem adverts on Twitch in eSports to be more interactive, informative, and effective in engagement with more opportunities and insight through the interactivity whereas offline videogames restricted such engagement and opportunity for better understanding and learning more. This supports the literature review in the sense that online engagement from brands prove

to be more meaningful through consistency and reach whereas offline videogames lack such reach. Therefore, insight from interpretation suggests that brand advertisements mainly spark interest and deeper engagement if the viewers are communicated with in an eye-catching manner towards the product and with clear interaction with benefits for both the advertiser and viewer.

Question 8: How does the verbal and visual interaction of the streamer persuade you to learn more about the brand?

relatable
engaging personality
attention grabbing
human connection
personal effective
understandable

Figure 4.1.8: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 8 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

As found in the responses from question 8, all respondents were positive that the verbal and visual interaction of Twitch streamers has a persuasion level to an extent as it depended on what was being promoted or communicated. Majority of the respondents deemed the interaction most effective if the topic and message included a trusted brand or interesting product. The interactions were deemed to be more relatable and personal with human connection allowing for respondents to gain a better understanding of the brand message through the streamers' interactions. Brand judgements and feelings are on level three of the brand equity model and are enhanced through meaningful interactions and clear communication (Keller, 2013). Therefore, as brands convey messages through streamers interacting with audiences, the responses in question 8 depict that these interactions are effective as described as attention grabbing, engaging and easily understandable. Thus, proving the theoretical foundation to be effective for this research study.

Question 9: Do you feel inclined towards buying a brand's products after a Twitch streamer has promoted it on eSports streams? If yes, why?

informative
live-stream
influence
discount
associated

Figure 4.1.9: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 9 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

Interactional flows are developed during live streams on Twitch, which allows for streamers to connect and engage with audiences for meaningful communication (Chen and Lin, 2018). As per the findings of this question, five respondents admitted to not being inclined towards purchasing promoted products however, most of the respondents had responded positively to being inclined and considering of the product promotions on Twitch by the eSports streamer.

As the above words were used in responses, it is interpreted that Twitch streamers are effective and informative within the brand promotions as viewers can see brand association and become influenced to a level towards learning more or heeding the brand communication. This finding supports the study as the research problem of non-interactive and offline videogames disabled interactive flows to influence consumer perceptions and purchase decisions as compared to the current technological era in which online platforms such as Twitch provide means for brands to advertise and interact with audiences in eSports in the digital space.

Question 10: What is your opinion on eSports players brand sponsorships?



Figure 4.1.10: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 10 responses.*
(Unpublished, 2021).

Integrating brands on Twitch with digital advertisement placements and sponsorships enable brands to have greater exposure to eSports communities and increase brand reach (Long, Drabicky and Rhodes, 2018). This notion was found and discussed in the literature therefore linking to question 10 findings. These findings depict that majority of respondent's opinions support these brand sponsorships as players may become more popular, audience become more targeted, sponsorships are effective and brilliant ideas to boost streamers and players careers.

Interpretation suggests that brand sponsorships in this aspect, appeal to viewers as an effective way of targeting specific audiences as brands may sponsor eSports players to grow both parties' audiences and integrate the brand offerings into new horizons as mentioned in the theoretical framework with Tyler Blevins being sponsored by Adidas and having the ability to shape consumer judgements and feelings with sponsored and endorsed products.

Question 11: Does brand advertising on Twitch streams help you to better understand a brand advertisement or message?

casual
appealing
accessible exposes
informative
relates understanding
aware

Figure 4.1.11: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 11 responses*.
(Unpublished, 2021).

These findings suggest that respondents perceive and feel that the brand communication is better received and understood through being placed and informed on the interactive platform of Twitch. The words above depict that brand advertising is greater established through streams as viewers can establish relatability, be exposed to deeper meaning, become more aware of what is being offered as streamers relate personal experiences and the casual yet appealing manner of advertising through streams provides brands and consumers more accessibility to information and audiences.

As integrated with the literature, this supports the research objective in obtaining insight of the effectivity of brand advertising and ability in shaping consumer perceptions as findings suggest that brand awareness is greatly supported in advertising on streams to establish that relatable connection for understanding and exposure to the brands through human connection. Online streamers are deemed the source of creating relatable content through entertainment to enhance brand-consumer relationships using digital brand advertising (King and de la Hera, 2020). Thus, the finding does depict the enhancement of brand equity through Twitch streamers creating relatable and understandable content targeted at eSports communities and enhancing the understanding between brands and consumers.

Question 12: Do you feel that brand advertisements on Twitch are helpful towards creating awareness, brand equity and valuable association(s)? Please provide a reason

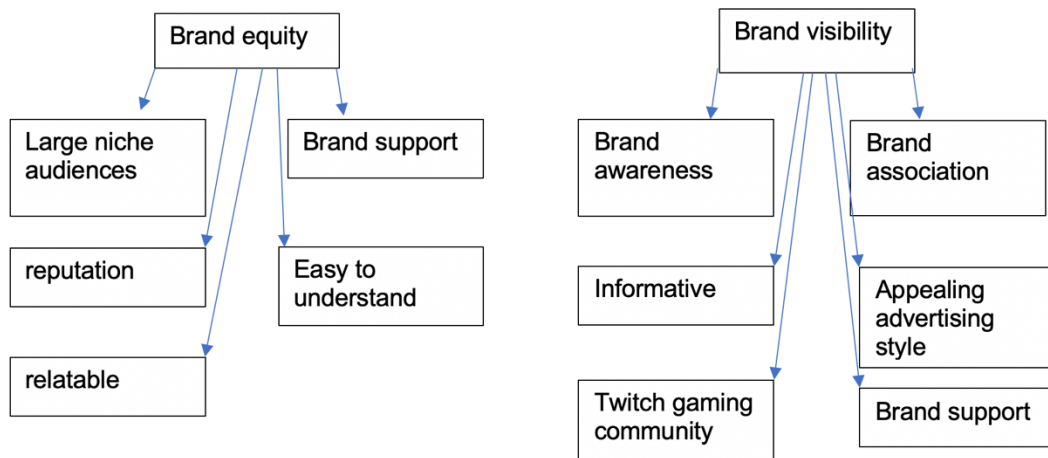


Figure 4.1.12: Singh, A. 2021. *Themes and codes derived from question 12 responses.* (Unpublished, 2021).

As interpreted from the obtained data above, these codes show the link through which brands digital advertising on Twitch have influence on the sample accessed as respondents feel and perceive brands support their gaming community which then prompts the respondents to support the brands in return. This enhances brand equity to an extent as loyalty and interest increases. The words such as “appealing” and “relatable” were used to describe live streamers advertising on Twitch, linking the efficiency and influence of the digital advertising styles used and brands sponsorships on Twitch in eSports.

By strategic brand advert placement in Twitch streams, brands can enhance visibility and awareness with interactive human connection (Long *et al.*, 2018). The research objectives are evidently proven, and the literature is supported through these findings suggesting that advertisements on Twitch are informative, easy to understand, visibly appealing and allows brands to reach large and niche audiences through brand sponsorships as well. Therefore, another interpretation is that advertising on Twitch streams allow brands to increase visibility and provide viewers with an interactive break to view and listen to an advertisement thus becoming informative and enhancing the visibility of brand associations on Twitch.

4.2. Findings in context to the research problem and question

The research problem describes a lack of creativity and innovative ability in advertising within video games, restricting brands from creating a measurable, meaningful, and consistent consumer-interactivity which negatively impacts on brands' efforts to enhance brand equity (Ender, 2020). Therefore, posing the research question as this study aimed to derive insight as to how digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports may counteract the research problem.

Findings suggested that majority of the respondents who belong to the Generation Z local eSports community support brand advertising in the digital space of Twitch with eSports content as it is simple to understand, relate to and includes interactive persuasion which shapes consumer perceptions. Findings from question 6 and 7 also suggest that the opportunities and engagement in eSports is greater with higher interactivity in real-time than offline video games are non-interactive and lacks measurability of advertising impact on audiences.

The main theme is brand equity, however, themes such as brand visibility and resonance were identified in the key findings supporting the overall main theme as findings depicted digital brand advertising strategically creates and places adverts in high traffic visibility and with measurability to direct and monitor brand responses. As brands strategically place digital advertisements within eSports streams on Twitch and sponsorships, a level of relatability and increased brand support is established through human connection during the promotion of products or brand communication.

Through the in-depth analysis, the theme of brand equity is strategically and greatly enhanced by digital brand advertising on Twitch as the audience is continuously growing, seeking innovative creativity and human connection within eSports. Brand visibility and awareness themes is evident in questions 12, 10, 9 and 8 as greater exposure to brands with human connection, deeper understanding as interactions flow with an appealing advertising style to the Twitch gaming community. Findings in this aspect also describes that equity is enhanced as brands show support to Twitch streamers which prompts viewers to associate brands with value offerings and support

brands in return with loyalty. This contributes towards answering the research problem as brand equity can be measured in digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports through whereas offline videogames lacked measurability and meaningful impact as such.

The research question of how brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content provides value to the growth of brands and enhancement of brand equity is addressed through the evidence of the objectives being supported in the findings and the link between the findings and the literature. Objective one is to obtain valuable insight on the efficiency of brands using Twitch and live streamers to enhance brand equity and visibility through digital brand advertising. This objective was highly evident in findings derived from question 8, 11 and 12 which suggest the brand advertising had proven efficient in making viewers more aware of brand offerings, streamer-brand associations and enhancing equity through brand loyalty as viewers deemed the human connection to be persuasive and effective in communicating reasons for and to support the brand. This also supports the creation and improvement of meaningful brand relationships through this notion.

The second objective was to obtain insight on how effective brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content shapes consumer perceptions and enhances brand equity, which was supported in findings from questions 8, 9 and 12. These findings determined that digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports through sponsorships and strategic placement is highly effective and persuasive towards creating further brand visibility and shaping consumer perceptions. This is done the advertising style and method providing reasons, creativity, and innovativeness within the brand communication along with streamers personal experiences with the sponsored brands, which in turn enhances brand equity amongst audiences.

Thus, concluding the research question with a positive notion with evidence in research and findings derived that an extensive amount of value is added to brands exploring new technological platforms, which in this study is the Twitch platform, with digital brand advertising. Overall insight derived from the research conducted coincides with the literature suggesting that the rise of eSports and its growing

audiences on Twitch enable brands to have new digital spaces to explore with advertising and brand visibility to increase equity, resonance, and loyalty.

This type of advertising does indeed challenge and prevail over offline video games through eSports and digital platforms providing increasing innovation opportunities in brand advertising (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). As reinforced by the findings and literature, it is evident that digital advertising in eSports on Twitch has a greater and measurable impact on audiences as opposed to offline video games as insight suggests the interactional link and scope for captivating creativity within digital advertising to allow for consistent online presence and strategically enhance brand equity.

Furthermore, the aspect of trustworthiness was addressed through the researcher including an introduction for the research, the topic and what was required of the respondents in order for the respondents to comprehend the topic briefly and understand the research aim before constructing and conveying opinions, perceptions and experiences within responses thereof. The research is then transferable to similar research and topics through exploring themes such as brand equity through brands digital advertising on Twitch in eSports content. The questionnaire was formulated and constructed in a manner which directly related to the topic, research, question, goal, and objectives in order to derive insights which could be useful to this study and similar research. Lastly, the confirmability was greatly linked to the ability of the data collected being strongly supportive of the literature and providing insight to the topic, allowing for the researcher to obtain valuable and useful knowledge about digital advertising on Twitch in eSports such as its measurable impact on audiences and ability through interactive advertising to enhance brand equity on a large scale.

4.3. Ethical considerations

Respondents:

- 4.3.1. Data collected: The researcher will ensure that respondents are fully informed about how data will be utilised and analysed, this will be done within the introduction of the questionnaire, thereafter respondents may

choose to continue the questionnaire and submit it back to the researcher or not.

- 4.3.2. Anonymity: Respondents names and personal information will not be asked at any stage during research data collection. This upholds the inability to match the respondents' identity and personal information to their research responses at any given stage or way (Louw, 2013). Thus, upholding anonymity for the respondents at all times.
- 4.3.3. Providing incentives: The researcher will not provide any incentive of any sort to respondents as the participation is completely voluntary. Providing incentives will negatively hamper the trustworthiness of the research findings and responses thereafter.
- 4.3.4. Deception: The researcher will be honest about the research aims, purpose, background and what the research aims to achieve. The researcher will not falsify or deceive the respondents in any way as deception during the research will negatively hamper with the quality, reliability and trustworthiness of the research conducted as well as become unfair to the respondents.

Researcher:

- 4.3.5. Falsifying information: The researcher will not falsify any information gathered from respondents or given to the respondents. The data collected and provided will be of trustworthy and honest quality.
- 4.3.6. Bias: The researcher will not allow bias to influence the findings for desired outcomes as this will negatively affect the findings and distort the results.
- 4.3.7. Misusing information: The researcher will not misuse any information as all information will be collected for the research solely for the study of the research topic at hand.

4.4. Limitations

- 4.4.1. Time: The amount of time to collect data after obtaining ethical clearance may be limited which could potentially limit the time to collect and analyse data from the research methods used which includes sending out questionnaires and analysing data collected thereafter. Thus, the researcher will need to plan and work timeously to complete the research deliverables.
- 4.4.2. Accessibility to target population: The accessibility to the Generation Z gaming community may be limited as not many respondents are available to respond or have time to respond. This population is also limited in size as the researcher may not have access to a large amount of Gen Z gamers who watch or stream eSports on Twitch.
- 4.4.3. Population: the potential respondents will be asked beforehand if he or she utilises Twitch in any way. Not all Gen Z gamers utilise Twitch which can potentially limit the amount of the accessible population.
- 4.4.4. Questionnaire responses: If questionnaire responses are too short, vague, or broad, the research findings will be difficult to analyse. Therefore, the researcher is required to fully explain the research, purpose and what is required of the respondents within the questionnaire introduction before respondents begin to type responses.

5. CONCLUSION

As the new technological era has been advancing, video games becoming competitive and online various platforms has opened opportunities for multiple brands to benefit through supporting this advancement (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). eSports has thus offered an effective method for brands to create awareness and attract new markets in various innovative ways such as digital brand advertising (Gawrysiak *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the research goal being to explore the value in innovative brand advertising opportunities on Twitch with eSports content has been largely supported through the literature and findings being able to achieve the goal of exploring how brands are able to and have been utilising the innovativeness through digital advertising on Twitch in eSports and exploring the benefits thereof.

The theoretical foundation being focused on the brand equity through Keller's model applied to this study allowed for the topic and research question to be fully understood through analysing with application and examples. This had included how brand equity and meaningful stakeholder relationships may be created and enhanced further through brand advertisements which integrate a form of interactivity with the audience. The effectivity of Blevins partnership with Adidas with an endorsement depicted how brands may utilise digital advertising with interactivity during endorsements to increase the interest within new markets. Thus, reinforcing how digital brand advertising on platforms such as Twitch in eSports may enhance brand equity through integrating human connection with innovative technology and creative advertising which was further supported by the findings being that such interactivity and advertising innovation does increase brand equity to an extent.

This research aims to contribute to the existing literature of how brands digital advertising opportunities on Twitch in eSports enhance brand equity, resonance, and shape perceptions of consumer markets. This research aims to unpack how digital brand advertisements have had a significant impact on persuading individuals on Twitch during live streams of eSports to learn more about brands, understand the value communicated and build meaningful brand relationships.

This research also aimed to provide insight which informs researchers, marketing teams and brands on the new trends available to use for advertising to interconnect with larger audiences in the virtual space of eSports and by gathering insight on benefits of using Twitch. The digital advertising theme aimed to enhance the understanding of how brands can strategically place digital advertisements which prompt Twitch users to identify a common factor or create a response thereafter. The research findings will allow the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding and analysis of Twitch users' experiences, opinions, and feelings towards digital brand advertising on Twitch. This may assist the in-depth insight into how innovative and valuable digital brand advertising is in terms of enhancing brand equity and motivating individuals to learn more or heed the brand message.

Furthermore, the ethical considerations were upheld through the researcher having included an explanation of the research through an introduction placed before the questionnaire begun which aimed to enlighten the respondents about the research topic, who the researcher is and ensure that the respondents will remain anonymous along with their responses. All information provided within the introduction was clear and honest to prevent deception of any kind and no incentives were offered at any point during, before and after the research was being conducted.

Limitations, however, were also recognised in a positive manner during data collection as the data collection proved to be time efficient as respondents responded timeously and all data was collected within three days allowing for ample time afterwards to analyse data collected. The accessibility size had been confined to under 20 respondents as only 17 respondents were reached and had successfully responded to the questionnaire, this allowed for data saturation through mostly receiving lengthy, in-depth, or concise responses and all respondents being of the desired and relevant sample and population.

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Figure 2.2.2: Adidas. 2019. *Adidas Ninja Collection*.

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Figure 4.1.1: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 1 results*.

Figure 4.1.2: Singh, A. 2021. *Question 2 results*.

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Figure 4.1.8: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 8 responses*.

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Figure 4.1.10: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 10 responses*.

Figure 4.1.11: Singh, A. 2021. *Codes derived from question 11 responses*.

Figure 4.1.12: Singh, A. 2021. *Themes and codes derived from question 12 responses*.

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



Date 17 June 2021

Student name: Ashmita Singh

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: IIE Vega Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

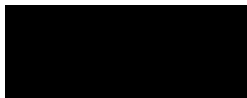
Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.

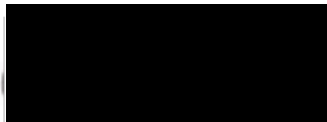
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: **Simon Grainger**

Signature:



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: **Carolanda du Toit**



Signature:

09 July 2021

Appendix B: Vega Ethics Checklist



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☒	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Ashmita											
Last name(s)	Singh											
Title of study	The rise of digital advertising in eSports: A case study on Twitch											
Qualification	Honours in Strategic Brand Communication											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☒	Mx	☐
First and last names	Simon Grainger											

Co-supervisor Details (if applicable)												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Click or tap here to enter text.											

Explaining your research process						
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☐	Interpretivism	☒	Constructivism	☐
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐
	Functionalist	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐
	Other:					
Research design:	Interview	☐	Questionnaire (self administered)	☒	Focus group	☐
	Ethnography/ Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐
	Other (if so, state)	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	15-20 participants who reside in Durban, fall into the Generation Z category and are within the age group of 18-25 years old. The participants must have knowledge of and/or utilise the Twitch platform for eSports.					
	Purposive	☒	Random	☐	Snowball	☐
	Convenient	☒	Stratified	☐	Census	...

Target group sampling methods/artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	Explain selection process	The purposive method is selected as the target group of respondents is required to share certain characteristics. Respondents who have the knowledge of and/or use the Twitch platform will be best suited in order to obtain their perceptions, experiences and opinions on brand advertising on Twitch with eSports content. Convenience sampling is used as the researcher has access to the gaming community within the Durban area, therefore will be able to send questionnaires to this community. These respondents need to be in the Generation Z age group (18-25 years old) as this age group is most evident in gaming communities. Therefore, Generation Z respondents having knowledge and experience on Twitch and eSports is highly vital in order to obtain valuable and useful responses to this research study.
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Ethics		
Documentation submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper's letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒
	Participant or respondent consent form	☐
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	☐

Campus ethics committee recommendation	
Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included. ☐ Accepted as is and provide letter ☐ Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor ☐ Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: Click or tap here to enter text.	
Supervisor signature	
	2021/08/18
Co-supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature	
 Carolanda du Toit	2021/08/18

Appendix C: Sample of the Questionnaire

Hi, my name is Ashmita Singh, and I am an Honours student at Vega in the Strategic Brand Communication field. I am conducting research on the effectiveness of brands using Twitch and live streamers to understand how it may enhance brand equity and visibility through digital brand advertising. This questionnaire is designed to gain your feedback about your experiences, opinions, and perceptions on digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports. Digital brand advertising consists of the brand advertising of products or brand communication done on the internet or a digital platform (Twitch). This questionnaire is anonymous and no identifiable information linked back to your responses will be used. Thank you for your time and feedback.

1. How old are you?

2. Where do you currently reside?

3. Do you stream eSports gameplay or watch eSports on Twitch?

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Have you seen brand advertisements on Twitch whilst watching/streaming eSports?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Do you feel persuaded to click on the brand website link or learn more option when you see a brand advertisement on Twitch? If yes, what persuades you to do so?

6. Do you feel engaged and entertained by the adverts run on Twitch channels during eSports streams?

7. What is your opinion on brand advertising in eSports on Twitch as opposed to advertising in non-interactive offline video games?

8. How does the verbal and visual interaction of the streamer persuade you to learn more about the brand?

9. Do you feel inclined towards buying a brand's products after a Twitch streamer has promoted it on eSports streams? If yes, why?

10. What is your opinion on eSports players brand sponsorships?

11. Does brand advertising on Twitch streams help you to better understand a brand advertisement or message?

12. Do you feel that brand advertisements on Twitch are helpful towards creating awareness, brand equity and valuable association(s)? Please provide a reason

APPENDIX D: FINAL RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY TABLE

Title: The rise of digital advertising in eSports: A case study on Twitch

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Lit Review – Conceptu al Framewor k	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations				
To explore the value in innovative digital brand advertising opportunities for brands using the Twitch platform in eSports content.	How does brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content provide value to the growth of brands and enhancement of brand equity?	The digital interactions during video games were highly restricted in the past as the internet was not always integrated and technology was not advanced like current times. This then limited the eSports industry's innovativeness and ability behind digital advertising to reach mass audiences with interactivity in real-time.	Keller's brand equity model (Keller, 2013) Keller's brand equity model (Keller, 2001) Changing the game: how video games are transforming the future of business. (Edery and Mollick, 2008)	Theme 1: Brand's digital advertising in eSports on Twitch Theme 2: Brand equity	Paradigm Interpretivism Methodology Qualitative research with in-depth questionnaires to obtain insight on opinions, feelings, and perceptions towards digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports	Qualitative Approach	Questionnaire with 8 qualitative questions as the approach is qualitative and 4 quantitative questions to obtain demographic data	Questionnaire includes an explanatory introduction to fully inform the respondents Respondents always remain anonymous No incentives were provided No deception was supported, researcher upheld honesty throughout	Findings were strongly linked to the objectives, goal and question of the research through positively supporting the notion that digital brand advertising on Twitch in eSports is effective in enhancing brand equity, brand relationships and integrating innovation in advertising. The human connection deemed to be persuasive and effective in communicating reasons to support the brands and maintain meaningful brand relationships.	The findings in this study strongly convey positive opinions on brands being able to persuade audiences if the advertisement is interactive or a supported brand. Thus, the interpretivist paradigm is highly useful in this study.				
						Population								
						Population Parameters Generation Z individuals within the gaming community, aged between 18-25 years old. Target population Generation Z gaming individuals who utilise Twitch for eSports or eSports content Accessible population Generation Z gamers who utilise Twitch for eSports and reside in Durban								
						Research Problem	Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories		Sampling	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	Key Contribution
						There is a lack of creativity and ability in advertising in offline video games which then restricts brands from creating a measurable impact on consumers brand equity levels. Therefore, this research will explore the value offered through brands using Twitch and eSports in the current technological for innovative digital brand advertising.	To obtain valuable insight on the efficiency of brands using Twitch and live streamers to enhance brand equity and visibility through digital brand advertising To obtain insight on how effective brand advertising on Twitch in eSports content shapes consumer perceptions and enhances brand equity	eSports Twitch Live stream Digital advertising Brand equity Brand resonance	Keller's brand pyramid model will assist in the exploration of how brands may be able to effectively enhance brand equity by creating meaningful relationships and positively shaping consumer perceptions through innovative advertising and digital human connection.		Non-probability sampling was used to uphold the qualitative nature of the study and obtain ample data from a limited accessible population. Sampling method Purposive and convenience sampling methods were used Size 15-20 respondents was the aimed size of which 17 respondents were successfully accessed	Questionnaires were qualitative in nature and analysed using an inductive approach with qualitative content analysis. Data was analysed and codes were derived to obtain in-depth findings, understanding and allow for data to be categorised into themes within the study such as brand equity.	Time constraints- limited time to complete data analysis Accessibility to target population-not many Gen Z gamers may be available or accessible to respond to the questionnaire Questionnaire responses being broad, vague or too short which would limit the analysis of the responses	The research findings will allow the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding and analysis of Twitch users experiences, opinions and feelings towards digital brand advertising on Twitch. To obtain insight into how innovative and valuable digital brand advertising is towards enhancing brand equity.

