

THE RISE OF E-SPORTS LIVE-STREAMING AND THE RESULTANT SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED TO MARKETERS

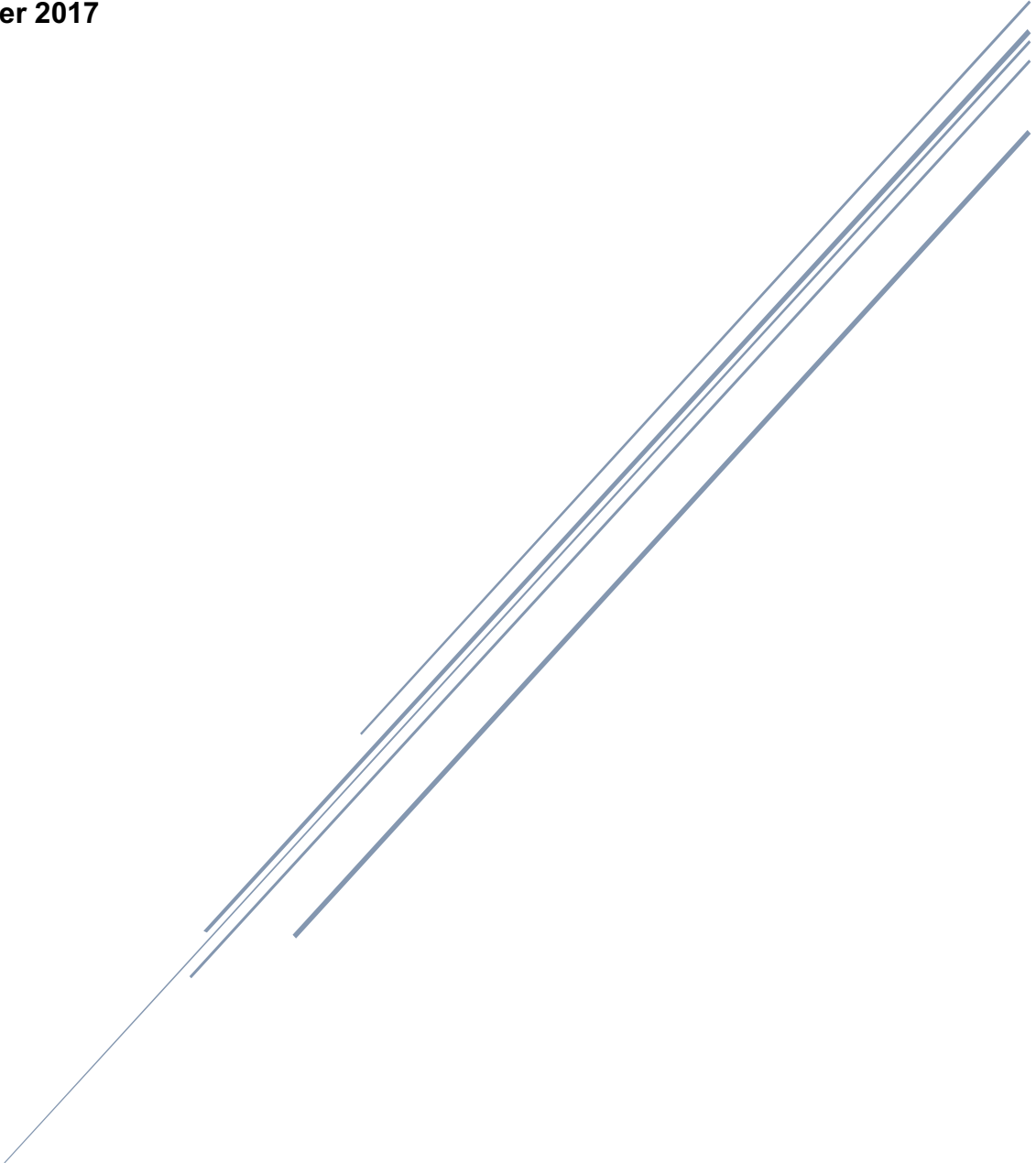
A Qualitative Study

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16 October 2017



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BA Honours – Strategic Brand Communication

Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA. Hons. Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact that current eSports based sponsorships have on South African Twitch viewers. eSports can be defined as competitive sports that take place in the digital space. eSports have enjoyed immense growth in recent times and this trend of growth shows no signs of slowing down. While some marketers have started to realise the scope that this up and coming sport form offers from a marketing and sponsorship perspective, brands in general have been reluctant to enter the space due to a lack of research into the effectiveness of this form of marketing communication. This qualitative study measures the impact of eSports based sponsorships in terms of the impact that current sponsorships have on the brand perceptions, purchase intentions and brand recall of South African Twitch viewers. Findings from the study suggest that while sponsorships within eSports do offer brands potential marketing value, only certain industries are currently receiving substantial benefit. It would seem that Twitch viewers want to see sponsored products in action, and will only then consider purchasing the sponsoring brand's products or perceiving the brand as being of high quality. Ultimately, sponsoring athletes currently seems to be the most effective form of marketing within eSports. Gamers and Twitch viewers identify with these individuals, trust their product choices and are largely influenced by their behaviour. Further research may consider the effects of changes in athletes' performance on sponsoring brands' image in the eyes of eSports viewers and investigate reasons for the minor impact that eSports events sponsorships currently have on the brand perceptions, purchase intentions and brand recall of Twitch viewers.

1 - Introduction

eSports (Electronic Sports) can be defined as a form of sport taking place in the virtual gaming space or where the primary aspects take place and are facilitated in an online/digital environment (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015). In simple terms, eSports refers to competitive computer/video gaming usually streamed in an online environment on a platform such as Twitch (a popular video game streaming website). There is still much speculation about whether or not competitive gaming can possibly qualify as a sport; however, what cannot be denied is the extreme rise in popularity eSports have experienced in the past decade and in particular, the last few years. To put this into perspective, the Electronic Sports League (ESL), a company that facilitates eSports events, had more than 3.6 million unique registered accounts in Europe in 2012. By 2015, this number had risen to 5.1 million, thus showing a growth rate of 41.6% over two years (Chalmet & Zackariasson, 2015). In 2012, the first International Dota 2 (A real time strategy game) was held. Peak viewership statistics through streaming sites for this event were around 500000. This same event three years later attracted 4.6 million viewers in its final event (Statista, 2015). It seems clear that the eSports community is set to continue this trend of significant growth. Understanding the industry better may open marketing - and more specifically sponsorship and advertising - opportunities for brands in a fresh, emerging industry.

1.1 - Rationale

Improved understanding of the necessity of this study requires background on the Twitch streaming platform, its features and reach. Twitch is the world's leading social video platform and streaming platform for gamers (Twitch, 2017). The platform gives members of the public an opportunity to spectate both professional eSports and casual gamers in real time. According to the Twitch website, the site draws around 9.7 million gaming enthusiasts on a daily basis and has a record of 2 million simultaneous viewers (Twitch, 2017). Looking at Twitch's growth statistics, it seems as if the site is only becoming more popular. Average monthly users in 2012 were around the 20 million mark. In 2013, this average increased to 45 million. In 2014 this figure was up to 100

million and in 2015, 220 million. The site is therefore experiencing exponential growth in its user base (Statista, 2017).

In May 2014, Twitch made international headlines as rumours surfaced that global megabrand, Google, planned to acquire the streaming service for \$1 billion (Life Course Associates, 2014). Discussions about this acquisition were centred on the rapid growth of Twitch in recent years and the potential of the platform from an advertising perspective. However, missing from discussions was a deeper understanding of who Twitch users are and how companies can effectively target this audience from a marketing perspective (Life Course Associates, 2014).

The study should ultimately contribute to marketers' understanding of eSports and Twitch live streaming and the potential that this form of media has, to affect the purchase mind-set and brand perceptions of consumers. Findings will hopefully uncover a new and modern tool that can be utilized to effectively reach this audience through the use of an avenue not often utilized by corporates in their communication programs.

1.2 - Research Problem

Despite the rapidly rising popularity of eSports and Twitch live-streaming, very little research has been done on the viability of this form of media as an advertising, marketing and more specifically, sponsorship opportunity for brands (Chalmet & Zackariasson, 2015). While eSports are starting to catch on with marketers, the process is taking place slower than it should (Reubenstein, 2015). Perhaps this is because eSports are relatively young, and have only really taken off in the last decade or so. It is also an environment that only "gamers", a niche market, truly understand. Feeling like they do not know how to communicate with this audience, corporates may back out of entering this industry for the sake of sponsorships. While companies such as Red Bull have started sponsoring eSports related events, further research into this field is necessary in order to fully understand the impact that this form of marketing communication has on eSport consumers and their purchase behaviour (Chalmet & Zackariasson, 2015).

1.3 - Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact that current eSports event and athlete based sponsorships, visible to consumers through the Twitch streaming platform have on the purchase intentions, brand perceptions and brand recall of these consumers. The focus will be on visible branding of companies at eSports events (as a result of financial sponsorship) as well as sponsorships and associations with eSports athletes. The aim is to have findings from this research provide marketers with a better understanding of eSports based sponsorships and the efficacy of this medium as a form of marketing communication. The study also aims to provide a better understanding the eSports and Twitch consumers, information that will be useful for corporates looking to sponsor eSports events or ‘athletes’ as part of their marketing communication programs.

1.4 - Research Questions

From the above, it is proposed that the following primary and secondary research questions will be suitable to guide the study:

Primary Research Question

“Do eSports based sponsorships as a form of advertising have a significant impact on South African Twitch viewer’s perceptions of brands?”

Secondary Research Questions

“Do eSports based sponsorships as a form of advertising have a significant impact on the purchase intentions of South African viewers accessing the media content through the Twitch streaming platform?”

“Do eSports based sponsorships result in effective brand recall amongst South African Twitch viewers”

“Does the amount of time one spends playing games affect the way eSports sponsorships and the associating brands are perceived?”

1.5 - Conceptualisation

The study aims to provide an understanding of the impact eSports based sponsorship as a form of advertising has on its intended audience and whether or not this impact results in an intent to purchase products from the sponsoring brands. For the purpose of this study, the audience will comprise of South African Twitch users who make use of the service to watch live eSports events.

To understand the context of this study, it is essential to define both 'eSports' and 'Twitch streaming' as they are both relatively young terms that have been brought about by the digital transformation experienced in recent years, and form the basis of this study. eSports (Electronic Sports) can be defined as a form of sport taking place in the virtual gaming space or where the primary aspects take place and are facilitated in an online/digital environment (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015). There is much speculation about whether or not eSports can be deemed real sports, however, for the sake of this study, those who play eSports competitively will be referred to as eSports 'athletes'.

Twitch streaming refers to the process whereby a broadcaster is able to stream a digital game that they are playing to a public online audience in real time (Deng, Cuadrado, Tyson, & Uhlig, 2016). Live streaming via Twitch involves two main entities, a broadcaster and a viewer. A broadcaster is someone who streams media content in real time to the public via a channel on the Twitch streaming platform. This broadcaster could be an individual or an organization and the content can range from anything from casual gaming to professional eSports events. For the purpose of this study, only streams containing competitive eSports content will be focused on. The viewer is simply anyone who accesses channels on the Twitch streaming platform and watches the media content being streamed (Deng et al. 2016).

As stated previously, the study will be investigating the impact of eSports based sponsorships on the audience discussed above. According to (Dolphin, 2003), sponsorship refers to financial support given by an external organization, usually to a leisure or sporting activity/athlete. It is the practice of promoting specific interests and brands by creating association with a specific event or organization (Dolphin, 2003). Generally speaking, financial contribution is given to the organizer of the event by a corporate in return for exposure of the corporate brand to the audience supporting the event. For the case of this study, sponsorships of existing eSports events that can be

viewed through Twitch as well as sponsorships of individual eSports 'athletes' will be considered.

In terms of the impact made on viewers by sponsorships within the eSports industry, consumer purchase intentions and changes in these intentions brought about by such sponsorships will be investigated. Purchase intentions refer to an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a specific brand (Spears & Singh, 2012). Sponsorship is practiced by corporates in order to improve consumer perceptions of the organization and drive sales. Measuring changes in purchase intentions of the studied audience thus provides a good idea of the efficacy of this form of marketing communication within the realm of eSports.

Brand recall associated with current eSports based sponsorships will also be investigated. For a sponsorship to be considered successful, the audience exposed to a sponsor's communications must be aware of the specific brand sponsoring the event. The ability to recall the name of the brand sponsoring the event indicates that the brand made an impression on the viewer (Barros, Barros, Santos, & Chadwick, 2007).

1.6 - Objectives

The Objectives of the study, following from the research questions stated previously are as follows:

- To determine the extent to which viewers take note of eSports event based sponsorships by exploring respondent's recall of current sponsorships within the eSports industry.
- To determine the effect that eSports based sponsorship and a company's association with the eSports industry and its key stakeholders has on the purchase mind-set of viewers and whether this effect is significant or not.
- To determine trends surrounding changes in purchasing patterns amongst South African Twitch viewers due to influence by eSports based marketing activity and sponsorships.
- To determine the effect that eSports based corporate sponsorships have on viewer's brand perceptions.

- To determine if the amount of time one spends playing games has an effect on the way eSports based sponsorships are perceived

2 - Review of Previous Literature

2.1 - Theoretical Framework

The AIDA model

The AIDA model is an advertising theory that describes what happens when a consumer engages with a form of marketing communication (Rawal, 2013). AIDA is an acronym that stands for the following: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (Rawal, 2013).

The theory suggests that an effective advertisement or any form of marketing communication should first and foremost attract the attention of the consumer. Thereafter, the interest of the consumer should be stimulated. Once this has been achieved, the consumer's interest should be converted into a desire to acquire/own the said product. Lastly, the consumer should be convinced to take action and ultimately purchase the advertised product (Rawal, 2013).

While the AIDA model is generally used as a guideline and a frame of reference for people and organizations looking to advertise products, it will prove as a useful theoretical background for the current study. During the development of questions for qualitative aspects of data-collection, the core values of the AIDA model will be taken into account. According to the AIDA model, sponsorship should result in discernible shifts along the decision making path of the consumer (Hoek, 1999). The degree to which current sponsorships within eSports are achieving this goal will be analysed through the collection of primary, qualitative data.

The Self-Congruity Theory

According to the self-congruity theory, people select, purchase and use goods and or services that have a user image that aligns with their self-image (Sirgy, Lee, Johar, & Tidwell, 2008). The theory runs off the premise that people are motivated to hold and maintain a set of beliefs about themselves and will therefore consume/purchase goods in a way that their self-concepts are reinforced. Self-congruity with a sponsorship

refers to the degree to which consumers feel like a specific, sponsored event matches with their own self-image.

Sirgy et al. (2008) investigated the extent to which self-congruity with a sponsorship has a positive impact on brand loyalty. Results from a series of surveys suggested that self-congruity with sponsored events has a positive influence on brand loyalty moderated by customer's awareness of the organization sponsoring the event specific to the study and customer involvement in the event.

The self-congruity theory will prove valuable when formulating questions for data-collection within the context of the current study. Determining the extent to which current sponsorships within eSports align with the self-image of consumers will provide a good idea of the current effectiveness of this form of marketing communication.

2.2 - Live Streaming and Twitch

Relevance of Streaming and Twitch Related Studies

While the below studies are not directly related to the sponsorship of eSports and its impacts on the consumer, live-streaming and the Twitch streaming platform play vital roles in the study due to the fact that eSports are most frequently viewed through these mediums. The following articles provide an academic definition of what live-streaming and Twitch are. They also provide empirical information relating to why people make use of the Twitch streaming service. Understanding such motivations will play a vital role in determining the impacts of eSports and Twitch based sponsorship on consumers when the results of this study are analysed.

Definition of Live-Streaming

Live-streaming is a relatively new form of media that allows users to view video broadcasts as they are being recorded (Farrington, 2015). The Process of live-streaming is broken up into three parts. Firstly, a broadcaster uses a streaming platform of his/her choice to stream video data to a server in real time. Next, the server

processes the video and audio data. Lastly, the live stream is sent out to clients connected to the streaming platform or channel (Farrington, 2015). Previously, video streaming sites such as YouTube provided users with the ability to watch videos after they had been completed and uploaded to a server. Live streaming has changed the game per se by providing users with the ability to watch video uploads in real time.

The Twitch Streaming Platform

(Deng et al. 2016) describe Twitch as a streaming platform that focuses on gaming. The website provides people with the ability to watch other individuals playing digital video games. The study identifies two user types, the broadcaster and the viewer. The broadcaster being the individual who is streaming (playing) the game through a dedicated streaming “channel” using Twitch as a medium. The viewer on the other hand is the individual viewing the stream.

A study by Deng et al. (2016) exposes the Twitch streaming platform by analysing live viewing figures gathered over an eleven-month period. The paper provides insight into the growing scale of Twitch, details regarding peak viewership, the ecosystem of games available on the platform, events streamed via the platform and the popularity of individual broadcasters. Metadata was collected using the public Twitch REST API and included (for each channel), the game being played, the number of viewers, title of the channel and the broadcaster’s name. Repeating this process every 15 minutes allowed the researchers to build a time series of metadata for every channel in the Twitch system, totalling 323 million channel samples and 5.2 million unique broadcasters. Overall trends of the Twitch platform were then analysed.

Several unique characteristics of the Twitch streaming platform were identified. According to metadata gathered, 10% of games available to stream on Twitch gather 95% of viewership (Deng et al. 2016). Twitch is therefore an ecosystem driven by several extremely popular games. One game in particular, League of Legends (LoL), held the top spot for 90.4% of the acquired dataset. Another key finding in this study is the fact that users (viewers) have distinct preferences with regards to broadcasters they choose to view. Much like the choice of games, choice of broadcasters is highly skewed towards a handful of individuals according to Deng et al. (2016). It was found that the top 10 broadcasters alone collect on average 16% of all views on Twitch. The

top 1% of broadcasters collect 70% of total views and the top 10% of broadcasters collect 93% of all viewers. The majority of broadcasters were therefore found to have very little impact on the overall system. Twitch was also found to have predictable popularity trends. Twitch flash crowds were found to almost always be influenced by eSports tournaments (Deng et al. 2016). Event broadcasts were found to regularly exceed 20% of daily viewers, making them the top ranked channel. In contrast to this, the average top ranked (non-event broadcaster) usually accounts for around 8.9% of total viewers. Twitch therefore resembles other live sports platforms that receive peak viewership during specific, key events.

The Motivations of Twitch Users

Sjöblom & Hamari (2016) investigate why people choose to watch others play video games via Twitch. The study examines five types of motivations from the perspective of the uses and gratifications theory, these being, cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative and tension release (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016). Cognitive needs refer to the acquisition of information and knowledge. Affective needs refer to emotional experience and pleasant/aesthetic experience. Personal integrative needs are needs related to enhancing personal credibility, confidence and status. Social integrative needs are those pertaining to enhancing connections with other individuals and tension release needs are those relating to escapism and diversion (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016). Data was gathered using a questionnaire which received 1091 respondents. The study aims to provide a framework for understanding the motivations to consume this emerging form of media from the perspective of online games and video streams.

The five motivations of Twitch users were investigated in relation to four distinct usage types. These being: hours watched, streamers followed, streamers watched and streamers subscribed to (subscription refers to an option to pay a fee towards the streamer in order to gain access to exclusive, streamer specific privileges) (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016). The survey used to gather relevant data was distributed through social networking sites, Reddit, Facebook and Twitter as well as other online forums dedicated to gaming. 93.2% of respondents reported that they had registered an

account on Twitch and had used the service for an average of 22.1 months. 38.7% of respondents had acted as a streamer/broadcaster at some point.

Results showed that in general, all five aforementioned classes of gratification were significantly correlated with how many hours people watch streamers as well as how many streamers people watch (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Tension release was found to be the strongest positive predictor in terms of how many hours' people spent watching streams. Tension release also has a positive impact on the numbers of streamers watched and number of streamers followed (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Regarding affective motivations, a positive association was found between such motivations and number of hours watched by viewers. Positive correlations between affective needs gratification was also noted between the number of streamers the sample of users watched and followed were also identified. Similar to tension release, no correlation between affective needs gratification and subscription to specific streamers was identified (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Cognitive motivations were seen to have a small positive association with number of hours watched by individuals, a similar strength correlation was also identified for number of streamers watched. Once again no significant relationship between cognitive needs and subscription to channels was identified (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Personal integrative motivations showed a moderate negative correlation between hours watched according to the study. In addition to this, a similar correlation is identified between such motivations and number of streamers watched, while a small positive correlation is identified between these motivations and number of streamers followed (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

Social integrative motivations were found to correlate with hours watched on a moderate level, a similar correlation is also identified between such motivations and the number of streamers watched (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016). The correlation between social integrative motivations and streamers followed was found to be stronger than the previous two, they were also found to be the sole type of motivation with a significant correlation to subscription to Twitch channels.

Impact of Online Video-Game Streaming on Consumer Attitudes and Behaviours

A study was conducted by Foster (2016) in order to determine whether or not video game streams influence the purchase intentions of customers and to assess how streams serve video game titles as a marketing tool.

The researcher distinguishes between three different types of gamers, these being the casual, heavy and hard-core gamer. Casual gamers play games themselves for an average of 9.5 hours a week, heavy gamers for 18.5 hours and hard-core gamers for 26 hours on average (Foster, 2016).

An online experiment and survey were designed to achieve the objectives of the study. The survey consisted of three parts. Firstly, participants in the study were required to indicate their gaming habits and familiarity with streams. Thereafter, they were asked to watch either a user-generated stream or developer generated stream of a video game title. Lastly, participants were asked their opinions of credibility, usefulness of content and purchase intention after watching the stream (Foster, 2016). The 87 respondents to the survey were recruited through convenience sampling. They were all undergraduate students from Psychology and Communications courses.

Findings showed that heavier gamers (those that played games for an average of 18.5 hours a week) found user-generated streams to be a more credible source of information than developer-generated streams. It was expected that casual gamers would find developer-generated streams more useful, however, no difference in perceptions were identified between these stream types in the context of casual gamers (Foster, 2016). Two major factors were found to affect the perceived credibility of streams, these being identification with the streamer and streamer familiarity. Streamer identification refers to the extent to which an individual can identify with a specific streamer's behaviour, similarities and thoughts. The higher the degree to which an individual identifies with a streamer, the more likely it is that the streamer will influence the said individual's purchase intentions. Familiarity refers to how often an individual has watched a specific streamer. It seems that an individual who views a specific streamer frequently is more likely to perceive that streamer as credible (Foster, 2016)

2.3 - Electronic Sports (eSports)

Relevance of eSports Based Research

The following articles provide a definition and brief history of eSports. In addition to this, literature reviewed also investigates the motivations of those who watch eSports. The current study aims to measure and understand the impact of sponsorships within eSports on consumer perceptions. It is vital that understandings of what eSports are, how they came to be and why people support this growing industry are established.

Definition and Brief History of eSports

A study by Wagner (2006) aims to lay a foundation for the proper academic treatment of eSports. The study provides a definition suitable for academic studies, a brief history of eSports and discusses approaches to the topic of eSports that are applicable to problems in seemingly unrelated fields.

Wagner (2006) defines electronic sports eSports as an area of sports activities in which people/participants are required to develop specific mental and physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies. In more simple terms, eSports refer to the process of competitive digital gaming.

According to the study, the term eSports dates back to the late nineties. One of the first reliable uses of the term was a press release by the Online Gamers Association (OGA) in which Eurogamer evangelist compared electronic sports to traditional sports (Wagner, 2006). From the perspective of both the US and Europe, competitive gaming (eSports) originated with the release of the 1993 released game "Doom" and its follow up release in 1996 "Quake". During this time, players formed teams termed "clans" and competed against each other. From an Eastern perspective, the gaming market has been dominated by multi-user, real time strategy games. The first of these to gain mass, mainstream media success was that of "Starcraft", released in 1998 by Blizzard entertainment. The popularity of competitive playing of this game in Korea led to the development of eSports channels on television and individuals players gaining cult-like status comparable to that of traditional sports stars (Wagner, 2006).

A more modern study by Seo (2013) describes a more current position of eSports from an international perspective. According to this study, the World Computer Gaming tournament in 2010 involved approximately 450 players from 53 countries and attracted more than 9.5 million spectators.

Why Do People Watch eSports?

Hamari & Sjöblom (2015) investigate the motivations of those who watch eSports online.

A questionnaire was administered to a sample in order to gather relevant data and 888 usable answers were received. The measurement instrument was distributed through social networking sites linked to eSports and streaming such as Reddit, Facebook and Twitter. The questionnaire was based on the MSSC (Motivations Scale for Sports Consumption) and answers were measures on a 7-point Likert scale. (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015).

Results from primary data showed that the enjoyment of the aesthetic aspects of eSports was negatively associated with frequent viewing of eSports. It is believed by the researchers involved in this study that this correlation exists because of the complex nature of eSports. Its complexity means appreciating visual aspects of the games while still following what is happening in the competitive aspect of the game is near impossible (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015).

Drama does not seem to be significantly associated with watching frequency much to the surprise of the researchers. It is hypothesized that this lack of concern for drama has come about due to the diminishing return nature of drama (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015). For example, if every broadcasted game of eSports contains one very dramatic event, dramatic events in general may start to lose their impact on viewers.

A statistically insignificant association was identified between player skill and watching frequency (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015). It seems that for a specific eSports match to be watched, there is a specific threshold of skill that needs to be present for the game to be perceived as worth watching. Players being above this threshold of skill however does not seem to have an impact on watching frequency of viewers. Social

gratification was found to have no significant effect on viewing frequency. This finding was unusual as spectatorship in traditional sport is strongly tied to social groups and social interaction.

The exhibition of aggressive behaviour by eSports players was found to be positively and significantly associated with viewing frequency (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2015). Again, this finding was interesting as players are not usually shown for long periods during eSports broadcasts. The physical bodies of players are seen far less frequently by viewers than they would be in a comparable, traditional sports broadcast. It is hypothesized by the researchers that perhaps the physical bodies of the players do not have to be seen to enjoy this aggressive behaviour. Many of the eSports games played are aggressive and violent by nature and viewers could therefore enjoy this behaviour through game related content.

2.4 - Sponsorship

Relevance of Sponsorship Related Research

Research in this section is related to sponsorship within the sporting sector. As it is a new field of study, very little research has been conducted on eSports related sponsorship as a marketing communication tool. Currently, research conducted on sponsorship in the traditional sporting sector provides a solid base for understanding the impact of sponsorship on consumer perceptions in an event based context. The following articles investigate the effects of sports based sponsorship on consumers and the impact of sponsored advertising in a sports arena context. Many eSports events are hosted in an arena based setting thus this research is relevant to the study at hand.

Definition of Sponsorship

According to Dolphin (2003), sponsorship refers to financial support given by an external organization, usually to a leisure or sporting activity. It is the practice of

promoting a specific interests and brands by creating association with a specific even or organization.

Sponsorship has become an increasingly popular form of corporate marketing communication among companies operating within the consumer market sphere and has the potential to become one of the most powerful marketing tools of the twenty first century (Dolphin, 2003).

The Effects of Sports Sponsorship on Consumers

A study by Turco (2014) aims to recognize the relationship between sponsorship within sport and awareness, corporate image and brand association. The research is based on the study of popular beer brand, Heineken as the official sponsor of the UEFA Champion's League football tournament.

To gather relevant data, an online questionnaire was administered. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, the first being related to football involvement, UEFA champions league involvement, and brand recognition and awareness. The second section was made up of questions relating to beer consumption and perception and brand image of Heineken as a sponsor of the UEFA champion's league. The third section consists of questions pertaining to Heineken's corporate image due to their association with UEFA as well as their fittingness as a sponsor for the said event. Lastly, the fourth section consisted of demographics variables such as gender, age, country and current occupation (Turco, 2014). The questionnaire was completed by 100 respondents aged between 18 – 37.

Of the 100 respondents to the survey, 66 individuals recalled Heineken as the alcoholic beverage category sponsor of the UEFA champion's league. This significant percentage would suggest that sponsorship in this case has played a role in creating brand awareness amongst the population (Turco, 2014). The study also identified a strong positive correlation between participants' involvement with a specific event type (in this case football) and their brand awareness in that specific context. Respondents who report strong involvement with soccer tend to be more aware of Heineken's involvement with the UEFA champion's league.

Results from the questionnaire suggest that by utilising sponsorship, brand association between the event being sponsored and the actual sponsor can be created. In the case of this study, 73% of respondents reported perceiving Heineken as a premium beer based on their association with the UEFA champion's league (Turco, 2014). It was also found that "fittingness" (relevance of the sponsor's association with the event being sponsored) increases the chance of positive brand association taking place.

Lastly, based on answers to questions surrounding the corporate image based on Heineken's association with the UEFA champion's league it was deduced that the sponsorship played a role in creating a positive corporate image towards Heineken (Turco, 2014). While 91% of respondents did not recall the corporate image strategy line promoted by Heineken, 62% of respondents agreed that Heineken is "involved in community issues" suggesting that the company is perceived in a positive light.

Impact of Advertisements in Sports Arenas

A study by Turley & Shannon (2000) investigates the effects of advertising on individuals in sports arenas with regards to message recall, purchase intentions and actual purchase behaviour.

Information was gathered by means of a field study. Researchers interviewed spectators (through the use of a questionnaire) who attended the last four home games of a regular basketball season at NCAA mid-major university in the USA (Turley & Shannon, 2000). Initial questions explored respondents' frequency of attendance and the extent to which the interviewed individuals consider themselves to be sports fans. This included their loyalty to specific teams (Turley & Shannon, 2000). The next set of questions was aimed at determining the extent to which individuals noticed advertisements within the given sports arena and whether or not they could recall specific companies/marketers associated with these advertisements. Respondents were asked if they were more likely to purchase a product because of its association with the home basketball team or if they have ever patronized a product because of this association. Lastly, questions about basic demographic variables were asked. 348 usable questionnaires were completed.

Findings showed that although people in a captive setting do notice adverts in a facility, they do not process many of them. Primary data gathered in this study showed that the average respondent recalled 2.68 adverts in the arena from memory. Fans in the arena are exposed to around 45 advertising messages on a game day (Turley & Shannon, 2000).

Data also shows that frequency of exposure to specific advertisements has the largest impact on recall. According to (Turley & Shannon, 2000), if someone is exposed to an advertising message on multiple occasions, they are more likely to recall the message and the brand associated with it.

Value Creation through Sponsorship in Electronic Sports

Pitkänen (2015) investigated the value creation potential for companies undertaking sponsorships within the eSports environment. Theory of traditional sports and electronic sports were compared with the aim of determining how theories of traditional sports fare in the new and emerging eSports environment.

The qualitative study consisted on interviews conducted with company representatives who are associated with eSports and are considered experts in the realm of eSports sponsorship. The aim of the interviews was to get a clear of what sponsorships within eSports means to them as individuals (Pitkänen, 2015). This sample included marketing managers and CEO's who partner with and/or sponsor eSports entities.

Conclusions from the study suggested that the relationship between sponsor and eSports entity is extremely important for value creation. Actors in electronic sports need to create win-win situations meaning that the sponsorship needs to benefit the relationship between sponsor and sponsored athlete while also benefiting the eSports community (Pitkänen, 2015). It was also found that gaming hardware companies can benefit from sponsoring eSports actors, these being events and/or players and teams. The players are important for product development as they can give constructive criticism and suggestions for improvements while enhancing the image of the sponsoring brand's products.

Sponsorship as Distinctive competence

A qualitative study by Amis & Slack (1999) provides an analysis of 28 national and multi-national Canadian firms that have been involved in sports sponsorships. Interviews were conducted with senior marketing personnel in each of the 28 companies in order to determine how sponsorships were created and managed as well as how successful these sponsorships were.

Findings from the study suggest that sponsorship of sport entities can be an extremely valuable form of marketing communication for companies. Such sponsorships have the potential to increase customer value if the brand is associated with a celebrity endorser, individual, team or event which appeals to the target market of the sponsoring company (Amis & slack, 1999). It would seem though, that for long term competitive advantage, brands need to integrate sponsorship with the rest of the marketing mix in order to create a powerful image for the organisation.

2.5 - Conclusion to Literature review

While little research relating to sponsorships within eSports has been conducted, the above literature provides a solid foundation from which the current study can be conducted. Prior studies provide vital information regarding eSports, live-streaming through the Twitch platform and sponsorship within sport. In addition to this, the current study gains useful insights from this literature in terms of data-gathering methods. Reviewing this literature has provided a useful framework of paradigm selection and data analysis approaches. Sports sponsorship related studies above would suggest that sponsorship within traditional sporting codes is a viable form of marketing communication. The current study will determine whether the same is true within eSports and live-streaming. Lastly, theoretical frameworks and key theories used in previous studies relating to marketing communication and sponsorship were investigated. It was decided that the AIDA model and the self-congruity theory will form the basis of the current study based on their suitability to the topic.

3 - Research Methodology

3.1 - Introduction to Research Methodology

This study will be conducted with the aim of understanding the impact that sponsorships within eSports, visible through the Twitch streaming platform have on consumers. To reiterate, the research questions to be investigated are as follows:

Primary Research Question

“Do eSports based sponsorships as a form of advertising have a significant impact on South African Twitch viewer’s perceptions of brands?”

Secondary Research Questions

“Do eSports based sponsorships as a form of advertising have a significant impact on the purchase intentions of South African viewers accessing the media content through the Twitch streaming platform?”

“Do eSports based sponsorships result in effective brand recall amongst South African Twitch viewers”

“Does the amount of time one spends playing games affect the way eSports sponsorships and the associating brands are perceived?”

To best answer these questions, a qualitative research methodology will be followed. A qualitative approach conducted from an interpretivist perspective will allow the researcher to gain insight into the subjective experiences of participants in relation to their exposure to sponsored advertising within eSports.

3.2 - Research Methodology

Research methodology utilised for this study will comprise of a questionnaire and a focus group. Questionnaires will provide the researcher with an opportunity to gather qualitative data in an inexpensive manner and to cover a large geographical area

(Dube, 2010). Questionnaires provide an additional benefit in the sense that they allow the researcher to collect substantial amounts of data over a short period (Visocky O'Grady & Visocky O'Grady, 2017). Conducting a focus group with members of the chosen sample group will allow the researcher to explore current perceptions and experiences of eSports based sponsorships through interpersonal interaction (Litosseliti, 2007). Questions for both the questionnaire and focus group will be administered in a way that they will provide the necessary information to answer the research questions stipulated above. Once data has been gathered through these techniques, it will be analysed in order to identify trends and similarities that will aid in the answering of research questions (Maree et al, 2016).

Paradigm Selection and Research Strategy

Research will be conducted from an interpretivist perspective. An interpretivist approach places value on the subjective meanings of persons in studied domains (Goldkuhl, 2012). Alfred Schutz (1970) claimed that empirical, scientific knowledge was of second-order character, and that true meaning should be based and derived from the meanings and knowledge of studied actors. Knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed through meaning rather than being purely objectively determined (Edirisingha, 2012). Due to the nature of the interpretivist paradigm and its approach to the research process, qualitative data-collection methods are used. The data gathered needs to be rich, detailed and subjective. Such information can only be gathered if study participants are given the opportunity to elaborate upon their views and opinions. From this, the researcher can derive meaning and generate insight regarding the subjective opinions of participants.

The strength of the interpretivist approach lies in its ability to address the complexity and individual meanings of different situations (Black, 2006). In this study, the aim is to determine underlying individual meaning with regards to viewers' perceptions of eSports Based Sponsorship and its effects on these viewers. Each individual is likely to deduce unique meaning from these marketing communications. Thus, gaining insight into these subjective meanings through qualitative data collection will prove an effective approach for this study.

Population

The study aims to determine the effectiveness of sponsorships within the realm of eSports as a medium for marketing communication for brands. The population identified below is the South African audience that is exposed to these sponsorships through Twitch. These individuals are the people targeted by corporates who undertake sponsorships of eSports events and players, thus their views and opinions will help generate data that will address the objectives of this study and answer the proposed research questions.

The population to be studied includes all individuals residing in South Africa that play video games (either offline or online) and make use of the Twitch streaming platform to view live eSports events. A previous study by Sjöblom & Hamari (2016) suggests that individuals watch video games live via Twitch for a variety of reasons. Five main types of motivation for viewing exist, drawn from the perspective of the uses and gratifications theory, they are cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative and tension release motivation (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2016).

For the purpose of this study, only computer gamers who make use of Twitch to stream eSports will be researched. According to Foster (2016), gamers can be separated into three primary categories, namely, casual, heavy and hard-core gamers. Casual gamers play games for an average of 9.5 hours a week, heavy gamers play for 18.5 hours and hard-core gamers play for 26 hours a week, on average. These different categories will be used to segment the chosen sample and will be taken into account during data-analysis

Delving further into Twitch viewer demographics, it is estimated by Quantcast, a company specialising in audience measurement that 76% of the site's users are under the age of 35 suggesting that the site is dominated (in terms of viewership) by the millennial generation (Life Course Associates, 2014). With regard to gender, an overwhelming 94% of users are male. Thus, the gaming population can be largely characterised as male millennials.

Sampling

Non-probability sampling will be used for the purposes of this study. Non-probability sampling does not make use of randomisation, instead subjective methods are used to determine which elements/participants should be included in the sample (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Randomization cannot be used as the population concerned with this study is difficult to access due to geographical limitations. Time and financial resources are also constrained. According to Maree et al. (2016), these three reasons inhibit the use of randomisation and allow for the use of non-probability sampling in research.

Thus, purposive sampling will be used. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate choice of research participants due to qualities that make them suitable members of the studied population (Etikan et al. 2016). This method of sampling involves identification and selection of individuals who are proficient, well-informed or regularly exposed to the phenomenon of interest.

According to Mason (2010), saturation should be the guiding principle when deciding on the sample size in a qualitative study. Saturation refers to a point whereby more data from more participants does not necessarily lead to more useful information or insights. In order to achieve this, a sample of 30 participants has been chosen for the questionnaire. While this is a fairly small sample, the nature of the questionnaire is such that each respondent is required to give detailed answers to questions resulting in rich, subjective data. These participants will be sourced through the Steam gaming platform. Steam is a leading digital distribution platform for digital game titles and a social network for gamers that boasts over 100 million unique users (Steam, 2017). Individuals will be contacted through private messages on the steam platform, the purpose of the study will be explained and should they wish to participate, the questionnaire will be sent to them for completion via email. It will be clearly stipulated that participation is entirely voluntary and that identity will be kept anonymous. Regarding demographics - 76% of the international Twitch community are under the age of 35 and 94% of this community are male (Life Course Associates, 2014). Although this study is centred on the views and perceptions of the South African Twitch viewing community, these international statistics will be utilized and considered during

sample selection. To the knowledge of the researcher, no demographic data relevant to SA has been released

Due to the overwhelming majority of the population (94%) being male, all 30 selected participants will be male. The Twitch community is dominated by the millennial age group, hence questionnaire participants will all be under the age of 35. Participants will not be chosen according to any geographical factors apart from the fact that they must reside in South Africa.

3.3 - Data Collection Process

The researcher will personally send out the questionnaire to each individual participant. Questionnaires will provide qualitative data and remove the risk of bias that can sometimes occur in interviews because there are no visual or verbal cues and interactions involved (Dube, 2010). Instructions for the completion of the questionnaire will be clearly stipulated on the front page. The front page will also clearly state that respondents will remain anonymous. Through implementation of the questionnaire, data relevant to the identified research questions can be gathered.

A focus group will be conducted with members of the identified sample to explore their experiences of current sponsorships within eSports. Discussions will revolve around the impact that this form of advertising has on purchase intentions, brand perceptions and brand recall. Participants will be encouraged to talk to each other, ask questions and exchange their personal experiences on the matters being discussed (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus group will be conducted through the TeamSpeak communication application. This is a program that allows people to speak online in real time in chat rooms. TeamSpeak has been chosen due to geographical limitations. Making use of an online application will allow the researcher to conduct a focus group with people from different parts of South Africa without them being in the same physical space. The focus group will be informal and open discussion will be encouraged. Respondents are able to participate from the comfort of their own homes meaning they will be in a comfortable environment, thus allowing them to answer questions and state opinions freely.

Questionnaire Design and Administration

The questionnaire has been designed so that it will reveal data necessary to answer the above stipulated research questions. In summary, the questionnaire investigates awareness of current sponsorships amongst Twitch viewers. It also measures how effective these sponsorships have been on the sample in terms of how the sponsorships have affected viewer perceptions of sponsoring brands, how they have resulted in brand recall as well as investigating changes in purchase intentions brought about by these brands associating with eSports.

The first section of the questionnaire gathers basic information including age of the participant and the number of time the participant spends playing games on a weekly basis. This helps the researcher categorise the participants into being either a casual, heavy or hard-core gamer.

The second section asks questions that investigate whether or not participants take note of brands that sponsor eSports events, players or teams while watching streamed content through Twitch. Gathering data of this nature will play an important role in determining whether sponsorships within eSports are resulting in effective brand recall amongst its target audience. Participants are also asked to elaborate on why they believe they do or do not recall sponsorships within eSports. These elaborations will prove useful in determining individual subjective opinions as to why brands are or are not successfully catching the attention of eSports fans through their advertising efforts.

Questions about the impact of recalled sponsorships on viewer perceptions of brands are also asked. Measuring this impact on consumer perceptions will play an important role in determining whether or not eSports offers brands an effective way of creating positive brand associations, and ultimately improving the image of these brands in the minds of the consumer. This section goes on to determine whether or not eSports based sponsorships have successfully driven purchase intent amongst the sample. Again, these questions are followed by a request for elaboration in order to better understand deeper meaning behind the given answers.

Focus Group Administration

The focus group will be conducted in an interactive setting whereby participants are encouraged to express their honest opinions about sponsorship of eSports events, players and eSports teams. A focus group was chosen as a research instrument for this study as it will allow open discussion of the topic being studied.

The researcher will guide the discussion but allow for free expression from each individual participant. The focus group will take place online over the TeamSpeak communication application. The fact that the session takes place in the virtual space means that individuals do not have to reveal their appearance and/or names. This means each participant will stay entirely anonymous. In addition to this, participants will be participating from the comfort of their own homes. They are therefore less likely to be influenced or intimidated by other participants, making their answers more honest and trustworthy. Research suggests that participants generally appreciate the convenience of online focus groups with regard to flexibility in scheduling. The increased anonymity also makes participants feel more comfortable and at ease (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). Focus groups conducted online tend to promote more concise information making the focus group transcription shorter and more practical when conducting data analysis (Reid & Reid, 2005).

The focus group session will begin with the researcher welcoming the group and giving a brief overview of the study and what topics of discussion will be. Each participant will be asked to identify an eSports based sponsorship that they became aware of through use of the Twitch streaming platform. After giving a brief explanation of this sponsorship and its associated brand, the group will discuss the sponsorship's effectiveness as a form of advertising in terms of the impact that it has on the viewer, his/her purchase intentions and whether or not this sponsorship would have a lasting effect on the viewer. The researcher will not ask any leading questions during the focus group session. The job of the researcher is merely to guide the conversation in a direction that best promotes revelation of data relevant to primary and secondary research questions of the study.

The entire focus group session will be recorded and transcribed for the sake of data analysis. Once the session is complete, the researcher will thank the participants for their participation.

3.4 - Data-Analysis Technique

As this is a qualitative study, the data analysis technique will be based on an interpretive philosophy. This means that the aim will be to examine meaningful and symbolic content of the data gathered through the administered questionnaire and focus group (Maree, 2016). Through this process, the researcher will be able to make specific meanings from the collected data by analysing participants' knowledge, attitudes, understanding and opinions of sponsorships within eSports. Findings and meanings will be related back to previous literature and theoretical frameworks.

The researcher will use an inductive process to put data from questionnaire responses into categories. This means that categories will be deduced gradually from the data (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). From these categories, the researcher will identify common themes and trends that emerge from the data. Common words, themes and patterns will be deduced from the data which will aid the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon being studied (Maree, 2016).

In terms of the conducted focus group, the session will be recorded and then transcribed. A discourse analysis will be conducted on the focus group transcription. Conducting a discourse analysis on the transcribed data from the focus group will reveal underlying attitudes, opinions and knowledge of participants with regards to sponsorships within eSports. Trends and patterns will then be identified from this data.

Trends and themes that emerge from the questionnaire and the focus group will then be compared and findings verified and validated through a process of triangulation. Conclusions will be drawn from the triangulated data.

3.5 - Ensuring Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) proposes four criteria that need to be met for a qualitative study to be considered trustworthy (Maree et al. 2016). These are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility of the study will be enhanced through the development of early familiarity with participants and through a well-defined purposive sampling process, ensuring that the sample is representative of the population being studied (Maree et al, 2016).

Familiarity will be achieved by asking each participant certain questions prior to either the questionnaire being completed or including the participant in the focus group to ensure that they form part of the population being studied. In addition to this, the researcher will spend considerable time analysing responses to questionnaires to ensure that common themes and trends are accurately identified. Questions and conversations in the focus group will be focused on and around the objectives of the study. Information gathered will be closely compared to relevant literature in order to deduce credible conclusions on the phenomenon being studied.

Transferability will be enhanced through in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon being studied (Maree et al, 2016). The researcher will provide full, valuable and purposeful account of the context of the study, research participants and the research design. To enhance dependability, a journal will kept for the sake of memoing, a process of reflection by the researcher on data being acquired. The journal will be used to record decisions made during the research process. The journal ensures that any relevant academic or authoritative party can monitor the effects and nature of the researcher's reasoning (Maree et al. 2016). In addition to this, the data-analysis process will be carefully documented in order to clearly explain and outline all interpretations made.

Lastly, an important part of any qualitative study lies in the researcher's ability to steer clear of personal biases. The researcher will stay objective throughout the study and not let relationships with focus group participants alter interpretations of data in any way in order to further maximize dependability of the study (Maree et al. 2016).

3.6 - Ethical Considerations

All research conducted for the purpose of this study will be completed in an ethical manner. Ethical guidelines for research within the Western world require that anonymity of participants is guaranteed, consent is informed, dignity is maintained and, and that the individual participants and domain/group being studied receives more benefit than harm (Behi & Nolan, 2014). Each of these ethical guidelines will be taken into account and adhered to throughout the study.

All personal information acquired from research participants will be kept entirely confidential. Participants identities will be protected by the researcher and all names of participants referred to in the study will be fictitious.

There are several criteria for informed consent that require that prospective human subjects partaking in a study are given true and sufficient information about the study so that they can make a decision on whether or not they would like to be research participants (Behi & Nolan, 2014). Participants will not be coerced in any way to partake in the study. It will be made clear by the researcher that participation in the study is entirely voluntary in a written and oral manner. It will be made clear to participants that they may remove themselves from the study at any stage. In addition to the above, reporting from the researcher's side will be conducted in an open and honest manner without any deception (Connely, 2014).

4 - Data Analysis

4.1 - Research Findings

Findings from Questionnaires

The first section of the questionnaire collected data regarding the age of the participant, the amount of time the individual personally spends playing games on a weekly basis and how frequently they watch eSports via the Twitch streaming platform. Of the 30 respondents, 14 were categorised as hard-core gamers, eight as casual gamers and eight as heavy gamers based on their time spent gaming weekly.

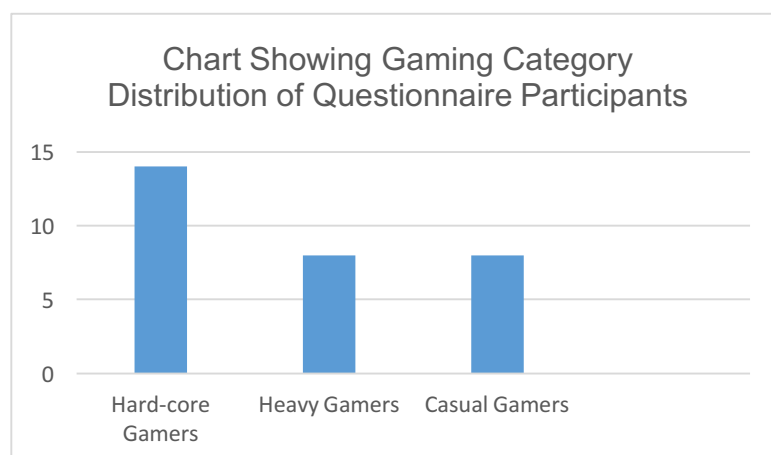


Figure 1: Chart showing gaming category distribution of Questionnaire participants.

A positive correlation was identified between the amount of time spent playing games per week and the amount of time one spends using the Twitch streaming platform to view eSports. Of the 14 hard-core gamers that took part in the questionnaire, 11 watch eSports via Twitch at least once a week. Six of the eight heavy gamers watch Twitch monthly. Casual gamers seem to use Twitch infrequently, this being less than once a month. Only one of the eight casual gamers in the questionnaire sample stated that they use Twitch on a monthly basis.

The second section of the questionnaire investigated participants' awareness regarding current eSports sponsorships. Participants were asked if they take note of brands sponsoring eSports events and were then asked to name as many brands as they can think of that are associated with eSports events, teams or athletes as possible. Only 19 respondents could name brands that they associated with eSports due to sponsorships that these brands have undertaken within the industry. Of these 19 respondents, 12 were hard-core gamers, six were heavy gamers and only one fell into the casual gamer category. In terms of brands that were recalled, popular gaming hardware brands made up the bulk of responses. Razer was the most commonly recalled brand and was mentioned 13 times. Steelseries was the second most mentioned brand with nine mentions and was followed by Logitech with seven. All three of these brands make hardware for computer gaming including mice, keyboard and headsets. According to respondents, these are brands that sponsor top eSports athletes. These athletes use these brands' equipment when competing. Something else worth noting is that all 12 hard-core gamers mentioned above were able to mention multiple brands. Only two of the six heavy gamers who could recall brands were able to recall multiple brands. The casual gamer only recalled one brand, this being Alienware, a popular gaming hardware brand. While non-gaming hardware brands were recalled, they were few and far between. Red Bull was the most commonly mentioned non-hardware brand with four mentions. On each of these occasions the brand was referred to as the sponsor of popular eSports team, Team OG.

Some key findings can be deduced from the above data. Firstly, it seems that hardcore gamers are far more attentive to eSports sponsorships than heavy and casual gamers. Having said this, it seems that they do take note of brands in a very selective manner in the sense that they are very aware of eSports teams/player's equipment sponsors

and are less concerned with brands that are not directly related to the gaming industry through their product set.

The following section investigated the impact that current sponsorships within eSports has had on the way brands are perceived by participants of the sample. It then went on to determine whether purchase intentions and/or behaviour have been influenced by such sponsorships.

Findings from the questionnaire would suggest that sponsorships within eSports do have an impact on Twitch viewers, however, it seems that the impact is far greater if the associated brand is directly related to gaming equipment. Participants were asked if a brand's association with eSports has had an impact on their individual perception of the given brand and why they believe this is the case. Of the 19 respondents able to recall brands that are associated with eSports through sponsorship, only five said that the brands association with eSports has not had an impact on their perceptions of these brands. Of the remaining 14 respondents, ten mentioned the level of play of eSports athletes and/or the success of eSports teams as reasons for this change in perception. Three of these respondents stated that their perceptions of a brand are usually only improved if that brand is an equipment sponsor that would offer them some kind of functional benefit should they purchase one of their products. However, status and image also seem to play a role in improving brand perceptions of eSports sponsors. To quote one respondent's response when asked why he bought a product as a result of being exposed to sponsorship of eSports athletes - *"looks great and works well. Basically the "cool" and "quality"* – Findings would suggest that while eSports athletes enhance the perception of quality of sponsored products, they also play a role in creating a "cool" factor which creates a desire to purchase among certain image conscious Twitch viewers.

Questionnaire responses would therefore suggest that while a brand associating with eSports through sponsorship gives the potential to improve consumer perceptions, its chance of achieving this is increased should the brand be directly related to gaming, more specifically, gaming equipment. In terms of purchase intent and behaviour, ten respondents said that they have purchased a product due to its associations with eSports events, players or teams. It is important to note that in each of these ten instances, the product named fell into the gaming hardware category. No mention of

a non-gaming hardware's product being purchased due to its association with eSports was found in respondents' answers.

Findings from Focus Group

The focus group was recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The transcription of the focus group session has been included as appendix B. Data was carefully analysed by the researcher in order to deduce findings. From these findings, patterns and similarities from participants' comments were deduced.

The first noticeable trend is that participants tend to recall brands of gaming equipment as sponsors of eSports athletes before they recall brands that are not directly associated with gaming through their product set. Participant one and two were quick to identify DXRacer and Razer respectively as examples of sponsorships within eSports. It is also interesting to note that both sponsorships resulted in an improved perception of the brand due to its association with particular eSports teams and athletes. Both of these respondents have purchased products from these brands as a result of these associations.

"I think generally speaking, as gamers we tend to trust the equipment that the pros are using. I also just like to know that I am using the same equipment as my favorite players." – Focus group participant three.

There seems to be an element of trust among the participants for equipment that is used by professional eSports athletes. They perceive equipment that is used by players who compete at a high level to be of superior quality. One participant stated that gaming equipment brands sponsoring high profile eSports athletes is an authentic form of advertising as it gives the viewer or member of that brand's target population an opportunity to see product in action.

When prompted, respondents were able to recall non-gaming equipment brands as sponsors of eSports teams or athletes. Two brands were given, these being popular energy drink companies, Red Bull and Monster. It is clear however that these brands associations with eSports teams and athletes is not as impactful as associations involving gaming equipment companies. Participant one mentioned that two popular professional teams, Evil Genius's and Alliance are both sponsored by Monster energy

drinks. However, he went on to mention that athletes from these teams have water bottles with Monster branding next to them while they are competing in eSports events. This made it clear to the participant that the athletes are not actually using Monster products while competing and therefore in this case, the sponsorship had no effect on the participant as a viewer. This comment prompted a comment from participant two who mentioned the example of team NaVi (a popular eSports team) and their headphone sponsor. He stated that the team members wear the sponsored brand's headphone around their necks and then use an alternative brand's product for team communication. This had a negative impact on the participant's perception of the sponsoring brand.

"I think it is clear that if sponsored players are actively using alternative products, it would suggest that the sponsoring brand is not of great quality." – Focus group participant three.

It would seem then that sponsorships within eSports have a larger and more positive impact on viewer's perceptions of brands if the associated eSports athletes actively use the sponsoring brand's products and that this use is evident through streamed content.

Another trend amongst participant responses is the fact that brands that sponsor players are recalled more frequently than brands that sponsor events. While participants were able to recall event sponsors when prompted, they were far more knowledgeable on the topic of eSport athlete sponsorships. It also seems that brands associating with eSports athletes has a more significant effect on the viewer's perceptions of brands and purchase intentions.

4.2 - Discussion of Above Findings

Responses to the questionnaire suggested that there is a positive correlation between how much time one spends playing games and the amount of time one spends streaming eSports content through Twitch. As a result, it was found that hardcore gamers, these being persons who spend on average 26 hours a week playing games were far more aware of sponsorships within eSports than heavy and casual gamers,

both of whom spend significantly less time playing games and streaming content through Twitch.

It seems that South African Twitch viewers are significantly more aware of sponsorships by brands that are directly related to the gaming industry through their product set than they are of sponsors that are not necessarily specialised gaming brands. The majority of respondents mentioned popular gaming hardware brands such as Razer and SteelSeries when asked to recall sponsorships within eSports. Respondents associated these brands with eSports athletes and teams rather than with eSports events. This would suggest that viewer's perceptions of these brands are enhanced by the level at which professional eSports are able to perform with their products. While popular energy drink brand Red Bull and Monster were recalled as sponsors of eSports teams, these sponsorships seem to have less of an impact on the viewer.

Discussions from the focus group would suggest that purchase intent can be brought about by eSports based sponsorships of athletes and teams. It would seem that gamers enjoy the idea of owning gear that is used by the pros and are made aware of this gear and their benefits through watching eSports via Twitch. Viewers perceive sponsorships of eSports athletes and teams by gaming equipment companies to be an authentic display of the quality of the brand's products. Similar views are shared by Amis & Slack, 1999 who concluded that sponsorships of celebrity athletes in traditional sports has the potential to increase perceived value of brands in the minds members of the target population. It would also seem that the impact of sponsorships is far greater and more positive if eSports athletes are actively using the sponsoring brand's products on stream. If it is clear that the sponsored pros are not using a sponsor's products, brand perceptions remain the same or can even be negatively impacted. These findings align with the conclusion drawn by Pitkänen (2015) who suggested that eSports based sponsorships should add value to the eSports community as a whole, including Twitch viewers. Twitch viewers are attracted to hardware and/or equipment used by pro players due to the perceived quality of these products as well as their image boosting potential. All members of the sample fall under the millennial generation, a status conscious consumer group (Grotts & Johnson, 2011). It is clear that this awareness of brands as a social status symbol applies to the effectiveness of eSports sponsorships.

Based on the above findings it would seem that gaming hardware brands sponsoring pro players and teams are making it easier for non-professional players to discover equipment brands. Sjöblom & Hamari (2016) found cognitive needs, these being needs related to acquiring knowledge and information to have a small positive correlation with the amount of times spend watching games via live stream. Findings from the current study reinforce the fact that one reason viewers watch eSports streams is to gain knowledge and information surrounding equipment that is utilised by professional players. Viewers are after an authentic display of the quality of featured products as they are able to watch top players compete at the highest level through their use.

In terms of brand recall, the focus group revealed that viewers are more aware of brands that sponsor eSports athletes than brands that sponsor eSports events and in general, did not show significant awareness surrounding brands that sponsor eSports events. Sponsoring athletes also seems to have a greater impact on viewer's brand perceptions. A lack of significant impact made by event based sponsorship was also found in a study by Turley & Shannon (2000) who investigated the impact of event sponsors' branding in a basketball arena. Findings showed that while participants were exposed to around 45 brand's advertisements per game, respondents were only able to recall an average of 2.68 brands as sponsors of the event. In contrast to this, findings by Turco (2014) found that 73% of respondents reported perceiving Heineken as a premium beer based on their association with the UEFA champion's league. The stark contrast between these sets of results would suggest that within traditional sports, brand recall of event sponsors varies depending on the event and the sponsoring brand. Results from this study would suggest however that currently, sponsoring eSports events does not result in significant brand recall amongst Twitch viewers.

Data gathered through the questionnaire and the focus group revealed trends and patterns relevant to the objectives and research questions of the study. While sponsorships of eSports athletes, teams or events do seem to have a significant impact on the brand perceptions of viewers, brands that are directly related to gaming have a greater impact on the brand perceptions and purchase intentions of both questionnaire respondents and focus group participants.

4.3 - Linking Findings to the AIDA Model and Self Congruity Theory

AIDA Model

Based on findings from both the administered questionnaire and focus group, it would seem that the AIDA model is relevant to eSports based sponsorship. To reiterate, the AIDA model is an advertising theory that describes what happens when a consumer engages with a form of marketing communication (Rawal, 2013). AIDA is an acronym that stands for the following: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (Rawal, 2013). Multiple research candidates have purchased gaming hardware that they became aware through watching eSports athletes on stream via Twitch. Hard-core gamers take note of the equipment that pro players are using, hence attracting the attention of the viewer. Gamers are inquisitive as to what hardware these players are using and associate this hardware with a high level of quality due to the level at which the pro player competes. Brands associated with eSports athletes also have a “cool” factor among some Twitch viewers and thus become a status symbol. This means that the sponsorship has stimulated the interest of the viewer. In cases where viewers see sufficient value in a brand's product due to its associations with eSports athletes, desire is stimulated and thereafter, the viewer is driven to action and ends up purchasing the product. The Infographic on the following page provides a visual illustration of the AIDA model applied to eSports sponsorships based on the analysed primary data.

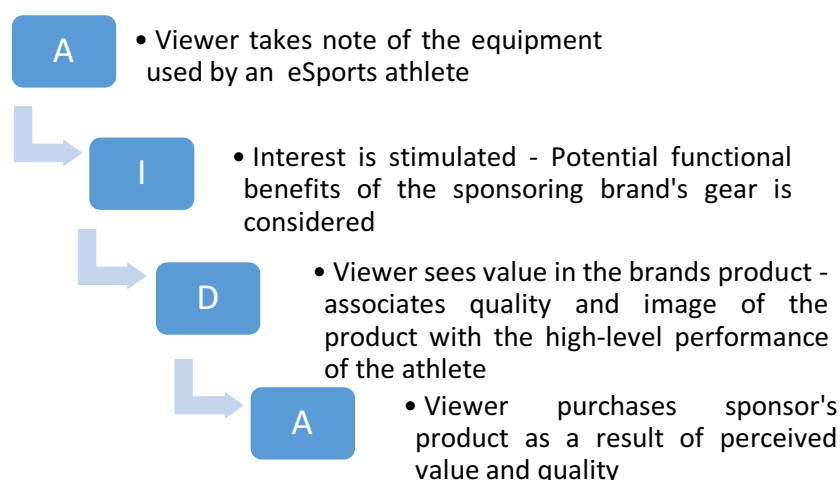


Figure 2: An illustration of the AIDA model applied to eSports sponsorships based on findings from primary qualitative research

Self-Congruity theory

According to the self-congruity theory, people select, purchase and use goods and or services that have a user image that aligns with their self-image (Sirgy, Lee, Johar, & Tidwell, 2008).

Findings would suggest that the self-congruity can be applied and is relevant to current sponsorships within eSports. Findings show that more serious gamers identify with and highly regard the opinions and product choice of top eSports athletes. Aspiring to play at a similar level and have comparable social image to these pro players, Twitch viewers tend to choose gaming gear that is used by their favourite eSports athletes. Foster (2016) deduced coherent findings in a study investigating the impact of live-streaming of games on consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour. In this study it was found that identification and familiarity with the streamer as an individual led to the stream having a larger impact on viewers' purchase intentions. Identification with eSports athletes seems to bring about similar shifts in purchase intention. If eSports athletes are sponsored by a brand but are not actively using that brand's products on stream, viewers do not associate the product with the athlete and brand perceptions are not strengthened. It would seem then that it is important that sponsorships within eSports align with the self-concept of the viewer. In order for this to be achieved, pro players need to actively use the products of their sponsoring brands on stream.

5 - Conclusion

5.1 - Overview of Evaluation of Data

The aim of this study was to explore the impact that current eSports event, team and athlete based sponsorships, visible to consumers through the Twitch streaming platform have on the purchase intentions, brand perceptions and brand recall of these consumers. In addition to this, the researcher intended to investigate the impact that the amount of time one spends playing games personally has on an individual's perception of eSports sponsorships. Results from the questionnaire and focus group suggested that while eSports do offer brands an effective marketing opportunity through sponsorship, only brands that are directly related to gaming in some way will enjoy the full benefit of this form of advertising. Results also suggest that the amount of time one personally spends playing games will affect the way that eSports based sponsorships are perceived. The following section draws conclusions from the analysed primary data in the context of primary and secondary research questions.

5.2 - Evaluation in the Context of Secondary Research Questions

Brand Recall

Results from the study point to the fact that eSports based sponsorships of professional players have the potential to stimulate brand recall among Twitch viewers. Participants of the study who reportedly watch eSports on a regular basis were able to recall sponsors of eSports athletes with relative ease, however, it must be noted that in the vast majority of cases, these brands were related to gaming hardware and equipment. The most commonly recalled brands by research participants in the questionnaire were Razer and SteelSeries, both popular and high-end gaming hardware brands. While brands such as Red Bull and Monster were also mentioned as sponsors of eSports teams, mentions of them were few and far between. Results suggest that Twitch viewers' attention paid to brands sponsoring eSports events and athletes is somewhat selective. Brands that are not related to gaming and gaming equipment are largely ignored by Twitch viewers and therefore cannot be recalled. While some major brands associated with eSports events and players

through sponsorship were recalled by respondents, it is deemed that prior existing familiarity with these brands and their logos played a major role in this regard.

Sponsorship of eSports and Purchase Intentions

Analysed data confirms that eSports based sponsorships do have the potential to bring about purchase intention among Twitch viewers, however, achieving this is highly circumstantial. Findings show that many purchases of products are made as a result of brands' associations with eSports athletes. Associations with eSports events do not have a significant impact on purchase intentions. Twitch viewers, and more specifically, hard-core gamers who watch eSports hold eSports athletes in high regard, both in terms of their expertise and their social status. Brands associated with eSports athletes are perceived by Twitch viewers to be of high quality, however, they are also a status symbol. Viewers therefore see these products as tools through which they can enhance their own level of gaming performance as well as their own social image. This makes sense considering that 76% of Twitch's viewers and the entire sample of this study comprise of millennial individuals (Life Course Associates, 2014). Millennials are notoriously image conscious and look to enhance their social status through their purchases. Findings from this study suggest that in order to optimise the effect on consumers' purchase intentions, sponsoring eSports athletes rather than eSports events is the best option for brands.

Time Spent Gaming and the perception of eSports Sponsorships

Results revealed that those who spend a significant amount of time playing games in their personal capacity also spend more time on Twitch watching eSports. Hard-core gamers, these being individuals who spend a weekly average of 26 hours playing games tend to be regular Twitch users. Being exposed to many hours of Twitch streams, these individuals have substantial knowledge surrounding the sponsors of eSports teams and athletes when compared to less serious gamers. Not only were the majority these individuals able to recall more sponsoring brands than less serious gamers, they were also more likely to change their perceptions of brands as a result of an association with eSports athletes.

5.3 - Evaluation in the Context of Primary Research Question

eSports Sponsorships and Brand Perceptions

The primary research question of the study asked if eSports based sponsorship as a form of advertising has a significant impact on the brand perceptions of South African Twitch viewers. Taking into account the analysed data from this study, it can be deduced that while some brands are effectively impacting consumer perceptions through sponsorships within eSports, these brands tend to operate in a specific industry, this being gaming hardware. Sponsored eSports athletes can be seen using the associated brand's products while competing at the highest level. In the mind of the Twitch viewer, this is an authentic display of the quality of the brand's product. eSports fans associate brands that sponsor eSports athletes with the high quality of performance and high profile reputation of the athlete him/herself. This has a significant impact on these consumers' perceptions of these brands and as mentioned previously, often leads to an intent to purchase products from these brands.

It was however also found that sponsorship can lead to viewers' perceptions of brands being damaged. In cases where a team or athlete is sponsored by a specific brand and the individual players do not make use of the brand's products during competitive play, viewers seem to think less of these brands. Viewers perceive this aversion to using a sponsor's products as an indicator of its overall quality and value. In short, consumers perceive sponsored goods actively used by eSports athletes during competitive play in a positive light. In contrast to this, viewers perceive sponsored goods not actively used by eSports athletes during competitive play as being of sub-standard quality and associating this lack of quality with the player's aversion to using the sponsoring brand's product set.

Overall, the results suggest that while sponsorships within eSports are a viable form of advertising for brands, there are many factors that need to be taken into account in order to optimise the effectiveness of this investment. Brands should ensure that whatever product they are sponsoring will be actively used by eSports athletes during competitive play as the authentic display of a product's quality is a major driving force behind changing consumer perceptions. This of course significantly limits the pool of brands for which this form of marketing communication is viable. It is very important

that whatever this product may be, its use by sponsored athletes is clearly visible through the video stream.

5.4 - Evaluation of Ethical implications

Research ethics were taken into account throughout the study. It was made clear to all questionnaire respondents that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Prior to completing the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and how their responses would be utilised. All respondents' names and personal details were kept anonymous in order to protect their identities. Questions included in the questionnaire did not ask personal details aside from age and questions related to gaming behaviour. Reporting on respondents' answers was done in an open, honest and objective manner as to produce authentic answers to the research questions of the study. In terms of the focus group conducted by the researcher, the purpose of the study was explained to all participants prior to the session being conducted. Participants were reminded that participation in the focus group session is entirely voluntary and they were not pressured in any way to partake. They were also told that they were free to leave the session at any stage should they not wish to continue. Responses were recorded in verbatim in order to accurately depict the views of participants on the matter being discussed. All information gathered was analysed in an open, honest and objective manner. The identity of the focus group participants has been kept anonymous. It should also be mentioned that the researcher merely acted as mediator during the focus group session in order to guide discussion and ensure the group stayed on topic. Participants were not pressured by the researcher to answer questions in a specific manner and open, honest responses were encouraged.

5.5 - Limitations of the Study

The sample used for the questionnaire consisted of only 30 participants, meaning that the group was fairly small. Findings may therefore not be entirely generalizable to the South African Twitch viewing population in its entirety. In addition to this, the sample

only included individuals under the age of 35. While these millennial individuals make up the vast majority of the international Twitch viewing population, older viewers do exist as part of the population. It can be assumed that this is the case with the South African Twitch viewing population as well. It should also be noted that while questionnaires allowed the researcher to collect significant amounts of data in a relatively short amount of time, body language and non-verbal cues could not be observed by the researcher. These factors may have had an impact on the way in which respondent's answers were perceived and how meaning was deduced from them. Thus, questionnaire answers may not be an entirely accurate depiction of respondents' attitudes and feelings towards sponsorship in eSports. Only one focus group was conducted and only three participants were involved in this process. While much of the data gathered through this technique aligned with findings deduced from the questionnaire, further focus groups could have been conducted in order to ensure the accuracy and generalizability of findings. Again, these responses may not be representative of the South African Twitch viewing community in its entirety.

5.6 - Significance of the Study

Results of this study contribute to a very limited pool of research regarding sponsorship and marketing within eSports. Findings from the study provide insight into how Twitch viewers perceive current eSports based sponsorships of events, athletes and teams. As the popularity of eSports continues to grow, investment interest from a marketing and sponsorship point of view will follow. It is essential that brands looking to sponsor eSports events, athletes and teams have a clear understanding of how current sponsorships within eSports are perceived by viewers. Results from this study give a clear indication as to what industries are currently benefiting the most from eSports based sponsorships in terms of improving brand perceptions of the target audience and driving sales through positive impact on consumer purchase intentions. The study also clearly indicates the implications and differences regarding sponsoring eSports events and athletes. The study also provides insights into the nature of current successful eSports based sponsorships and how brands looking to venture into eSports sponsorship can optimise the effectiveness and impact of their investment from a functional point of view.

5.7 - Suggestions for Further Research

This study revealed insights into basic considerations that should be considered in order to ensure the effectiveness of eSports based sponsorships as a form of advertising. While it was established that in general, Twitch viewers in South Africa perceive products associated with professional eSports players to be of high quality and status, further research should be conducted into the effects of visual appearance of these products on consumer perceptions. Ultimately, hardware sponsors are looking to visually showcase their products through their sponsored athletes. Viewers are exposed to a visual display of these products in this regard. The impact that visual appearance of products has on consumer perceptions will prove useful during the product development process for gaming hardware brands.

Research should also be conducted on the performance of eSports athletes and how this performance affects Twitch viewers' perceptions of their sponsors' brands. It is clear from the findings of this study that in general, viewers perceive any product utilised by professional player to be of high quality. However, it would be useful to potential sponsors to know how a sponsored athlete's change in performance, be it a negative or positive change can influence consumer perceptions of the sponsoring brand.

This study would suggest that currently, sponsorships of eSports events are not having the desired impact on brand recall, brand perceptions and purchase intentions. Further research should be conducted to determine the reasons for this lack of impact. Within traditional sports, corporates such as Heineken have successfully strengthened their image of their brands through sponsoring events (Turco, 2014). A study comparing sponsorships of eSports events and successful traditional sports events could be conducted in order to measure differences in consumer perceptions of these event sponsorships. Reasons for these differences could be deduced to gain insights into how the effectiveness of eSports based event sponsorships can be optimised.

Addendums

Addendum A – Example of Administered Questionnaire

The Impact of eSports Based Sponsorship on Twitch Viewers

Please note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary

All responses are entirely anonymous

What is your age?

How many hours a week do you spend playing PC games (An estimate)?

Do you watch eSports Via Twitch?

If you said yes above, how frequently?

Do you take note of brands sponsoring eSports events? If yes, please list brands and their associated events below:

Did the association of this brand(s) with eSports have an impact on your perception of the brand? Please explain why you think this was the case:

Are you aware of brands that sponsor eSports athletes or teams? If yes, please list teams/players and their associated brands below:

Did the association of this brand(s) with eSports teams and/or athletes have an impact on your perception of the brand? Please explain why you think this was the case:

Has a brand's association with eSports ever led to you purchasing (or consider purchasing) one of their products?

If yes, why do you believe this was the case?

Please name a popular eSports event that you have streamed via Twitch:

Can you recall any sponsors from this event? If so, please list them:

Addendum B – Transcription of Focus Group

This focus group was conducted with three male participants. Each of these participants are gamers and make use of Twitch to watch eSports on a weekly basis. The focus group took place on TeamSpeak, a popular online chatroom for gaming. Participants therefore took part in the focus group while being able sit in the comfort of their own home and were therefore at ease when discussing the matter. Before the focus group discussion took place, participants were reminded that their involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and that their responses and participation will remain entirely anonymous.

Researcher: Good day everyone, thank you very much for your time today. The purpose of this session is to discuss your knowledge, attitudes and opinions surrounding current sponsorships of eSports events, teams and athletes that you are aware of as a result of using the Twitch streaming platform. Please remember that your participation is entirely voluntary and that anything you say during the session will remain anonymous. I would like each of you think of a brand that is currently sponsoring an eSports team, event or athlete and explain how this brand association affected your perception of the brand.

The researcher asks if anyone would like to begin the discussion.

Participant 1 – The first brand that comes to mind is DXRacer. They make luxury gaming chairs and they sponsor many streamers and most eSports athletes. I was made aware of the product through watching streams of various eSports events and I would like one myself. I didn't have a perception or opinion of the brand before as I hadn't heard of it but after watching multiple pro's use the product I ended up ordering online.

Participant 2 – I have also seen those on stream, I wanted one as well but was put off by the price. One brand I will mention is Razer. I watch a lot of Dota 2 via Twitch and closely follow Team Liquid, the winning team of The International in 2017. It's basically like the world cup of Dota 2. When I buy hardware now I only really look at Razer. I feel like if eSports athletes are world beaters using their equipment then chances are their product are of the finest quality.

Participant 3 – I think generally speaking, as gamers we tend to trust the equipment that the pros are using. I also just like to know that I am using the same equipment as my favorite players.

Participant 1 – I think it's quite an authentic form of advertising because you actually get to see the product in action. I feel like a lot of advertising you see these days make big claims but don't necessarily back the claims up. If I see Team Liquid win a big event using Razer gear, I know that those products are capable of top notch game play with the right skillset.

Researcher – What are everyone's thoughts on brands sponsoring eSports that aren't linked to gaming equipment?

Participant 3 – I know Red Bull and Monster are sponsoring quite a few teams nowadays.

Participant 1 – Evil Genius's and Alliance are two popular Dota 2 teams, they're sponsored by Monster. The strange thing is that when you see them playing on stream, they have water bottles with Monster branding on them. It makes it pretty obvious that they aren't really drinking Monster so for me that association doesn't really strengthen the Monster brand.

Participant 2 – I have another example similar to that actually. NaVi (a popular eSports team) are sponsored by a headphone brand, I can't actually remember the name of the brand. Anyway, the point is, they keep that brand's headphones around their neck because they are paid to use them, however, they use a different brand over their ears to communicate in game. So yes, I think in this case if anything all this does is damage the image of the brand. Clearly they prefer alternative brands to their sponsor. I know for me personally, I would never consider purchasing the headphone brand that they wear around the neck and don't actually use.

Participant 3 - I would say the same. I think if it is clear that if sponsored players are actively using alternative products, it would suggest that the sponsoring brand is not of great quality.

Researcher – I know that the ESL pro league is a popular eSports company and that they host many large events. I am sure that as eSports fans you are aware of some of these events, Can you recall any sponsors from their events?

Participant 1 – I can't think of many off the top of my head, I know that Intel are one of their main sponsors. Nvidia are another one.

Participant 2 – Can't recall any additional brands. I tend to remember the sponsors of players more readily than sponsors of events.

Researcher – Thank you all for your participation in this discussion, it is much appreciated.

Addendum C - Ethical Clearance Letter



30 July 2017

Dear Mr Raath

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and ethical considerations were reviewed by your supervisor and moderated by the campus research panel.

☒ Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns. We hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your research methodology.

OR

☐ Your research proposal posed minor concerns (see below):
Please discuss with your supervisor how your research design will address this issue.

The concerns included:

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!

Supervisor Name: HF Conradie

Campus Anchor Name: Dr F Cronje

Supervisor Signature: HF Conradie

Campus Anchor Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Cronje', is written over the printed name of the Campus Anchor.

Addendum D – Focus Group Consent Form

The following consent forms were completed and signed by participants of the focus group conducted.

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this study regarding the opportunity that eSports live streaming presents to marketers. The main purpose of the study is to determine if current sponsorships of eSports events, teams and athletes are having a significant effect on brand perceptions and purchasing patterns of Twitch viewers in South Africa.

Information included in this consent form will assist you in deciding if you would like to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be required to join a focus group conducted via the TeamSpeak communication platform. You will be involved in a discussion surrounding sponsorships within eSports and the way they are currently perceived by Twitch viewers.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact the researcher – contact details can be found below:

Email address – raathadrian@hotmail.co.za

Phone Number – 0720238532

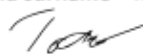
Please note that you may withdraw from this study at any stage. Your participation is entirely voluntary. All information gathered during the study will be held in strict confidence. Only the researcher will have access to the original data. Results will be presented in a way that you are not identifiable.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand all the information above and understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I hereby agree to participate in this study.

Full name and surname – Ion Todd

Signature



Date – 07/10/17

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this study regarding the opportunity that eSports live streaming presents to marketers. The main purpose of the study is to determine if current sponsorships of eSports events, teams and athletes are having a significant effect on brand perceptions and purchasing patterns of Twitch viewers in South Africa.

Information included in this consent form will assist you in deciding if you would like to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be required to join a focus group conducted via the TeamSpeak communication platform. You will be involved in a discussion surrounding sponsorships within eSports and the way they are currently perceived by Twitch viewers.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact the researcher – contact details can be found below:

Email address – raathadrian@hotmail.co.za

Phone Number – 0720238532

Please note that you may withdraw from this study at any stage. Your participation is entirely voluntary. All information gathered during the study will be held in strict confidence. Only the researcher will have access to the original data. Results will be presented in a way that you are not identifiable.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand all the information above and understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I hereby agree to participate in this study.

Full name and surname – Nico du Plessis

Signature



Date – 07/10/17

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this study regarding the opportunity that eSports live streaming presents to marketers. The main purpose of the study is to determine if current sponsorships of eSports events, teams and athletes are having a significant effect on brand perceptions and purchasing patterns of Twitch viewers in South Africa.

Information included in this consent form will assist you in deciding if you would like to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you will be required to join a focus group conducted via the TeamSpeak communication platform. You will be involved in a discussion surrounding sponsorships within eSports and the way they are currently perceived by Twitch viewers.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact the researcher – contact details can be found below:

Email address – raathadrian@hotmail.co.za

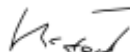
Phone Number – 0720238532

Please note that you may withdraw from this study at any stage. Your participation is entirely voluntary. All information gathered during the study will be held in strict confidence. Only the researcher will have access to the original data. Results will be presented in a way that you are not identifiable.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand all the information above and understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I hereby agree to participate in this study.

Full name and surname – Tim Mostert

Signature 

Date – 07/10/17

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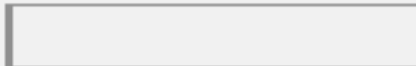
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RESM8419_2017_HB1_VGCT1 - RESM8419_VGCT1



Final Submission: Research Project

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